

## WEDNESDAY BIBLE FELLOWSHIP

Christ Church, Crouch End Hill

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No: 84

"The fifth of the signs" -  
Jesus walks on water.

Brief Talk on John 6:16 - 21

**Read** 6:16 - 21

### **Introduction**

So, as we look at John's record of the miracle, we see the disciples in a great difficulty. They were obeying Jesus. He told them to go in the boat to the other side, and He made a promise to meet them. And Jesus fulfilled His promise in spite of all the natural obstacles in the way. The presence of Jesus was needed to help the disciples, and Jesus came, triumphing over all the limitations which sea and storm and distance could put upon Him. And Jesus helped the disciples to reach the goal they aimed to reach on the shore. If we accept and believe the first sign of John 2:1-11 that Jesus is Lord of **Nature** we will have no difficulty in also accepting John's account of Jesus walking on the water in John 6:15-21 as a miracle. All the forces of nature are under His control.

Before we consider the Significance of this fifth sign, we should note carefully that it was to the disciples of Jesus that this sign was given. It was given to those who had decided to follow Jesus even though they did not understand fully everything about him.

**Open:** What was one of your greatest childhood fears: Bugs? High places? Darkness? Water?

## Questions for discussion

1. On a dark and stormy night, weary from rowing and afraid of capsizing, how would you have reacted if you saw Jesus on the water? (b) When he climbed aboard?
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2. What did the disciples fail to see in the turning of water to wine and the feeding of the five thousand that could have helped them here?
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3. When storms of life whip up in your life, how do you respond?
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4. Does the fact that we are on a mission for Christ guarantee that we will not encounter difficulties and obstacles? How does this passage shed light on this question?
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## Comment

All the time the disciples struggled, Jesus watched over them. He watches over us at all times, and prays for us even when He seems distant. Jesus knew exactly what was going on, and He was monitoring their progress across the lake. He saw them straining at rowing, yet let them work at it for a good long time.

In this miracle, Jesus reassured the disciples at the precise point where they needed to be reassured. The disciples had just seen Jesus turn down an offer to be king; they might have thought that this was why He came and why they were following Him! Despite that disappointment, Jesus came to them full of majesty and power, reminding them that He is still quite in charge even though He won't receive a king's throne based on popular opinion.

5. (a) What difference should this sign make as we face stormy times in our lives? (b) What can you say about the strong wind that was blowing and the tempest that arose thereby rocking the boat in which the disciples were travelling (read Mark 6:48) but, on the other hand, was a walking surface for Jesus?
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### Comment

The Christian who understands the significance of this fifth sign has found in Jesus Christ a Guide, a Friend, a Helper, a constant Companion whose presence makes all the difference; the difference between struggling in the dark of futility and getting nowhere--and of finding life enriched, happy and purposeful, even as was the experience of the disciples on the sea of Galilee so long ago.

6. Read Isaiah 43: 2 and Matthew 28:19. What is your understanding of the promises God made to his people in those verses? How are these applicable to us?
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### Conclusion

Jesus' words in v. 20 are the key to understanding the miracle of 6:16-21. The words "**I am**", "**It is I**" (NIV); "do not be afraid", identify Jesus with the divine name "**I AM**". John is hereby portraying Jesus as speaking the way Yahweh speaks. These words are the words of comfort spoken to end the distress of God's people. (Isa. 43:1; 44:2, 8)

Jesus crossed the barrier of difficulty to help his disciples. We don't sense the same fear in the disciples as with the first time Jesus calmed the seas. Here they seemed simply frustrated, because they were doing what Jesus told them to do, but there were obstacles on the way. The disciples' frustration is evident in their lack of progress. Matthew 14:25 tells us that this happened in the fourth watch of the night, sometime between three and six in the morning. So, they rowed hard for perhaps six to eight hours, and were yet to get to the end of their journey because of the rough seas.

We will face trials when we set out to do what Jesus tells us to do. Jesus knows this. He understands it. We should never be deceived into thinking that if we were really right with God, everything in life would be easy. Sometimes, God tells us to do something and allows it to be hard as we do it.

However, Jesus watches jealously over us and He is always a help in time of need and he is the one who can take us to a safe haven. When Jesus came to the disciples during the storm, walking on the water, he told them not to be afraid.

We often face spiritual and emotional storms and feel tossed about like a small boat on a big lake. In spite of terrifying circumstances, if we trust our lives to Christ for his safe - keeping, he will give us peace in any storm. If the disciples had thought of all they had seen Jesus do, they could have accepted this miracle without any fear. But they did not expect Jesus to come. And were not prepared for his help. Faith is a mind-set that expects God to act as we show our dependence on his goodness.

The disciples' experience is a perfect picture of us when we try to do God's will, but forget to utilise resources that are available to us in Christ Jesus. Jesus provided reminders for them of His supernatural help. Undoubtedly, they took with them at least some of the twelve baskets of leftover bread (John 6:13), yet they were still shocked when the supernatural help came.

By bringing His supernatural help, Jesus was able to miraculously overcome every obstacle that frustrated the disciples. Jesus rescues the disciples from futility and shows them that he is a caring God and a present help in times of trouble.

In closing we shall sing the hymn:

"I need Thy presence every passing hour  
What but Thy grace can foil the tempter's power?  
Who like Thyself my guide and stay can be?  
Through cloud and sunshine, oh, abide with me!

I fear no foe, with Thee at hand to bless  
Ills have no weight, and tears no bitterness;  
Where is death's sting; where, grave, thy victory?  
I triumph still, if Thou abide with me."