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“I Need a Miracle”

Mark 6:45-56

Pastor Wayne Puls, Senior Pastor at Hope Lutheran Church

We’re looking this month at just three of the many, many miracle stories of Jesus from the pages of the New Testament. Two weeks ago, the healing of the blind man; last week, the miracle of the loaves and fishes; and today, one of my favorite miracle stories, Jesus walking on the water. Last night I baptized a little child in the font, and you saw Pastor Lew splashing around in the the kiddie pool. But none of us can actually walk on water, can we? In today’s miracle story, though, we see how Jesus – our hero, our Savior, our God – did exactly that.

So let’s *dive right in* to the trickiest part of our story. Look at verse 48. The disciples are out there on the lake rowing a boat, straining against the wind for hours, barely making any progress. They’re not in any real danger. They’re just not getting anywhere. Jesus, from the shore, can see their problem. So Jesus “came to them,” it says, “walking on the sea.”

And then we read these strange words: “He meant to *pass by them*.” Now, what is that? These poor guys are exhausted from hours of rowing, and Jesus is going to just *pass by them*? A practical joke? A test of faith?

No, Jesus had an excellent reason for passing by them. You see, in the Old Testament part of our Bible, there are some memorable instances where God makes a temporary, striking appearance before his people, *passing by them* in visible form. We call this an epiphany, a manifestation or revelation of God.

In Exodus 33, the worn-out, frustrated Moses is up on Mount Sinai, and he asks God to show him his glory. God responds by passing before him (vs. 17-23) and proclaiming his omnipotent identity.

In 1 Kings 19, the Lord God tells his discouraged, exhausted prophet Elijah to stand on the mountain. “And behold,” it says, “the Lord passed by” (v. 11).

In Job 9, the forlorn Job speaks of his mighty, miraculous God “who alone stretched out the heavens and trampled the waves of the sea” (v. 8); but then Job admits, “Behold, he passes by me, and I see him not; he moves on, but I perceive him not” (v. 11).

And throughout the Old Testament, the mighty Lord God is often described as walking on the waters of the deep, controlling the waves, setting the boundaries of the oceans, and even parting the seas to save his people.

So when Jesus, in Mark 6, comes striding across the lake and means to *pass by* his disciples, he’s not just ignoring them, or teasing them. What Jesus wants is for those men to have an epiphany. He wants them to see him as God! Jesus means for his followers to recognize at last that he is a divine being, and to be reassured in their time of distress.

You see, these men still didn’t get who he was. They had already witnessed many of his miracles. They had been in a boat with him one other time on those very waters during a storm, and Jesus had calmed the seas and stilled the storm. But still they didn’t get it! Still they didn’t quite believe. Still the disciples didn’t fully trust that Jesus was truly God. They weren’t yet confident that the power of almighty God was right there with them, or that Jesus’ love and friendship for them was God’s love and friendship for them.

Sounds kind of familiar, doesn't it? Aren't we modern-day Christians so very much like those disciples in the boat? We read about Jesus, and talk about his divinity. We even come to church to worship him. But do we live our lives day to day with a full, complete trust that he really has the final say, that he really will provide for us no matter what? Do we actually say, "Jesus, I'm going to trust your word, and follow your ways even when the world is tempting me and pulling me in a completely different direction?"

Many are the times in life when we, like the disciples in our story, face adversity, feel separated from Jesus, and end up frustrated because we're just not getting anywhere. Maybe it's a marriage problem that just won't go away, or a broken relationship that's not getting better. Maybe it's a health concern that's lingering, or a season of grief that's prolonged, or a never-ending anxiety for the safety and well-being of our nation and our community.

"Lord, I need a miracle," we sometimes pray. But do we really believe that God is present? Are you truly convinced that your God is all-powerful? Do you have the assurance today in your heart that your Lord and Savior truly knows best for you?

Jesus wants to give you divine reassurance today! Jesus wants to give you an epiphany, to help you realize who he truly is and what he truly means for your life. He is God! He is present! He is all-powerful! He does know best!

Yes, Jesus knows your needs, whatever they may be. Yes, he sees your distress. Yes, he's very aware of the hurts and the heartaches you're dealing with today.

And what a miracle of grace it is that, no matter where you are in life, Jesus is walking on the waters toward you. No matter what trouble you're in today, no matter what headwinds you're facing, Jesus is walking toward you. No matter how you got to that place you're in, no matter what mistakes you've made, no matter how faithful or unfaithful you've been to him, Jesus is walking to you.

He's not turning his back on you. He's not sitting around waiting for you to make the first move to come to him. Jesus, in a miracle of grace, is walking to you with divine love, divine forgiveness, divine guidance, divine help.

I love how this story turns out. Jesus wants his disciples to be reassured when they see him passing by; but, instead, they're freaked out. They see only a ghost and a phantasm. Their fears and apprehensions overwhelm their faith. They're not ready, still.

So Jesus comes to them, all the way. He doesn't just pass by them. He gets into the boat with them, the wind ceases, and he finishes the journey with his friends.

And so he will with you and me. We may not see him, visibly, coming to us. And the image of Pastor Lew trying to walk on the waters of our pool may not give you divine reassurance. But be assured of this: Jesus is here! Trust him. He is God! Get to know him, and trust him, in your life. Jesus is all-powerful, and he does know best! Trust him today, wherever you may be on your life's journey. Amen.