

SESSION 5

# THE SIGN OF HIS PRESENCE

Leader pages on pp. 118-121

**THE POINT:**  
IN JESUS'S PRESENCE, WE  
HAVE NO NEED TO FEAR.

## JOHN 6:16-21

<sup>16</sup> When evening came, his disciples went down to the sea,  
<sup>17</sup> got into a boat, and started across the sea to Capernaum. Darkness had already set in, but Jesus had not yet come to them.

<sup>18</sup> A high wind arose, and the sea began to churn.

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<sup>19</sup> After they had rowed about three or four miles, they saw Jesus walking on the sea. He was coming near the boat, and they were afraid.

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**MEMORY VERSE**

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<sup>20</sup> **But he said to them, "It is I. Don't be afraid."**

.....  
<sup>21</sup> Then they were willing to take him on board, and at once the boat was at the shore where they were heading.

**KEYWORDS**

**Capernaum (v. 17)** - This city was on the northwestern tip of the Sea of Galilee and served as the hub of Jesus's ministry for a time.

**Began to churn (v. 18)**—The Greek word means to arouse completely. An angry sea erupting and attacking with fury.

**Afraid (v. 19)**—The Greek verb is based on the noun *phobos*, the source for our word phobia or fear.

**At one (v. 21)**—The Greek word, *eutheos*, meaning "quickly" or "without delay," and related words are used over seven dozen times.

# HOW DOES JESUS'S PRESENCE BRING TRUE PEACE?

When you're a kid, having a parent around can change everything. Parents figure this out quickly when teaching their kid to ride a bike. At first, the kids want Mom or Dad holding on and running alongside them. They keep saying stuff like, "Don't let go!" or "Stay with me." They just feel safer knowing you're there. Same thing goes for us in life. We all hit those moments where having Jesus around takes the edge off our fear, and we don't want Him to leave.

The incredible truth? No matter what goes down, Jesus is always by our side, walking with us through it all.

In today's passage, we're going to see another powerful and unique sign of the divinity of Jesus Christ. Many today try to focus only on the human side of Jesus to the point that they reduce Him to being just another good teacher who lived and died. However, in the passage we read today, we read the power and authority of Jesus as the Son of God. We see that even in the worst of our storms, Jesus's promises and His compassion don't waver. Jesus truly sees us through our doubts and fears.

## Life Without Jesus is Dangerous // John 6:16-18

When Jesus dismissed the crowd, the people continued to try to follow Him. Some people came to see another miracle. Some people came to try and make Him their king (John 6:15). In their minds, if Jesus could feed this many people on a few pieces of bread and fish, He must be the One who would be ready and able to conquer Rome and restore Israel. Rather than getting caught up in the crowd, though, Jesus wanted to get away by Himself to pray to His Father. There was so much for Jesus to reflect upon at this moment, such as the news of John the Baptist's death, the reports of the disciples from their time away, and the miracle that had just occurred. After the feeding of the five thousand, it was evening, and Jesus wasn't present with the disciples (v. 17).

When we look at Jesus's life, even after powerful moments, we can see how He prioritized prayer. Jesus knew that prayer was His lifeline to His relationship with God the Father. It was through prayer that He drew His strength and vision for His ministry. Therefore, we, too, must be people of prayer who derive our strength from God alone. Prayer should also remind us that we can't do



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things on our own. Sadly, in the self-sufficient culture of today, we end up doing things out of independence instead of dependence upon God. Often, our lack of prayer is due to distractions. We wake up and check our email, text messages, and social media feeds. Then, before we realize it, we have spent mindless time viewing other things instead of listening to God. Prayer reminds us that we need to hear God's voice in our lives more than the world's voice. The disciples were about to learn a good lesson about going it alone.

Not only do we see the priority of prayer, but we also see an example of submitting to authority in this story. It was later in the evening after Jesus had just performed this amazing miracle of feeding the five thousand. Thus, when Jesus sent them in the boat to Capernaum (about five miles away from where they began), the disciples could have easily questioned Jesus for sending them at dark on the Sea of Galilee, which was known to be treacherous. Yet, we see they surrendered to Jesus's commands and obeyed, even when He sent them into the dark.

Since the Sea of Galilee is set between six to seven hundred feet below sea level, and with the way that the mountains on the northwestern side of the lake were formed, a natural wind tunnel can bring about storms at a moment's notice. So, while the disciples were in the dark and in the middle of the night, a storm began to affect their journey to Capernaum (v. 18).

When we think about the "storms" of our lives, we may not get a warning sign of when they will begin. For the storms that arise immediately could be a diagnosis that becomes a severe illness, issues that occur as the result of an accident, or the sudden loss of a friend or family member. While we don't understand the reasons for the storms, we must learn how to navigate through these storms in our lives, even when the purpose or end is unclear. We certainly don't want to have to do it without Jesus.

### HOW DO STORMS REMIND US OF OUR DEPENDENCE ON JESUS CHRIST?

## Jesus's Presence Brings Peace //

John 6:19-20

You can sense the frustration the disciples were experiencing as they had rowed the boat all night long, yet they were a little more than halfway across the sea with a storm raging. Considering the journey was five miles to Capernaum, this meant the disciples had only traveled about three miles. So, it appears the winds were really pushing against them as they were moving.



### DIGGING DEEPER SEA OF GALILEE

The Sea of Galilee has deep historical Christian significance. It is a freshwater lake in Israel that's intertwined with stories from ancient times. It's famously known as the backdrop for many of Jesus's miracles, making it a magnet for visitors looking to connect with its rich spiritual heritage. This peaceful water body, located among scenic hills and landscapes, offers a peaceful escape from the hustle and bustle of everyday life. Today, it's a popular spot for both tourists and locals, who come to enjoy its tranquil beaches, fishing opportunities, and breathtaking panoramic views. Today, the Sea of Galilee isn't just a relic of the past; it's alive with activity, from water sports to relaxing boat tours. It perfectly blends the sacred with the everyday, making it a special place where history and modern recreation coexist.

**Many miraculous events in Jesus's ministry occurred on or near the Sea of Galilee, what miraculous event do you need Jesus to perform in your life?**

Fortunately, Jesus was watching the disciples from the shore as the storms raged on around them (Mark 6:48). As we've read about before, when Jesus sees those in need, He has compassion on them. His compassion led to action when He walked on the water (John 6:19) to the disciples. As Jesus approached the boat, the disciples were terrified and thought that perhaps Jesus was a ghost (Matt. 14:26). In another gospel account, we see that Jesus was about to "pass by" the disciples as they were in the boat (Mark 6:48). The phrase "pass by" doesn't mean that Jesus was ignoring His disciples in the boat. The phrase was used in the Old Testament when God "passed by" Moses, revealing His nature (Ex. 33:22), so this is certainly a fair comparison.

Jesus didn't just reveal His nature in this moment. He brought peace to the disciples. The words that they heard Jesus cry out were, "It is I. Don't be afraid" (John 6:20). Jesus's statement is similar to the way God revealed Himself to Moses at the burning bush when He called Himself "I AM" (Ex. 3:14). Jesus's purpose was no doubt to reassure the disciples that the One who had all authority and power was in their presence. And in His presence, there is peace and no room for fear!

Scripture is full of assurances for us not to be afraid because of God's presence, both in the Old and New Testaments:

- "Haven't I commanded you: be strong and courageous? Do not be afraid or discouraged, for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go" (Josh. 1:9).
- "Do not fear, for I am with you; do not be afraid, for I am your God. I will strengthen you; I will help you; I will hold on to you with my righteous right hand" (Isa. 41:10).
- "For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but one of power, love, and sound judgment" (2 Tim. 1:7).
- "Therefore, we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper; I will not be afraid. What can man do to me?" (Heb. 13:6)

Now that Jesus was with them, the disciples' fears would settle like the storm, and all would be well. We can share in the same security in the storms we



face when we realize that with Jesus's nature and character comes His presence and peace.

## HOW DOES JESUS'S PRESENCE ULTIMATELY CALM YOUR SPIRIT, ESPECIALLY IN TOUGH TIMES?

### Jesus's Presence Will See Us Through // John 6:21

So, how is the miracle of Jesus's walking on water a sign of the nature of Jesus Christ to this point? First, just as in the miracle of the feeding of five thousand, Jesus shows providential compassion and care for people. Second, the authority that Jesus showed over nature, particularly the sea, was a sign of God's sovereignty. Jesus wants His followers to understand that no matter how many difficulties we encounter and no matter how unequal to the task our own strength may be, He will not allow us to fail ultimately.

So, when Jesus entered the boat, the winds died down, and the sea became calm. The same One who was the Master of the sea was Master of the disciples, and He would see them through their journey. After all, He was the One who knew of the storm and sent them through it; yet, He also knew He had a plan and the power to control it.

We can all have unsteady hearts through the storms we face, sometimes we let doubts and fears creep in. But let's learn the lesson of storms.

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- **Sometimes storms teach us to trust.** To trust in the Lord means that we find security in His presence.
- **Sometimes storms teach us to find our purpose.** To find our purpose, we have the Word of God that tells us how to know the will of God.
- **Sometimes storms teach us to surrender.** Surrendering teaches us to submit to God's authority that He has over our lives and the circumstances around us.
- **Sometimes storms teach us to be prepared.** This won't be the last storm that you go through in your life, but the next time one comes, whether suddenly or not, you'll be ready!

Ultimately, the lesson Jesus teaches us here is that He is the anchor in the storm who we should cling to, and He is the One who will see us through our storms. What did the disciples need to do? Kenneth Gangel put it this way: "The requirements for help in their distress were simple enough—recognize their own need and take Jesus into the boat. That has not changed much in our day."<sup>6</sup>

### HOW DOES THE RECOGNITION OF JESUS'S PRESENCE CHANGE EVERYTHING?

#### DID YOU KNOW?

Tamela Mann has emerged as an influential African American icon, captivating hearts with her powerful voice and inspiring presence. Known for her exceptional talents as a gospel singer, actress, and songwriter, Mann's career took off with her standout performances in Tyler Perry's productions, particularly in "Diary of a Mad Black Woman" and the subsequent Madea films. Her soul-stirring vocals and heartfelt lyrics have earned her numerous awards and critical acclaim, making her a beloved figure in the church and beyond. But Mann once feared being an actress. However, by conquering that fear she became successful in doing what she once thought she never could do. She said, "It's kind of like having faith over fear; it's like you just have to do it."<sup>7</sup>

**Biblical Truth:** "For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but one of power, love, and sound judgment" (2 Tim. 1:7).

**How did the presence of Jesus help the disciples overcome fear? What can we learn from them about conquering fear?**

## LIVE IT

### How can we overcome fear?

In 1933, during his inaugural address, President Franklin D. Roosevelt said, "There is nothing to fear but fear itself." Satan knows this and uses fear like a secret weapon to trap believers. Fear of death, safety, war, the economy, and persecution can make us feel stuck, unable to truly live our lives. But by staying close to Jesus, we can break free from those chains of fear and live with courage and faith.

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- **Surrender.** Make a list of the times that you have tried to "row the boat on your own" in your life versus letting Jesus take control. Ask God to help you avoid those choices in the future.
- **Worship:** Read the lyrics for "It Is Well with My Soul." Worship the Lord and thank Him for seeing us through the storms of life.
- **Share:** Consider how storms from the Lord are for the purpose of helping disciples see who Jesus is. Write down something you have learned about Jesus from this week's study. Share that truth with someone else in your life this week.



# DAILY READINGS

## 1. INCOMPARABLE PEACE // JOHN 14:27

The world offers peace in several different ways. However, the world's peace is temporary and superficial. It can be laced with stipulations and compromise. But Jesus's peace is different. After defining Himself as the way, truth, and the life (John 14:6), Jesus speaks to the disciples about His departure and promised not to leave them comfortless. He explained that He would send them the Holy Spirit, who will teach and remind them of everything they had been taught. This verse outlines that Jesus left them with His peace, not peace as the world gives. Therefore, they are not to be troubled or afraid. As believers, we have access to that same peace. Dear Peace Giver, thank you for your peace that is unlike the world's peace.

**Because the Holy Spirit lives within me, I have continual access to that peace.**

## 2. PRESENT IN CORRECTION // JEREMIAH 46:28

"I am doing this because I love you," my mother would say. As a child, I was always puzzled by the fact that love meant discipline. The word of the Lord came to Jeremiah concerning the demise of Egypt-Nebuchadnezzar would come and smite their land. This entire chapter speaks of their punishment, but the final two verses offer reassurance and comfort. In this verse, Jeremiah told them to not be afraid, for the Lord is with them. He goes on to say how He will bring destruction to the nations where they have been banished. He will not bring destruction on them, but he will discipline them with justice. They will not be left unpunished.

**Remember that the Lord is with us even when He is correcting us.**

## 3. ENTERING HIS PRESENCE // PSALM 95:2

How do we enter the Lord's presence? One way to enter His presence is through prayer with thanksgiving. Use the ACTS model: A= Adoration, C=Confession, T=Thanksgiving, S= Supplication. The A reminds us to praise Him for who He is and what He has done. The C challenges us to admit our sins

and offenses. The T invites us to think about all that we are thankful for. Lastly, the letter S encourages us to present our requests to the Lord. Psalm 95 opens by admonishing us to shout joyfully to the Lord, the rock of our salvation. Like the ACTS model, this verse invites us to enter his presence with thanksgiving. The Lord is great!

**Reflect on all that the Lord has done today, having thanksgiving in your heart.**

## 4. BEAR WITNESS OF THE LIGHT // JOHN 1:8-9

What do we do when we have a really good experience at a new restaurant? What do we do when we receive exceptional service at an auto mechanic shop, beauty salon, or doctor's office? That's correct—we tell someone. By the same token, we should testify about Jesus Christ. John identifies himself as a man sent by God who comes to testify about the light so that all might believe through him. He makes it clear that he is not the light but comes to testify about the light. He explains that the true light that gives light to everyone is coming to the world. Like John, we are sent by God to let others know that Christ is coming.

**Let's make a conscious decision to raise our evangelistic bar!**

## 5. PRAY FOR SIGHT // PSALM 119:18

I faithfully wear my contacts because without them I am unable to see clearly from a distance. What I think I am seeing is usually not what I am seeing at all. So, the assistance of my contacts is necessary. In the same way, we need assistance from the Lord when reading or studying His Word. Because we bring our personal opinions and background experiences to the text, we need His wisdom and understanding to see what He wants us to see. In this verse, the psalmist offers a prayer for us to repeat, "Open my eyes so that I may contemplate wondrous things from your instruction." Today, I challenge you to commit this verse to memory and meditate on it before, during, and after you read or study God's Word.

**"The hearing ear and the seeing eye—the Lord made them both" (Prov. 20:12).**