

Caleb Evans (14)

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Preacher: Fr. Caleb Evans

[0:00] But immediately he spoke to them and said, Take heart and desire, do not be afraid. And he got into the boat with them and the wind ceased.

! In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen. Alright, so I am about to commit what some might consider a grave sin.

I am about to begin a sermon with a joke. Yeah. I'm not, however, going to commit the grave sin of family to cite my source. I've heard this joke in various forms through the years, but I got this version from the great theologians at Comedy Central.

So here goes. A priest, a Baptist preacher, and a rabbi are fishing on a lake. The preacher has to use the bathroom, so he walks across the water, goes to the restroom, and walks back.

Then the rabbi has to go, so he walks across the water, goes to the restroom, and walks back. And then the priest has to go, but when he gets out, he falls into the water. He swims back, he gets back into the boat, he says, God, let me walk across the water.

[1:19] He tries again, and he falls into the water. He swims back, he tries again, and falls again. The preacher leans over to the rabbi and asks him, Do you think we should tell him where the stepping stones are?

Now, why did I start with this joke? I assure you there is a method to the madness this morning. My point is basically this. It is really, really unusual for someone to walk on the water. Have you tried it lately? No. Well, if that starts happening, it's going to be a little bit of a shock.

And it should be a shock. That's not something that happens. I haven't walked on water recently, right? What kind of person can walk on water?

Well, let's think of it this way. What happens to you? Say you're out on the water in a boat, and you step off the side of the boat. What happens? You sink.

[2:23] Yeah. Why? Because you do not have power over the laws of nature. They have power over you. But Jesus does have power over the laws of nature.

What does that say about him? That's what I want us to consider this morning, along with what all of that means in our lives. Now, it's no accident that the psalm appointed for this morning is Psalm 114, where we read a description of the Exodus when God saves his people from slavery in Egypt. Look there with me. Starting in verse 1, we read, When Israel went out from Egypt, the house of Jacob, from a people of strange language, Judah became his sanctuary, Israel his dominion. The sea looked and fled. When we think back on the biblical account of the Exodus, God was determined to save his people, and he wasn't going to let a little thing like the natural elements get in the way of it.

So what happens? God parts the Red Sea, doesn't he? The Israelites walked through on dry ground on their way to freedom. Now, of course, God worked through Moses to lead the people through, but Moses didn't exactly part the Red Sea on his own steam, did he?

[3:49] No, the power of God was on display. Power that is greater, even, than the mighty power of nature. Here's the first point I want us to get this morning.

In walking on the water and calming the storm, Jesus is making a statement. He is demonstrating his power. He is demonstrating his authority.

He is saying something about his identity. If he has the power and the authority to walk on water and calm storms, what does that say about him? What's the claim that Jesus is making by his very actions?

I'd suggest that it's this. Jesus is saying, I am acting with the authority of the God who parted the Red Sea.

I am acting with the authority of the God who turned back the Jordan. Jesus is demonstrating his claim that he is, in fact, the true and living God who has done these very things.

[4:58] I'd call walking on water and calming a storm a convincing demonstration, wouldn't you? None of us can control nature.

I can't make it rain. I can't make the rain stop. Can any of you? If I fall while I'm going down the stairs, which has happened to me many more times than I care to admit, I cannot keep myself from landing on my hindquarters because gravity is a force that's stronger than I am.

And I have had the bruises that show it. But Jesus, Jesus can make the storm stop. Jesus can step out onto the water and walk without sinking.

Because he is the one through whom everything that exists was created. How do you feel about that? On the one level, the authority of Jesus and the power of God is not looking like a tame thing this morning, is it?

A God who can turn back rivers, a God who can stop storms, who can walk on water, that is no joke. A bit of a personal aside, much to Mia's delight, Elaine has been reading through the Chronicles of Narnia with her lately.

[6:16] As I think of Jesus walking on the water, I can't help but think about the character of Aslan, whom C.S. Lewis intended to remind us of Jesus. It's no accident, of course, that Lewis chose a lion to represent Jesus in the stories.

At one point, a character asks if Aslan is safe. You remember that conversation? The answer is that, no, of course he's not safe, but he's good and he's the king.

Throughout the stories, we are reminded that Aslan is good, but that he is not a tame lion. We have before us this morning a reminder that Jesus is good, but he is not tame.

The psalmist gets at the reality that God is not tame or safe in this morning's psalm. So he reflects on the Exodus. What do we read in verses 7 and 8?

Tremble, O earth, at the presence of the Lord, at the presence of the God of Jacob, who turns the rock into a pool of water, the flint into a spring of water. The psalmist is talking about approaching the presence of God with fear and trembling.

[7:37] Why? Well, for an example, this God, the true and living God, can turn a rock into a pool of water. That is sovereignty and that is power.

I'm not surprised that those who looked at Jesus walking on the water were afraid. Now, even if they didn't think that they were looking at a ghost, I can understand their fear.

What kind of a person walks on water? What kind of power and authority is that? Isn't that enough to cause you to tremble? If being on the water during a bad storm makes you tremble, think about being in the presence of the one who can walk on it and calm it.

I think sometimes we are inclined to forget about the majesty and the authority of the Lord. Let's be clear. Jesus is holy. Jesus is just.

Jesus is coming back with authority to judge the living and the dead and He will reign as King forever and ever. Jesus is coming back with authority. Jesus is coming back with authority. Jesus is coming back with authority. Jesus is coming back with authority.

[8:48] Jesus is coming back with authority. Sometimes we forget that. It's not uncommon for people to say casually, only God can judge me. The truth is that He's going to and there is absolutely nothing casual about it.

Because this Jesus, who has the authority to walk on water, this Jesus who has the authority to calm storms, this Jesus has the authority to forgive sin or to pronounce righteous and perfect judgment on sin.

Where does that leave you and me? The psalmist this morning leaves us at trembling. The people who saw Jesus were trembling, were terrified, were astonished, were hardened, but that is not where Jesus intends to leave us.

They didn't listen to what Jesus said to them. And what He said to them is applicable to us. Will we listen to it this morning? What did Jesus say?

Take heart, it is I. Do not be afraid. Now you might be wondering, why shouldn't they be afraid?

Why shouldn't they have been utterly trembling at the presence of the Lord?

[10:10] I think the answer is this. That the one who has the authority to calm storms, the one who has the authority to judge, is also the one who came to seek and to save the lost.

The authority of Jesus shouldn't leave us at the point where we're trembling in fear. We should stand in awe of His authority and His lordship. But it's not meant simply to leave us trembling. No, the authority of Jesus should lead us to come to Him in faith and in repentance. How does Jesus demonstrate His authority? We certainly see examples of mastery over nature, like we see in our text today in the Gospels.

But even then, even today, we have a reminder not to be afraid. not to be afraid, but to trust Him. But it's also helpful to think of the other ways Jesus demonstrates His authority in the Gospels. Healing the sick, forgiving sins, raising the dead, rising from death in victory Himself. And then we consider that Jesus, who possessed all authority, rightly took the form of a servant.

[11:29] He endured death on a cross to put away our sins, to win eternal life and forgiveness for us. Isn't that amazing? What kind of authority does that?

I want us to see this morning if Jesus has the authority to walk on water, if Jesus has the authority to calm storms, if Jesus has the authority to heal the sick, if Jesus has the authority to forgive sin, if Jesus has the authority to raise the dead, then that means everything for you and for me.

I see the authority of Jesus on display, and I'm not simply left trembling. I'm certainly left in awe. I'm certainly driven to worship.

But I am not left simply with a fearful sense of dread. I'm not even left with a fearful sense of dread when I consider that I'm going to die or when I consider that Jesus is coming again to be our judge. Are you filled with dread at that thought? Because here is the thing. If Jesus has authority over nature, if Jesus has authority over this world, and we know Him as our Savior and as our Lord, we don't have to be afraid of anything.

[13:05] He is on the throne at this very moment, is He not? What in the world is there to be afraid of? Jesus Christ is Lord over all.

If Jesus has authority over death, if Jesus can raise the dead, if Jesus defeated death by dying and rising again on the third day, then we can trust that He has the authority and the power to save us from death and raise us from the dead, right?

If Jesus has authority to forgive sin, then we can look at our sins honestly.

And we can repent, and we can cry out to Him for mercy and confidence. Because if Jesus can forgive sin, then He can forgive my sins and your sins. If Jesus has put away the guilt of all who trust in Him by His death on the cross, then that guilt, no matter how great the guilt, is gone, and it's gone forever.

There is no sin that is so grave that the blood of Jesus Christ can't wash it away for good. So this morning, if you have sin weighing you down, if you have a guilty conscience, turn to Jesus and cry for mercy.

[14:26] He has the authority to forgive your sin, and He is ready and willing to do just that, and to change your life and your heart through the power of His Holy Spirit.

All who come to Christ in repentance and in faith, trusting in His death and resurrection, are not left simply trembling.

No. They hear the voice of Jesus telling them, Do not be afraid. No matter what comes, do not be afraid.

Jesus, the one who walked on water. Jesus, the one who calmed the storm. Jesus, the one who forgave sinners. Jesus, the one who raised the dead, is coming again.

He is coming in judgment, yes, but He is also coming to save those who are eagerly waiting for Him. And already, even now, Jesus Christ is exalted as head over all.

[15:40] Jesus Christ is your Lord and your Savior. There is no need to be afraid ever again. Do you hear His voice this morning?

That strong and loving voice telling you, It is I. Do not be afraid. My friends, hear His voice this morning calling to you through the Gospel. Hear His voice.

Listen and follow Him. The one who walked on water can forgive you, give you sin, can carry you through the storms of this life, and finally give you victory over the grave.

He has the authority to do all of those things. He has the mercy and the willingness to do them.

Praise the holy name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.