



Tell me the stories of Jesus

Connect group questions

Jesus walks on water and the Rich young ruler

Jesus walks on water - read Matthew 14: 22-33

1. What was Jesus saying when he assured the disciples "it is I"?
2. Why did Peter step out of the boat?
3. Why did he start sinking?
4. What is the significance of Peter's cry "Lord save me?"
5. What is the significance of the disciples' exclamation in v13?
6. What are the take homes for us from this passage?

The Rich young ruler - read Luke 18:18-30

7. What was Jesus teaching in this phrase 'no-one' is good but alone'?
8. Why did Jesus mention the particular commandments he did and how likely is it that this guy had kept them all? Why are people today under the impression that they keep the commandments?
9. v22 - why did Jesus ask this guy to sell everything he had? Why aren't we all doing this?
10. v24 - why is it any harder for rich people (that's us!) to enter the kingdom of God then for others?
11. How does God make what is impossible, possible?
12. Share how you have been compensated for anything you have given up to follow Jesus?
13. What are the take homes for *you* from this passage?

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Passage Matthew 14: 22-33
Title: Jesus walks on water

Most of you have heard me speak a few times now

And so you're probably getting used to the fact that I usually start with a family anecdote

And today is no different!

I'm going to take you back to a time when I was about three or four years old

I was very cute back then - how things have changed!

White blond hair, usually up in a topknot

I spoke with a lisp

And I wanted to do everything my big sisters could do.

Except I was afraid of water,

Which was pretty serious given most of our summer Saturdays were spent at the beach.

Mum was determined that I was going to overcome this fear.

So one Saturday she found what to me at the time was a huuuuge rockpool

And it had a big rock in the middle.

Mum went and sat on the rock in the middle of the pool

And cruel mum that she was

She held out a sweet to me

You can see it can't you

Lots of encouragement from mum

Me - toe in the water then pulling back quickly

Wanting to do it but being too afraid

Now I must have heard the story of Jesus walking on water at some stage

Because I can remember standing there and thinking

Maybe I don't need to actually go **in** the water

Maybe I could just walk on top of it like Jesus did.

Trouble was - I stood there thinking for so long

That my big sisters came and pushed me in!

But this story still had a happy ending -

they got told off and I got the sweet anyway.

Anyway let's turn to our story of Jesus this morning

And work through what this miracle is all about.

Now this particular miracle

is in fact included in three of the four gospels.

And it's not just something biblical scholars and devout Christians know.

It's a story known by almost everyone who has ever heard of Jesus.

But there's a problem with famous miracles like this.

Because we tend to focus on the act itself,

and not on what it tells us.

Jesus had a purpose for everything that he did, including miracles.

So every time we read the Bible and see Jesus doing something amazing,

we need to ask ourselves - why did he do that?

In the gospels miracles are often called signs, because they're pointing us to something.

In fact I can't put it any better than the apostle John

who finished his gospel with these words

Jesus performed many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.

But how on earth does walking on water act as sign to show us this.

To show us that Jesus is the Son of God

And to show us that we have a promised future eternal life because of him.

Well that's what we're going to look at this morning.

Now, up to this point Jesus has already performed many signs or miracles

He's healed people, both privately and publicly

He's cast out demons

He's calmed the storm

He's brought a little girl back to life

He's fed the five thousand.

And yet this miracle,

seen by just a few people –

seen only by his disciples who are already committed to follow him

This miracle is pivotal.

But before I explain why, let's look at some background.

We are at a point immediately after one of Jesus' most public miracles

the feeding of the five thousand.

Jesus is now into his third year of ministry

And his popularity is at its height.

Expectations of him were also at their height

And what were these expectations?

Well in John's gospel we're told that after this miracle of the loaves and fishes

the crowds "intended to ... make Jesus king by force"

This is what they wanted.

A leader who would lead a rebellion

to free them from the bondage of Roman rule.

But this of course was a complete misunderstanding of the mission of Jesus.

Jesus **would** soon be King

but not in the way they wanted, and not on their timetable.

This, I think, explains why Jesus is so eager to send the disciples away.

They are almost certainly caught up in this same fervour.

After all it's exactly what they want as well.

It's the plan they've had for Jesus all along.

And this is why this miracle is so pivotal

Because up to this point the disciples still don't get it.

They still don't understand who Jesus is and why he's come.

So how does this miracle change things?

We know the story well don't we

The disciples are out on the lake

And we can work out from things in the narrative

that they had been rowing all night

Yet they only needed to go a short distance along the shoreline

to get to where they were heading.

But here they are - after hours of rowing

a considerable distance from land.

Now they're not in a storm as such - it's just a very strong headwind

So the wind and waves were against them

And the waves would have been pretty big even though this is just an inland sea.

But they were experienced sailors who had spent most of their lives on or around the Sea of Galilee

so they probably weren't terrified at this stage - just exhausted.

That is until they saw, in that misty pre-dawn light

a figure walking towards them.

This is so familiar to us that perhaps we aren't amazed by it any more.

But come on, put yourself in their position

They're in the middle of the sea of Galilee -

in the middle of an expanse of sea that is about 21km long and 13km wide

And suddenly they see something or someone walking towards them.

It would have been pretty frightening?

Add to this the fact that one of the Jewish superstitions at that time

was that the appearance of spirits during the night brought disaster.

And it's no wonder they were terrified and cried out in fear.

Jesus would have known this

He would have known the effect his appearance in this manner would have.

So why then did he choose to come to them by walking on water?

He was answering the question the disciples had asked

the last time they were in a boat when they were caught in a storm.

"What kind of man is this? Even the winds and the waves obey him!"

This is where we start to see why this miracle is so pivotal

Because it wouldn't just be this previous miracle of calming the storm that came to mind

Jesus' disciples were faithful Jews

They would have heard the scriptures taught or recited in the synagogues all their lives

So maybe they recalled Job's words in praise of God:

"He alone stretches out the heavens and treads on the waves of the sea" (Job 9:8)

or David's words in Psalm 77

"Your path led through the sea, your way through the mighty waters, though your footprints were not seen"

So now, maybe, they were beginning to answer for themselves the question "what kind of man is this"

But it's Jesus' words to them here that changes everything for them

He says in vs 27

Take courage. It is I! Don't be afraid.

Now I'd love to tell you that I'd studied biblical Greek for years and am completely fluent

But no.

Instead it's by the wonders of Google I can reveal to you why this is so pivotal.

Why Jesus' words here change everything for the disciples.

The key is in the three words "It is I".

Or in Greek "ego eimi"

These two words are incredibly significant and powerful

Because a more literal translation of the words Jesus says here would be "Take courage, I AM, don't be afraid".

Ego eimi I AM

In Exodus Chapter 3 when God calls Moses to be the one to lead his people out of Egypt,

Moses said to God, "Suppose I go to the Israelites and say to them, 'The God of your fathers has sent me to you,' and they ask me, 'What is his name?' Then what shall I tell them?"

God said to Moses, "I am who I am. This is what you are to say to the Israelites: 'I am has sent me to you.'"

I AM - the name by which God wanted to be known and worshipped in Israel

So when Jesus walks on water and then says: Take Courage. It is I! Do not be afraid"

He is both showing and telling them he is God.

This is the truth that this sign, this miracle is pointing to.

Jesus is God.

Just think how mind-blowing this must be for the disciples.

They had a nice neat view of Jesus – one that met their objectives.

A great leader who would rouse up the people and free them from the Romans

How about you?

Do you have a nice, neat view of Jesus.

Someone to turn to with our agenda, our needs, our wants in mind.

Someone brought out when we need him but then put away again when we don't need him.

I confess this is sometimes how I am,

Getting on with things on my own

Turning to Jesus when I need him

But then forgetting about him when I don't.

There are times I think when we need to remind ourselves of all the dimensions of Jesus

Of course the loving, giving, humble Jesus who gave his life for us.

But also the glorious, majestic, powerful, all-knowing I AM

The one as we're told in Hebrews who is:

"... the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word."

But our narrative isn't finished yet

Because we need to think about what Peter is up to here.

Now I spoke about Peter a few months back

And here again he's being typically Peter isn't he?.

This is what we see with him in so many incidents –

boldness, failure and restoration.

In fact if I asked you which disciple was most likely to get out of the boat

I'm pretty sure you'd say Peter wouldn't you.

But why did he get out of the boat.

Well, despite some of what has been written,

I don't think it was bravado or showing off or just crazy behaviour.

I think it was Peter's almost instinctive response.

No matter what the situation, Peter wanted to be near Jesus

He knew the best place to be is with Jesus.

But note he didn't immediately get out of the boat

He says in vs 28

"Lord, if it's you," ... , "tell me to come to you on the water."

Two comments about this

First, don't read this as if Peter is testing this figure on whether or not he is Jesus.

The "if it is you" would probably be better translated "since it is you"

This is Peter's faith in Jesus -

because it's you Jesus,

you have the power to enable **me** to walk on water.

The second point is that Peter says "tell me to come"

He doesn't just say "whoa Jesus, hang on a minute, I'm coming, I'm coming"

Instead he asks and waits for Jesus' command before he acts.

He's ready to submit to Jesus' will.

In one way Peter gets it so right

Because he acknowledges Jesus' power and authority.

But then,

He takes his eyes off Jesus and starts to focus on his circumstances.

He looks at the effect the wind is having.

Doubt enters and he begins to go under.

We can absolutely put ourselves in Peter's place here.

We understand his fear, we understand his faith and we understand his doubt.

You can almost hear him can't you?

Look, Lord, it's not easy to have faith while I'm walking on water.

I mean, I haven't done this before.

Yes I've been around water my whole life,

But up until now

very time I've put my foot in it, my foot goes to the bottom.

It doesn't stay on the top.

So this is a whole new thing for me."

Isn't that the way it is with us sometimes?

We understand something of the nature of Christ,

We step out in faith, full of enthusiasm to obey him.

and we do really well,

well that is until we come up against something a bit scary or a bit difficult.

For example you're sharing the gospel with someone.

It seems to be going well,

You think you're talking sensibly,

but then they start frowning or asking difficult questions.

suddenly you feel inadequate – you don't have all the answers.

Fear comes in and faith departs.

And yet sharing the gospel isn't about our ability,

It's about God using us in our weakness.

Or maybe life is generally going along pretty well.

Health, family, finances, work are all pretty stable

Your devotional life is good

because you always make time for prayer and bible reading.

But then a crisis hits and all that goes out the window

while you get on and try to fix things.

Because it's down to you to get it sorted out, to solve the problem.

And suddenly your faith is in your own ability.

Except that sometimes we just can't do it

Things just can't be fixed the way we want them fixed

Or we just can't cope with the pressure on our own.

This is a great teaching moment for Peter and the disciples

and it's a wonderful reminder for us.

Jesus is the answer.

We can trust in Jesus, no matter our circumstances.

Because it's not **our faith** that is important.

It's the one in whom we have placed that faith.

The I AM who came into our world.

Peter knew what to do when he thought he was in danger of drowning.

He had the sense to make the right call when he cried out "Lord save me".

It's the most profound prayer possible.

It's also one of the shortest prayers you'll find anywhere. "Lord, save me!"

no excess words, no explanations, no justification,

just "Lord, save me!"

But it's all that was needed.

And in response,

Jesus graciously reached out to him, lifted him up, and took him to safety.

This is the pattern we see in God's actions throughout the Bible.

He reaches out to his people and brings them to safety.

This is what he did for us in the person of Jesus Christ

He reached out to us by coming into our world,

and through his death and resurrection

we are lifted up and brought to safety.

How often do you make that same cry that Peter made?

Lord save me.

If you've never made that cry then I'd love to talk to you about what it means.

But for many of us I'm sure it's a cry 've made quite often,

Particularly in moments of hopelessness or despair

And when we do, we feel that same wonderful feeling that Peter would have felt.

The sense of safety and security when you reach out and Jesus takes you by the hand.

The knowledge that, no matter what the circumstances in this world,

we are safe because of Jesus.

Now I often wonder how many times Jesus must want to say to us

You of little faith Why do you doubt.

It's hard to know exactly what he means when he says this to Peter

Because we can't hear the tone of his voice.

But I think that it was more about encouragement than reprimand.

He's reminding Peter not to lose focus but to trust him, no matter what.

In the same way we're reminded that while we also may have lost focus, he never does.

And as he pulls us out of the water, we're reminded that there is forgiveness.

Forgiveness for those times we've not trusted him,

Forgiveness for those times we've been more focused on our problems than his solutions.

You of little faith, he says to each of us,

Why do you doubt my love for you?

Why do you doubt my ability to protect and help you?

Why do you doubt my forgiveness?"

And we have no answer because there is no reason to doubt.

Jesus is the covenant-keeping God, **I AM**.

Jesus is the one who has the power to work all things for our good.

Jesus is faithful in his forgiveness of us

because he paid for all our sins, including our doubts and distractions.

I started this morning by talking about how the disciples didn't understand who Jesus was or what he came to do.

When we read verse 33 we see the transformation

Then those who were in the boat worshiped him, saying, "Truly you are the Son of God."

Finally the disciples get it.

This is the first time they refer to him as The Son of God

But it's not just their words, it's their actions that show they now understand.

that there is only one response they can give ... to worship him.

And this too must be our response

To worship Jesus with our whole lives

To glorify his name to the world.

Jesus walked on water that *we may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing we may have life in his name.*

Amen.