

BELIEVE IN JESUS FOR ETERNAL LIFE NOT FOR BREAD**John 6:16-29****Facilitator: Rev. Darral Jeffrey**

Having told of the opening signs of Jesus' ministry in Galilee and having recounted one of Jesus' journeys to Jerusalem during this period, John next recalled two of the greatest wonders taking place at the close of Jesus' Galilea ministry. The feeding of the five thousand in the wilderness and Jesus' walking on the Sea of Galilee. Related to the feeding of the five thousand Jesus gave his famous Bread of life Discourse in Capernaum. The multiplication of the loaves is only one of many of the great miracles of Jesus recorded in the Gospels. The Synoptics indicate that following this miracle Jesus withdrew from public view in order to give the disciples unique instruction about his upcoming suffering and death in Jerusalem. The reason for crossing to the other side of the Sea of Gennesaret was simply to be alone with His disciples. The symbolism under the guise of a voyage, and its troubles and difficulties under the metaphor of storm and tempest, is especially natural to nations that are kindly to the water. I do not know that there is any instance, either in the Old or New Testament, of the use of that familiar metaphor; but the emblem of the sea as the symbol of trouble, unrest, rebellious power, is very familiar to the writers of the Old Testament.

John 6:16-29

Matthew and Mark tell us that after the feeding of the five thousand our Lord immediately told His disciples to get into the ship, and to pass over to the other side. John does not mention the immediacy of the disciples getting into the ship but John, in the previous chapter, supplies us with the reason for it. The preceding miracle had worked up the excitement of the mob to a very dangerous point. Crowds are always the same, and this crowd thought, as any other crowd anywhere and in any age would have done, that the prophet that could make bread at will was the kind of prophet whom they wanted. So they determined to take Him by force, and make Him a king; and Christ, seeing the danger and not desiring that His Kingdom should be furthered by such unclean hands and gross motives, determined to withdraw Himself into the loneliness of the bordering hills. It was wise to divide the little group so not to draw attention. It might lead some of the people, as we know it did, to follow the boat when they

found it was gone. It would save the Apostles from being affected by the coarse, enthusiasm of the crowd. The Apostles already believed that Jesus was the Messiah, but the Messiah of the Second Coming. They wanted a Messiah that would overcome the Romans and establish a Kingdom in Israel. That's why Peter rebuke Jesus when Jesus told him about His coming death and resurrection. That why James and John wanted to know who would sit on Jesus' right and left. They were looking for Him to bring the Kingdom into being right then. No wonder Jesus immediately removed them from this crowd.

It would also save them from revealing the place where He went to pray. It might enable Him to steal away more securely unobserved. So they are sent across to the other side of the lake, some five or six miles. An hour or two might have done it, but for some unknown reason they lingered. It could have been that they were thinking about the miracle they just witnessed so they were not really concerned when they would reach their destination. But suddenly one of the gusts of wind which are frequently found upon mountain lakes, especially towards nightfall, rose and soon became a gale with which they could not battle. John does not say how long it lasted, but the book of Mark says it was about the fourth watch of the night; that is between the hours of three and six in the morning of the subsequent day.

Storms come into our lives at the most inopportune time. And they usually come right after an uplifting spiritual moment. When you are thinking and really mediating upon the Word of God that you have just received, Satan brings a storm into your life to quench the Word that has been brought forth in your life. But God uses storms to build up our faith in the Lord and to strengthen our commitment to Him. When we are battered by the forces of darkness, the Holy Spirit will bring up passages like Psalm 46. God is our refuge and strength and ever present help in trouble. After Jesus was baptized the Holy Spirit led Him into the wilderness to face Satan. So storms are an integral part of a believer's life. You have either come out of a storm, you are in a storm, are you are about to enter a storm. But when we enter our storms we must remember that Jesus is always with us. The Apostles could not see the physical presence of the Lord, but they should have had faith in His words. In the book of Mark it says that Jesus told the Apostles to get into the boat and go on ahead of them to the other side.

They should have taken Jesus' words by faith that they would get to the other side. Instead of fearing they should have had faith. When the Lord tells us that we are going to get to

the other side, it makes no difference what happens from the time you launch to the time you land, the Lord said that you would get to the other side. So we shouldn't worry about the storms that arise around us. Faith casts our fear.

The Church has been operating in fear instead of faith. We would rather listen to the government than to listen to God. Jesus said I will never leave you or forsake you, but as soon as a storm comes, we get afraid. When they had rowed to about the middle of the lake, they see Jesus walking on the sea and drawing near unto the ship. They were about half-way across the lake. We do not know at what hour in the fourth watch the master came, but probably it was toward daybreak. Toiling had endured for a night, but joy and help should come with the morning.

If we look for a moment at this miraculous fact, we have a revelation here of Christ as the Lord of the material universe, a kingdom wider in its range and authority than that which the shouting crowd had sought to force upon Him. In doing these miraculous miracles, Jesus is telling us that He is restoring this power back to us. We all have the power to do just what Jesus did and Peter confirmed this by walking on the water. But faith and keeping our eyes on Jesus is the key to conquering the material universe. Adam was the first man to have authority over the world, but he lost it when he sinned. Jesus has come to reclaim that authority and give it back to man. Jesus' will sustained His material body on the tossing waves and it was a manifestation of the glory of Christ and of His power over the physical order of things. We have here a wonderful picture which is true for all ages of the mighty Christ. Jesus uses all the tumults and unrest the opposition and tempests which surround the ship that bears His followers, as the means of achieving His purposes. How often in the world's history has this scene repeated itself, and by a divine irony the enemies have become the helpers of Christ's cause, and what they plotted for destruction has turned out rather to the furtherance of the Gospel.

When they first saw Jesus walking on the sea, they did not know that it was Jesus but thought it was a spirit. John says that they were afraid. John does not relate that Peter walked on the water to go to Jesus. The purpose of John's Gospel is to reveal Jesus as the Son of God through His mighty signs. Jesus walked on the sea as if His feet had solid support. Yet the waves lashed high around Him and the wind blew with great force. Christ's calm majesty coupled with the miracle of walking on the water indicates His divine origin. According to Mark, Jesus

intended to pass by them. This may have been to give them opportunity to invite Him into boat. Because of His compassion for their fear, He spoke to them “It is I; be not afraid.” At this point Matthew records Peter’s desire to walk on the water as Jesus did. Fear dissipates when Jesus comes to us in our struggles. His words, “It is I,” are most assuring. Jesus’ words remove fear, and we become encouraged, like Peter, to undertake the impossible by relying on the Lord. Matthew records that Peter did walk on the water. Usually some criticize Peter for sinking and forget that he did what no other man has done. At first glance, the sign of walking on the sea may have little to do with Jesus’ previous sign of feeding the multitude, or of the following discourse on the bread of life. There is a connection, however, and it is provided by Jesus’ words I am.

These words are the divine revelation of who God is. This story, therefore, provides the corrective to the misunderstanding of the crowd who wanted to take Jesus by force and make Him king. Throughout the ministry of Jesus, the crowds wanted to see spectacular deeds and have their physical needs met. The crowds, however never understood that Jesus came not to entertain, nor to give physical water or bread; He wrought miracles so men might believe in Him as the Son of God. The crowds wanted to make Jesus king: Jesus wanted to be known as the I am. Four times in the remainder of this chapter Jesus refers to Himself as the I am. He is the Bread of Life; He is the Living Bread; He is the bread which has come down from heaven. Then they willingly received Him into the boat. No longer did they fear Him as a spirit, but they wanted Him to come aboard. Immediately indicates they had reached their destination. The last half of the trip was not accomplished by rowing, but by the divine action of Christ. John related the distance they had rowed. But as soon as Jesus was on board, the boat glided swiftly to shore. How much easier it is when you have Jesus in your life.