

Miracles of Jesus 12-08-19a

This is Sunday, the 19th of August, 2012. As we look at our series on the miracles of the Lord Jesus Christ, we move forward. I had an original ambition that each miracle would be in a nice little discrete lesson, but as we have seen, the common elements in some of these miracles, the ones most recently, the feeding of the 5,000, the feeding of the 4,000, Jesus calling to the disciples after His resurrection and the multiplication of fish, the significance of bread as it pertains to these and other events and episodes and teachings of the Lord Jesus Christ, whether it's John 7, where many turned away because He made the comparison that as the bread of heaven, His flesh was to be partaken of, and people said, well, you're just wanting us to be cannibals, and they left.

And inability to make the leap from the physical circumstance, the physical teaching aid to the spiritual truth. And this is a great concept that we want to explore and to advance in ourselves to not get stuck in sort of a limited mode of application. So we're doing our best to explore these things and to see what Scripture has to say about them, to have God the Holy Spirit teach us and through these passages and through these truths to enable us to grow and to be more fruitful.

It is an ambitious undertaking. It is a challenge. I think many of us as believers, when you look at the world at large, our country at large, have settled for something less in terms of defining what Christian life is, defining what spiritual growth and production is.

And the more Scripture opens to us and reveals God's plan and purpose, the more limited that view seems. We have so many opportunities. We have so many resources.

If we can just see them and if we can just remember them in the clutch, in the pinch, when circumstances face us and it's time to think and to decide, to choose, to act, to do it as the Lord Jesus did in the light of Scripture with eyes on the throne of God in prayerful consideration and meditation, looking at its purpose, looking forward to the kingdom and to being prepared and equipped not only to serve but to reflect the glory of God, this is why we're here. We tend to get so caught up in the story that we, like a scary movie, we jump when the door slams and we need to step back. We need to see that these things are temporary and ephemeral.

As we saw Friday night, it is a momentary light affliction that is working for us an eternal weight of glory. And nowhere is that more apparent than in this complex, this series of miracles that we have been looking at. And we move forward this morning to consider the specific details of Jesus and the Apostle Peter walking on the water.

Lengthy introduction, but that's all you're going to get by way of background review and context because we've got quite a lot to look at. So let's go to the Lord in prayer and then we'll begin. Father, once again we find ourselves blessed with the opportunity to be in contact and in fellowship with believers who share an appreciation and an enthusiasm

for your Word, which enables us to partake of heavenly truths, of divine revelation, of insight and knowledge that is not discernible, understandable to the carnal mind, but through the ministry of your Holy Spirit becomes perspicacious, becomes meaningful, becomes real to us.

We thank you for the gift of the Spirit. We thank you that we have His ongoing presence, His encouragement, His comfort, His teaching ministry, His sealing, His enablement to serve our fellow believers and to shine a light beyond the limits of our immediate fellowship to the world at large in making the gospel apparent in flesh and blood just as the Lord Jesus did when He walked this earth. We thank you for this passage that is before us.

We thank you for the truth that it contains and we ask your blessing on us as we study it together. We pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen.

If you're not already there, turn with me to Mark chapter 5 and flip over another page to Mark chapter 6. We're going to be in a chapter 5 but not in Mark. Mark chapter 6, beginning at verse 45, let's review the text that we have covered thus far and move into the fresh unbroken snow this morning. Verse 45, immediately He made His disciples get into the boat and go on before Him to the other side to Bethsaida while He sent the multitude away.

You remember all of the background, what has happened that preceding day, what the multitude was trying to do with Jesus that we know from John's gospel. So Jesus sends the disciples away. This is the end of the day.

Night is approaching. So this is a night trip across the water. Think about that.

Is this a common thing to launch at night? Why would that be? Can't see. Already tired. Spent a full day in food services handing stuff out, picking stuff up, lugging baskets, loading the boat.

Why does Jesus send them on this journey at the end of the day? Well, we'll explore that momentarily but He does. When evening came, the boat was in the middle of the sea and He was alone on the land. So they launch while there is still daylight but when the sun sets and everything begins to go dark, they are still in the midst of the sea.

This is not the geometric center. This means they're out. They're on the water.

They're not close to launching. They're not close to landing. They're somewhere in the midst of the sea and of the journey.

Verse 48, then He saw them straining at rowing for the wind was against them. Now about the fourth watch of the night, He came to them walking on the sea and would have passed them by. And when they saw Him walking on the sea, they supposed it was

a ghost.

Because you see these from time to time. Oh, look, a ghost. That's what that is.

Saw one last week. Glad there's just one. Sometimes they travel in crowds.

It's so strange to me that they assume it's a ghost. Until you kind of think of the circumstances. For they all saw Him and were troubled.

But immediately He talked with them and said to them, Be of good cheer. It is I. Do not be afraid. Then He went up into the boat to them.

We know that we've skipped the episode here. And the wind ceased and they were greatly amazed in themselves beyond measure and marveled for they had not understood about the loaves because their hearts were hardened. Actually He says their heart was hardened.

Okay, there are so many productive lines of investigation that are suggested by these statements, these observations, the details of this story that it's hard to know where to begin or how to organize them in a way that is useful. But there's a lot. I think you could read this passage in its context and meditate on this for every day for a month, an hour a day, and not begin to exhaust all of its meaning and purpose and the divine truth that is connected to it.

We're going to look at a few of the things that pertain. I back up to where this particular episode begins. Those who had eaten of the loaves were about 5,000 men.

We know from the Gospel of John that Jesus sends His disciples away and then He deals with the crowd. John 6.15, When Jesus perceived that they were about to come and take Him by force to make Him king, 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.

Well, why do you do something at night? Jesus has decided that He's not going to stay in this area, right? He's going to go back toward Bethsaida or Capernaum, and the journey is going to take place at night. Why do you do something at night? Why do military maneuvers of a surprise nature take place at night? Because you are not seen. You can do things without people observing.

There is a big crowd. You get the idea that although Jesus was able to send this multitude away that wants to make Him king, He can't stay there. Unlike the casting out of the legion of demons and the people who can't wait for Him to leave, these people can't wait for Him to stay.

They want to keep Him there. Instead of the goose laying golden eggs, He's sort of the

bread factory. They figure, wow, this solves our economic problems.

We'll make this guy king, and in exchange for that, He will supply everything for us. So Jesus needs to leave, and evidently He does not want to be followed because He's going to delay the departure. When the disciples get in a boat and sail, people don't know where He's going.

They're not all equipped with boats, and so they can't, as they have sometimes done when they found His destination out, they would go on the land and try to be there when He arrived by the sea route. So He is trying to get away from the people He just fed. Why would they not camp there overnight? They're used to sleeping under the stars.

They've got plenty of bread. It's not that they need to go somewhere to get food. Why do they need to go someplace? Why are they going to travel at night? They figured, since they left in the daylight, that it would be a relatively short trip.

They might get there after dark, but these are experienced sailors. This is their home water. They know this thing like the back of their hand, and there is apparently pretty good visibility.

It is evidently, and I am guessing here from the details, it's not overcast. It's not thunderstorm weather, because if you do not have some sort of celestial observation out on the water, you cannot travel. You don't know where you're going to go.

They have to be able to at least see the moon, see a few navigational stars, or be able to see something on the shore, but this is not the day when there are lighthouses or people who keep navigational lamps conveniently burning for people who foolishly are out there trying to travel at night. The shoreline, unless they are very close to the shore where they could perhaps see the glow through someone's window, but that's not going to last too long. People didn't typically stay up late.

They slept when it was dark. They rose when the sun came up, so they can't count on, well, I hope somebody's lamp is lit in a window so that we cannot run aground or run out to the middle of the sea. Evidently, it is clear enough that not only can Jesus see their progress on the water, even as it is getting dark, but they can see to make their way, and this is important for the subsequent scene that takes place.

So in verse, whichever account you look at, John 6, 17, they got into the boat, went over the sea toward Capernaum, and it was already dark, and Jesus had not come to them. So this is twilight, apparently, when they are packing to get in, and they would not be able to undertake this voyage unless they thought, well, we've got a moon. We can see a couple of stars.

We can make this. As long as we keep our heading, we've done this before. So, I'm going to turn back to Mark chapter 6, the evening came, verse 47, the boat was in the middle

of the sea, and he was alone on the land, and he saw them straining at rowing.

Remember, he's up on the mountain. He's got a view of the north part of the Sea of Galilee, and they're making a little, what do you call that, a cord, or when you take a line and you go across the top of a circle, it's not a radius, it's like a cord. I don't know where I dredged that up from.

I think I learned that in the third grade. But they're just going across the top, and they're just trying to steer a straight course. Well, Jesus is on the mountain, and He can see them.

It may be possible from that mountain height to see all the way to the misty distance where the destination is. And the wind is against them, and they are rowing. Now, these fishermen like to sail, but the wind is directly against them.

Who controls the wind? Who determines the wind direction? You've got God incarnate telling you to go somewhere, and you've got God in heaven blowing the wind. If there's any kind of an angle to the wind, you can tack. It might take a while, but you can tack.

But you can't tack when the wind is directly coming from the direction you're trying to go. The wind is just against them. And if they try to make these angles, they're just not making any progress, so they have to row.

They're rowing because of the wind. It seems to me like you ought to be able to tack if the wind is directly on your bow. But for whatever reason, they couldn't.

The sail is doing them no good, and they're having to row. They were in the conditions I'm not. For whatever nautical reasons, they couldn't raise the sail and get any progress.

So, of course, one of the things is I do know the kind of sails. You know, they've dredged up a fishing boat from this time, and the kind of sails that they have are not really conducive. They don't have those wonderful tall masts with triangular sail and sheets and the kind of things that you can do with a good boat.

This is a fishing boat. It had, I believe, a square sail with a single mast. And tacking and stuff doesn't really get you there.

So they're rowing. Now, in the stepping back and looking at it mode, God has given a command, but conditions that are under God's control seem to be utterly adverse. Ever felt like you were in this situation? I know that I should be doing this, but due to forces beyond my control, I cannot get there.

Why is this? So it seems to me there are two options in a situation like that. One is we can work really, really hard to just make it happen anyway by putting the oars in the oar lock and pulling away. And it should become pretty quickly apparent that if that's going

to have any effect, you You notice that the detail in verse 48 in terms of time, He saw them straining and rowing, for the wind was against them.

Now, about the fourth watch of the night. In the Old Testament days, they would divide the night into three watches of four hours each. So from 6 p.m. until 10 p.m., what we would call evening, that's the first watch.

Then from 10 to 2, the second watch. 2 to 6 was the third watch of the night. But under the influence of the Greeks and the Romans and so on, in New Testament times, they had four watches in the night.

And there are three hours each. So 6 to 9, 9 to midnight, midnight to 3, 3 to 6. When is it they launch the boat? Circa 6, 7 p.m., just as the sun is going down. By the way, the Holy Land is roughly the same latitude as we are.

Your days and nights waxing and waning, short and long, the solstices and so on are about the same. So how long have they been pushing against the wind? This is the fourth watch. Eight hours? Nine hours? Long time.

At night, after a full day, and well, the Lord said, go, we're going. I am being obedient, and they're switching off. I doubt that they had 12 oars on this boat.

So they're rowing until a guy falls over, and another disciple takes his place, rows until he falls over, and the first one comes back. Rowing, rowing, rowing. I've rowed a little.

I know people that have rowed a lot. Your hands can be tough. They didn't have white mule gloves and things like this, but I don't care how good you are.

If you row for nine hours, you're going to be tired. You're going to be sore. You're going to be questioning in your mind, what is the meaning of life? Will it matter if this boat eventually arrives and they have to pour me out of it into a basket because I'm just dead? You can get really cranky and in a foul mood.

So this is one way to deal with a situation where you have a pretty clear indication that you're going in the proper direction. This is the will of God that you go in this direction, but everything seems to be against it, and human resources are not meeting the challenge. I am doing everything I can.

We are killing ourselves getting across this stupid lake against this stupid wind with these stupid oars. We were going to go over there and try to find a bed for the night so we didn't have to sleep under the stars. We haven't slept at all.

What are we going to do when we get there the next day? Go somewhere and sleep all day? You can imagine the frustration. I can imagine the frustration. About the fourth watch of the night, He came to them walking on the sea and would have passed them

by.

Jesus is up on the mountain. He sees them. It must be a clear enough night that they can navigate and He can see.

I would suspect that this is sort of a moonlit night, especially since when Jesus is walking on the sea, they can see Him. Jesus, as far as we know, did not glow in the dark. He wasn't like a Catholic painting.

He didn't have kind of a light bulb at the back of His head that gave off a glow. So if they see Him walking on the water, and He is apparently at a distance from the boat, He doesn't walk right beside and kind of knock on it as He's walking. Hey there.

He's a distance. It's a far enough distance that Peter is going to be interested in trying to traverse it. It takes some walking.

So He's at a distance and far enough away that He is indistinct and they think He is a ghost. It still puzzles me. So it says He would have passed them by.

We have two concepts on the table here. One is God tells you to do a thing, but when you try to do it, it doesn't happen. The other is Jesus sees this situation, starts coming in your direction, but is fixing to go right on by, which even if they had been able to figure out that it was the Lord Jesus, that would be discouraging in itself.

Lord, carest thou not that we roweth? Carest thou not that we are killing ourselves here to no effect? He didn't go to the boat. He didn't say, now they're liable to think I'm a ghost. Let me holler at them before I get there.

Fear not. It's just me. Don't panic.

If you stop rowing, why, the wind will blow the boat in my direction and I'll get there even sooner. He didn't say any of that. It appears, and it's much stronger.

They try to tone this down because it seems so harsh. If you look at this in Greek it says He had willed to pass them by. He was going to go in a totally other direction.

When it says He would have passed them by, this is from thelo, T-H-E-L-O. This is the verb that means to will, to intention, to purpose, to decide to do a thing. The noun from this is used when we're talking about the will of God.

This is the desire. This is the direction in which a decision and a policy takes you. Thelo.

You consider it. You make a decision. This is my will.

This is my goal. This is the way I'm going. It's thelo.

It's an imperfect active indicative. This is ongoing action in past times. It's what an

imperfect is.

Perfect tense, He had gone. It's completed action in past time. This is an imperfect active indicative.

He was purposing to go on by. When they look at Him and they finally figure out that this is a human figure walking on the sea, He's not coming to them. He's going past them.

He seems to have a sense of purpose. We noted last time that there is a failure here that Peter seems to have focused on in his teaching and Mark picks it up. Their hearts were hardened.

They had not understood about the loaves. There's a perfect for you. They had seen the loaves, distributed the bread, picked up the bread, and didn't digest it, didn't get the spiritual lesson in it.

What is the spiritual lesson? Any Sunday school quarterly would tell you, my God shall supply your needs. If you are hungry, God will feed you. I have never seen the righteous go hungry or his seed begging bread.

So is there a need? Lord, I've been given a command and I can't get there. What would be a good application of what they have just seen in the day? Who controls the wind? Oh Lord, could you do something about this wind so that we can get across? The Lord Jesus has control of the wind as we already know. So Father in heaven, help us accomplish this divine task, divinely appointed task.

Apparently they didn't think of it. It just didn't occur to them. This to me is the exact point where we have to do better.

We tend to do this very same thing. We are so like the disciples. They are so like us.

We hear great teaching. We see the demonstration of God's power and then in the, what I should say is we hear the teaching of great things. And then in the moment, we just space it.

We don't stop and say, hey wait, this would be a good time to apply that thing that we saw in God's Word. I ought to do that. We are just, oh well, that was then, this is now.

We are in a boat or sailors. We know how to make a boat go and this is the only way we are going to, when the wind is contrary, what can you do? And they just don't stop and think. There is a new option here.

We've got the Lord Jesus with us. Yes, we spent our life as fishermen and sailors, but the Lord Jesus, connection with Him, recognition of what He teaches, we've got a different option than what we have always used and what we have always done. Why don't we try that? Not a single disciple, not John, not Peter, not James, not anybody says, men, you

know, we started when the sun was going down.

Wouldn't it be great in the first watch sometime before 9 p.m. to say, we are never going to get anywhere with this wind. The Lord said, let's get across. Why don't we ask God to do something about this wind so that we can fulfill the Lord Jesus' command.

It just doesn't ever hit their mind. Now, you can think, when you are just doing mindless drudge work, when you are just enduring and going along stroke after stroke after stroke, this is like driving after a while. If your body has got muscle memory and you know how to pull an oar, you can think while you are rowing until the lactic acid builds up and you can't even think.

Do they have time? Does Jesus go to them at 8.30? He gives them the maximum amount of time. We wonder sometimes why our trials last for so long. Jesus knows.

Jesus knew when he sent them that the wind was against them. He knew it was going to be getting dark. He said, well, I am going to give them as long as it takes to think of the answer.

8 o'clock, 9 o'clock, pulling the oar, pulling the oar. Somebody spell me. I can't even get my arms to function anymore.

Pulling the oar, 10 o'clock, 11 o'clock, midnight. There are only two things that can wear you out like this. Rowing is one of them.

Have you ever seen people pushing a sled? They do this as an exercise to lose weight. Or pushing a weight, pushing something really heavy a long distance against high resistance. It can just wear you out in no time.

Two of many things. 1 a.m., 2 a.m., 3 a.m., still rowing. They have had nine hours to think of the answer, to figure out a better way.

And they are just, you know, rowing is rowing. I just have to pull this handle until I can't. Somebody can spell me.

I will recharge a bit. Grab a piece of bread out of one of these baskets. Take a little snack.

Build up my carbs. So I've got a little bit more fuel for my muscles. And oh, it's my turn to row again.

Just unthinking, slavish, toiling. I know I'm supposed to do this. This is the will of God.

Instead of a thinking recourse to divine enablement, divine provision, divine answer to prayer, we just don't think of it. Jesus gave them plenty of time. I've always wondered, you know, why did he wait so long? Jesus had to stay up all of this time as well.

I don't know if he took a nap up there. Maybe he spent the whole time in prayer. But he doesn't start going across until really, really late.

But the second thing, that's one, is their hearts were hardened. They had not understood about the loaves. The loaves are provision in a case of need, sourced in the compassion of God.

He had compassion on the multitudes. They'd been there all day and they were hungry. Do you think Jesus had compassion on the disciples who were valiantly trying to carry out his command? So the second thing I mentioned is that he would have passed them by.

Almost every translation tries to water this down. It looked as though he would pass them by. It appeared that he would pass them by.

He seemed to be passing. There's no seem to. It says he was willing to pass them by.

He had decided to pass them by. His goal was not to come to the boat. Well, this is one of the more fascinating things I have seen in our miracle study.

We're going to pause here and take our break. When we come back, this is what we're going to look at. Why is Jesus intending? Fellow is the verb of intent.

Why is he intending to pass them by? It seems to me like if he's waited nine hours and the whole thing is to remind them about prayer and so on, well, it seems like he would be intent on coming and driving that point home. Parents do this with their children. I'm going to let you fail and fail and fail.

Then I'm going to come in and make a teaching point for you. It doesn't seem to be Jesus' intention at all. He's intending to go right by.

Well, let's take our break. When we come back, that's where we'll begin.