

Life in His Name – Part 14

Trust in Jesus – John 6:16-21

Crosspoint – Dave Spooner – May 14th, 2023

Intro:

- This morning we are returning to John chapter six, where John records the event of Jesus going to His disciples by walking on the water with the purpose that we may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing in Jesus we may have life in His name (John 20:31).
- For the purpose of his Gospel, Luke does not write about this event at all, but Matthew and Mark do write about it. Matthew records Peter's interaction with Jesus and Peter's walking on the water, and ends with, "And those in the boat worshiped him, saying, 'Truly you are the Son of God'" (Matt 14:33 ESV). Neither Mark nor John records the incident with Peter (but it is the same event). Mark's account ends with, "for they did not understand about the loaves, but their hearts were hardened" (Mark 6:52 ESV), whereas John's account ends with, "and immediately the boat was at the land to which they were going" (John 6:21 ESV). All three versions are accurate while emphasizing different things, and they all point to and reveal the true identity of Jesus.
- John continues to give evidence of the true identity of Jesus while painting a picture of people's response to Jesus. In the account of the healing of the disabled man at the pool of Bethesda, we read that religious leaders want to kill Jesus, and Jesus resists them (John 5). In the account of the feeding of the 5,000, we read that the crowds want to use Jesus, and Jesus walks away from them (John 6:1-15). And in our account this morning, we read that the disciples obey Jesus, and Jesus engages with them.
- One of the things that strikes me in this passage is how Jesus initiates and interacts with His disciples. And from this short account, we will see how Jesus initiates and interacts with us.
- In John's account of the event of Jesus walking on the water, we will see that following the directives of Jesus is not always easy, and sometimes we make slow, painful progress. We will see Jesus demonstrate His identity by fulfilling Old Testament scriptures which should shape, strengthen, and solidify our faith in Him. And we will see that Jesus's deliverance is not about getting us out of the storm but getting Him into our boat.
- We are going to read the entire description, and then we will break it down into three points, with all of them pointing us to trust in Jesus.

John 6:16-21 ESV

When evening came, his disciples went down to the sea, 17 got into a boat, and started across the sea to Capernaum. It was now dark, and Jesus had not yet come to them. 18 The sea became rough because a strong wind was blowing. 19 When they had rowed about three or four miles, they saw Jesus walking on the sea and coming near the boat, and they were frightened. 20 But he said to them, "It is I; do not be afraid." 21 Then they were glad to take him into the boat, and immediately the boat was at the land to which they were going.

Trust in Jesus who sends us

- The disciples were following the instructions of Jesus as Jesus went up to the mountain to pray. He sent the disciples across the sea in a boat. Now I imagine it had already been a long day, they had the large crowds to manage, and they had all been working in food service. They trusted Jesus and

did what He asked them to do. Even though it would get dark soon, they got into the boat and started rowing.

- As they were rowing, it started blowing, really blowing. Not only did the seas become rough, but the wind was blowing against them, making their journey really difficult. Their backs were aching. Their hands were swelling, it was slow, painful plotting that went way into the early morning hours.
- Following in the direction of Jesus does not always mean that plans or the pathway will result in pain-free progress. Sometimes the progress you make will take time, be painful, and require consistent work and continual exertion. This does not mean that you are not in the will of God. On the contrary, this may mean that you are in the heart of the will of God. Sometimes Jesus sends us to do things that are difficult, things that require effort and pain. Sometimes following the word of Jesus does not get progressively easier. It gets progressively harder. Keep rowing.
- Do you trust Jesus? The one who sends you out into strong opposition? Do you trust Jesus's word and commit to continuing to follow even though it is difficult and it causes you pain? If they were not doing what Jesus told them to do in the conditions that were difficult, the disciples would not have seen another facet of who Jesus is. They saw something that the crowds did not, and those who follow, trusting in God's word, will see things that others will not. In slow, painful progress, God has a plan. The Jesus who sends us is also the Jesus who finds us. Continue to trust His word.

Trust in Jesus who finds us

- Jesus walks *away* from those who want to use Him—but Jesus walks *toward* those who follow His word.

John 6:19a ESV

When they had rowed about three or four miles, they saw Jesus walking on the sea and coming near the boat

- The disciples were working hard at following the directive of Jesus. And Jesus came out to them. Jesus does not lose sight of anyone; no one is outside of His reach. Jesus waited all this time, until the perfect time, when the conditions were right, to come and find them.
- Perhaps right now you are “rowing your boat,” following the words of Jesus and thinking that it should not take this long to get to your destination, feeling that you are making slow, pitiful progress and that the winds are against you and the seas are rough. Remember, at just the right time, it is Jesus who comes to us.
- Why? Why does He wait so long? Why does He allow us to struggle? Why is it so hard sometimes to follow the will of Jesus? You want to know why? Because you will learn things about Jesus in the rough waters that you will never learn in the green pastures.
- Trust in Jesus and do what He tells you. Trust in Jesus to come and find you.

Trust in Jesus who comforts us

John 6:19b-21 ESV

... and they were frightened. 20 But he said to them, “It is I; do not be afraid.” 21 Then they were glad to take him into the boat, and immediately the boat was at the land to which they were going.

- You would be frightened as well if you saw something coming toward you on the water. There are plenty of scary things in the water, but if someone is coming toward you *on* the water, that is an entirely different level of frightened.
- Knowing that they were afraid, after walking three to four miles on the waves of the sea, Jesus spoke to them saying “It is I; do not be afraid.” This is how our English Bibles translate the phrase, but literally Jesus said “I AM” (ego eimi); do not be afraid.”
- This term “I AM” surely struck a chord with these Jewish boys. This was the same phrase God used with Moses at the burning bush “**I AM who I AM**” (Exod. 3:14). This is the same phrase that God proclaimed to Isaiah when He said, “**I AM the Lord, and beside me there is no savior**” (Isa. 43:11).
- Jesus said, “I AM” right after He demonstrated who He was by doing only what God alone could do. The righteous Job in all his troubles and all his pain said this about God, “**Who alone stretched out the heavens and trampled the waves of the sea**” (Job 9:1 ESV). This whole thing was set up this way so that those who were following Jesus would understand and see Him for who He is. The same God who makes “footprints in the sand” is the same God who “tramples on the sea.”
- This is not a story about getting people out of storms. This is a story about getting Jesus in the boat. This is not a story about who we are; this is a story about who He is.

Heb 1:3 ESV

He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power.

- The God who upholds the universe by His word is the God who is with us. He is the one who comforts us by His presence, and by His rod and His staff (see Psalm 23:4, Isa 51:12-16). The greatest comfort God offers us is that He is with us in all our fears.
- The disciples only saw this wonder and heard this claim because they were following Jesus, working against a storm, and even though it was painful, it was for their benefit. Once they learned the power and goodness of the Lord, once He was within the boat, compared to what they had encountered, it was smooth sailing from there. They immediately got to where they were going straight away.

Conclusion

- The text reads that the next day the crowds that had been fed and others who had come to join them were looking for Jesus. Once they realized Jesus was not where they thought He was going to be, they left and looked for Jesus in Capernaum. For the next two weeks, Michael will be sharing the messages where we will hear from Jesus as He explains to the crowds and His disciples the meaning of the feeding of the 5,000, where Jesus proclaims that “I AM the bread of life.”
- Trust in the God who is strong. Trust in the Lord who is near. Trust the Father who cares for you. Trust Jesus who loves you. Trust Jesus who sends, finds and comforts us. And in these things, have peace. Your labor in the Lord is not in vain. Following the word of God will always be worth it all (1 Cor 15:58).
- Prayer people and prayer