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Lessons on the Water; Matt 14:22-33

GPBC

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Introduction – Just as we observed 5 lessons from the loaves and fish, so we will see 5 lessons on the water. Jesus orchestrates these times of learning. He gave the order for the crowds to stay when the disciples wanted to send them away; He had some lessons for the disciples. He sends the disciples ahead of Him in the boat; He has some lessons for the disciples.

Jesus has lessons for us as well. Good lessons. Sometimes hard lessons that produce good results. We are disciples, that means we are students, He is the Teacher; we are learners, He is the Master; we are followers, He is the Leader. Jesus teaches us today through Matthew's account of this miracle. He teaches us every time we study the word individually, as a family, as a small group, or as a corporate church body. Jesus teaches us through our circumstances in life as we are faced with either trusting in His Word or relying on another source. Jesus teaches us through the council of other godly people around us. Jesus teaches us through the nudging and convicting and prompting of the Spirit of God. Jesus is teaching. Are we learning? Well that's certainly not only for us as disciples today but also for the disciples in today's text.

- I. Jesus Speaks Peace to Our Fears (vv22-27)
 - a. Notice Jesus intentionally puts the disciples on a boat and sends them into troubled waters. I said last week that Jesus never practices social distancing, and in a sense, that is absolutely true. He promises us He will never leave us or forsake us, and indeed He dwells within us. We are never separated from our Savior.
 - i. But there are occasions when He may create an apparent distance, and when that occurs, we can be sure He's teaching us something and it's good.
 - b. Not only was there a distance created, but it wasn't smooth sailing was it? The sea was raging. The wind and the waves pounded their boat. The wind was against them.
 - i. Sometimes life feels that way doesn't it? It seems as if everything is against us. Nothing goes our way and everything is harder and more difficult than it could be. We tend to get

frustrated and stressed and weary, and we tend to forget if sailing was smooth yesterday and difficult today, maybe Jesus is teaching us something.

- ii. These disciples have been fighting the wind and waves all night. Jesus comes to them about 3 hours before dawn. So by this time they are soaked and tired. All their effort and rowing seems to be getting them nowhere. They are just trying to stay afloat.
- c. And then Jesus comes to them. Certainly not in their timing. They would have Jesus show up as soon as the first wave pounded the boat, but Jesus shows up right on time in His timing, after the hours of struggle. You see, Jesus is teaching them something just as Jesus is teaching us something when He shows up after our struggle.
- d. And boy did He ever show up! Not in another boat. Not on the shore ahead of them waiting for them to land – but walking on the water!
- e. That is scientifically impossible. That is in total contradiction to the laws of nature. It's precisely narratives such as this one that causes the atheist to dismiss the Bible. The stories seem too fanciful, too irrational. There is no way this can happen – unless – unless – the One walking on the water happens to be the One who created the water and has authority over every ounce and molecule of His creation! If you are God, you can walk anywhere you choose!
 - i. Remember back in Matt 8 Jesus spoke to the wind and the waves and the sea became calm. If He can quiet the sea; He can walk on it too!
- f. And that's the point – and that's the first lesson! Only God could do this, therefore, Jesus must be God!
- g. Now you may be thinking, why would Jesus need to teach the disciples He was God after just feeding the 5000 with one meal? Did they not fully appreciate and apprehend that He was God then? According to Mark's account, apparently not! Mark writes, "they did not understand about the loaves."
- h. You see after this episode they exclaim, "Truly you are the Son of God!" They should have exclaimed that when they took up the 12 baskets of fragments! But they didn't. That proclamation is missing from the loaves account.

- i. And we are just like them aren't we? Jesus has to teach us the same lessons over and over until it sinks in and we get it! How many times have you said, "I should've learned that by now!"
 - i. But notice – Jesus directly addresses them and their fear. "Take heart, it is I. Do not be afraid."
 - i. And when we are in the middle of everything against us, and when we are filled with fear, and when we are facing a global crisis, if we will listen closely to Jesus, He will directly address us and our fears as well. Take heart. Do not be afraid.
- II. Jesus Wills What He Commands When We Trust and Obey (vv28-29)
 - a. It's one thing for the Son of God to walk on water, it's quite another for Him to enable another to walk on water! That is even a greater miracle for Peter had not the power and authority within himself to walk on water, but if he would trust and obey Jesus, the power of God would be displayed through him.
 - b. Jesus said "Come." He commanded Peter to do what Peter in himself could never do – to walk to Him on water. It was the same with the loaves and fish. And Peter trusted and obeyed and came to Jesus on a liquid surface!
 - i. Oh dear friends we have yet to know the power of God at work in our lives if we would simply trust and obey, for He will what He commands when we trust and obey!
 - ii. Trust and obey for there's no other way to be happy in Jesus than to trust and obey. The same power that raised Jesus from the dead dwells within us as His people. Trust and obey and see the power of God at work within you!
 - c. I spoke of Augustine in the sermon this past Sunday evening. One of his famous lines, in speaking of our inability as sinners to come to God on our own and yet Jesus calls us to come to Him for salvation, Augustine said, "Lord command what you will and will what you command!"
- III. Our Faith Ebbs and Flows According to Our Focus (vv30-31)
 - a. There was Peter walking on the water, coming to Jesus, the power of God in full force in his life, and he took His eyes off Christ and began

to worry about his surroundings! And as soon as he did, he began to sink.

- b. Oh that hits close to home doesn't it? We've known the power of God in our salvation. We've known the power of God in answer to prayer. We've known the power of God through the ups and downs of life, and yet at times we still take our eyes off of our only source of strength and life and faith, and when our faith shrinks, we sink!
- c. The lesson is so clear – keep our focus on Christ not our circumstances.

IV. When Our Faith is Small Jesus Remains Faithful (vv30-31)

- a. Peter didn't have enough faith to stay afloat but he did have a small ember of faith to cry out to Jesus. He couldn't walk on water, but he could cry out to the only one who could save him!
- b. I don't know about you, but I needed that! My faith grows weak. My faith grows small. What a comfort to know that in my lowest times, when all I can do is cry out to Jesus that all I need to do is cry out to Jesus, and immediately He is there to lift us up out of our miry bog and set our feet upon a rock!
- c. Jesus does gently rebuke him, but He also walks with Peter back to the boat!

V. The Purpose of Jesus' Lessons is Worship (vv32-33)

- a. Those in the boat worshiped Him and they exclaimed, "Truly you are the Son of God!"
- b. And that my friends is the ultimate purpose in every lesson Jesus teaches us – that we may worship Him for who He is! The purpose was not to create a distance between them. The purpose was not to tire them out fighting against the waves. The purpose was not to frighten them. The purpose was not for Peter to feel like he was drowning. Those were the teaching tools. The purpose was worship!
- c. You see that's what we were created to do and that's where we find our greatest joy so that's what Jesus teaches us over and over again. To trust Him. To obey Him. To believe in Him. To learn His faithfulness. To learn His power. To experience His grace and mercy. All that we might worship Him as the Son of God!
- d. You can learn a lot from water, especially when you're sinking in it.

Conclusion – What is Jesus teaching you today? What is Jesus teaching all of us through this coronavirus crisis? Whatever He is teaching, we can be sure, it will lead us to worship!