

I'll Catch Up with You Later

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[0 : 00] So last Sunday we looked at an amazing miracle of Jesus. He fed a crowd of 5,000 plus people with just a boy's lunch out in the middle of nowhere on the eastern side of Galilee.

And the reaction of the people that day was striking. Surely this is the prophet who is to come into the world. Others, John tells us, had intentions of coming out to him and making him king right here and right now.

And we read, this was in verse 15, that Jesus knew their intention and so he withdrew up onto a mountain by himself. So why was Jesus going to go up this mountain by himself?

What about the disciples? Well, Matthew and Mark help us fill in some of the details. We won't turn there, but I'll summarize it for you. After the feeding of the 5,000 plus, Jesus told his disciples to go get into the boat and go back across the lake.

Meanwhile, he stayed by himself with the crowd. And we don't know how long, but then he later dismissed the crowd. And then afterwards, we find out from another gospel, he went up the mountain to pray.

[1 : 21] So John continues the story here from the perspective of the disciples. And we pick it up in verse 16. 16. When evening came, his disciples went down to the lake, where they got into a boat, as Jesus had told them, and set across the lake for Capernaum.

So let's get the picture here in our minds. Evening has come. Supper has been eaten. Jesus made the meal. And now Jesus tells you, one of his disciples, to go get into the boat and set out across the lake.

You can imagine. Well, how are you going to get across? Oh, don't worry about me. I'm going to stay a bit longer with the crowds and dismiss the crowd.

I'll catch up with you later. Okay. Well, let's go. By now, verse 17, it was dark.

Have you ever been out on a lake, in a boat, in the dark? Anyone? Rob has.

[2 : 38] We generally try to avoid that, right? I've only done it once myself, and it was on a beautiful, calm evening in the Okanagan, one of those fancy water sports boats that had all kinds of big, powerful overhead lights and interior lights, and they called it the Starlight Cruise.

It was kind of a romance thing at family camp. It was lovely. We could see the lights of people's getaway cottages and expensive houses all along the shore.

We could see the downtown skyline of Kelowna, kind of a backdrop with its towers and lights. This moment was not like that for the disciples.

There was no electricity back then. Galilee was not surrounded with the lakeside cottages of millionaires, and they were not in a luxury speedboat with powerful overhead lights.

No, this was more like another time that I was out in a boat. Out on Last Mountain Lake, actually, I participated in a fishing derby with my grandfather that was held out at Strasburg Bible Camp there when I was a kid.

[3 : 48] And we didn't have our own boat, so we just borrowed the camp's small fishing boat. I was just a kid back then, and even then the boat felt small. And the motor on that thing was absolutely gutless.

I remember being out on the water on the last day of the derby. We had until 5 o'clock or something like that, and we wanted to have every chance to get the big one and win, at least I did as a kid.

And evening was getting close, and the sun was starting to go down. It was fall, and the wind was starting to come up, and the waves were starting to get a little bigger, a little bit of white cap stuff happening.

And in that little tin can, it felt like we were having quite the ride with this gutless motor just trying to get back to shore. Even that experience of mine just doesn't compare to what the disciples are

facing and feeling right now.

They're out in the boat. By now it was dark, says John, so the sun has already gone down. You can imagine them looking for those familiar spots along the shore, but not really able to see them and get their bearings.

[5 : 00] But then it gets even worse than that. John tells us in verse 18, a strong wind was blowing, and the waters grew rough.

So we imagine the disciples are in their boat, and they're having quite the time, quite the ride out there in the dark.

In verse 19, John tells us that they had already rowed about three to four miles. So like five to six kilometers, for those of you who are younger.

The Sea of Galilee is about 12 kilometers across at its widest point. So if you think about Last Mountain Lake, that's about four times across the width of Last Mountain Lake is the Sea of Galilee. Or if you're at Elbow, at the marina, it's about six times from the marina to the point just right across. So they're in the middle of the lake.

[5 : 59] They've rowed quite a long ways, but there's still a ways to go. In the dark, with the wind, and the waves are coming up, and it's a long way to the other side.

Don't miss the detail that they had already rowed about three or four miles. They didn't have an outboard motor on this boat. They probably, if it was a typical Galilean fishing boat, had four rowing oars and 12 guys in the boat.

If we flip over to Matthew's Gospel, and we get a sense there that they were even further away from where they wanted to be at this point, simply because of the wind and the waves being against them.

Mark tells us that they were straining at the oars in the dark, three to four miles from shore, riding these waves up and down, fighting to get to where they want to go.

And can you imagine how they're feeling right about now in this boat? This is not the starlight cruise. This probably feels tense.

[7 : 13] Maybe a glimpse of the feeling some of us have had. Maybe you've traveled around Christmas time and you know what it's like to be traveling in the dark. Then all of a sudden you come into a blizzard and you can't see anything.

And all of a sudden the road starts to feel a little more slick and you feel some slipping around in the vehicle. And then you look off to the right and you see a guy who just freshly tracks gone into the ditch.

You start slowing down. That happy feeling of travel turns into that tense feeling of, oh boy, your progress towards the destination just kind of slows to a crawl.

Perhaps it's a little of what the disciples felt like that night. Their progress had slowed to a crawl. Matthew tells us in his gospel that they're still out there in the middle of the lake during the fourth watch of the night, like three in the morning, straining at the oars in the dark.

The wind is blowing. The waves are surging. And all of a sudden, John tells us in verse 19, when they had rowed about three or four miles, they saw Jesus approaching the boat, walking on the water.

[8 : 40] Like, what? John tells us they were frightened. Things were already tense. They'd been fighting at this for hours and suddenly out there in the middle of nowhere on the lake, they see a human figure walking on the water, approaching the boat.

And they were frightened. Like, what is that? Like, hey, do you see that? Am I seeing things or is there someone out there? No, that can't be.

It's not possible. What is that? Quick, bring the torch. They'd never seen anything like that before. Mark tells us in his gospel that they thought it was a ghost.

I mean, what else has the shape of a human figure in the middle of a lake, in a storm? Mark tells us also that they were terrified. Not just afraid, but terrified.

So much so that they began to cry out. Like, out loud. You can almost picture it. Quick, row! He's gaining on us!

[9 : 50] It's coming closer! At some point, Jesus gets close enough that they can actually hear him calling out to them over the sound of the wind. If you know the story, it's right about here in the Gospel of Matthew that Peter has his little moment where he steps out and walks on the waves.

John leaves that out of his account, but he does tell us what Jesus said as he called out to them. And we can imagine he maybe said this a few times to them just to reassure them. Verse 20, It is I. Don't be afraid. Peter, John, James, Matthew, it's me. Don't be afraid. Can you imagine the look on their faces? How wide their eyes must have been as all of this was unfolding right in front of them? As Jesus walks right up to the boat with Peter like you imagine them just looking down at over the side of the boat at Jesus' feet just standing on water? I can't even imagine what this looked like, especially with the waves, you know. Was it just that the waves just kind of went around him? We don't know. But needless to say, they were probably in shock and in awe.

[11 : 17] At some point, they all accept that it really is Jesus and they take him and Peter into the boat. And Matthew tells us in his gospel that as Jesus and Peter climb into the boat, like all of a sudden, the wind died down.

Just like that. Presumably, the waves did with it gradually. Verse 21, then they were willing to take him into the boat and immediately or at once the boat came to the shore where they were heading. Now, it's difficult to know just what John means by this. Many would highlight the word immediately and take this as a second miracle that somehow the boat was miraculously transported from where it was to shore by Jesus.

Others would put the highlight on the word came. In my Bible, it says reached but the word there is more close to came in that there, you know, there was still a process, natural process, but they were able to do it at once or immediately now that things had settled down and make a beeline for the shore.

Some others have suggested that they had already rowed a good long while and maybe they were cutting more across the corner of the lake and they were not that far from shore and so they just rowed a little more and boom, they were there almost at once.

[12 : 45] If it was a miracle, we're kind of left wondering, well, how did this happen? Was it a miracle of teleportation? Like just, the whole boat goes to shore. Was it a miracle in which, you know, Jesus sat in the boat and all of a sudden the boat just starts to go real fast right towards the shore.

We don't know. We'll have to ask the Lord just what happened that night someday after he returns. But whatever the case, what is crystal clear from all accounts of this is that Jesus walked miles on the water of the lake.

It was an amazing miracle. An astounding sign. And if it hasn't hit home yet, I want to give you a simple challenge.

This weekend, with a friend or family member, head on out to Lake Diefenbaker or Last Mountain Lake, have your friend or family member hit the record button on the phone, and I challenge you to walk on the water and see how far you get.

If you can give me a legitimate recording of you making it even halfway across the lake, I'll give you my whole life savings. I still remember back when I was a young kid, me and a friend just thought this was the coolest story ever.

[14 : 16] Jesus walked on the water and he enabled Peter to walk on the water too in Matthew. It seemed that the only reason Peter sank was that he doubted, that he didn't have enough faith.

And so, in our young, immature way of reading the Bible, we kind of figured, well, maybe the lesson here is simply that if we have enough faith, we too can walk on water.

So we tried it. I can't remember if it was at a pool or if it was at a lake. I think it was at a lake. We tried it and we laughed our heads off as we watched each other taking a run for it so we could get as far as possible and then within three steps just disappearing out of sight into the water.

This was an amazing sign, an astounding miracle. Mark and John at this point move on to tell other parts of the story here but Matthew thankfully lingers a little bit on the reaction of the disciples and we want to capture that this morning.

This is what Matthew records. He says, Then those who were in the boat worshipped him saying, Truly, you are the Son of God.

[15 : 37] These words seem to fit well with what we've been looking at back in John chapter 5. Jesus has been talking about his special relationship with the Father. father. It's like the disciples have the quarter drop all of a sudden.

Like, We've heard what you've been saying, Jesus, and we've believed it, yeah, but now we really, truly believe it. Like, those lingering doubts, those wonderings, they just melted away for us.

If all the miracles that Jesus has done up until now hadn't been enough, in fact, Mark actually tells us that the feeding of the 5,000, the disciples didn't get it.

They didn't fully understand what it was pointing to because of the hardness of their hearts, says Mark. But it seems as though now, right after this, when they see Jesus walking on the water, for the first time, they are really starting to get it.

More than just a prophet. More than the prophet. More than just the Messiah, the promised king. More than just a man. For the first time in all the gospels, Matthew tells us that they worshipped Jesus.

[16:56] Like, the bow down in front of him kind of worship. you truly are the divine son of God.

What a moment that must have been. Let's go back to John. Finally, John tells us about some details that help confirm that this story is true.

Verse 22, John chapter 6. The next day, the crowd that had stayed on the opposite shore of the lake realized that only one boat had been there. and that Jesus had not entered the boat with his disciples, but that the disciples had gone away alone.

Then, some boats from Tiberias landed near the place where the people had eaten the bread after the Lord had given thanks. Once the crowd realized that neither Jesus nor his disciples were there, they got into the boats and went to Capernaum in search in search of Jesus.

When they found him on the other side of the lake, they asked him, Rabbi, when did you get here? John wants us to see the confirming testimony of the masses.

[18:16] 5,000 or more people were there on the eastern side of the lake. They had eaten their fill of the bread that Jesus had made miraculously out of thin air. Many of that crowd had actually followed Jesus to the eastern shore from back on the western side.

We see that in chapter 6 verse 1. Whether they walked or hitched a ride, we don't know. But many of them, they stayed on that eastern side where they had had the meal with the big crowd because it seemed to them that Jesus himself was staying on that side that night.

They saw John tells us the disciples get into the boat, the one boat that was there without Jesus and leave hours before.

And probably they saw Jesus kind of, after dismissing the crowd, heading off up towards the mountain. So it seemed pretty clear to them that Jesus was still somewhere on their side, so we're going to stay too.

And the expectation is that tomorrow we can all come back out and we can see him, we can hear more of his teachings, we can seek healing or whatever they were there for. But on the next day they could not find Jesus on the eastern side.

[19:35] In fact, some boats, John tells us, from the western side, from Tiberias, a town on the western side, were now landing in the place where Jesus had fed the multitude. And we're not really sure what the deal with the boats from Tiberias is.

Were they full of people that had also come to find Jesus after hearing about him being over there? Were they just fishermen who had been blown in by the waves and the wind in the night?

Or were they family members who'd come to join loved ones or bring supplies from back home on the western side? We don't really know, but at some point the crowd that had been there with Jesus realizes that he's not here, his disciples are not here, he sent the disciples to go to Capernaum, so let's go, let's see if we can find him.

So a bunch of them jump into the boats from Tiberias and ride across to Capernaum to search for Jesus there. And eventually we read that they catch up with him and the big question is, when did you get here?

The point of all this is to confirm the miracle of Jesus walking on the lake. Like, how did you get here, Jesus? Jesus, by the time you left us late in the evening, I mean, we saw you go up the mountain.

[20:53] You couldn't have walked all the way around the lake to here by now through the night. It's too far. And then there was the storm that came up last night.

You couldn't have gone across the lake in a boat. There were no other boats. There was only one boat there. How did you get here? When did you get here? They were mystified.

And what would have really baked their noodles even more is if they'd already talked to some of the people on the western side who saw Jesus get out of one boat with his disciples.

Mark 6, verse 54. As soon as they got out of the boat, this is on the western side, people recognized Jesus. They saw it. And how is this possible?

people. It's as if John is saying, you think this sounds crazy, walking on the water across the lake? Go ask the various parts of the story. Ask the crowd that saw him send the disciples away and go up the mountain side.

[22 : 00] Ask the guys on the other side of the shore who saw him get out of the one boat with his disciples. We're telling the truth. At the time John is writing this, many of these people are likely still alive.

ask the fishermen in the boats from Tiberias about the storm that night. Matthew tells us that as soon as Jesus and his disciples landed on the western side, they immediately recognized Jesus and then right away they sent word to all the surrounding country.

You can almost picture it. Oh, you're traveling tomorrow? Well, wherever you're going, tell them that Jesus is here. And so people are coming from all over the region to see Jesus for one reason or another, to hear Jesus.

It was a really exciting time. If people didn't come, you have to know that at the very least they're hearing the news about all that Jesus is doing. It's an exciting time in the story of Jesus.

There's a lot happening. And we're going to continue the conversation that he has with those who found him next Sunday. But let's stop for a moment and just reflect on this amazing sign.

[23 : 24] Walking miles on water, on a lake. It's one of the most impressive miracles Jesus ever did. Most of them are impressive, but this just stands out with some of the big ones.

skepticism. How does it hit you? What's your reaction? One possible reaction is skepticism.

I don't know that it'll be well represented in this room, but if this just sounds too amazing to true, I want to just give you some thoughts. The alternative to believing that this truly happened is that Jesus walked on the water, is that the disciples just made this up.

Right out of thin air. And if they did just make this up, along with all the other miracles that Jesus did, why did almost all of them still choose to die for Jesus if they knew that he was a fraud?

that this was all a fabrication, that there was no walking on the water and getting into the boat? Why would they die for him? Why would they choose to suffer as they did?

[24 : 50] I mean, you might say that people die for religious zeal all the time. Look at suicide bombers. But the big difference is that they die for what they believe to be true, for the reward that they believe that they will receive for doing it.

But if this story and all the miracles of Jesus, his resurrection from the dead, if all of that was just fabricated by the twelve disciples, then they knew it wasn't true. Why would they willingly choose to be executed for what they knew was a lie?

Hashem, give me a reason. I haven't heard a good one yet. if it's for any earthly profit or gain, even for their families. I mean, they could have had plenty of that, probably, just by putting up their hand and saying, I'm willing to testify that Jesus was a fraud, and that we made it all up.

And yet, none of them did that. Not one of them. The only other possibility to consider, briefly, is that Jesus was a masterful deceiver.

that somehow he hoodwinked, he tricked his twelve disciples along with all the crowds, but even that doesn't stand to reason. I mean, they traveled with him constantly.

[26 : 12] How do you feed five thousand people with a boy's lunch in the middle of nowhere, and not have your disciples in on the trick? It just doesn't add up. How do you convince twelve grown men, some of whom are fishermen, and familiar with the sea, how do you convince them that you are walking on a lake, out to them, and then get into the boat?

You can't. Peter gives the greatest test of all to Jesus right in the middle of that moment. He almost essentially just asks him to prove that it's you by calling me to come out to you.

And maybe he was asking for Jesus to call him by name, just as a test, you know, do you know who I am? And Jesus does. And Peter himself walked on the water, and the other disciples saw it for a bit before Jesus pulled him up and hauled him the rest of the way back into the boat.

There's just no way that any mere man could fool twelve guys in a boat in the middle of a lake like that. There's only one reasonable explanation for this eyewitness account of the disciples, and that's that it truly happened, just like they say it did, which means that Jesus is who he has been

claiming to be.

The disciples came to the right conclusion for the first time that night. Jesus is no ordinary man. He's not just the prophet who speaks for God.

[27 : 51] He's not just the Messiah, God's chosen king. He is the divine son of God, the father who he has been claiming to be back in John chapter 5.

He is the one, as he said, who has been given authority by God to judge the world and to grant eternal life to those who believe.

He's the one who will someday call all people, the righteous and the wicked, out of their graves to that moment of final judgment. Those are the things Jesus said back in John chapter 5.

This is the sign that confirms that yes, he is that son of God. They worshipped him in the boat that night.

They confessed that they believe him to be the son of God. What's your reaction? what's your response?

[28 : 54] There's a reason why I gather, why I come here, why I serve here every Sunday morning. I come to worship Jesus, the son of God, because he alone does things like this, walking on the water.

Great signs that show that he is the light and the life and the hope of the world sent from the Father. Do you believe that?

Father in heaven, please press the reality of these moments into our hearts again. Fill us with wonder. Lord Jesus, may we worship you as you deserve.

Not just here in church with our songs, but also throughout the day, throughout the week with our whole lives. You are worthy of it.

Amen. Amen.