

The One Who Walks on Water¹

Mark 6:45-56

Opening: Have you ever heard of the Jesus Christ Lizard? They are called that because they can walk on water. (Video) Basilisk Lizards² are found in tropical regions like Southwest Florida. They live near water and when they are frightened by a predator they can get to the water and run across the surface. They can run on water because they have scales on their hind toes which make little webs that can trap bubbles of air and water beneath their feet. This keeps them from sinking into the water if they run quickly enough across. **Have you ever tried to walk on water before?** Over the years, I have tried but it's never worked out for me, and I always end up getting wet. **It's physically impossible for a human to walk on water³:** The density of water is one gram per cubic centimeter at 4 degrees Celsius, which means the surface tension of water cannot support us because we are too heavy. The only way you could do it is if you could sprint 67 MPH (fastest recorded foot speed is 27.79 MPH by Usain Bolt.) But what is impossible for us, is not for Jesus.

Context: As we go through these familiar stories of Jesus in Mark's gospel, we keep finding deeper connections and truths that we may have just glanced over or taken for granted. In the story of Jesus walking on the water in the middle of the storm, we are tempted to say, "Amen" and move on. But this story tells us more about Jesus than the fact that He can do what we can not do. It tells us who He is and calls us to trust Him even more. We have seen that Jesus is more than a bread maker, more than a prophet, and more than a King. ***In this story, Jesus is going to vividly show us that His authority and identity are greater than we can imagine and how absurd it is not to trust in Him.***

I. Authority: They were Sailing under His Orders

- **VS. 45: Immediately:** right after Jesus' fed the 5,000: **He made his disciples get into the boat:** he commanded them to get on the boat without him, bringing the leftovers and to meet him at Bethsaida. John 6:15 says that Jesus knew that the crowds wanted to make Him King because of what He did. (Burger King) They obeyed their Rabbi.
- **VS. 46: After He had taken leave of them, he went up to the mountain to pray:** Jesus, in his humanity, had to get away from the crowds and spend time with His Father. Jesus does this three times in Mark's gospel (1:35, 14:32); often it was to strengthen himself against the temptation to take the easy road. *Doing what is right is more important than doing what is easy. Jesus chose to go to hell so that we could go to heaven.*
- **VS. 47-48: When evening came:** after 6pm, it was dark; Jesus was on a mountain and the disciples on a boat: in the gospels, when Jesus isn't around typically something bad is going to happen. The sea of Galilee is 600 feet below sea level and in the evening as the warm air rises, cold air rushes down from the mountains creating a wind tunnel.
- **He saw they were making headway painfully:** a mega-windstorm arose out of nowhere: **Headway painfully:** graphic word: straining torture; torment; pain of childbirth; pain of hell. It was torturing them trying to keep the boat from blowing over. It had been a long day. Everyone was exhausted and this wind was against them and was unrelenting.
- **Jesus watched the whole thing:** what was unknown to the disciples, was not to Jesus. The storm did not surprise Jesus. *The disciples were not in the storm because they were out of the will of God but because they were in the will of God for their lives.* There is nothing that comes into your life except that which either God causes or allows. ***Sometimes we believe false narratives about the will of God or trials. There are two false narratives that many believe.***
- ***"If I am in the will of God, then it will be easy and comfortable."*** But it's often the opposite. Often where God leads us is tough and dangerous. We can't allow the degrees of difficulty in our lives be the determining factor for the will of God in our lives. ***The WILL OF GOD will NEVER take you where the GRACE of GOD CANNOT KEEP YOU!***
- ***"If I am going through a difficult situation then God is mad at me or doesn't love me."*** We cannot judge God by our situation. We can't get our theology from our circumstances because we may conclude God doesn't love us. Jesus loves us enough to allow us to go through difficult situations because it's what's best for us.
- **Quail Eggs:** A few years ago, someone gave my kids some quail eggs and an incubator so that they would hatch. (The original and much cheaper Hatchimal) The kids got excited and waited for them to hatch. Finally, the first egg started to hatch. In their excitement, one of the kids helped the baby quail get out of the shell. They saw it was struggling and thought it would be best to help; but it may have been the worst thing to do because the baby quail died soon after. I'm not saying that helping the chick is what killed it; but research has shown it's best to let them hatch on their

¹ **Works Consulted:** Mark Batterson, *The Grave Robber*. Pp. 169-189. Jason Meyer. *Mark For You*. Pp. 106-110. Ian Nelson. *Ghost*. Message preached September 14, 2013. Daniel Akin. *Christ Centered Exposition: Mark*. Pp. 141-149.

² [How 'Jesus Lizards' Walk on Water \(nationalgeographic.com\)](http://nationalgeographic.com)

³ [Can You Walk On Water? » Science ABC](http://www.scienceabc.com)

own at least for the first 24 hours. Its best for the chick to build strength to live in the outside world. If you intervene too soon, it could be detrimental for the chick. It's not evil or unloving to let the chick struggle to get out, but the best.

- ***In our bubble wrapped, helicopter parenting, easy button world, this seems counter-intuitive, but God often allows us to go through difficulty so that we grow in our faith and knowledge of Him:*** Jesus did not send them into this storm because He was mad at them but because He loved them and watched to teach them more about who He is.

II. Identity: They Watched Him Walk on Water

- **VS. 48: He saw them:** they could not see Him, but He saw them: this was a miracle itself. It was dark, a few miles away and storming. But Jesus never took His eyes off of them. He knew everything that was going on. Jesus does not turn a blind eye to their suffering, nor does He do the same in our suffering. He knows your pain and sees your struggles.
- **About the fourth watch of the night:** right before dawn; darkness was losing its grip on the night. They were rowing for hours trying to stay alive in the middle of the storm. **He came to them:** he did not swim to them, he walked to them on top of the water in spite of the wind and the waves. He wasn't riding an iceberg or walking on a sand bar.
- **Jesus walks on water for 3-4 miles (70 minutes):** this was unprecedented: **He comes to them because they couldn't come to Him:** Jesus is teaching us something about how He cares for His children. Some of you are in a huge, relentless situation. You wake up with it and go to bed with it. Yet, Jesus finds a way to get to us!
- **Why does Jesus do this? Jesus was revealing His identity to them:** Again, Jesus is going to do what only God can do: Mark is very intentional with the words He uses to convey what Jesus was doing here. *We often want to be taken out of the storm, but instead Jesus wanted to revealed God to them in the middle of the storm.*
- **The disciples got a revelation of God in the middle of the sea not on top of a mountain.** Often we see God clearest in the middle of the storm. In the crisis, in the diagnosis, in the pain, in the operating room and when hard knocks hit us. We learn more about God through stressful situations than we do smooth sailing.
- **There is imagery of God walking on water all over the Old Testament.** You know that God is God because He walks on water. **Job 9:8:** Job is an ancient story written like a play with monologues and drama. He goes through the worst kinds of trials losing almost everything he loved. He says (of God), *"He is wise in heart and mighty in strength - who has hardened himself against him, and succeeded? He who removes mountains, and they know it not, when he overturns them in his anger, who shakes the earth out of its place, and its pillars tremble; who commands the sun, and it does not rise; who seals up the stars; who alone stretched out the heavens and treads on the waves of the sea."*
- **Psalms 77:19** *Your way was through the sea, your path through the great waters; yet your footprints were unseen.*
- **He meant to pass by them:** when you read that, you scratch your head and say, "Why would Jesus have just walked on by them." But Mark is using intentional language here. **Exodus 33:18:** Moses asked God to show him His glory and God told him that He would only "pass by in front of him." The closest thing you can get is seeing my back or where I just was. So, God "passed by" Moses and revealed Himself to Him. Mark uses the same words to describe Jesus.
- **VS. 49-50: When they saw him walking on the sea they thought it was a ghost:** a phantom; a sea-demon: these disciples had seen a lot of freaky stuff: **They were terrified:** they don't know it's Jesus; they respond with terror. Jesus responds to them with comfort: **Take heart; it is I, do not be afraid:** In the midst of their fears, anxiety and terror, Jesus says, *"I am here with you. It's going to be OK. Don't worry."* (*I'm not a Ghost, I am God!*)
- **It is I: ego eimi:** It is I AM: the name that God gave Moses at the burning bush in Exodus 3:14 (YHWH: I am who I am). I am not who you say or think I am, I am who I am. Jesus walks where only God walks and talks like only God talks. This is a revelation. Jesus is saying, *"Take heart. Do not be afraid. Because I am God. I am coming to your rescue."*
- **Every other religion tells us that we have a boat, don't get holes in it, God gives you a paddle, do your best and row hard and maybe you will make it to shore.** *But Christianity says, "You can't make it. Your boat is going to sink. You are lost at sea. Unless God come and saves you, you are going to die."* (**Christmas: God came to US! Immanuel**)
- **The point of all the miracles, healings, exorcisms and teachings from Jesus is not just for the sake of miracles, healings, exorcisms and teaching, but to tell us who Jesus is.** **DeYoung:** *The unmasked glory of Jesus is more powerful than any hurricane, more astounding than any storm, more terrifying than any near-death experience and more comforting than your mom and dad holding your hand in the middle of the night.*⁴

III. Absurdity: They were hardened to who He is

- **VS. 51: He got into the boat with them, and the wind ceased:** immediately stopped: John tells us that the disciples were "glad" when He got on the boat and that they immediately got to where He told them to go. They were teleported there instantly. Jesus walked on the water to them and saved them from their torment.

⁴ Kevin DeYoung. *It is Not a Ghost*. Message preached May 23, 2010.

- **They were utterly astonished:** amazed, overwhelmed: it was a rollercoaster of emotions; *terrified, glad, astonished:* **They did not understand about the loaves:** while they were freaking out on the boat there were 12 baskets full of leftover bread and fish in front of them. But they did not put two and two together. They see the miracle but miss the point. They don't see who Jesus is. They have amazement but not faith. (He is a provider but not a protector)
- **Their hearts were hardened:** a phrase used to describe the Pharisees and the scribes; the outsiders to the Kingdom; those who have "eyes to see but do not see or ears to hear but do not hear." The disciples were acting like the scribes and Pharisees, like outsiders to the Kingdom. **God has been faithful to us over the years, and we still freak out.**
- **They wanted Jesus on their boat, but they did not have Him fully in their hearts:** they were wowed just like the crowd by the multiplication of the loaves and fishes, but they didn't yet recognize fully who Jesus was. Their hearts were not fully opened to the reality of who Jesus is. *Their faith was fickle. They believed, but still had unbelief.*
- **Amazement is not the same thing as faith:** the disciples still had the bread in the boat and the smell of fish on their breath, yet they didn't fully embrace and trust who Jesus is. God can do the miraculous and we should ask Him to do so. But we need more than miracles to truly believe in Jesus. **We ALL tend to forget once they are over.**
- **How many times in your life have you prayed, "God, if you would show me a sign or a miracle, I would trust in your more?" Or "God, if you would just show so and so a miracle, I know they would believe in you."** Those may be well-meaning prayers, but they are shallow and won't really create faith.
- **How many people in the Bible saw miracles and actually, truly believed in Jesus?** Not as many as you think. Many more saw tons of miracles and still didn't believe in Jesus! (Matthew 11: *Woe to you, Bethsaida, Chorazin!*) *Faith is not the result of knowing about Jesus or even seeing the power of Jesus, it is a gift of the Holy Spirit in your heart.*
- **No pastor or parent or friend can make you believe.** God must give you faith. Parents, you can't make your kids believe. No matter how hard you try. You can raise them in church and constantly point them to God. But it takes the work of the Holy Spirit in their lives to change them and cause them to believe.
- **You may say, "Why would you tell us this? Why not just end on a happy ending?"** The reason is in MY LIFE I need to be reminded of this. I need faith in who Jesus is. I don't just need the storms calmed outside of me; I need the presence of Jesus inside of me. I need faith in HIM. **I don't need Jesus to give me bread, I need Him to be my bread!**
- **The miracle here is not just that the storm was calmed, but that despite impossible circumstances, Jesus was there. It is the miracle of His presence.** When they thought there was no way he could be there, He made a way. His presence was really all the disciples needed. His presence in our lives is what we truly need. **Psalm 16:11** *You make known to me the path of life; in your presence there is fullness of joy; at your right hand are pleasures forevermore.*
- **Sometimes God seems absent in our lives, but He is not.** Sometimes we experience His felt presence in our lives. In rare times, we experience his manifest presence among us. No matter what happens Jesus can walk on water. Jesus is stronger and greater than our biggest fears and our deepest hurts. What is over your head is under his feet.
- **Rogers: Peace is not the subtraction of the problems in your life, but the addition of the presence of God in your life.**⁵

Application: Jesus does not rebuke His disciples but invites them to trust Him. He says, "Do not be afraid." Fear is an emotion but is also a decision. It is a conscious decision that you make. You have to decide am I going to be afraid of what I do not know or what I can not see or am I going to trust in the One who died for me?

Jesus is teaching his disciples (and us) that there is NOTHING that can separate me from you. I will allow nothing to separate me from you. I will walk on water to be with you. I will come to you in the middle of your darkest night to be with you. When you take me into your life with joy, we will arrive at our desired destination.

Romans 8:38-39 *For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

When I am assured of the presence of Jesus in my life, when I recognize who He is and live in light of it, then NO STORM, NO GHOST, NO IMPOSSIBLE SITUATION can really scare me anymore. Therefore, I am free to take risks for Him. I am free to give my life to Him. I am free to live generously. I am free to go all in for Jesus and trust Him for greater things!

⁵ Famous quote from Dr. Adrian Rogers.