

## Jesus Walks on Water Mark 6:45-46

Well friends, since we last hung out with Jesus... a week ago, he's been rather busy. And you need to understand how busy Jesus and the disciples have been because it sets the stage for what we witness happening today.

Jesus wants to get his disciples into a boat and sail out on the **Sea of Galilee to get to a remote place** where they can be alone to rest and recharge.

However...Jesus' ministry has touched so many people now, and the need is so great that the crowds refuse to go along with Jesus' plans to get away for some quiet time.

The people rush around the edge of the lake, and word of mouth spreads even quicker so that when Jesus and the disciples land – the crowds are waiting for them. So much for spending some time alone with his disciples in a quiet place.

Now you might think, a bit of rest I get it but why is it so important for Jesus to get away with his disciples – after all you need to make hay while the sun shines.

Jesus wants to be alone with his disciples so that he can reveal to them that the power and resources for doing ministry in his name - come from him.

But the crowds are here... so that will have to wait. Jesus has compassion on the people begins to teach them. The day wears on and it starts to get late and the disciples realize that the people are going to get hungry, and they are out in the middle of nowhere with no food – so they go to Jesus with this concern.

So to identify the fact that they need to understand where their resources and power for ministry comes from He says “You give them something to eat!” and their first response is to see if they can accomplish this from their own resources.

They estimate how much money it would cost to buy everyone bread and probably would have been willing to spend the

money if Jesus had told them too – albeit reluctantly. But what would that would have only reinforced the disciples notion that they were to do ministry out of their own abilities.

So Jesus redirects them to see if there is any food in the crowd and they manage to find five loaves of bread and two fish. Then Jesus blesses it and multiplies it so that there is enough to feed 5000 plus people – with food leftover!

But it seems that the disciples didn't understand the point Jesus was trying to make to them – in fact we know they didn't because in our scripture passage today it says so, vs. 52 – *“they had not understood about the loaves for their hearts were hardened”*

While they were no doubt impressed by the fact that Jesus multiplied all this food – somehow they missed what Jesus wanted to reveal about himself through it.

So, when it was all over and they had finished gathering up the leftovers, the scripture says that Jesus *“immediately”* sent the

disciples into the boat and told them to sail over to Bethsaida while he stayed behind.

Jesus needed to get the disciples away from the distractions of ministering to people so that He would be able to reveal himself to them.

Now the disciples aren't worried that Jesus isn't going with them - in fact Jesus has already sent them out on a mission trip by themselves.

And sailing to the destination where they assume they are going to minister isn't something they would need Jesus for anyways – they are after all experienced fisherman and sailors – they've sailed on the Sea of Galilee all their lives. They've done this on their own hundreds of times before.

So they obediently and most likely rather confidently get into the boat and set out.

However... *a few hours later they are stuck in the middle of the lake straining to row against the wind.*

Now I don't know if you've ever had to row into the wind?  
Back in Ontario I used to do a lot canoeing on lakes, and often times it seemed that when you went out from the dock there was no problem.

But when you wanted to turn around a go back... well! You always seemed to end up having to paddle into the wind... and that can be extremely difficult.

You actually think you're making good progress because you see the bow of the canoe slicing through the waves which are rolling past you, but then you get your bearings against shoreline and you realize you're just paddling to stay in one place – the wind is blowing the waves past you and its just an illusion that you are moving ahead, you're actually stuck.

And friends we need to realize that the disciples were stuck out in the middle of the lake not because they didn't know what they doing, not because they had bad rowing technique, and not because they didn't have a new boat or the latest in oar technology...

The disciples were straining because the wind was too strong for them. With their own resources and strength they could not make much headway to where Jesus had instructed them to go.

And friends I can't help but think that **Jesus wants to speak to us through this passage about our Christian lives** and ministry.

We are disciples of Jesus are we not? and in many ways very much like the first ones!

We are busy... working hard to be good employees at our jobs, to be honest and ethical in the work we do, we want to take good care of our children and our families and give them opportunities to develop God's gifts and talents in their lives, we make sure they know right from wrong and raise them to know Christ as their savior,

We've obeyed Jesus and we've hopped into the boat, this "fellow-**ship**" called Valleyview and we've sailed off into our community to share the gospel, to tell people Christ loves them and forgives them, and has a wonderful life planned out for them...

And all this busyness can make our hearts hard; it can distract us from understanding who Jesus is revealing himself to be.

And friends, as we follow Jesus it can be easy for us to believe that we live our lives and do his work out of our own strength and resources.

And finally our lives and ministry may have come to a point where we feel like we are not making any progress. The prevailing winds of our cultural context are blowing against us

Truth is relative, people believe all roads lead to God, they go away on the weekends; they want to sleep in on Sunday, etc... etc...

And we're working hard, rowing against this – our boat is seaworthy, we've got the latest in oar technology, we've got good people and good technique – we know what we're doing...

but the **wind is too strong for us and we're straining at the oars** to try and make any progress towards our goals.

Now there is a very popular saying these days about the definition of insanity – *“doing the same thing over and over and expecting different results”*

So please notice friends that the disciples are insane – they simply keep on rowing against the wind. There is never any question of turning back and walking along the shore or giving up or doing anything different.

They just keep on rowing into the wind – all night from evening until just before dawn.

Why? Because Jesus told them to. Jesus said get in the boat and sail over to Bethsaida and so that is what they are going to keep on doing.

Friends... sometimes it helps to be a little insane to be a disciple of Jesus.

Because **we just keep on rowing into the wind**; we just keep on reaching out to our community with the gospel whether it seems like we're making progress or not... because Jesus has

told us too. As the apostle Paul says “*If we are “out of our mind,” as some say, it is for God” (2 Cor 5:13)*

So the disciples keeping rowing into the wind all night – and Jesus can see them struggling from the shore and He waits until just before dawn to go out to them.

They’ve struggled long enough, and Jesus determines they are ready to have Him reveal Himself to them.

So He goes out walking on the water!!! Friends this is extremely significant... Moses parted the Red Sea, the Jordan River parted for Joshua, Elijah and Elisha – all great men of God.

**But Jesus *walks* on the water** – he is in a different class altogether than Moses, Joshua, Elijah and Elisha. As we read in Job 9:8 It is God alone who marches on the waves of the sea.

So by walking out to them on the water Jesus wants to reveal himself as God’s Son who is fully God.

But the disciples can’t comprehend this – instead they are terrified, they think a spirit has come to do them in. And it’s hard to blame them, after all God is so beyond us in who He is that it is terrifying.

But this is Emmanuel – God *with* us. It is not God come in judgment or anger – it is Jesus and He calms the disciples by saying “Take courage – it is I”

Courage...in the face of coming to understand that Jesus is fully God, the God who is absolutely Holy, whose very presence can undo a human being – Jesus says courage! And gets in the boat with them. God is with us!

And suddenly things are no longer insane, the wind dies down and they suddenly realize God is with them in Jesus.

You see friends Jesus doesn’t want to let our busyness keep us from missing His revealing Himself to us as God, He wants us to understand that as God, He is the source of what we are doing –not us.

And so He allows us to row into the wind for a while so that He can come to us as God, walking on the water.

But friends we might not recognize Him at first because He comes to us as one who walks on the things we fear so much – bankruptcy, divorce, failing in our ministry, opposition or persecution... the things we are straining to push through on our way to reaching our goals.

But the good news is that it's not a disaster looming on the horizon – its **Jesus showing himself to be God.**

And Friends, I've seen this happen twice in my time here at Valleyview. Twice I've thought that we were facing an impending disaster that would destroy the mission to our community which Christ has sent us on.

But in the end it has turned out to be the opportunity in which Christ has revealed himself as the one who does the impossible – you know God-things – and it only serves to confirm that He is in the boat with us and we're on the right course.

The latest one had to do with getting permission from Presbytery for changing our Church's name to Valleyview Community Church – to reflect our ministry and mission.

We're straining and working hard to make progress in reaching out to our community, to build relationships and share the gospel.... And suddenly all I could see coming on the horizon was a negative report criticizing our mission focus and accusing us of pulling away from our denomination and recommending that we not be given permission to change our name.

I was afraid that this report was going to prompt Presbytery to come and investigate us and find all sorts of issues with our church and end up sidetracking us and interfering with what we're supposed to be doing. That would be disastrous for us as we are straining to make progress.

Instead I saw Christ at work – when the report came up at our last Presbytery meeting, the preceding events on the agenda set a context in which this report seemed petty and unsubstantiated and it ended up being voted down.

And in a dramatic turn around we ended up being given permission to change our name! This totally confirms Christ is in the boat with us, this is not something we're doing out of our own abilities and strength – if it were it wouldn't have happened.

But as amazing as that is and as much as it is great for us – I think I'm just excited and amazed to have witnessed Christ do this. I saw Him through what He did!

I just saw Jesus walking on the water friends – maybe you did too.

So, I pray that this will help us all keep on rowing into the wind when it blows against us –

Whether it be in your personal life as you struggle to serve Christ in your work, in your marriage, in your family, in your school or in whatever part you play in Valleyview's calling to serve this community.

Keep on rowing into the wind – because friends, Jesus will reveal himself to you. You will see God – and in that moment, that's all that matter – that's what it's all about... seeing Christ.

and once you witness something like this – it doesn't matter that you've struggled against the wind for a long time – **Jesus is with us!** He's the beginning, He's the end, He is our all in all. He's real- He's the Son of God!

Friends there's lots more we could cover in this story – but I want to leave it here, and not just because of time.

We've seen Jesus.....and I don't know about you, but I needed that. I believe we all needed it. So it's important that we just enjoy it for a while, be encouraged by it, and stay in His presence – and worship Him, Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

Amen