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SERMON TITLE: "Jesus Walks on Water to Help You!"

SCRIPTURE: John 6:15-21

DATE: April 29, 2018

Check out the service at www.fpcd.org.

READ Psalm 107:21-32

We began the study of John looking at Jesus' defining qualities. Jesus is the light of the world. The Hebrew word for light means: life, deliverance, justice, and joy. Those qualities in Jesus are so all encompassing, they provide such true help, Jesus is so able and willing to come into your life that he brings those qualities into you.

In January, we asked some questions to help us understand and apply these qualities, "Where do you want to shine your light in me, Jesus?" Where do I need life? Or, deliverance? Where do I need to walk justly and with joy? In the midst of life, how do we experience Jesus' light? We want to ask this question with every week of study. How does Jesus overcome the darkness in me?

If you are pragmatic, you might say: *whenever and wherever I need it.*

What times in your day do you need some of Jesus' light? Do you ever go to work or the store or out on the freeway and think, **NOW** Jesus, I need your light now!

Those sailors which the Psalmist writes about—the ones who were suddenly hit by a storm? They did not waste time—they cried out for help!

God was their light—their deliverer; the one who calmed the storm and gave them life. Then they were filled with joy. They praised God.

After the disciples, to their surprise, fed the 5,000, the crowd determined to take Jesus by force and make him king. READ John 6:15-21

What a story. You might think the account is terse, but I'll add Matthew's and Mark's details.

John says the people were going to force Jesus to be king. But that's God's business. The only way to truly follow God's will is to talk to him—so Jesus slipped away by himself to do just that. For hours. It was afternoon; he dismissed the crowd; Matthew and Mark say he sent the

disciples in the boat then he went up the mountain and prayed well into the night. By that time the wind had kicked up.

Matthew and Mark relate that it wasn't just against them; it was battering their boat. The waves beat against the boat. They were rowing against the wind in intense waves. Rowing, rowing all night—but had only progressed a short three to four miles.

In 2012, four Olympians attempted to row from Africa to Miami. Here's how they described rowing in rough weather with the wind against you:

[T]heir progress is soul-crushingly slow. Currents, waves and wind clash around them like rush-hour commuters in a train station. Most of the time, they ride swells of one to three metres. But in stormy seas, the boat surfs down into deep troughs between waves up to five metres high and the whole world disappears, leaving nothing but sliding walls of water around them.¹

That is the kind of water Jesus walks on.

- ~ What is threatening for us is no problem for Jesus.
- ~ What is impossible for us is very doable for Jesus.
- ~ What scares us to death does not scare Jesus at all.

Gail McWilliams knows what it means to be threatened by impossible circumstances. She tells the story in her book *Seeing Beyond: Choosing to Look Past the Horizon*. Gail was faced with a great struggle which felt like giant waves crashing over her. She and her husband wanted children, but she had had diabetes since childhood. Doctors said it would be impossible. But she and her husband prayed. In time, they would indeed have five "miracle" children. But what I want to tell you about is child number two.

During that pregnancy the blood vessels in Gail's eyes hemorrhaged. Gail had developed diabetic retinopathy. Her doctor gave her an ultimatum one day. "You must choose between your baby and your eyes." Without hesitation she said, "I choose my baby." She knew immediately what was right in God's eyes. But she writes: "The doctor stood to his

¹ Shannon Proudfoot, "What Happens When Four Guys Try to Cross the Atlantic in a Rowboat," at <https://www.sportsnet.ca/magazine/what-happens-when-four-guys-try-to-cross-the-atlantic-in-a-rowboat/>, accessed 4/25/2018.

feet as he angrily shut my file and said, “What a foolish decision,” and then left the room.” She was stunned.²

Eventually she had three more children. Each pregnancy created more hemorrhages in her eyes and brought her closer to blindness, until she was totally blind. But she trusted God, realizing that she could see things others could not see. She explained that most people live life based only on what they can see. But she testifies that there’s so much more, “It’s about vision. When you have vision, you can see even in the darkest places of life.”³

Jesus could see on this dark, stormy night what the disciples could not see because they were living life based only on what they could see. Jesus did not see them in their terrified attitude; he saw their potential. That’s why he sent them out. He was teaching them to have vision.

Are you fearful? Listen carefully for the hope in this story.

The three gospels that tell this story each have a few details of their own. But there’s one thing that is the very same in all three—what Jesus said in response to the disciples’ fear: ἐγώ εἰμι

“I AM.” You recognize that, of course. It is the words of God to identify himself to Moses when he asked God, “What is your name?” Mark tells us that from the top of the mountain “Jesus saw that they were making headway painfully” (6:48). Jesus walked up to them on the water and shouted out ἐγώ εἰμι, “I AM.”

In those two words the expression answers four things about a person: First, *who are you?* Second, the qualifier, *what are you?* Third, an identifier, *who or what organization are you identified with?* Finally, a recognition factor, *is this the one asked for or expected?*

For example, if I came here and I was a plumber I would say, “I am Ginger Hertenstein, the plumber, with Ben Franklin Plumbing Company, founded by my grandfather. I came in response to your call about your toilet overflowing.”

I identified myself, qualified myself, connected myself to a person or company, and announced I was the one whom you called.

The disciples are terrified both about their circumstances and that Jesus had come walking on water.

He says, “I AM.” That phrase spoke volumes to the disciples. They would quickly recognize that Jesus was indicating a unique relation to God:

- ~ I AM provider of the bread of life
- ~ I AM bringer of light in darkness (so do not fear)
- ~ I AM here to deliver
- ~ I AM the LORD, the Son of GOD
- ~ I AM he whom you have been calling for centuries

With this identifier, those who were terrified were GLAD to take him into the boat. They were *SO GRATEFUL!* They were willing, happy, and eager instead of terrified, afraid, and straining against the storm. Suddenly the entire struggle was over and they had arrived at their destination. They had been delivered! Hallelujah!

In your dark storm, when you pray to Jesus, do you pray in fear or do you recognize that He is Jesus, who provides life and light, who is here to deliver, sent by God, because you called. He is the Lord who says to you, “I AM he.”

That’s all that John tells us. But Matthew adds this: *Peter answered him, “Lord, if it is you, command me to come to you on the water.” He said, “Come.” So Peter got out of the boat, started walking on the water, and came toward Jesus. But when he noticed the strong wind he became frightened and beginning to sink, he cried out, “Lord, save me!” Jesus immediately reached out his hand and caught him, saying to him, “You of little faith, why did you doubt?” (14:28-32)*

Peter, out there in the dark, caught the vision for a brief moment. With Jesus, nothing is impossible. With Jesus storms can become your help to learn about his power; to learn who Jesus really is.

Jesus said, No matter how bad it looks, I AM the light in your darkness.

No matter how rough it is, I AM here to deliver. And in this storm you can learn to walk on water.

Know and believe: I AM he.

AMEN

² Zig Ziglar and Julie Ziglar Norman, *Embrace the Struggle: Living Life on Life’s Terms* (New York: Howard Publ., 2009), 79-80.

³ Interview with Kirk Cameron, at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qR_0vvGIDs8, accessed 4/25/2018.