**WALKING ON THE WATER**

***Another Miracle on the Sea***

***Matthew 14:22-36***

Sunday School Lesson 11

*The Miracles of Jesus*

03/24/2019

**Introduction:** This week’s lesson focuses on the events immediately following the feeding of the more than five thousand people. The Lord sent the people away after the feeding, as He knew that they were ready to make Him their king. They did not understand the idea of a suffering Messiah. When the people were gone, the Lord constrained His disciples to enter into a ship and cross over the sea without Him. This was done to provide the disciples with another test of their faith, and it also allowed the Lord to spend time in sweet communion with the Father. A great wind met the disciples on the sea, and they spent the night fighting against the waves. Thankfully, the Lord knew their trouble, and He came down from the mountain to help them. Here’s where we find the miracle of the walking on water. There were no conventional methods for the Lord to travel across the sea at that hour of the day, but we know that He is not limited by convention. As the Lord walked on the water, the disciples experienced quite the shift of emotions. They started with frustration and then moved to fear and doubt. Then, their doubt was quickly changed to faith and amazement. The Lord desires our faith. Every test that He gave to the disciples was only done to help encourage and strengthen their weak faith, and the same is true of us today. While faith is the theme of this miracle (and every miracle), we will notice a variety of important truths found throughout this story.

1. WHEN WE PUT GOD TO THE TEST, IT REVEALS THAT OUR FAITH IS ACTUALLY THE ONE THAT NEEDS TO BE TESTED. (MATTHEW 14:28-29)
2. **Notice that Peter tested the Lord’s power to see if it was really Him (Matthew 14:28).** It’s somewhat difficult to understand exactly why Peter handled the situation the way that he did. Some have posited that Peter requested to walk on the water because he wanted to be close to the Lord. Perhaps, it’s that simple. Others suggest that he did it because he wanted to experience the miraculous ability of walking on water. It’s impossible for us to know Peter’s full motivation. What we do know is that Peter’s request did not make much sense considering their fears and concerns. They thought that Jesus was a spirit, but Jesus told them who He was. Peter decided that if it was the Lord, then He could give him the power to walk on water as well. The question is what would have happened if they were right, and He was a spirit? Peter would have fallen into the troubled waters, and the spirit would have still been close to the ship. From a practical standpoint, Peter’s request would not have changed much either way. Given that he referred to Jesus as Lord in his request, Peter must have had some small level of faith, but he just needed a demonstration of power to prove the Lord.
3. **Notice that Peter had to have the faith to step out of the ship and make his way to Jesus (Matthew 14:29).** While Peter meant for this to be a test of the Lord’s power and authenticity, the real test was on Peter. He was the one who had to have the faith to step out of the ship. The Lord’s answer to Peter was simple. He just said “come.” He put the onus on Peter to determine whether he had the faith to believe or not. Even today, many Christians are looking for the Lord to give them some sort of sign or evidence of His power. Like Gideon, we put out our fleeces and call on the Lord to show us something. Yet, Gideon had to make the choice on whether to believe that it was really the Lord involved or not. His faith was put to the test, and it failed on the first effort. When our first response is to test the Lord, we should pause and consider what that says about our faith. The Lord is faithful, and He is going to do all things well according to His gracious will.
4. WHEN WE PUT OUR VISION ON UNCONTROLLABLE AND FEARFUL THINGS, IT WILL CAUSE OUR FAITH TO FAIL US. (MATTHEW 14:30-32)
5. **Notice that Peter was doing well until he looked at the boisterous wind (Matthew 14:30).** When Peter first came out of the ship, he began to walk toward the Lord. Imagine how that must have felt to walk across the top of the water and totally defy the laws of science as we know them! Peter got to do something that no other person, except for Christ, was able to do. When the children of Israel needed to make their way across the sea during their escape from Egypt, the Lord chose to part the sea instead of allowing the people to walk across it. Notice that Peter did not just walk on ordinary and calm water. This water was gushing back and forth as the result of the wind. Everything was going well for Peter until he turned his attention away from Christ and onto the boisterous wind. In that moment, all of the fear that he had experienced previously on the boat returned back to him. We might be quick to blame Peter for looking at the wind, but we must at least consider how we would have handled the situation if we were there in his place.
6. **Notice that the wind was beyond his control, but it was not beyond the control of the Lord (Matthew 14:31-32).** There was nothing that Peter could have done about the bothersome wind. After all, he had been trying to fight against it all night with no success. That’s the problem though. We often fear most the things that we cannot control. We want everything to work properly and within our time tables. The other thing that we fear is the unknown. This again is attributed to control. We have no control over the future except for the decisions that we make today. We do not know the decisions that everyone around us will make. How many times do we ask the question “what if?” How do we so easily forget that we survived those same “what ifs” yesterday? The happiest Christian may be the one who has given full control to the Lord. That person does not have a care or burden. He has firmly placed the responsibility for the outcome upon the Lord. We know that the Lord has the power to handle the situation, so there is no reason to worry. Was the same God that let Peter walk on water going to allow a wind to cause Peter to fall?
7. WHEN HE WAS ALONE IN THE MOUNTAIN, THE LORD SHOWED US THE NEED TO PRIORITIZE A PERSONAL TIME WITH THE HEAVENLY FATHER. (MATTHEW 14:23-25)
8. **Notice that Jesus chose to put His personal time with the Father above the people’s desires (Matthew 14:22-23).** As mentioned in the introduction, the people wanted to make the Lord their king. They would have stayed there with Him all night. In fact, when the people saw that the ship was gone the next day, they journeyed across the sea just to find the Lord. Although the Lord had a great burden to help every single person with an infirmity, He recognized the need for that personal alone time with the Heavenly Father. His disciples probably wanted to stay as well. After all, they had just gotten back from being out in groups of two. They would have enjoyed some more time with Jesus. Yet, Jesus sent them on ahead of Him to the other side of the sea. From the start, His plan was not to abandon the disciples, but He first needed and craved that alone time. Our compassion should cause us to desire to help as many people as we can. Yet, we cannot let our Christian service impede the need for a personal relationship with the Lord.
9. **Notice that He waited until the fourth watch to come down to His disciples (Matthew 14:24-25).** The Romans divided the twelve hours of the night into four 3-hour increments. Each one of these increments was referred to as a watch. The Bible tells us that the disciples left at the start of the evening, meaning that they left during the first watch (around 6:00PM). They had travelled out roughly three to four miles from the shore before their trouble with the wind began. This means that the wind started some time during the first or second watch. The disciples struggled for several hours with the wind, as it was not until the fourth watch (3:00AM – 6:00AM) that Jesus came down from the mountain. The fourth watch is significant because it represented the last opportunity during the evening hours to provide a rescue. Some might look at this and think that it was cruel or unreasonable for the Lord to put that type of strain on His disciples. Yet, if they had strong faith, they would not have needed His intervention. Consequently, we should see the desire that Jesus had for communication with the Heavenly Father.
10. WHEN HE CAME INTO THE SHIP, THE LORD CONTINUED PERFORMING MIRACLES AS A WAY TO INCREASE THEIR FAITH. (MATTHEW 14:32; JOHN 6:21)
11. **Notice that the wind ceased once they were in the ship (Matthew 14:32).** While this was not the first time that He had done this, it would have still been amazing to observe the Lord stopping the wind. As soon as He stepped foot in the boat, the winds ceased. He did not even have to speak to the wind this time. Sometimes, we tend to think that the Lord only performs miracles or mighty works when we are without as a way to draw us in. Yet, the Lord does not stop doing work just because we are in His fold. He knows that our faith still has more perfecting that is needed. Even the greatest Christian has room for faith improvement.
12. **Notice that He took consideration to their condition and caused the ship to immediately be at the shore (John 6:21).** There’s a very subtle miracle performed at the conclusion of this trip. The book of John tells us that the ship was immediately at the shore after Jesus came into the ship. Remember that the ship was stuck out in the middle of the sea. They probably still had several miles to go to reach the other side. Yet, they were there immediately! This is equally as incredible as the walking on water. The Lord turned their ship into the fastest speed boat in history. Given that the disciples had been toiling in rowing for several hours, the Lord knew that calming the wind would not totally alleviate the problem. The disciples did not have the strength to continue. Thankfully, Jesus had more than enough.

**Conclusion:** Although we are now in our eleventh week of our study on the miracles of Jesus, reflecting on the power and greatness of God never gets old. We should be thankful that we have a God that defies the normal logic of man. He makes a way where there is no way. Why do we still struggle to trust in God when we see all of the things that He has done? We should stop trying to test Him and just trust Him. He will never let us down. He will walk across the water to help us through.