

## Bread and Water

Sermon26  
03/10/24

I want to speak today about two stories in the gospels that are back-to-back and are intricately connected. I don't think most people realize how closely related the two are. I'm speaking of the feeding of the five thousand and Jesus' walking on water.

We start out with the miraculous feeding in  
John 6:

5 "So Jesus, after raising His eyes and seeing that a large crowd was coming to Him, \*said to Philip,  
"Where are we to buy bread so that these people may eat?"

6 But He was saying this only to test him, for He Himself knew what He intended to do."

The word "test" is not a temptation as we have traditionally understood it. It is simply finding ourselves in contradictory circumstances in which we have to engage our faith. How many times have we said I have no idea how I will ever get through this and yet you're here this morning. Most of the time we don't even recall how it was resolved because it simply vanished as if it never happened. When we do remember the details it's because the Lord left a powerful impression as He took us through it. He took us by the hand as we put one step in front of another and He walked us out of it.

We read in

James 1:

13 "Let no one say when he is tempted, "I am tempted by God"; for God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He Himself tempt anyone."

This after he had already said in verse 3 "count it all joy when you fall into various testings."

So, what is being said here? To fall into a situation isn't an orchestrated event by God to punish or cause humiliation. We live in a contingent universe. One in which freedom in love is the fundamental law of existence. Our experience of life is based on the freedom to choose. The reason we think of temptation or testing the way we do is because we've been saturated with the idea that God really doesn't like us all that much and wants to see us fail. This in order to show us that we're nothing more than depraved sinners, losers and no-hopers. Thus, life is nothing more than a depressing experience that must be endured in martyrdom like fashion if we're to have any hope of going to heaven when we die.

No, God doesn't sovereignly cause all things. He didn't cause your sickness or the tragic death of your loved one. We are all connected to one another. Our experiences are based on our choices as well as the choices of those around us, even those on the other side of the world. God has bestowed this freedom on all; therefore, we collectively determine our present existence and quality of life.

The word test is one that applies to a jeweler's testing of precious jewels or metals. The item in question is rubbed on a touchstone which removes any surface covering or debris in order to reveal the essence underneath. It is the same idea as the crucible or smelting pot whereby the dross is removed in order to expose the true substance. Its purpose is to remove that which is not in order to reveal that which is.

Jesus knew what Philip's response would be because it was logical. He even planted the thought as He so often does with a question. 'Where can we possibly procure enough bread to feed a crowd like this?' He observed an opportunity that He could use to reveal a powerful truth to His disciples. The response of the disciple was an obvious one. It was a physical solution to a physical problem, that is, money. We need money to purchase bread to feed hungry people that we don't have. Ever notice how short lived our logical solutions often are? It doesn't take long before a logical answer runs its course and ends with the conclusion that it's impossible. So that's that, right? Not with Jesus, for God is the divine opportunist. They've now fallen into a test in which the solution isn't a physical but a spiritual one. It would look like nothing that the natural mind would conceive. Based on what he had experienced with Christ, Paul would later put it this way.

2 Cor 4:

18 "while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal."

That was exactly what Jesus had in mind on that day to teach His disciples. We pick up the story in

Matt 14:

16 "But Jesus said to them, "They do not need to go; you give them something to eat!"

17 They \*said to Him, "We have nothing here except five loaves and two fish."

18 And He said, "Bring them here to Me."

19 And ordering the crowds to sit down on the grass, He took the five loaves and the two fish, and looked up toward heaven. He blessed the food and breaking the loaves, He gave them to the disciples, and the disciples gave them to the crowds."

Read closely and notice that it doesn't say that Jesus continued to break bread and hand it to the disciples to trudge up and down the hillsides dispensing it a bit at a time. No, it says He gave the loaves to the disciples and the disciples gave to the multitudes. The food wasn't multiplying in Jesus' hands but in the disciples', a miraculous solution to the problem and a magnificent revelation to the disciples, as well as to the crowd. Our provision comes from God into our hands and is multiplied to meet the needs of those around us. Jesus used a dramatic example to drive home for generations to come the connection we share with one another.

Jesus was initiating something new in His relationship with them. Rather than have them simply observe His miracles, He was including them in performing them. In fact, they had just returned from their first outing on their own prior to this event. They were excited to share with Jesus all their experiences because we read that they had been through the neighboring towns preaching the gospel and healing wherever they went.

Luke 9:

11 "But the crowds were aware of this and followed Him; and He welcomed them and began speaking to them about the kingdom of God, and curing those who had need of healing."

Apparently, the teaching concerning the kingdom coupled with the incredible number of miraculous healings were enough to convince the crowd that they needed to make Jesus their Messiah King right then and there. It was the reason He sent them away.

John 6:

15 "So Jesus, aware that they intended to come and take Him by force to make Him king, withdrew again to the mountain by Himself, alone."

It was immediately after having sent them away that He went to the mountain. The words used here are a double entendre. Mountain, or oros, can be a geologic formation while its root, aheero, means to lift up or lift off, particularly as it relates to expiation or cleansing of sin. Jesus knew His destiny and desired to speak with His Father concerning their next step. He was not to be crowned as an earthly king because the kingdom He was attempting to teach them about was much greater and not of this world. He wasn't the warrior messiah king that had been anticipated for many centuries and needed to communicate that clearly. So, He had the disciples get into a boat and go before Him to the other side. Was it to protect them as there might be a possibility of threat based on the exuberance of the crowd when Jesus declined their advances? Or was it to shield them from the influence of the crowd's intentions and keep them from the infection of their mindset? I think the latter. He had a much more profound lesson in store. Did Jesus know there was dangerous storm brewing over the lake when He sent them? Of course He did. Was His idea all along to meet them in the midst of it? Yes, it was. But remember, God doesn't cause the storms of our lives, He calms them. So, what's really going on?

Let's shift to Mark's account.

Mark 6:

47 When it was evening, the boat was in the middle of the sea, and He (Jesus) was alone on the land.

48 Seeing them straining at the oars--for the wind was against them--at about the fourth watch of the night, He \*came to them, walking on the sea; and He intended to pass by them.

49 But when they saw Him walking on the sea, they thought that it was a ghost, and they cried out; 50 for they all saw Him and were terrified. But immediately He spoke with them and \*said to them, "Take courage; it is I, do not be afraid."

51 Then He got into the boat with them, and the wind stopped; and they were utterly astonished,

From the hilltop Jesus was able to observe them in the distance having made little headway in crossing the lake due to a strong wind against them. It had impeded twelve seasoned oarsmen to only 3-4 miles after hours of rowing. Seeing this He came to them walking across the water. Here Mark adds something interesting. Keep in mind that the Gospel of Mark was written by John Mark based on the teachings and stories of Peter. He records in verse 48 that He (Jesus) intended to pass by them. Why did Peter include this detail in his version of the story? It's because it is an allusion to events in the Old Testament.

In the story of Moses on Mt Sinai in Exodus 33-34, God promises to "pass by" Moses. The request was, "Please show me your glory" (Exod. 33:18), and God's response was, "I will make all my goodness pass before you and will proclaim before you my name..." (33:19). God told Moses, "I will cover you with my hand until I have passed by" (33:22). Then, in Exodus 34:6, "The LORD passed before him..."

Think of Elijah. While he was on Mount Horeb (also known as Sinai) the Lord spoke to him as well. "So He said, "Go out and stand on the mountain before the LORD." And behold, the LORD passed by!" 1 Kgs. 19:11. The mountain and action were the same. It is worth noting that Moses and Elijah were the representations of the Law and the Prophets in the Old Covenant. So, when do we see the mention of these two names together again? Remember the account of the Transfiguration with Peter, James and John.

Matt 17:

3 “And behold, Moses and Elijah appeared to them, talking with Him.” (Jesus)

When Peter suggests that the disciples build tabernacles to worship all three he is quickly reprimanded by the voice of the Father.

Matt 17:5 “This is my Beloved Son in whom I am well pleased. Hear Him!”

Seemed like a reasonable idea to a good Jewish boy but he had yet to understand who he was actually walking with.

We read in the account of Jesus on the Road to Emmaus in Luke 24:27 “and beginning at Moses and the Prophets He expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself.” He explains in such a way that they would hear and understand that all scripture was about Him. Notice that He was going to pass them by as well by going farther. Does that mean He was abandoning them? Absolutely not. It was to reveal to them that He was Yahweh, revealed in the prophets of old. It’s never a question of His presence it of our awareness of His presence. Love never forces itself but reveals itself in its goodness.

Walking on water was a revelation of His glory, deity and the identity of the One passing by. Just as in His transfiguration, although they mistook Him for an apparition, it was the brightness of His glory that allowed them to see him in the darkness.

Matt 17:2 “...His face shone like the sun and His clothes became as white as the light.”

The fact is it would have been impossible to miss Him! The God of both Moses and Elijah is walking upon the Sea of Galilee before their very eyes.

In the Old Testament, God is the one who subdues the waters and treads the waves. That poetic language takes on a physical sense in the New. The Word became flesh, and the Word walked upon the water.

Although we’re not told explicitly what Moses saw in Exodus 33:23, let’s examine the verses more closely to see what they’re revealing to us.

“Then I will take away my hand and you shall see my back or hind part but My Face shall not be seen.”

The key is in God’s use of the word for back. It can mean the hinder part as in backside but it also means that which will come hereafter or in the time to come. In other words, Moses couldn’t see the invisible face of the Father but perhaps a vision of the face of the Man, Christ Jesus, who in rhetoric Old Covenant is described as the Angel of the Lord. Gideon declared that he had seen this angel face to face in Judges 6:22. Could Moses and Elijah have seen Him as well in their desire to see God? He is the exact image of the Father by which Jesus can proclaim if you’ve seen Me, you’ve seen the Father.

We’re given further evidence in

Job 19:

25 “For I know [that] my redeemer liveth, and [that] he shall stand at the latter [day] upon the earth:

26 And [though] after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God:”

The word for latter day is the same as used in Exodus describing the back of God. Job didn't observe God's backside but just as Moses, they both beheld a vision of our beautiful Redeemer.

Hebrews 9:

"...but now once at the consummation (end) of the ages He has been manifested to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself."

The consummation, finality and completion spoken of by God to Moses was the Bridegroom of God's people, the person Christ Jesus. Just as Yahweh promised to Moses for I will place you in the cleft of the rock and cover (entwine) you into myself so did Jesus console His disciples. He encourages them not to be afraid but to recognize that it is Him. He tells Moses that He will place him within Himself and he shall stand (arise) from the rock. The rock from which we are hewn is Jesus and it is in Him that we have been covered. The cleft of the rock is the wound in His side. All mankind would one day enter the Holy of Holies through the veil of the true temple torn in two, that is the new and living way, His flesh.

Each of the three gospels in which this story is included, Matthew, Mark and John add their own details. Peter walking on the water is only included in Matthew.

Matt 14:

28 "And Peter answered him, "Lord, if it is you, bid me come to you on the water."

Peter spoke what was on his mind, is it truly you? If so, is it possible for me to accompany you? This was an amazing statement of faith on his part. To step out of a boat into the waves of a storm consisting of a great (megas) wind blowing was indeed the result of being strengthened by the Lord's presence. As we face the great winds of life Jesus always imparts His overcoming words of strength into our hearts before we dare step out onto the sea.

29 "He said, 'Come'. So, Peter got out of the boat and walked on the water and came to Jesus."

Therefore, he simply obeyed, not because Jesus had mandated it but because of Peter's request. This is a remarkable event and goes beyond the pale of what most of us ever ask for. Just that he followed through when Jesus said, 'come to me' must command respect and admiration. How many of us back down from what we ask for long before that point. So often we are led kicking and screaming through life's testings.

30 "but when he saw the wind, he was afraid, and beginning to sink he cried out, 'Lord, save me.'"

Do we actually see the wind? No, but we behold its effects. What did Peter see that drew his eyes away from Jesus and onto the storm? Was it the height of the waves, his clothing being violently whipped about him, the tossing of the ship or the terror filled faces of his colleagues? It could have been any one or all these things for each warned of imminent danger and even death. Being overwhelmed, darkness fell over his eyes and he began to sink.

31 "Jesus immediately stretched out his hand and caught him, saying to him, 'O man of little faith, why did you doubt?'"

32 And when they got into the boat, the wind ceased."

Did Jesus know that Peter would only be able to walk about for a short time? Was He disappointed? To keep our eyes upon Him is natural to us as we abide but distractions happen in our lives, just like theirs; wind, storms, waves that cause distraction and even destruction. He knew Peter's heart, just as He knows each of ours and because of it I don't think He was disappointed at all. In fact, I think He was inwardly beaming just as any Father whose child takes their first steps. Jesus' words to Peter weren't in condescension,

"Why did you doubt?",

rather to remind and reassure him of never succumbing to fear for I will always, every time catch you when you fall and I'll prove it to you over and over in your life. My love for you does not know the meaning of the word abandonment.

The winds of resistance in our lives are our own unbelief that doubt His love for us. When we become fully aware of His presence in our lives, our vessel, the winds cease. Peter is representative of us, a type and shadow of our own experiences. The powerful winds are the lies that the world would have us believe about God as well as who we are in Him. God is our Ark and our Mercy Seat, the holy of holies where God and man dwell together.

Job 9:

8 "who alone stretches out the heavens and tramples the sea."

Jesus IS the outstretched arm of God. He is the right hand of power. It is He who still bends the heavens and overcome the seas and stretches out His hand to each of us in deliverance. He has pulled us from the sea of death with His mighty right hand.

God is not the author of tragedy and destruction. He didn't cause your toddler to be run over by that car. It was not His will! He has made a contingent creation with limitless possibilities in which every type of circumstance and situation is potential, the result of the thoughts and behaviors of mankind. Man is a spiritual being in a physical body. Because the spiritual dimension is greater than the physical, the choices and desires of man, when made in darkness, have a direct bearing on our existence.

Psa 8:6 "You have made man to have dominion over the works of your hands, you have put all things under his feet."

No, He doesn't cause all things, He causes all things to work to the good. What man means for evil, God means for good. He continuously rights our wrongs in His tender mercy and loving kindness.

Peter showed uncommon courage in stepping out of a boat into stormy seas in order to stand with Jesus. He asked Jesus to bid him to accompany Him on the water. Because of Peter's later failure in denying Jesus, we don't give him enough credit yet he was the only one with the courage to step out onto the water. Even though at the end of this harrowing adventure the disciples all claimed Jesus to be the Son of God, no one had come to fully realize that the Messiah and God were one and the same. These miracles were the prelude to Jesus asking them soon thereafter 'who do men say that I am?' It was Peter who answered in

Matt 16:16 "...You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." Upon hearing this Jesus made the amazing statement that he could only have come to this conclusion as a result of the Father having revealed it to him. This was the mark at which Jesus had been aiming. The preceding events had given him insight for the coming days. Just as with all of us, experience is our greatest teacher. We don't completely believe

something until we experience it and it's because of it that we read one other unique detail of walking on water in Mark's gospel. It's vital because it ties the miraculous, back-to-back events together.

Mark 6:

51 "And he got into the boat with them and the wind ceased. And they were utterly astounded, 52 for they did not understand about the loaves, but their hearts were hardened."

For all of his awkwardness, Peter would be the one who understood the profound question, Who am I? It was the very truth that Jesus was trying to communicate, our true identity and that of being created in the image and likeness of God. In spite of everything, Peter began to see that we are co-rulers and co-creators in Him. He knew that we had been given an imagination making us a creator in terms of Asa, not to create from nothing but to alter or redesign. To reformat based on our ability to imagine. This is the fish and bread, reformed and reproduced at its most fundamental level. We're also charged to have authority and subdue and bring under authority. This is the walking on water. In Christ we feed the hungry, walk upon stormy seas and even procreate, God's most precious gift of co-creation.

**1 Peter 2:9 "But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light."**

He would learn over the years that with God nothing is impossible and that we have been given everything that pertains to life and godliness as partakers of the Divine nature. This was the lesson concerning the feeding of thousands of people on a hillside from his own hand and the virtually unbelievable experience of walking on water. For He is King of the many kings.

Hardened hearts are the result of darkened understanding causing ignorance, the very source of sin. And sin is the blindness to who we are. Peter, along with the rest eventually realized that the ability to do anything in life, whether it be miraculous or not, was because we do all things through Christ. He saw that God providing a pathway to walk on the Sea of Galilee was no less than parting the Red Sea for the millions of children of Israel to escape the bondage of Egypt. To feed the multitudes on the hillside was no less than feeding a nation of millions manna in the wilderness. It's all the same to Him whether it seems big or small. It is all done in and through Him and He expresses great joy in providing it for us.

The question becomes do we believe this? What do we feed on? Do we abide in Christ and His love? If so we will treasure Jesus' words and encounter the love of the Father reflected in them. The Father and Son will be present face to face to you and will be at home in your heart and mind. If on the other hand it is a casual, indifferent and suspicious relationship, that place will be filled with fear, worry and anxiety, leaving no room for peace and rest. Jesus said in

John 16:

24 "Until now you have asked nothing in My name. Ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be full."

The word rendered ask is lambano which actually means to lay hold of. Do you live from a poverty mentality because you aren't worthy? Because a life of fulness isn't for someone such as yourself?

You pray but immediately upon finishing return to that same place of doubt and trouble. Where do you choose to live? It will always reflect who you believe yourself to be.

Matthew tells us that Peter came down from the boat and the term used is he went walk about on the water in joining Jesus. The word "go to" is pros meaning to be face to face. I believe we've misinterpreted the scene as we've assumed he never reached Jesus but fell short. However, if he was face to face then that was not the case. Therefore, when he began to sink Jesus simply reached down and drew him back to His side. The Mirror Bible translates John 16 this way beginning with verse 23...

23 In that day of your awakening to our inseparable union, you shall ask Me no more questions; instead you would certainly ask the Father directly in My name, knowing that My name represents the extent of all the Father has already accomplished on mankind's behalf and He will happily grant you your requests and take all questions of possible doubt or uncertainty out of the equation.

24 Until now you have not required anything in My name - when you realize what is yours in My name, then make your requests and lay hold of that so that your joy may burst its banks.

There are so many times He has done the same for us as He did for Peter, so relax and enjoy the stroll. For in the end, whether we realize it or not, we're all walking on water in Him.

Amen!