

Text: John 6:16-21

Title: "Believe because Jesus walked on water"

Time: 9/8/2024 am

Place: NBBC

Introduction: I would like to begin this morning by letting you know that I have walked on water. I think you probably have too. In the past, I have enjoyed watching Kevin's hockey team skate on water. I am referring, of course, to those times we have found ourselves on ice.

That we can walk on ice is one of the properties of water that make it amazingly suitable for the support of life on our planet. Isa. 45:18, "The Lord, who created the heavens (He is the God who formed the earth and made it, He established it and did not create it a waste place, but formed it to be inhabited)."

About 60% of our bodies is water. Nearly all biochemical reactions take place in water. The H₂O water-molecule is polar, meaning that it is negatively charged on one side and positively charged on the other side. This dual polarity makes water a universal solvent, allowing many things to dissolve in it. Without this property of water, neither our circulatory system nor our digestive system would work.

Roughly 70% of the surface of the earth is water. When water cools it becomes more and more dense until it reaches about 4 degrees Celsius. From there, as it approaches freezing, water becomes less and less dense as it expands. The denser 4 degrees Celsius water sinks, while the less dense frozen ice floats on top. So frozen lakes freeze on the top first while remaining liquid below, where all the aquatic life continues to thrive.

Other properties of water are uniquely designed. The viscosity of water is a finely tuned property that supports life. *Viscosity* refers to water's resistance to changing its shape. We might think of it as how thick it is, or how quickly it can pour or flow. Water's heat absorption properties, its ability to absorb heat

without changing temperatures, is important for the stability of temperatures on our planet. And the way the water cycle forms clouds keeps temperatures regulated and fields watered with rain. On hot days clouds shield from the sun. On cooler days, clouds condense into rain and snow and fall to the earth, allowing for more sunny days and warmer temperatures. And for our non-scientific artists here today, remember that clouds know how to paint beautiful sunrises and sunsets.

Because I know that water is so well designed for life, and because I believe that Jesus is the Creator of water, I do not find it strange at all that our Lord would decide to walk on liquid water on a warm spring evening or that His Apostle John tells us about the day that he and his fellow disciples saw Him do so. It was Passover time (v. 4), a night with a bright moon, and having seen Jesus do what He did, John and his fellow boat passengers could only conclude “Of a truth, thou art the Son of God” (Matt. 14:33).

Helping us to conclude the same is the purpose of the passage before us this morning. John’s purpose in writing is that we, his readers, would believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and believing have life in His name (John 20:31). John tells us simply that we must believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and believing have life in His name, because Jesus walked on water.

As Jesus walks on water, He teaches His disciples three lessons I would like us as their fellow disciples to learn this morning.

I. Run away, do not walk, from popular false-views of Jesus (vv. 15-17; Matt. 14:22, Mark 6:45).

Illustration: Last Sunday the *New York Post* carried a story about the rock band, 3 Doors Down. The article said that they paused a recent show to share “the love of Jesus” with their audience. Introducing their song, “Away from the Sun,” lead singer Brad Arnold shared this with his fans:

“I feel like I can identify with this song more than most of our songs. This world surrounds us with a message that we’ll never be good enough, we’ll never be strong enough, we’ll never be beautiful enough, we’ll never be rich enough. Whatever the case may be. Certainly, that we’ll never win. Social media surrounds us with those messages all the time. It’s driven down our throats every day, that we’ll never be good enough and that nobody really, really loves us.

“You are loved. You are enough, and you will win. Not only can you win, but you will win. You’ll always be enough for one reason. And that’s because Jesus Christ loves you.

“Jesus Christ loves you so much that he made you just the way you are, just the way you’re standing there right now. He also loves you to let you know that you’re not complete. I promise you there’s more, and you will win. I failed all day today. You failed today. But you’re still the one that Jesus loves.”

He then led the crowd in a chant of “I am the one Jesus loves,” before launching into the rest of his performance [nypost.com/2024/09/01/entertainment/3-doors-down-lead-singer-stops-show-to-share-message-of-christian-faith-you-are-loved].

Application: The gospel of Jesus Christ is the power of God unto salvation, and it says that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures. The Bible tells us that the true Christian gospel begins with, “All have sinned and come short of the glory of God” and “the wages of sin is death.” In other words, no one is good, let alone good enough.

It is a false gospel that begins with, “You are enough, and you will win.” Yes, it is true that Jesus loves sinners, but He saves sinners like the publican of Luke 18, who would not lift up his eyes to heaven, but beat upon his breast and prayed, “God, be merciful to me the sinner.” It was the Pharisee who chanted about how much God loved him and why. Jesus said the

publican went down to his house justified, not the Pharisee, and this is why defending the true gospel is so very important.

On Thursday evening we read some wonderful good news about the good news from our missionary/evangelists, the Champeons. Here is that story:

“Grace got married at age 14, and became a mother of two soon after. Grace – like so many Middle Eastern women we’ve interviewed – suffered physical abuse, endured the humiliation of an unfaithful husband, and finally fled to save her life. Because of her divorce, her family disowned her, treating her with disdain and disrespect. She spent ten years living on the fringes of life, cleaning houses, begging, and doing anything she could to keep body and soul together.

“Finally, she met and married Barad, a kind man who loved her and agreed to be a father to her children. But Grace’s soul was still empty. Barad had become involved with some family members translating unfoldingWord® Open Bible Stories. Worried that Grace might accidentally betray their work to the authorities, Barad wouldn’t allow her into the room when he met with other translators. But Grace is not so quickly stifled. She sat by the closed door listening with every inch of her being. That’s when she heard Jesus’ name.

“‘The first time I heard the name of Jesus, my soul became calm. I heard the name of Jesus, and I was filled with Joy!’ Soon, it was impossible to keep Grace out of the translation project. Whenever she heard the team struggling with the right word for the translation, she would shout it through the door! Finally, the team leader said to Barad, ‘Just let her in. She needs to be part of this.’

“‘It wasn’t a particular verse or story,’ says Grace. ‘It was the message I kept hearing that Jesus Christ is love, that he is purity, that he loves the sinner, and he takes away sins. This was new to me, and I wanted it! I always wanted to get clean from

the inside out, but I didn't know how. That's what touched me." That is what touched the publican of Luke 18 as well.

False gospels always utilize glorious truth, like "Jesus loves you," to help promote falsehoods, like "you are good enough." In our passage, the glorious truth is that Jesus is the Christ, the Messiah, and as such a King who should rule as King, and yet that gospel truth was put in the service of a popular political agenda that was against God's will (v. 15).

Both Matthew and Mark tell us that Jesus had to compel or force His disciples to get into the boat and leave this scene. Leaving at that opportune moment seemed a fool's errand. But instead of embracing this popular movement to make Jesus King, Jesus forces His disciples to run, not walk, away from this false view. He withdrew into the mountains to pray. We need to do the same when people popular with the world tell us that we are good enough because Jesus loves us. Run away, do not walk, from the world's popular false-views of Jesus.

II. Have courage, do not fear, for Jesus is who He is (vv. 18-20).

Illustration: Last month off the coast of Rye, two men and their boat were capsized when a big humpback whale jumped on their boat. The incident was captured on video by a neighboring boat, and the young man who witnessed the event was visibly shaken by what he had just seen. He and his brother were able to rescue the men and their boat from the water, and they told reporters that the two passengers who were capsized looked like they were in shock.

Application: Our passage is about men in a boat who are in shock (v. 19b). We learn that the sea of Galilee literally awakened, as if from sleep, due to a strong wind, such that the men had a difficult time steering their boat. Some were fishermen, but men like the former tax collector Matthew, whose account of this incident has the most detail, must have been somewhat

frightened by the potential for shipwreck or capsize. We do not know whether Matthew or the others knew how to swim.

And yet, what we do know is that none of these passages tell us that the men feared capsizing, or the wind, or the water. They do so on a different occasion, but not here. Here it is clear that the fear in these men happened when they saw Jesus walking on the dimly moonlit water's surface. The feared not what, but Whom. They feared Jesus, evidently not knowing it was He.

It was He, who had sent them on their way into the storm. It was He, who had just fed 5,000 families with five barley loaves and two portions of sardines. It was He, whom the winds and the waves always obey. And it was He, who had called them to be His disciples, who loved them in spite of their sins, who would go to the cross to die for those sins, and who would rise again so that they could live eternally.

And so Jesus simply says, *"It is I (I am Me) - do not be afraid."* When we face the storms of life, we need not fear the storms, and we must resist the temptation to fear Jesus, whom we often blame for allowing the storm to hit us. Jesus owns this responsibility gladly, but because Jesus is Jesus, always in control, and always the One who loved us and who gave Himself for us, we need not be afraid, neither of the storm, nor of Him. Have courage, do not fear, because Jesus is who He is.

III. Bring Jesus along, do not go alone, and you will get where you need to go (v. 21).

Application: Our Gospels are independent accounts of some of the same historical events. Each relays its history according to its author's evangelistic purpose.

Interestingly, while Matthew, Mark, and John all tell us of Jesus walking on the water, only Matthew mentions that Peter too got out of the boat for a bit and walked on the water before sinking in fear, then to be helped into the boat by the Lord.

Peter likely helped Mark write his Gospel, which may explain Mark not including the Peter-details out of personal modesty. Conversely, Matthew may have included the Peter accomplishment, because it fits his purpose to convince a Jewish church that it always had been God's purpose to save Gentiles through the Messiah. Peter learned that lesson in Acts 10 in ministry to Cornelius and gave testimony to what he had learned at the Jerusalem Council. He was at the center of the controversy. It would not have hurt Matthew's cause in this regard to remind his Jewish readers that it was this same Peter who walked on water a few steps with the Lord.

In our account this morning, John also omits the details about Peter, probably because in the end this account is really all about the Lord. He is not interested in our believing anything about Peter. He wants us to believe something about Jesus. He wants us to understand that if we have a boat, we need to receive Jesus into it. Only John tells us about this second miracle, that as soon as Jesus got into the boat, the boat instantly traveled the other 3 or 4 miles to the desired shore.

The miracle Jesus performs illustrates spiritual truth. Some of us will be in a boat, some in a school, some in a field, some in a home. Whatever we find ourselves in today, we need to receive Jesus to accompany us there. If we bring Jesus along each day, if we do not try to go it alone, we will get to where we really need to go. Prov. 3:5-6, "Trust in the Lord with all thine heart, and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct thy paths." Each day's destination will be successfully completed if we remember who Jesus is and that we can do nothing without Him. We can do all things through Christ who strengthens us (Phil. 4:13).

Conclusion: This is the second time in John's Gospel that Jesus identifies Himself with the simple phrase, *I am* ("It is I" is literally, "I am," *ego eimi* in Greek). The first was to the Samaritan woman, who was wondering who the Christ was in John 4:26.

The phrase is an echo of Jehovah's self-identification to Moses at the burning bush of Exodus 3. Moses asked God what His name was. God said, "I am that I am."

John's Gospel will go on to tell us more about the importance of Jesus's reference to Himself as "I am." Jesus will say, "I am the bread of life" (6:35), "I am the light of the world" (8:12), "I am one who bears witness of Myself" (8:18), "I am the door of the sheep" (10:7), "I am the good shepherd" (10:11), "I am the resurrection and the life" (11:25), and "I am the way, the truth, and the life; no man comes unto the Father but by Me" (14:6).

Jesus is who He is, the Christ, the Son God. To each of us this morning, Jesus says what He told His disciples, "I am *Me*; do not be afraid." Will we believe Him? Believing Him, will we run, not walk, from false views of Him? Will we have courage instead of fear as we sail through the storm? Will we bring Him along each day, in the boat, in the shop, in the barn, in the home? Or will we try to go it alone?

"A man came—I think it was actually in Philadelphia—on one occasion to the great George Whitefield and asked if he might print his sermons. Whitefield gave this reply; he said, 'Well, I have no inherent objection, if you like, but you will never be able to put on the printed page the lightning and the thunder.' That is the distinction—the sermon, and the 'lightning and the thunder.' To Whitefield this was of very great importance, and it should be of very great importance to all preachers, as I hope to show. You can put the sermon into print, but not the lightning and the thunder. That comes into the act of preaching and cannot be conveyed by cold print. Indeed it almost baffles the descriptive powers of the best reporters."

—David Martin Lloyd-Jones,

Preachers and Preaching