

---

# MIRACLES | Walking on Water

Rob Rogers      May 16, 2021

---

## Introduction

A few weeks back, Pastor Steve had a great message on how we can survive life's storms.

**Today**, we're going to be looking at another miracle that involves a storm. It reveals an enormous amount about God, and about what it means to be people of faith.

### John 6:16-21

When evening came, His disciples went down to the sea, <sup>17</sup> got into a boat, and started across the sea to Capernaum. It was now dark, and Jesus had not yet come to them. <sup>18</sup> The sea became rough because a strong wind was blowing. <sup>19</sup> When they had rowed about three or four miles, they saw Jesus walking on the sea and coming near the boat, and they were frightened. <sup>20</sup> But He said to them, **"It is I; do not be afraid."** <sup>21</sup> Then they were glad to take Him into the boat, and immediately the boat was at the land to which they were going.

### THE ILLUSION OF CONTROL THE BLESSING OF CHAOS THE CALL TO COURAGE

---

## The Illusion of Control

One thing that I really missed about living in this area during our time in the Pacific Northwest, was thunderstorms... there's something so ominous, powerful, and intriguing — simultaneously — terrifying about them.

Throughout history, different cultures have tried to explain what a raging thunderstorm meant... what caused it? Why did lightning strike certain areas and not other places. Both Greeks and Romans believed that any location struck by lightning was sacred, and they would build temples to try to appease the anger of the gods to prevent storms from occurring in the future.

**They did with literal storms what we try to do with figurative storms.**

So much of our life is spent on controlling or protecting ourselves from storms. Putting up buffers between ourselves and unpredictable storms of life... this is why insurance exists! We're trying to protect and distance ourselves from hardship and suffering...if we're not careful, we can find ourselves frantic, panicked, absolutely filled with fear about what we can't see coming, what we can't predict.

*Who could have predicted that a ransomware attack would shut down a major oil pipeline this past week?*

*One thing this last year has revealed — is that life is unpredictable — that there are certain things we have some level of control over — but the majority of life is outside our ability to control — and we're infinitely more fragile than we'd like to admit.*

### **James 4:13-16**

Come now, you who say, “Today or tomorrow we will go into such and such a town and spend a year there and trade and make a profit”— <sup>14</sup>yet you do not know what tomorrow will bring. What is your life? For you are a mist that appears for a little time and then vanishes.

### **Psalm 103:15-16**

The life of mortals is like grass, they flourish like a flower of the field; <sup>16</sup> the wind blows over it and it is gone, and its place remembers it no more.

**In these verses God is inviting us to see and accept the reality that we live in a world that we can't predict or control.**

*This passage doesn't say that the disciples were terrified because of the storm. They were terrified — when they saw Jesus. They were familiar with the sea and storms. But in this moment, they realize that they're in the presence of something supernatural, transcendent, something HOLY.*

In other accounts of this story, it says that they thought he was a ghost. Then Jesus speaks to them and says:

### **John 6:20**

**“It is I; do not be afraid.”**

Jesus actually didn't say, “It is I.” That's the way the translators wrote it, because grammatically it sounded better. But what Jesus said was:

**“I AM”**

**The same person that revealed Himself to Moses in the burning bush in Exodus 3 — is the same person that is walking on water in John 6.** *“I'm God. You've never seen anyone else like Me. I'm holy. I'm perfect. I'm eternal. I need nothing. I'm dependent on nothing. I'm the eternal, transcendent God of the universe.”*

At the beginning of the twentieth century, Rudolf Otto wrote a book called *The Idea of the Holy*, and he noted in all religions, men and women, when they get into the presence of the supernatural, have an ambivalent reaction. It's an approach-avoidance reaction. It means on the one hand there's an attraction, and on the other hand there's a repulsion. On the one hand they're attracted, but on the other hand they're terrified. <sup>1</sup>

*When we get near the presence of someone holy, it's like being awakened when you're sleepwalking. It's terrifying. We sense our weakness. We sense our dependence, and we don't want to believe it.*

Many people want to associate themselves with God, or even with Jesus Christ... but when we truly get near Him, we get scared — because we realize we can't control Him.

*And if we can't control Him, and we give ourselves to Him — we lose control of ourselves — and that's terrifying to us.*

- Because we say, “Maybe he'll ask me to do something I don't want to do.
- Maybe He'll send me to Africa... Maybe he'll embarrass me.
- What if I have to suffer?

---

<sup>1</sup> Otto, Rudolf, *The Idea of the Holy* (Ravenio Books, 1924)

- What if he doesn't make all my dreams come true?
- What if he disappoints me?"

*If we're honest, many of us are saying, "Yes! I want God — but I also want control of my life. On the one hand you say, "I want him." But on the other hand, you say, "How do I keep control of my life?" And this is the problem — because you can't have both.*

## **The Blessing of the Chaos**

Look at the parable of the men who built two houses.

### **Matthew 7:24-27**

*"Everyone then who hears these words of Mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock. <sup>25</sup> And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on the rock. <sup>26</sup> And everyone who hears these words of Mine and does not do them will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand. <sup>27</sup> And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell, and great was the fall of it."*

Have you ever driven through a neighborhood after a tornado? It's devastating. Debris is everywhere... the destructive nature of it is other-worldly.

**What do the storms do in this parable?** The storms of this parable, and tornadoes, **and the storms of life** do that same exact thing — **they reveal what's true. They expose the foundation.** They reveal what you're clinging to for your life raft... as your salvation.

### **When the storms come into your life... what is your default response?**

*Do you think? Oh, It's okay...*

- I've got money in the bank.
- Or at least I have romance.
- Or at least my children love me.
- At least I have my reputation.
- At least I'm successful.

### **What life raft do you cling to? What do you comfort yourself with when the storms come? Whatever that is, it's revealing something that maybe God wants to change in you.**

- if you build your life on beauty, there's the storm of aging.
- if you build your life on your wealth, there's the storm of recession
- or in success, there's the storm of failure.
- if you build your life on love, there's the storm of rejection and abandonment

*What life raft are you clinging to in life's storms? Because the blessing of the storms — is that it exposes what's true — what's really in your heart. What you really think, what you really believe. Storms often reveal the inadequacy of whatever life raft you're clinging to, whatever control you're trying to exercise over your life.*

Matthew's account it gives the story a bit more detail.

## Matthew 14:22-25

Immediately He made the disciples get into the boat and go before Him to the other side, while He dismissed the crowds. <sup>23</sup> And after He had dismissed the crowds, He went up on the mountain by Himself to pray. When evening came, He was there alone, <sup>24</sup> but the boat by this time was a long way from the land, beaten by the waves, for the wind was against them. <sup>25</sup> And in the fourth watch of the night He came to them, walking on the sea.

*It says that Jesus MADE the disciples get into the boat. What this tells us is that...*

### Sometimes Jesus sends you into the storm.

Not as punishment... but as an opportunity.

Because he wants to teach you... to grow you... to help you learn how to trust.

**Have you have learned lessons you'll never forget in the middle of a storm?** Humans don't really learn a whole lot when we're comfortable.

#### If you're in the storm now, ask:

*What is God teaching me?*

*What is He saying to me?*

*How is He growing me?*

*And am I fighting against Him or cooperating with Him?*

*What is the storm revealing and exposing in you?*

*What does God want to do about those things?*

---

## The Call to Courage

*A few weeks ago, Pastor Steve preached on another storm that the disciples were going through. What did Jesus do? He woke up from his nap and said to the wind and waves, "Peace, Be Still." But the disciples were terrified, and He stopped the storm. Sometimes God does that. We say, "God make it stop," and He does.*

But in this particular storm — Jesus doesn't do that.

### Matthew 14:28-31

And Peter answered Him, "Lord, if it is you, command me to come to you on the water." <sup>29</sup> He said, "Come." So Peter got out of the boat and walked on the water and came to Jesus. <sup>30</sup> But when he saw the wind, he was afraid, and beginning to sink he cried out, "Lord, save me." <sup>31</sup> Jesus immediately reached out His hand and took hold of him, saying to him, "O you of little faith, why did you doubt?"

- In both Mark's and Matthew's account it tells us that Peter got out of the boat, and, as long as he keeps his eyes on Jesus, Peter has power over the storm. He defies the laws of nature and the natural order.

#### What does this mean?

It means that —

**sometimes Jesus gets rid of storms,  
sometimes he calms the storms in your life  
and other times he says—**

- *"No, I'm not getting rid of the storm — I'm going to **call you to courage in the midst of the storm.***
- *I'm not going to stop the storm — I'm going to **raise your level of faith to meet the storm.***
- *I'm going to help you **TRUST ME in the MIDST of the storm.***
- *I'm going to show you how **walk THROUGH the storm — WALK OVER the storm...***

- *and if you'll just **keep your eyes on me you won't drown. You won't go under.***
- ***The storm, no matter how bad it gets, it won't overtake you.***
- *You won't be overcome by it, just keep your eyes on Me..."*

At this time in the service, a video of Randy Thompson is shown. A few years before Randy Thompson launched Celebrate Recovery here at Grace Chapel, he was in the middle of the biggest storm of his life. Randy's testimony is so beautiful because He didn't abandon God, He didn't blame God, He went to God and asked God to fill him with COURAGE! *"Help me not "Weenie out!" Don't let me throw in the towel. Help me cling to you. Keep my eyes on you! Help me to not become bitter and angry! Help me walk through this like a man of faith! Like a man who trusts you."*

**That's courage!**  
**That's walking on water!**  
**That's power over the storm!**  
**That's defying the laws of nature and the natural order!**

***Jesus Christ came, not that we might avoid the storms of life, but so that when the storms come, that we might learn to trust Him, and in so doing, we're made more and more into His image. When we trust Him, we become like Him.***

*After Jesus made them get into the boat...*

**Mark 6:47-48**

Later that night, the boat was in the middle of the lake, and He was alone on land. <sup>48</sup> **He saw** the disciples straining at the oars, because the wind was against them.

You know how you can have courage in the middle of your storm?  
 You know how you can trust God in the middle of your storm?  
 You know what gives you the ability to let go of whatever life raft you've been clinging to for security and comfort in life...

**What this passage tells is that —**

*just because you don't see Jesus in your storm — doesn't mean He doesn't see you  
 just because you can't see Him — doesn't mean He's not watching  
 when the time is right — in His perfect timing  
 He's going to walk right over that storm — and get you to the other side*

**Discussion Questions**

1. Is your "control over your life" more fragile that you'd like to admit? How?
2. What do you imagine the disciples thought when Jesus announced, "I AM"?
3. Can you have God, and also keep control of you own life?
4. When storms come into your life, what is your default response? What do you cling to?
5. Why would Jesus send you into the storm?
6. How does He handle each storm differently?
7. Are you in the middle of a storm right now?

# NOTES