

I Need a Miracle:
When Jesus Gets Personal
John 6:16-35

February 3, 2013

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Text Introduction: We are in a series called “I Need a Miracle.” Our definition for a miracle is “those things that can only be described by the phrase, ‘God did it.’” There are seven such miracles in the Gospel of John that are intentionally used by the Spirit of God through this Gospel writer to prove that Jesus is who He said He was. So far we have considered the miracle at the wedding at Cana, the healing of the royal official’s son, the man at the Pool of Bethesda, and the miracle of the feeding of the multitude. There are two more after today. We have been looking at each of these miracles as a way to ask God about our own need for Him to do something in our lives that we are desperate to see. Today, we come to the fifth miracle in this sequence—the miracle of Jesus walking on the water. It is immediately following the feeding of the multitude.

Text: ¹⁶ When evening came, His disciples went down to the sea, ¹⁷ got into a boat, and started across the sea to Capernaum. Darkness had already set in, but Jesus had not yet come to them. ¹⁸ Then a high wind arose, and the sea began to churn. ¹⁹ After they had rowed about three or four miles, they saw Jesus walking on the sea. He was coming near the boat, and they were afraid.

²⁰ But He said to them, “It is I. Don’t be afraid!” ²¹ Then they were willing to take Him on board, and at once the boat was at the shore where they were heading.

Introduction: Each Gospel account is a little bit different. We see this over and over again. I mentioned this to you at Christmas time last year when we considered the Christmas story from each of the Gospels. I kept reminding you of something that I want to say today. These differences are not contradictory, but rather complementary.

The story before us today appears in Matthew, Mark, and John. Luke does not record this specific scene. Let’s start with just a brief examination of the additional details by Matthew and Mark. What are the differences? What are the similarities? And do these teach us anything?

Differences:

In Matthew’s account (Matthew 14), Peter walks on the water. Remember that? Peter says, “Lord, if it is you, command me to come to You.” Jesus says, “Come,” and Peter briefly walks on the water.

In Mark’s account (Mark 6), the significant addition to the story is a mention of the disciples not understanding the loaves because their hearts were hardened, and so were astounded that Jesus came to them in this miraculous way.

In both Matthew and Mark, we get a reason as to why Jesus was not with them. He stayed behind to be alone and pray. We also get indication that the winds immediately calmed.

The additional reflection that we get from John as the story continues is that this miracle is coupled with additional words about the miracle of the feeding. In other words, Jesus uses the miracle of the feeding to speak specific words about His being the “bread of life.”

In all of the accounts, this miracle takes on added significance because Jesus gets personal with the disciples. Think about the miracles before this one. The wedding at Cana was not their wedding. They were guests. Neither did they know the royal official. The man at the Pool was one among many. Though they benefitted from the feeding of the 5,000, that miracle too was more about everybody else. And though they are following Jesus as a result of seeing His miracles, this miracle on the sea is for them. In fact, it’s just for them. No one else even sees it. Look at verses 22-25.

²² The next day, the crowd that had stayed on the other side of the sea knew there had been only one boat. They also knew that Jesus had not boarded the boat with His disciples, but that His disciples had gone off alone. ²³ Some boats from Tiberias came near the place where they ate the bread after the Lord gave thanks. ²⁴ When the crowd saw that neither Jesus nor His disciples were there, they got into the boats and went to Capernaum looking for Jesus.

²⁵ When they found Him on the other side of the sea, they said to Him, “Rabbi, when did You get here?”

In other words, “How did that happen?”

You might expect the next verse to read, “I walked over last night,” but instead Jesus changed the subject not revealing how or when He got there. It was just for the disciples.

It’s one thing to talk about, pray about, and be eyewitness to someone else’s miracle. It’s another thing to have your own. It’s deeper. It’s more significant. It’s more personal. Let’s talk about that today.

Jesus gets personal because...

1. Sooner or later, you are going to have to own your faith.

I usually say in the baptismal waters something like this. “You have come today because of your own faith in Jesus. You are not here because of your mother or father, your sister or brother. You are not here because of your church. You are here because of your own faith in Jesus.” I think this is what this miracle is all about. That the miracle is solely for the disciples is what separates this miracle from all the others.

Think about this. Jesus created the situation by staying behind. He was bringing the disciples to a deeper level of faith.

2. Personal faith grows by personal need.

The need was created by the storm. Jesus allowed them to go into the storm. Again, Mark revealed that the hearts of the disciples were hardened and they did not understand the loaves. Jesus knew that the storm created the thirst to see Jesus. Jesus knew that the storm would do for the disciples what the bread and fish did not do. Jesus knew that these disciples and all who would follow after them would seek Him in the storm.

Notice that this miracle is the fifth in the sequence for a reason. They weren't ready until now. Now they are ready.

Now lest you think all of this is unfair, remember this. What is Jesus doing before He meets them on the water? He is watching and He is praying. What do you think He might have been praying about?

3. Personal faith generates personal thanksgiving.

We want to give thanks when someone else has their prayer answered, but nothing is like the thanksgiving when it is our prayer being answered.

4. Ultimately, Jesus gets personal because we need we need Him!

Watch what happens next starting at verse 26.

²⁶ Jesus answered, "I assure you: You are looking for Me, not because you saw the signs, but because you ate the loaves and were filled. ²⁷ Don't work for the food that perishes but for the food that lasts for eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you, because God the Father has set His seal of approval on Him."

²⁸ "What can we do to perform the works of God?" they asked.

²⁹ Jesus replied, "This is the work of God—that you believe in the One He has sent."

³⁰ "What sign then are You going to do so we may see and believe You?" they asked. "What are You going to perform? ³¹ Our fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, just as it is written: He gave them bread from heaven to eat."

³² Jesus said to them, "I assure you: Moses didn't give you the bread from heaven, but My Father gives you the real bread from heaven. ³³ For the bread of God is the One who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world."

³⁴ Then they said, "Sir, give us this bread always!"

³⁵ "I am the bread of life," Jesus told them. "No one who comes to Me will ever be hungry, and no one who believes in Me will ever be thirsty again."

Jesus is saying, "You don't need the bread; you need Me." Don't seek the miracle; seek Me. Believe in miracles, but trust in Me. Miracles are one time things; I am forever.

Isn't it God's going with us that makes the difference? John Wesley was once on a ship crossing the ocean going from England to Georgia in the Colonies. Wesley had never been on a ship before. They're 7 days from land and they begin to encounter the third and most violent storm of the voyage. There is worry that the ship is going to be lost at sea. "The sea spilled over the ship, split the mainsail, and poured between the decks as if the great deep had already swallowed us up." The English passengers

screamed in fright; the German Moravians calmly continued singing without interruption. Wesley was impressed with their faith in the face of death. He saw the difference in the hour of trial, between those who truly knew Jesus Christ and those who didn't. Even though he'd been a preacher for some time now, he didn't have that faith.

It's almost as if The Moravians had Christ with them, in their boat, in themselves. Do you?