

**Martin White. Sunday 1<sup>st</sup> June 2008. Matthew 14: 22-33**

**Jesus walking on the water.**

I have been a Christian for well over 20 years and have known God doing amazing things during this time; I have seen people healed and set free and have seen God answer prayers in incredible ways.

But over the last few months, I have experienced more of God's Presence and Power than I have seen for as long as I can remember. It feels like God has pulled back the veil a bit, to reveal more of His Glory, and I feel like I am a real beginner, learning things about Him over again.

A few things have happened over the last few weeks, and I want to share a few things, before we look at the Bible, just to catch people up.

**Preaching about Jesus**

The thing that started this was the preaching series we have been looking for several weeks, at encounters that Jesus had with different people through the Bible.

It felt like as I was preparing the preach about Jesus and the man with leprosy, I caught a glimpse of Jesus and heard Him saying "I am willing; be clean."

And since then, as we have looked at other meetings Jesus had with people; it has felt like He has let me hear what He has said in a new way:

- Jesus at the Feast - "If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink" "Follow me and you won't walk in darkness, but you'll know the light of life." - This wide, echoing, all-inclusive invitation: "whoever", "anyone".
- Nicodemus - cutting through religion and 'goodness', bringing new life
- The rich, young ruler - Jesus looked at him and loved him.
- Zacchaeus - "I must stay at your house today."

- The boy with seizures - "let me help you with your unbelief"

Sometimes it seems like we know more about Jesus, but at the moment, it seems like He is helping us to know Him better.

### **Angela Kemms**

Secondly, I got to spend some time with a woman called Angela Kemms, who has a strong prophetic gift. She was visiting Church Central for a time, and some of the Newfrontiers leaders spent some time with her.

She speaks a lot about the encounter Jesus had with Bartimaeus in the Bible, where He asks blind Bartimaeus "What do you want me to do for you?" Bartimaeus says he wants to see, and Jesus heals and opens his eyes.

Angela spent a long time (30 minutes plus) praying for each person, with real patience and gentleness.

What I saw (and experienced) was that the point of her praying was to point people to Jesus; what she did was minimal.

### **Todd Bentley/Florida Outpouring & Revival Fires, Dudley/Trevor Baker**



In complete contrast, by accident, we found the meetings in Lakeland, Florida on the God Channel (which we don't often watch) and while the style of the meetings, and of Todd Bentley, is very different to what many of us would be used to, I have been very affected again by the power and presence of God as I have watched what is going on.

People are being healed and set free in large numbers, and although the style of the meetings is more "shouty" (Todd Bentley shouts "Come get some!" "Bam!" as he prays for people) the meetings are God-honouring, God-centred and full of God's Power.

Although these meetings are very different in style from Angela Kemms, and I think we need to keep on testing everything against the Bible and the fruit borne from it, actually, what they are both doing is encouraging people into

God's presence, and allowing God to heal, rather than focusing on people praying long or clever prayers.

I have also been to visit Revival Fires in Dudley, where I have found the same thing (although in a less American style)

### **Front Edge**

And finally, I believe that for us in the Crown, God is sovereignly working at the moment - especially moving us on and bringing breakthrough.

For years, we have been praying that God would move us on in terms of growth, and, having never had more than 100 people at a normal meeting before, three times in the last couple of months (Dedication, Baptisms & Front Edge,) we have had more than 120 people.

Secondly, with salvations, although sometimes we have brought people to the point of becoming Christians, and have seen some people respond, more often, we have got people 90% of the way, but not the last 10% breakthrough, we saw people responding at the front Edge event.

Thirdly, with healing, we have fairly regularly had words of knowledge, but with less clear healings afterwards. Over the last few weeks, we have seen something change, and a number of people have been clearly healed.

I know that with all three of these, we are just at the beginning and getting a sniff at something which has been beyond our experience. But I strongly believe that this is something God is initiating - wit across the country simultaneously.

We were due on the preaching rota to be starting a new series, which we will now do later in the year, but we strongly felt that God wants to reveal more of Himself to us through staying with what we've been looking at - namely people encountering Jesus.

So today, we're going to look at the account of when Jesus walked on the water.

**"Immediately (after Jesus had fed the 5000) Jesus made the disciples get into the boat and go on ahead of him to the other side, while he dismissed the crowd. After he had dismissed them, he went up on a mountainside by himself to pray. When evening came, he was there alone, but the boat was already a**

considerable distance from land, buffeted by the waves because the wind was against it.

During the fourth watch of the night Jesus went out to them, walking on the lake. When the disciples saw him walking on the lake, they were terrified. "It's a ghost," they said, and cried out in fear.

But Jesus immediately said to them: "Take courage! It is I. Don't be afraid."

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

"Come," he said.

Then Peter got down out of the boat, walked on the water and came toward Jesus. But when he saw the wind, he was afraid and, beginning to sink, cried out, "Lord, save me!"


Immediately Jesus reached out his hand and caught him. "You of little faith," he said, "why did you doubt?"

And when they climbed into the boat, the wind died down. Then those who were in the boat worshiped him, saying, "Truly you are the Son of God." Matthew 14:22-33 NIV

Normally when people preach on this passage (which is quite a favourite!) the angle they take is to imagine yourself in the boat with the Disciples, or to look at Peter stepping out onto the water in this moment of what someone called "extreme discipleship."

And I have heard some amazing sermons over the years about putting faith into action.

I don't want to focus so much on this today, so if you want to look more at this, I recommend John Ortberg's book "If you want to walk on water, you've got to

get out of the boat." 

Today though, I want to look more at what this encounter shows us of who Jesus is.

What has happened just before this is that Jesus has just healed the sick and fed the 5000, who had been so affected that they had wanted Jesus to lead them in a rebellion and become their king.

Jesus' response was to firmly send the disciples away to the other side of Lake Galilee while He sent the crowd away and then retreated up into the mountains - to a solitary place on His own to pray.

The disciples, several of who were fishers on this lake, possibly hung around for a while offshore to see if Jesus wanted to go with them, and then set out towards the other side of the lake.

As they were rowing, a storm blew up (which apparently happens when the wind blows down, over the mountains towards the low-lying lake in a certain direction.) The experienced fishermen are overcome and struggling, making little progress, tired from the long day, tired and concerned about the dangerous weather, and probably worried about what had happened to Jesus and doubting whether they should have left Him.

To add to that, it's now the fourth watch of the night - that's between 3:00 am and 6:00 am.

*My experience being in a boat in a storm - waves crashing into & over the boat, making no headway, thinking the boat may sink - scary!*

Suddenly, one of them sees someone walking between the waves towards them in the middle of the lake.

They are tired and probably emotionally worn down, and someone shouts "It's a ghost!"

You can imagine them getting hysterical and confused, maybe worrying that it's some demon - they have seen Jesus before calming the storm before His encounter with the Gadarene Demoniac (chapter 8) or possibly even Jesus has been killed by the crowd and it is His ghost!

And as well as walking on water, which must have been mind-blowing enough, someone also speculated that, as He has just been up on the mountain, alone with His Father, and they conclude that it must be a ghost, maybe He was

radiant - like some of the disciples would witness up another mountain, in another solitary place at His Transfiguration a few chapters later.

All through the Gospels, Jesus has called the disciples to Himself - to know Him, share His life, be close to Him as He healed the sick, ask Him questions, travel with Him, know His family, experience all His emotions.

Jesus didn't make it hard for them to know Him - remember, one of His Names is Emmanuel - "God with us"

And yet, these disciples, who knew Jesus better than anyone - possibly even better than His mother, kept coming back to this question - "Who is this?"

- "Who is this that teaches with such authority? We've never heard anything like it!"
- "Who is this that can even say a word and the sick are healed and demons go?"
- "Where did this wisdom and compassion come from?"
- "Who is this who can even command the wind and waves and they obey Him?"
- "Who is this that can forgive sins?"
- Who is this that can feed all these people with some loaves and fishes?"

And just as they think they might be getting a grip on what all of this means, He walks past on the water.

In Mark's account of this story, he adds in the detail that Jesus "intended to pass them by."

John Ortberg quotes someone called David Garland who explains this:

**Why did Jesus want to pass them by? Did He decide to race them? Did He want to impress them with a really neat trick?**

**...The verb 'parerchomai' ('to pass by') is used in the Greek translation of the Old Testament as a technical term to refer to a theophany - those moments when God... appears in the earthly realm to an individual for the purpose of communicating a message.**

God put Moses in the cleft in a rock so Moses could see "while my glory passes by" - the Lord passed before him.

God told Elijah to stand on the mountain "for the Lord is about to pass by."  
(p. 14-15)

Jesus reveals His Glory in the midst of circumstances - for the disciples, it was in the middle of a storm, while things are out of control and they are afraid.

Interestingly, God seems to choose times of distress and despair often to show His Glory:

- Elijah = depressed, fearing for his life
- Ezekiel, as the nation are led off to captivity
- John in a prison colony
- The disciples in a storm

This is a story of the "Bigness" and the "Otherness" of Jesus.

It's a story of some of the people who knew Him best getting a bigger view of who He is - an encounter where Jesus reveals His Majesty and breaks out of the 'boxes' that the Disciples had put Him in.

This was Jesus appearing in a way that the Disciples weren't expecting, in a way that they barely recognised, so Peter had to shout out "Lord, if it's you..."

I think that it was a good thing to ask.

There's a verse in Acts that says:

"Now the Bereans were of more noble character than the Thessalonians, for they received the message with great eagerness and examined the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true." Acts 17:11 NIV

I think that this is a timely verse for us to think about at the moment. I think we need to be asking the question "Is it You Lord?"

- Last week I met a woman who had one of her teeth turn gold as she was watching a Todd Bentley meeting.
- I'm hearing stories about gold dust falling on people as they worship.

- I'm hearing people talking about angelic visitations.

This stuff is beyond me, so I'm finding myself asking more and more frequently "Is it You Lord?"

And if God is going to pass by our nation with His Presence, then we're going to all be finding ourselves asking the question more and more.

My encouragement is let's be like the Bereans as God draws close - let's receive the message with eagerness *and* search the scriptures.

Let's be like Peter - "Is it you?" then, when we know it is, jump in with both feet.

"Then Peter got down out of the boat, walked on the water and came toward Jesus. But when he saw the wind, he was afraid and, beginning to sink, cried out, "Lord, save me!"

Immediately Jesus reached out his hand and caught him. "You of little faith," he said, "why did you doubt?"

When Jesus says "You of little faith" to Peter, literally it means "You were double-minded" in other words, he was looking at Jesus and the storm/the circumstances

Finally, this encounter ends, as it should, with worship for Jesus:

"And when they climbed into the boat, the wind died down. Then those who were in the boat worshiped him, saying, "Truly you are the Son of God."

God is going to pass us by with His Presence, we are going to know more of His Holiness, we are going to see more healings, more demonstrations of His Power; God is going to blow our expectations and break out of the 'comfortable' boxes we may have put Him in.

The point of this isn't so our meetings get more exciting, or even that our church grows; firstly, it's about worship for Him.

**Pray: say yes to Jesus.**