

Miracles of Jesus 12-08-12a

This is Sunday, the 12th of August, 2012, and we're continuing our series on the miracles of the Lord Jesus Christ. It's been, for me, a really information-filled and revealing study. Every time we are looking directly at the Lord Jesus Christ, as I've said many times, you just become aware of the power of God, the character of God that is so richly expressed in the Lord Jesus, His words, His actions, His teaching of His disciples, and the record of it for us.

It takes four Gospels just to even try to contain it, and it's far more than we can ever exhaust or find the limits of. So every time we look at these things, it is just a richer, deeper, and fuller exposure to the mind of Christ and the plan of God for us. We are going to pick up this morning in Mark chapter 6, verse 45.

This is paralleled in both Matthew and John. We've got three out of the four witnesses for this, and this is Jesus walking on the water. It will involve a bit of review because rather unexpectedly, this is very closely connected to what we've looked at the last two weeks in the miraculous multiplication of bread and fish.

You cannot understand the walking on the water if you do not understand the bread and the fish. Isn't that odd? I never really made a connection in my mind between those before, but come to find out you can't figure out the walking on the water if you haven't got a grasp on the loaves and the fishes. So we'll begin as is our custom by going to the Lord in prayer, and then we'll take a look at the scriptural witness to this fascinating set of happenings there on the sea of Galilee.

Shall we pray? Father, what a privilege it is for us to enter into the holy courts of your throne room, to have revealed to us and communicated to us the truth that is expressed in Scripture, that is revealed in creation and in the fullness of the person of the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. We thank you for the identity that you have given us, the family status that is ours through Christ, the many blessings and provisions and opportunities and challenges that come to us in this time in human history, in this part of your plan and purpose and calling out a body and a bride to be the unique possession of the Lord Jesus Christ. And we feel so privileged and so honored and so blessed to live in this day and at this time and have these wonderful honors conferred on us and gifts bestowed upon us and opportunities given to us.

And we ask that as we study this portion of your word, that God the Holy Spirit will minister it to each heart so that we find its purpose and meaning and application for ourselves in the time and circumstance we live in and that we will be thoroughly equipped for every good work, both now and in the days ahead and in the kingdoms and ages to come. We pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen.

As I said, the last couple of weeks we have looked at the feeding of the 5,000, the

feeding of the 4,000, and the multiplication of fish that takes place after the resurrection of the Lord Jesus at the shore of the Sea of Galilee when Peter hears the words from John's lips, it is the Lord, and he dives and swims to shore. And after they have cast their net on the other side, we have those three miraculous multiplications. And they are so freighted with meaning and information for us.

And we want to quickly summarize as we move to the next miracle, which is the episode where Jesus walks on the water in the night on the Sea of Galilee. It is set in that context and it is linked by Scripture to that context. Let's look at it first in Matthew.

I had you turn to Mark chapter 6. Keep your finger in Mark 6, but turn back to Matthew chapter 14. Matthew chapter 14. I want to read it here first for reasons that will become apparent.

This is Matthew 14, 13. Now this 13 through 21 gives us the feeding of the 5,000. And immediately after this, so just fix the context here in Matthew's account, Jesus has just fed the 5,000.

Sit down in groups of 50 on the green grass, 12 baskets of fragments taken up. Look at verse 20. They all ate and were filled.

They took up 12 baskets full of the fragments that remained. Now those who had eaten were about 5,000 men, besides women and children. That's where we are.

Now we pick up in verse 22 of Matthew 14. Immediately, Jesus made His disciples get into the boat and go before Him to the other side while He sent the multitudes away. And when He had sent the multitudes away, He went up on the mountain by Himself to pray.

Now when evening came, He was alone there. But the boat was now in the middle of the sea, tossed by the waves, for the wind was contrary. Now in the fourth watch of the night, Jesus went to them walking on the sea.

And when the disciples saw Him walking on the sea, they were troubled. This is understatement. They were traumatized.

They were amazed. They were shocked, saying it is a ghost. Do you believe in ghosts? Did the disciples believe in ghosts? If you don't believe in ghosts, why would you say, look, a ghost? It is a ghost.

And they cried out for fear. But immediately Jesus spoke to them, saying, Be of good cheer, it is I. Do not be afraid. Peter answered Him and said, Lord, if it is You, command me to come to You on the water.

So He said, Come. And when Peter had come down out of the boat, he walked on the

water to go to Jesus. It always amazes me how matter-of-fact the Scripture is in telling extraordinary things.

So Peter got out of the boat and walked on the water. It just knocks you back in your chair. But when he saw that the wind was boisterous, he was afraid.

And beginning to sink, he cried out, saying, Lord, save me. And immediately Jesus stretched out His hand and caught him and said to him, O you of little faith, why did you doubt? And when they got into the boat, the wind ceased. Then those who were in the boat came and worshipped Him, saying, Truly you are the Son of God.

Verse 34 says, When they had crossed over, they came to the land of Gennesaret. What is the other name for the Sea of Galilee? Lake Gennesaret. Well, there are several things that appeal for our attention in this account besides the obviously miraculous elements.

And there are some things I want to point out. A couple of them I want to point out carefully because I don't want to suggest a change in practice or a change in philosophy or a change in view. But they are things that are here and they need to be pointed out.

You think, what on earth could that be? Well, you're about to hear. So just remember, I am not saying anything other than what Scripture says. Immediately Jesus made His disciples get into the boat and go before Him to the other side while He sent the multitudes away.

You would think that if you were going to do crowd control, you'd keep your 12 disciples and have them herd the people. But Jesus sends the disciples away. He doesn't want them here for this crowd control, which is interesting when you look at the account in John.

Why is this? Well, keep one finger in Matthew, keep one finger in Mark, and you can find it again if you lose it. And turn over to John chapter 6. We remember that the feeding of the 5,000 was given in all four Gospels. And in the John account is John chapter 6. And it begins at the beginning of the chapter.

And you get yet another name for the Sea of Galilee in 6.1, the Sea of Galilee, which is the Sea of Tiberias, which is Lake Gennesaret. It's got three different names, all given in Scripture. Where shall we buy bread? Verse 10, make the people sit down.

Verse 12, gather up the fragments. Verse 14, then those men, when they had seen the sign that Jesus did, said, this is truly the prophet who is to come into the world. A little bit different than what the disciples are going to say in the boat.

Truly, this is the Son of God. This is the prophet. We remember Moses was the prophet.

And through Moses, we get the manna coming down from heaven. This is another

prophet bringing the bread of heaven. This is the conclusion they draw.

Now look at verse 15. Therefore, when Jesus perceived that they were about to come and take him by force to make him king, Moses was our leader and we got free bread. You're giving us free bread.

We're going to make you our leader. You can see the beautifully chiastic structure of this logic. He departed again to the mountain by himself alone.

When evening came, his disciples went down to the sea, got into the boat, and went over the sea toward Capernaum. And it was already dark, and Jesus had not come to them. Now, why did Jesus depart again to the mountain by himself alone? Why did he send the disciples away and depart? He sent the disciples, he sent the crowd away, sent the disciples away, and he departed by himself alone to the mountain.

Why? Back to Matthew chapter 14 verse 23. When he had sent the multitudes away, he went up on the mountain by himself. Why? To pray.

Here's my question. Why doesn't it say, and when he had sent the multitudes away, he called the disciples to himself and they went up in the mountain to pray? Can you think of any place in Scripture which is replete with references to Jesus praying where he led the group of disciples in prayer, where he called them together and said, let's have a prayer meeting? Can you think of any case? You're in Matthew. Turn back to Matthew chapter 6 verse 5. When you pray, you shall not be like the hypocrites, for they love to pray, standing in the synagogues and on the corners of the streets, that they may be seen by men.

Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward. Their reward is being seen by men standing on the street corner praying. But you, when you pray, go into your room, and when you have shut your door, pray to your father who is in the secret place, and your father who sees in secret will reward you openly.

The secret place, by yourself, alone. Not everybody's got access to a mountain. Over and over again, I don't have time to give you all the passages, but we've seen them together.

Jesus went off by himself. The disciples look around, where's Jesus? They find that he's gone off by himself to pray. In Gethsemane, Jesus says, Peter, James and John, watch with me, and he moves off by himself to pray.

Where do you ever see Jesus saying, let's get together and have a collective prayer? Which explains why, in Matthew chapter 6, if you've got a notation in your New King James that gives you the parallels, you notice that the model prayer that is given here, in this manner, therefore, pray, the parallel is over in Luke chapter 11. Turn over to Luke chapter 11. Luke chapter 11 verse 1, it came to pass, as he was praying in a certain place, when he ceased, one of his disciples said to him, Lord, teach us to pray.

Now, if Jesus has made a regular habit out of praying with his disciples, would they ask this question? He has gone off by himself to pray. They knew he was praying. He has come back from praying.

They say, Lord, teach us to pray. How should we pray? What does that tell you about the prayers of the Lord Jesus and whether or not the disciples heard them? They didn't hear them, which is why they ask, Lord, teach us to pray. He said, when you pray, and then you've got the Lord's prayer, skip down to verse 9 of chapter 11, I say to you, ask and it will be given you, seek and you will find, knock and it will be opened to you.

For everyone who asks receives, he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened. If a son asks for bread, whoa, if a son asks for bread, we've spent two weeks looking at bread, have we not? If a son asks for bread from any father among you, will he give him a stone? If he asks for a fish, will he give him a serpent instead of a fish? If he asks for an egg, will he offer him a scorpion? If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him? Parallels say, give good things to those who ask Him. Look again at Matthew chapter 6. I'm having you flip around here, but it's good exercise.

Matthew chapter 6, verse 5, when you pray, you shall not be like the hypocrites. Verse 6, go into your room. Verse 7, when you pray, do not use vain repetitions as the heathen do, empty repetitions.

Now, what would an empty repetition be? Praying the same prayer over and over and over again? Oh, Lord, please don't let Uncle Ralph die. Oh, Lord, please don't let Uncle Ralph die. Oh, Lord, please don't let Uncle Ralph die.

That would be an empty repetition. God heard you the first time, right? If you want to emphasize, if you want to put some punctuation and some force into your prayer, what is the way to do it? Give God reasons from His Word. Moses didn't say, Oh, Lord, please don't destroy Israel.

Oh, Lord, please don't destroy the people. Oh, Lord, please don't blast them out of existence. Oh, Lord, please don't take the people away.

Oh, Lord, please don't kill my brethren. Oh, Lord, please don't destroy this burgeoning nation. Oh, Lord, please don't take the Israelites away.

What did Moses do? God said, Stand aside, Moses, I'm going to destroy this people and I'll make a new one out of you. And he said, Lord, please don't, because, and gave him reasons that reflected his understanding of the plan and purpose of God. This is the way to press your point before the heavenly throne of grace.

Give God His own reasons. Give God His own declarations of truth and principle and promise. Do not simply, redundantly repeat.

Have you ever had a little kid tugging on your knee? Can I have a Popsicle? Can I have a Popsicle? Can I have a Popsicle? Can I please have a Popsicle? Say, No, it's too close to supper time. Can I have a Popsicle? On and on and on. The repetition does not, if you're a good parent, change the answer.

If you're a bad parent, it does, which means you're now going to have repeated requests for the rest of your life. When you pray, do not use vain repetition. I'll give you another category of vain repetition.

Repeating God's titles. Father, we just want to thank you, Father, for your grace, Father, and your blessings, Father. On this day, Father, have you heard these prayers? You can hear them on the radio.

You can hear them in assemblies. This, I tell you from Scripture, is vain repetition. How many times did Jesus say, Father, in the model prayer? Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name.

Thy kingdom come, thy will be done. Is there any more fathers in there? No. So do not say, Lord, Lord, Lord.

Do not say, Father, Father, Father. For heaven's sake, don't say, Dear Jesus, Dear Jesus, Dear Jesus, when you pray. Vain repetition.

So two things we have seen, and again, I preface this and I will conclude it by saying, this is something to take on board individually, but there is not a lot of support in Scripture for collective prayer. Let's all get together, and we'll go around the circle. I used to superintend.

I was pastor of a church where we had prayer meeting, and men would go in one place, women would go in another, and then we'd pray around the circle, and everybody hears everybody's prayer. I'm just saying, there is no Scriptural precedent anywhere for that practice. Jesus said, and Jesus, in His example, focused on individual time with God the Father alone.

So if you can find some Scripture that says, and behold, they all got together and had a round-robin prayer, God bless you. I can't find it. It isn't in there, and you can conduct yourself accordingly, but this is just an observation, and it is evidenced here, back to Matthew chapter 14.

He sent the multitudes away. He sent the disciples away. He went up on the mountain by Himself to pray.

You think, wow, He's missed a real teachable moment here. He's missed a chance to really help these disciples and model some prayer for them and speak out loud and emphasize that there's no record of ever doing this. When does He pray a prayer that

everybody hears? What are the prayers that Jesus prays and everybody hears it? When He had broken bread, lifted His eyes to heaven, and gave thanks.

So you can see that saying the, asking the blessing at the table, asking the blessing before a meal, thanking God for the food, great, short, public prayer. It doesn't say when He had prayed a lengthy prayer, He broke bread and passed it around. It says when He gave thanks.

He lifted the bread to heaven, gave thanks, broke it, gave it to His disciples. Same thing in the feeding of the 5,000. If you look back a little bit, the commander of the multitudes sat on the ground in verse 19, took the five loaves and the two fish, looking up to heaven.

He blessed and broke and gave the loaves to His disciples. He asked the blessing. Standard Jewish practice for centuries, millennia.

Thank God at the breaking of bread. That's a valid public prayer. But personal thanksgiving, intercession, request, the model is private.

Go into your closet. Go to a quiet place alone. Well, when evening came, He was alone there.

The boat was now in the middle of the sea, tossed by the waves, for the wind was contrary. When you look at the parallel in Mark 6, and we're now going to stick to just a few passages, and you can actually keep your fingers in them again. Keep track of Matthew, but turn back to Mark 6. We have a similar account, beginning in verse 45.

After feeding the 5,000, He made His disciples get into the boat and go before Him to the other side to Bethsaida, while He sent the multitudes away. When He had sent them away, He departed to the mountain to pray. It is an important detail.

Now, when evening came, the boat was in the middle of the sea, and He was alone on the land. And He saw them straining at rowing, for the wind was against them. Whose recollections does Mark record here? The apostle Peter.

And that is worth keeping in mind as we look at what is included and what is left out in this account. Straining at rowing, the wind was against them. The wind was contrary.

About the fourth watch of the night, He came to them walking on the sea, and would have passed them by. I have seen commentaries go through tortured logic and trying to deal with Jesus walking and would have passed them by. And some of them just flat out contradict what Scripture says.

The Scripture clearly says, you can go to the Greek, there is no way around it, it says, He would have passed them by. He was walking, and He wasn't walking to the boat, He was

walking past the boat. And the people in the boat saw Him coming and could tell.

Peter is in the boat, and Peter says, if they had just kept quiet, He would have walked right on by. He would have been waiting for them when they got to the other side, however much longer it took them to row. He would have passed them by.

But when they saw Him walking on the sea, they supposed it was a ghost and they cried out. They all saw Him and were troubled. Immediately He talked with them and said, Be of good cheer, it is I, do not be afraid.

Be of good cheer, be happy, don't be afraid, be happy. I'm not a ghost, it's me. Not a ghost, real person, don't be afraid, be happy.

That's what He says. Well, in the Matthew account, when He says these words, you have Peter and that whole episode. In the Mark account, which is Peter's telling of the story, verse 51 says, Then He went up into the boat to them, and the wind ceased.

This is what we call in the trade a lacuna. There is a whole missing section here. What? It is I, be not afraid, and He got in the boat.

Wait a minute, the way I heard this story, Peter, you'd left something out here. Isn't there like several more minutes that passed by? What do you mean, be of good cheer, it is I, and He got in the boat? Peter just leaves this out. He's the guy telling the story, and why does he leave it out? Well, I think maybe two reasons suggest themselves.

One is, this wasn't Peter's most shining moment. Secondly, Peter recognized on reflecting on this incident what the real issue is. How I come to this conclusion is by continuing to the next verse.

Look at verse 51 again, in Mark, chapter 6, Then He, Jesus, went up into the boat to them, and the wind ceased, and they were greatly amazed in themselves beyond measure, and marveled, for they had not understood about the loaves. What? That was yesterday. Jesus has been up to pray.

They've been rowing for four watches in the night. It's getting on toward morning. Dawn is beginning to break over there.

They've been rowing and rowing and rowing and Jesus walks on the water. They think He's a ghost. They're paralyzed with fear.

They cry out. He comes and gets into the boat, and they are amazed, and they marvel beyond measure because they didn't understand about the bread. Maybe this just makes perfect sense to you, and I'm the only guy that doesn't get the connection.

What is the connection between being amazed and marveling that a guy has walked on the water and has stopped the wind when he got into the boat, and you're just

thunderstruck because they didn't understand the loaves, because their heart was hardened, because their heart was hardened? Well, this is deep stuff. How did we get to bread and hardened hearts from observing the miracle of Jesus walking on the water? Peter says, you know what? Everybody tells that story about me getting out of the boat, Lord save me, pulling me back up, the two of us walking on the water together. He says, you're missing the point here.

That's not the point. Great story. Others can tell it and make the point.

God can inspire it. That's great, but in my mind, here's the issue. We were completely focused on the wrong stuff.

We had distributed bread, but we had not eaten it and digested it for ourselves. This is the bane, this is the horror, this is the scary story for any teacher or preacher of the Word of God is to prepare it and present it and distribute it to others and not get it, not have personal meaning and application, not be changed, not be transformed through it and because of it. It is similar for parents who are trying to train up their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, and you say, you know, it's real clear to me what you need to do and what you need to be and how you ought to act and how you ought to think, oh, child, and telling, telling, telling and not being, not being an example, not having trod that path ourselves and being all elbows and knees in effort trying to get someone else to walk what we see as being the path, and we haven't done it ourselves.

Peter says, look, yeah, walking on the water, I'm the only person besides the Lord Jesus Christ that has ever done it, but that's not the point. Here's the point. We screwed up because we did not understand about the loaves.

Our hearts were hardened. Did God harden their hearts? They did not ensure that they were the kind of soil into which that seed could be plowed, that divine truth could sprout and grow and produce fruit. They were present for the feeding of the 5,000, but they didn't understand about the loaves.

The implication being from Peter's own mouth here, if they had understood about the loaves, this whole scenario would have been different. So my question is, how would it have been different? We're going to pause here and take our break, and when we come back, we'll see if we can answer that question.