

Miracles of Jesus 12-06-10b

We resume our study now of the 13th miracle in our particular listing, the stilling of the storm. We spent the first session this morning looking at the background and the necessary context. These things are fresh in the minds of the disciples.

These parables dealing with the Word of God in its various aspects. How is it received? What is the larger design and purpose that it is part of? Is it going to always comport with human understanding and be consistent with human wisdom and human logic? Often it is counterintuitive. It is a wisdom that is higher than ours.

And we would expect the first to be greatest in the kingdom. And Jesus says, no, the last shall be first and the first shall be last. It is in dying to self that we become alive.

It is in denying ourselves that we gain everything. It is often a perception of opposites wherein lies the truth of God as opposed to the wisdom of men. The application, like the lamp, is related to purpose.

We've got to be sure that when we are applying the Word of God like a lamp, that we put it in the right place. There are wrong applications. You don't try to warm your bed on a cold night by sticking the lamp underneath it.

You don't light the lamp and then decide you don't want it to shine and throw a straw basket over it. This is not smart. And then finally, we recognize that the effectiveness and the power and the accomplishment of purpose and the fruitfulness of God's Word has been subordinated in this divine design, in the divine purpose, to human choice, human will, human volition.

It is not involuntary. It is not fate. It is not foreordained how God's power and God's truth is going to work itself out in our lives.

God has created the system, and God has invested it with power, and God has shown us how to plant a seed and how to harvest the seed and how to reap the benefits of His great design in the seed going into the ground. And as time passes, it grows, and you have the stalk and the ear and the head and all of the great benefits, but we have to find the proper place for human effort in God's plan and purpose. You can't go out there and get some pom-poms and jump up and down and cheer the seed to make it grow better.

You don't caress it and speak to it and sing to it and try to give it encouraging words as it's growing out of the ground. Where is the proper place for human effort? Human plants the seed, human reaps the seed. In between, you might do a little bit of weeding, but in the parable of the Lord Jesus, the man plants the seed and then goes away, and he wakes and sleeps and wakes and sleeps.

His days are spent doing other things. We have to recognize where our place is in the

great divine design, and we do not empower the Word. I do not make God's Word more powerful by a wonderfully effective presentation.

The best thing I can do is present it accurately and get out of the way of its power and its light. Present the Word. The Lord Jesus is the sower of the seed.

He is the author. He is the originator. It is His power.

It is His truth, and we are there at certain points, and this is where we express our volition. All of this is precursor now to chapter 4, verse 35, after He had given many such parables as they were able to hear. He's watching their response, watching what they can handle, what they can remember, and He gives them parables because that's what they are able to hear.

He can't give them straight truth. They can't take it. Now, He gives them what they need to hear, and He explains them to His disciples when they are alone.

We've seen the importance of that. Now, verse 35, on the same day when evening had come, He said to them, Now, evening, this is afternoon. Remember, the days work a little different in Israel in ancient times, and this is not as the sun is setting.

They're not setting out on a sea voyage in the dark. This is probably mid-afternoon. Evening is when the sun is past the meridian and is starting to descend.

Remember, it says that Jesus was crucified between the evenings, which is between 12 and 3 p.m., between the evenings. So, evening is afternoon in our parlance. So, when afternoon had come, He said to them, Let us cross over to the other side.

Now, I can tell you from my own experience, and you have probably had this as well, that if you spend several hours putting everything you have into presenting something and doing your best to get it across, looking into the eyes of your audience and seeing if it's making sense, explaining it, you might be tutoring someone, you might be teaching your child in homeschool, or you might be teaching someone else. It's tiring, isn't it? It is very exhausting. And the Lord Jesus, after an entire morning of teaching the crowds and then explaining to His disciples, and Thomas, you still have a question there? Let me go over that again.

So, He says, Let's get in the boat and go to the other side. Now, Jesus has a reason. He knows why He's going to the other side.

The disciples don't. Well, what's over there? He says, Let's go to the other side. So, when they had left the multitude, they took Him along in the boat as He was.

Why does it say they took Him along in the boat as He was? Isn't that an odd phrase? Couldn't the passage survive without it? Doesn't it sort of stick out? I mean, when did

Jesus not go somewhere as He was? And they took Him in the boat in a different guise. But what does it mean, they took Him in the boat as He was? It really puzzles me when I look at it. And I have to think that this is a reference to the fact that going across the lake in the afternoon, you figure, well, that maybe this is some kind of an overnight thing, right? The Sea of Galilee is no small body of water.

Have you ever seen pictures of it? There's people that have been there. I haven't. But Sea of Galilee, this is a pretty big lake.

And to get across it without a motor, sailing across, and it's already afternoon. So what this, I think, means is no preparation. He didn't pack an AWOL bag.

He didn't put in a change of clothes, and they didn't get together a bunch of meal stuff. They just get in the boat and go. This is sort of like what He told them to do when they went out to spread the gospel.

He sent the teams out and He said, don't take an extra bunch of stuff. Just go as you are. Don't take extra sandals.

Don't take an extra set. Just go. Just go.

And leave the provision in God's hands. You'll go to villages, and they either will or won't receive you. If they receive you, stay there till you leave.

Don't go from house to house. And if they don't receive you, shake the dust off and so on. Well, they just take Him as He is.

He just says, hey, we're in the boat. Let's go across the lake. And so they just go without preparation.

And this, by the way, just as a side note, if you get to a later trip across the lake after He has been talking about bread, and then they start thinking He's getting after us because we brought no bread, just think back to this episode. They just go as they are. And other little boats were also with Him.

This is an interesting detail that's often overlooked. There are other boats. This is a little flotilla that goes across.

And they're all tacking. They've got to kind of keep an eye on each other. They're starboard tack, port tack.

Standby to go about. You know, here they go. And unless they're going to run into each other, they've got to be watching each other.

This is a group going across. And a great windstorm arose and the waves beat into the boat so that it was already filling. He was in the stern, asleep on a pillow.

He probably didn't even move from where He had delivered His Bible class, His morning session. He probably just laid down and passed out because He was tired. He was in His humanity doing these things in His human capacity, sustained and empowered by God, the Holy Spirit.

And even in the power of the Spirit, you get tired. He was tested in all points like as we are. And there's nothing that will test your patience as when things go wrong and people start pestering you and you're really, really tired and trying to rest, which is part of this situation.

But when you picture this in your mind, and everybody knows this story, when you picture this in your mind, what do you picture in the storm? There's been illustrations in, you know, children's Bible story books and things. What do you picture? Black storm clouds and lightning. And don't you just picture sheets of rain and just a big thunderstorm, like right before a tornado in Oklahoma, it's just blowing every which way and everything is sopping wet.

And the disciples are there and the sheets are flying and there's water washing, you know, green water over the gunwales and everything. And you figure, how can Jesus possibly be asleep when it's, you know, just getting soaking wet? Pay attention to the details. What kind of storm is this? Read it again.

And a great thunderstorm arose and a great rainstorm arose. What is this? A great wind storm. A great wind storm arose and the waves beat into the boat so that it was already filling.

Now, when there is weather and you're on the sea, what do you do with the boat? In sailing days, when the weather gets bad, it's called running before the wind. The best way to operate is to get the wind astern and because what's happening is the waves are going to be perpendicular to the direction of wind, right? The waves are created by the wind blowing. It's just like you get a bowl of soup and you blow on it.

You make little perpendicular ripples, right? This is what the wind does to the sea. The wind is swooping down here. And this wind, by the way, is coming from, this is wind out of the Northwest.

North, Northwest. It is blowing. The wind is blowing.

And there are common storms of this nature on the Sea of Galilee, but it's blowing in the direction they are trying to go. So what do you do? You run before the wind. So when the water comes over the sides of the boat, where is it coming in? In the bow, right? Where is Jesus? In the stern.

So who's getting wet and who's staying dry? Guys in the front getting wet, trying to handle the sheets, trying to keep the thing before the wind, trying not to let anything

blow away. Jesus is in the rear with the gear, fast asleep. It's just windy.

The only water involved here is what's washing over the bow. Now, what time of day is it? Afternoon. Takes hours to get across the Sea of Galilee by sail.

Jesus wants to get over there for a purpose. So what's happening here? There is a storm of wind that is propelling these boats at extremely high speed in the direction that Jesus wants to go. And he's happy with that.

So he's asleep. Everything's fine. The disciples have never seen their boats go this fast across the Sea of Galilee, so fast that they're taking green water over the gunwales.

And they're nervous. They think, well, any wind like this, you know, the next thing that happens is everybody dies. But how are they going, you know, how are they going to get over there before dark? Jesus went as he was.

He didn't pack in overnight. He's not planning to be there overnight. Apparently.

But this is like the fastest trip across the Sea of Galilee ever made. There's just like angelic power just pushing these boats across. And they're just not used to going.

It's like speedboats, only the bow is dipping into these waves. And Jesus is asleep. It's, you know, everything's according to plan.

He's going where he needs to go. And the disciples are just in a panic. It's just freakish weather.

It's wind. It's wind and wave. And you'll remember that they say, what manner of man is this, that the wind and the... It doesn't say that the rain and the sea obey him, does it? They're not in danger of being flooded by a deluge from above.

It's wind. It's wind and wave. So he's asleep in the stern on a pillow.

And they awake him and say to him, Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing? Now, who's perishing? Look around the boat. We've got disciples in there. Look, Lord Thomas already got a big face full of water.

And, you know, we're trying to pump him out. We're trying to resuscitate him. He's drowned.

Here's Andrew and Bartholomew. We're just having to resuscitate. Look, people are dying right and left around here.

Do you not care that we are perishing? Who has perished? Nobody has perished. Nobody is perishing. Nobody's fallen overboard.

It's just a scary-looking situation. They're having to bail because of the speed at which

they're going through the water. They're taking water on board.

But there's plenty of guys. Disciples are there. They can bail.

But they think, you know, in their human wisdom, Now, let's stop right here. Because what should they be doing? We say, okay, so Jesus is going to rebuke them after he rebukes the wind and the sea. He says, why are you so fearful? How is it that you have no faith? So what have they done wrong? They're good sailors, lifetime on the Sea of Galilee, scary weather.

They wake up the Master. Do you not care that we perish? And he says two things. What are they doing and what are they not doing? There's one thing they're doing, and there's another thing they're not doing.

What are they doing? They are having fear. What are they not doing? They are not having faith. Supposed to have faith.

Instead, they have fear. Two things Jesus points out. Now, why all of our context? Why do we spend the whole first session on Jesus' morning teaching? Same day, right? On the same day, verse 35, circle it on the same day, teaching in the morning, test in the afternoon, teaching in the morning, testing in the afternoon.

Here's your pop quiz. Were you paying attention? Not only did you hear the parables, but you got a personal private session of interpretation from the Lord Jesus who explained all things to his disciples. Who should be the most ready of any human beings on earth to have faith? Now, how many of the parables dealt with seawater and wind and desperate nautical situations? Here's another great thing for us to observe.

People say, oh, you know, the Bible doesn't apply to my life. I mean, that was ancient times, a bunch of goat herds and sheep watchers and whatnot out there in an agrarian, ancient, dusty. They didn't know 1% of what we know today, and they didn't have iPods and telephones and cars and drugs and teenage pregnancy and administrations and economics and international banking crises.

The Bible doesn't apply to my life. What is Jesus expecting of his disciples here? He taught them seed and soil parables in the morning, and he's expecting them to apply it out in the middle of the lake where there are no seeds, no soil at all. Right? What does this tell you about the Word of God? Don't expect the Word of God to do chapter and verse and detail by detail, point by point on the specific problem we're having.

We are to observe, we interpret, and we can apply in a completely different environment. That's the nature of it. That's the counterintuitivity of it.

There's a word. It's like the mustard seed. You would think, well, if I'm going to have a seawater test in the afternoon, you need to be telling me seawater parables in the

morning.

Why didn't he say the one about pluck up the mulberry and cast it into the sea and then I could have something about the sea? No, it's all dirt and seeds and birds and sheaves and things, harvesting. It's got nothing to do. How can you expect me to have faith when you didn't tell me anything about seawater testing? What does Jesus say? Why are you being afraid? How is it that you have no faith? You have just had an entire morning of the best Bible class ever given on the planet.

Who's the best teacher of the Word of God ever? The living, breathing, incarnate Word of God. Can you imagine if we were sitting here this morning and the Lord Jesus Christ was standing right here and he started at seven this morning and taught till noon? Can you imagine how full our souls would be if he would tell a parable and then explain it to us? Excuse me, Lord, I've got a question. Could you just clarify? Absolutely.

Lord Jesus Christ standing here giving a Bible class for five hours and you think, boy, in the strength of that meat I could go 40 days and 40 nights. I would live a sinless life for the next couple of weeks at least because I've had a Bible class from the Lord Jesus Christ. These guys can't even get into the afternoon.

Why? They don't make the connection. Think about these parables. What invokes the power of the Word? How is the power of the Word activated? It's our reception.

It's our meditation. It's our thoughtfulness. Our praying it back to God.

Our cycling it through our souls, digesting it, chewing on it, thinking about its meaning. Well, what does that mean to me? How do I answer the question, so what? I just listened to two half-hour Bible classes, so what? Am I any different? Is there a way I can be more faithful to the Lord, more productive, more fruitful, more laying hold of righteousness by faith, build up my inheritance, reflect the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ, be a better witness, be a better disciple and follower of Jesus? What can I do differently because I have heard this Bible class? How can I change my schedule? We do everything on a schedule. We watch the clock all day long.

Schedule need changing? Use of time need any changing? Do we ever stop and think, I heard a Bible class. I have been exposed to the dynamic, powerful truth of the Word of God. Is it going to change me in any way? Are my priorities any different? Shifted my goals any? Are my values any different? The things that I assign a priority and worth and meaning to, is it any different? Or am I unchanged? Did the seed come and sit right here and a bird came and just plucked it away? It ought to make a difference.

Here are the disciples in a situation tailor-made, custom-made by God in heaven for faith. And what is their reaction? They've had a solid morning of teaching from the Lord Jesus Christ, a little bit of wind and a couple of waves, and they're terrified. Jesus says,

why are you afraid? Where's your faith? Why are you afraid? Where's your... Great question we can ask ourselves almost any time we're facing a challenge.

Why are you afraid? Where's your faith? Well, how do you answer the question, where's your faith? Faith needs an object, right? Faith needs a target. So what is it they should be believing here? He says, where's your faith? It's just like, oh God, I know everything will all turn out right in the end and every cloud has a silver lining and I'll just sort of cling to the mast here and sort of have an abstract faith. What faith is He expecting them to have? Remember these parables we just went over? What were the points? Response to the word is the issue, right? Parable of the soils.

What is our response? Do we take it in and chew on it? Does it make a difference? Do we recognize that this is God's power entering us and it's going to do things on its own because it's God's design? The power and the design are from God. All we have to do is embrace it, take it in and let it do its work. It doesn't make sense.

Most sailors would be terrified, but hey, I'm not any old sailor. I'm a disciple of the Lord Jesus and He's right behind me in the boat. What have I to dread? What have I to fear? Leaning on the everlasting arms.

With my Lord so near, why should I be afraid? Hey, is any boat with the Lord of glory going to sink? And if it does, maybe it'll become a submarine. Maybe we're going to have a whole new experience. Is anybody with the Lord Jesus Christ going to perish because they chose to be with Him, chose to obey Him, chose to go across the lake in the afternoon when He said go? Does it make any kind of sense that somebody this close to the Lord Jesus Christ is in any danger of perishing? And if you do perish, He'll bring you back.

Counterintuitive. Application related to purpose. Here is a challenge right after teaching.

What would you expect? Abstractions and theologies that have no pertinency to life? Listen, when we learn things from the Word of God, we are going to have the opportunity to have them reinforced, to change from gnosis to epinosis, if you will. Practical knowledge that makes a difference in the way we live. But the power is subordinate to our choice.

God is not going to make us faithful. When we are faithful, God makes us strong. God makes us complete.

God makes us fruitful. God makes us productive. God bounces and reflects His glory off of us, but it's when we choose.

God's design, just like seed and harvest, has been subordinated to human will, human recognition of the way God's system works. That's how it is. Well, this is what they call in recent times, epic fail.

Epic fail. And Jesus points it out. Why are you so fearful? Notice He only has to say two words to nature.

He says, peace and be still, which is just a couple of words in Greek. Of course, He probably said it in Aramaic. I think nature speaks Aramaic probably or Hebrew.

But He's got to say more to the disciples because they're just not getting it. Why are you fearful? How is it you have no faith? And when He says this, why are you fearful? What's their reaction? What's the next verse say? And they feared exceedingly. Little reminder, you know, sometimes people say, you know, we're in the midst of a thing.

You say, you know, it seems like we just had something about that in Bible class. And you get away from me. I'm in the middle of having a crisis here.

Don't annoy me with Bible class. And you just, you know, get worse. And so He says, what are you afraid of? And they become exceedingly fearful.

And they fear the very one that they ought to be having faith in. Now they're fearing Him. What manner of man is this? What have we brought in the boat with us here? This thing could turn on us at any moment.

I don't know what's going to go on now. Why would they be afraid? Jesus has just preserved their lives by a manifest miracle. And they look at Him and they say, this guy can calm the sea of Galilee instantly and can make the wind stop blowing with two words.

What have we got in the boat? You get the idea that they, you know, almost ready to jump out. It just, and this is the nonsensical nature of our response so many times. God is trying to help us.

He is trying to encourage us. He's trying to teach us. And we just are completely unteachable.

Panic never solved anything. No point in panicking. This is why you get your great statesman words.

We have nothing to fear but fear itself. This is almost literally true for believers. Be afraid of being afraid.

Because when we are, what time I am afraid, if we're not trusting in God, we are controlled by something other than the Holy Spirit. You can't think. Fear can't think.

Fear is a powerful emotion. Fight or flight goes in. Your adrenaline is pumping and you can't think thoughts.

God has not given us a spirit of fear. How many times did Jesus say, fear not? Fear thou

not for I am with thee. Be not dismayed.

I am thy God. Jesus could have quoted that right here. Look, I'm with you.

What are you afraid of? What do you think is going to happen? We're all going to die? It's nonsensical. But you just can't think sensibly in the grip of fear. And these guys are afraid and they get more afraid when Jesus speaks.

Well, all of this is a powerful illustration for us. We've got a whole chapter and a half of teaching that precedes these few verses of testing. And Jesus told many more parables, made many more explanations to the disciples than what we have recorded here.

But the point is very clear, isn't it? It is important for us to understand the role of the Word of God in our lives, to know where our effort is. Where is our effort involved? Where is our choice and our labor at the inception and at the harvest, when it is planted and when it is reaped? God will do the work in our souls. If we are faithful to the engrafted Word that is implanted in our souls, if we absorb it and let it sink deep, if we meditate on it, if we pray over it, if we discuss it with one another, speaking the truth to one another in love.

Most Christians today, and I'm not talking about any present company, but at large, if you look out in the world, if you read blogs and get out and mingle in the general Christian world, most conversation is not about the truth. It is subjective. It's about other people.

It's about situations. People get their hair lit on fire about various things that are going on in society or the nation or the globe or whatever. And feel like they need to do this and they need to be elbows and knees there.

Where is the speaking of truth to one another in love? Reflecting, meditating, encouraging, exhorting one another. Where is that? It needs to be a part of our lives. This is the purpose of this episode.

And by the way, this same sequence and the same essentials, the backbone of this is in all three Synoptic Gospels. You've got three times this is presented to us. Matthew, Mark, and Luke.

And it's a fun thing when you look at how similar Matthew and Mark are almost identical. And Luke almost looks like he heard it told and then repeats it and adds some of his own wording. But it's interesting that the structure of the preceding parables and the things that is the same in all three Gospels because it's important.

So we have the teaching of the Word of God, but that's just the beginning. That just gets the seed out of the bag in contact with the soil. We are the soil.

What are we going to do with that seed? And if it just sits on top, this is what happened with the disciples after Jesus told them all of these things. Seed never got down inside. And as soon as something turned bad, they are controlled by fear.

They are dominated by fear. They are blinded and deafened by fear. And Jesus' attempt to question them about that makes them more afraid.

Well, all of this leads up to the reason they went across the lake in the first place. Why did Jesus have a propelling wind to push them at record speed across the Sea of Galilee, shooting up rooster tails and big bow waves and water, green water over the gunwale? Why was Jesus in such a hurry to get there? That's going to be our miracle next week, which is the, depending on how you want to do it, the Gadarene or the Gerasene demoniac. This is the legion inhabiting this poor guy.

Jesus is going through this entire lake episode, and His disciples go through that entire storm, not just for themselves. All things work together for good. They are making this trip for one guy.

They are going to go to the far side. They are going to see this one guy, and they are going to leave. One man.

All of this takes place. Jesus brings up the wind, scares His disciples out of their wits to get to this one guy. And it's a great, great story, and that's what we'll see next time.

But we'll close here in a word of prayer. Father, thank You for the truth of Your Word. Thank You for the wonderfully effective way that it illustrates and impresses upon us the truths that are necessary to our life that guide us and inform us and edify us and build us up and equip us for every good work.

We pray that God the Holy Spirit will find us ready students, that the Word will sink deep and do its supernatural work by Your design and in accord with Your purpose so that we will bear that fruit that is in keeping with the work of Christ on the cross to save us and to bring us to Himself so that He could bring us to You. We pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen.