



## TALKS FOR GROWING CHRISTIANS TRANSCRIPT

### John 6:15-21: The Fifth Miracle in the Gospel of John: Jesus Walks on the Sea of Galilee

---

*"Therefore when Jesus perceived that they were about to come and take Him by force to make Him king, He departed again to the mountain by Himself alone.*

*16 Now when evening came, His disciples went down to the sea, 17 got into the boat, and went over the sea toward Capernaum. And it was already dark, and Jesus had not come to them. 18 Then the sea arose because a great wind was blowing. 19 So when they had rowed about three or four miles,<sup>[a]</sup> they saw Jesus walking on the sea and drawing near the boat; and they were afraid. 20 But He said to them, "It is I; do not be afraid." 21 Then they willingly received Him into the boat, and immediately the boat was at the land where they were going."*

#### Background Notes

A few background notes will help us set the stage for the teaching points of this section of scripture. In John 20:30-31 the apostle John gives us his purpose for writing this Gospel: *"And truly Jesus did many other signs in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book; 31 but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name."* John selected seven miracles to show that Jesus could be none other than the Son of God. These seven miracles are called "sign miracles" because they clearly point to the deity of Christ.

In John 6 we have two of these sign miracles: "Sign miracle #4," the miracle of the feeding of five thousand, and "Sign Miracle #5," the miracle of Jesus walking on the Sea of Galilee. When you read the accounts of the feeding of the five thousand in all four Gospels, it would seem that the miracle took place somewhere near the north shore of the Sea of Galilee. What a great miracle! Five small loaves of bread and two small fish were multiplied, and thousands of hungry people were fed. Remember, it was five thousand men, and women and children besides -- maybe as many as twelve thousand or more were fed! Certainly this was a sign of the deity of Christ.

Because of this great miracle, verse 15 tells us: *"when Jesus perceived that they were about to come and take Him by force to make Him king, He departed again to the mountain by Himself alone."* The people wanted to make Him king -- not because they were ready to repent of their sins, but because they wanted someone to lead them and overthrow the Roman occupation. Rome ruled all of the Holy Land at this time. So Jesus *"departed again to the mountain by Himself alone."* The mountain would have been one of the range of high hills, known today as the Golan Heights.

Meanwhile, the disciples had started to cross the Sea of Galilee. Suddenly a strong wind arose! Windstorms can build quite quickly on the Sea of Galilee. I have

seen myself on some of our Holy Land Tours, how the wind can come up very suddenly and dramatically. The disciples were in danger on the troubled sea.

It was at this point that our Lord came to them, walking on the water. Quite a miracle! Not only that, but as soon as the Lord got into the boat, the winds stopped and they were at their destination! This display of the Lord's power over natural law certainly is a clear sign of His deity.

## **Doctrinal / Teaching Points**

### **1. The Lord's comforting presence is not always immediate.**

In Psalm 23:4 we read: *"Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me."* The Lord promises the believer that He will be with us through all the experiences of life, and that He will comfort us. But the Lord's comforting presence is not always immediate. I think we see that point illustrated in this miracle.

While the disciples were straining at the oars, the Lord was on the mountain alone, praying. From the accounts in Matthew and Mark we know that the Lord saw them out there on the stormy lake, battered by the waves and straining at the oars, but they didn't realize this at that point. For the disciples it was dark and scary and dangerous. They would have loved to have the Lord there in the boat with them, but the Lord was not there in the boat with them – in fact, He didn't come to them until the fourth watch of the night, somewhere between three and six AM.

This whole event is a spiritual picture of our present life as believers. It is a picture – a spiritual picture. As the Lord was on the mountain, praying, so He is now in heaven, making intercession on our behalf. Hebrews 7:25 says: *"Therefore He is also able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them."* Meanwhile, we are on the troubled "sea of life." How many would agree that there's trouble on the "sea of life"? (OK -- I didn't see all the hands go up, what's the deal here? You must have it too easy!)

But you see, the Lord knows and He cares, His eye is on us, even though we may not realize it. The Lord can come into any troubled situation and bring peace and calm. Sometimes, however, (as here in this miracle) the Lord's comforting presence is not always immediate.

For example, after my father's death the "sea of life" was very troubled for my mother. As a Christian, she was trusting in the Lord, and she knew that the Lord was caring for her, but His comforting presence was not as "immediate" as she had expected. The Lord permitted her to go through a period of troubled adjustments.

Maybe some of you have had a similar experience of the Lord delaying His comforting presence "until the fourth watch of the night." This doesn't mean that the Lord doesn't love you, and it doesn't mean that the Lord doesn't care about you, and it doesn't necessarily mean that you don't have enough faith. The truth is, the Lord's comforting presence is not always immediate.

### **2. The Lord's comforting presence is not always obvious.**

When the Lord did come to the disciples, they were frightened. They thought He was a ghost, according to Matthew and Mark's accounts. But then the Lord said to them, *"It is I; do not be afraid"* (v20). The word "I" in this verse is, by the way, the "I AM" claim to deity. In John 8:58 the Lord Jesus said, *"Most assuredly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I AM."* That same expression is used here. The Lord used the same designation of Himself: *"It is I; do not be afraid."*

In the spiritual picture here, I think we see another lesson: the Lord's comforting presence is not always obvious. The Lord was there, but at first they were afraid – they didn't realize that He was with them.

Here's an illustration from my own life. Just before I went into the Lord's work fulltime, I had changed jobs, and we had moved to a different location. Things hadn't worked out as I thought they would. The job was not what I had been led to expect, and my boss was not a nice person to work with (and there's a lot more I could say there! I'm sure some of you have had similar experiences). The "sea of life" was very troubled at that time, and frankly, I was a bit afraid. Little did I know that the Lord was in all this! The Lord was using these events – our move, my negative experiences with the job and my boss -- to show us the door He was opening for Christian ministry! It took that experience to make us realize that the Lord really was there -- but at first it wasn't obvious! Maybe you have had a similar experience in your Christian life. The Lord's comforting presence is not always obvious.

## **Practical applications**

### **1. How well do you handle popularity?**

*"When Jesus perceived that they were about to come and take Him by force to make Him king, He departed again to the mountain by Himself alone."* What would you have done in that situation? Chances are, if people had come to me and wanted to make me a popular hero, a leader, a king, I would maybe let my arm be twisted? But the Lord withdrew by Himself alone so that He could be in communion with the Father.

What about us? How well do we handle popularity and prestige? Now you might say, "Well, I don't have to worry about that, because I'll never be popular!" But you never know when you might unexpectedly be thrust into the limelight, or into a leadership position, or become a hero for some good deed that you do. It happens to the most unlikely people at the most unlikely times. You might be put into a situation where, for some reason or another, people begin to sign your praises. Would you follow the pattern of our Lord here – withdraw to be alone with God? We need to do that.

When you are a hero, or if you are in a prosperous or popular position, there are many pitfalls and temptations. Get alone with the Lord to avoid the allure and snares of this world! How well do you handle popularity?

### **2. How well do you handle adversity?**

The disciples were straining at the oars, straining and rowing against the wind, and they were frightened when the Lord first came to them. But once they knew it was the Lord, they welcomed Him into the boat, and there was peace. We should do the same.

Some Christians don't handle adversity that way. They refuse to recognize that the Lord may be allowing this adversity for a particular reason. They remain frightened, and they insist on trying to

out-row the storm in their own way and in their own strength. They don't let the Lord bring peace to the situation. Yes, they believe in the Lord for salvation, but they just can't seem to turn their adversity over to the Lord.

A Christian woman I know falls into this category – she's a believer who is trusting in the Lord for salvation, but she just can't handle adversity very well. In fact, it seems that she even imagines more adversity than really exists! She can't seem to come to the place where she acknowledges that the hard times that come along our way – adversity – may be **designed** by the Lord for our eventual benefit and growth, and she just doesn't seem to be able to turn things over to Him.

What about you? How well do **you** handle adversity?