

Jesus is Present – John 6:16-21
Crossroads Christian Church
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Well hello everyone! I hope you are doing well today. My name is Andrew Bondurant and I am on staff here at Crossroads. It is crazy to think that this is weekend number eight without gathering together at our Newburgh or West Campus. If you are anything like me, it is near impossible to keep track of time in this season. I am lucky if I actually know what day it is, let alone what is happening over the next week. So, this is your friendly reminder that NEXT SUNDAY is Mother's Day. As we approach Mother's Day, we want to encourage you to take care of the mom's in your life, but we also want to encourage each and every one of you to think about those you know who may be facing an especially challenging Mother's Day this year. Maybe that is a single mom... or a mother who has lost a child... or a widow... or someone on the front lines fighting COVID-19. Parents in nursing homes... Whoever that person(s) is, find a way to let them know they are loved and someone is thinking about them this Mother's Day. You can find ideas/recommendations on *how* to do this by going to cccgo.com/mom. There are ideas there as well as a link to a Pinterest board with ideas.

I. Setting: John 6:14-15

Now, I know it may seem like a year ago because, again, we are operating on COVID time, but just last week we jumped into John 6 and saw the miracle of the feeding of the five thousand. We saw that Jesus is provider. Today we are going to look at three movements in John 6:14-21: I. the setting; II. The disciples situation; III. Jesus showing up. This story is also found in Matthew and Mark immediately following the feeding of the five thousand. But first, let's get our bearings by remembering the setting. Here is what we are told in verses 14-15:

¹⁴After the people saw the sign Jesus performed, they began to say, "Surely this is the Prophet who is to come into the world." ¹⁵Jesus, knowing that they intended to come and make him king by force, withdrew again to a mountain by himself.

The other two gospel accounts tell us that Jesus sent his disciples away while he dismissed the crowds, and then went to the mountain to pray. Here, John focuses more on *why* Jesus sent the disciples away and retreated to pray. We see the pressures that would lead to such a move! So what was the setting?

- Jesus had just performed this amazing sign (feeds five thousand people)
- Crowds are naturally amazed and try to make him King.
- This would come with temptation. Satan had already tempted him at the beginning of his ministry to take all authority, but without the cross. Maybe this was another opportunity for a kingdom without the cross?
- So Jesus then withdrew to a mountain by himself and sent his disciples away.

As John describes what comes next he zeroes in on the disciples situation in verses 16-18:

¹⁶When evening came, his disciples went down to the lake, ¹⁷where they got into a boat and set off across the lake for Capernaum. By now it was dark, and Jesus had not yet joined them. ¹⁸A strong wind was blowing and the waters grew rough.

II. Disciples circumstances

The passage here focuses on the disciples and their circumstances. Verse 17 tells us two important things: 1. It was night. 2. There was no Jesus

Now, these two ideas often go together in John's writings.

- He often uses DARKNESS or NIGHT to refer to life without God or the absence of Jesus.
- and he uses LIGHT to refer to Jesus and His presence.
 - o For example, the scene when Judas, one of Jesus' followers, leaves Jesus to betray him, we are told...after receiving the morsel of bread, he immediately went out. And it was night.
 - o The power of the light is seen in John 1 as John writes...
In him was life, and the life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

John is using the physical situation as a picture of the spiritual reality. So here are the disciples without Jesus at night. They are also on the sea as a strong wind begins to blow and the waters grew rough. Because of the location and topography of the Sea of Galilee, violent storms were not (and are not) uncommon.

In the ancient world, the sea and storms were a natural cause of fear. It was a powerful reminder of the fact that life is filled with terrifying, incomprehensible forces that can suddenly sweep you up and radically change everything. You know, on the land Earthquakes and tornadoes were few and far between. On the sea, a devastating storm can be much more common place. The dangers at sea were often unseen and

outside of human control. Here again we see the physical situation as a picture of the spiritual reality.

And lest we forget, this was two thousand years ago so this is no motor boat that simply cuts right through the waves. They are in a wooden boat, about 27 feet long, 7 and a half feet wide, and 4 and a half feet tall.

The disciples were battling these waves at night for potentially 8-10 hours after a long day of ministry. At least some of the men were experienced on the lake because of their days as fishermen. But this doesn't seem to be routine anymore as the storm overwhelms them. John tells us that they rowed three or four miles. But they still would have had about three or four miles to go. So there they are in the middle of the sea. At night. In a storm.

Earlier that day they had seen Jesus... the great provider... provided food for five thousand men (plus whoever else was there). But now hours of battling the sea likely made them begin to think that this may be the end.

Have you ever noticed how crisis and suffering have a way of revealing things about what is going on in our hearts? In times like this, what is really important to us is often revealed. The first time I recognized this was when my dad passed away unexpectedly when I was 25, but I've seen it in other times of crisis and suffering as well. My frustrations, anxieties, and my hope is for "escaping" the time of suffering began to reveal more about what was going on in my heart. It can be seen in our comforts. It is easy to feel insecure about the future. What will the new normal look like? How will we survive in what is such a big unknown?

You know what I think Satan would have us do in a time like this? I think he would want to cause a sense of frenzied-ness so that we do not slow down long enough to consider these questions. Or maybe he would have us scroll mindlessly through social media in a state of numbness as we simply get mad at others for how they are responding to this crisis. But if we give into this temptation I think there is a chance that we will miss what God wants to do in our hearts.

Right now we are going to take three minutes. I encourage you to write down the following four questions, but **choose one** to begin processing. Then, schedule some intentional time this week to process through all of these by yourself with a journal, with your spouse, with a friend, or with your small group!

Discussion questions: (3 minutes)

- What is causing me to be anxious?
- Where are my hopes placed for "escaping" this time of suffering?
- What am I angry about in this season?
- What insecurity am I facing?

Now, hear me: whatever it is you are anxious, insecure, or angry about often isn't inherently *bad*. Wherever you are placing your hope often isn't bad. But the issue isn't about whether it is good or bad... the problem is whether or not something has become ultimate focus for us that does not belong there. When we make anything other than Jesus ultimate focus, we are going to either crush that thing or be crushed when it is no longer there. 1. Family, 2. Peace, 3. Job security, 4. Health

I don't know where you are in this season... has the coronavirus maybe caused you to look at examples of God's faithfulness in the past and say, "Sure, he was faithful then... he provided then... but what about now? My family is driving me crazy. I would give ANYTHING for just a little bit of peace. My job and the financial security that come with it is now gone. My health is now gone... Where is He now?"

- Those three minutes very well may not have been long enough for you. So take some time this week to listen to whatever it is that your heart is telling you in this season. God may be revealing how He is at work in you.

III. Sees Jesus

As the disciples sit in their place of remembering how Jesus had provided for the crowds, but now facing this storm alone let's see what comes next.

When they had rowed about three or four miles, they saw Jesus approaching the boat, walking on the water; and they were frightened. (John 6:19)

And here is where the good news comes in: **Jesus is Present**

- In the midst of the battle, in the midst of the chaos, Jesus shows up. In the midst of your chaos today look up and see Jesus as the disciples did.

The disciples see a figure walking on the water, which is even **more frightening** than the storm. But Jesus speaks in the midst of the chaos and fear. What does Jesus say?

"It is I; don't be afraid." (John 6:20)

Jesus' presence drives out fear

In the midst of the chaos Jesus says,

- "Ego eimi" are the words John uses here. Jesus literally says, "I Am". Translated here as "It is I." Jesus identifies Himself to His disciples in a way that should simultaneously bring great awe and deep comfort.

Why was fear to vanish? Because Jesus was present.

- The same Jesus who changed water into wine at Cana
- The same Jesus who Healed the royal official's son with just a word
- The same Jesus who healed the paralytic

Not only that, but do you remember the setting of this passage? Jesus just fed five thousand men and whoever else was at this little potluck and the crowds respond by trying to make Jesus King.

The crowds recognize that Jesus has done something amazing and they respond by saying, "ah, we know who this Jesus is. He is the King to deliver us from the Romans." The crowds longed for a good thing: freedom. But they treated Jesus, the Lord, as a pawn to get them there rather than trusting His provision.

Jesus, as the One walking on water, says "IT IS !! Do not FEAR." Jesus was present, which meant fear had no place. Jesus reveals who He is. He remove the ability of the disciples to do what the crowds tried to do: to force their understanding of who Jesus should be onto Jesus.

You see, when we are facing chaos, we can know and trust that Jesus is going to show up because He is *Immanuel*, God with us. If He didn't abandon his disciples when he faced the waves; if He didn't abandon His people when He faced the cross; then He is not going to abandon us today. It would be contrary to His very nature.

But you and I do not get to define *how* He shows up or what He does when He shows up. Jesus is not some pet or crutch that we name and define how to be used. No, Jesus is who He is and we are forced to decide how we will respond to Him. Jesus reveals himself as one who cannot be on the periphery of your life. He is either the ultimate focus or it isn't the real Jesus you are interacting with. It is so easy for us to put Jesus in a box... and even to put the "how" of His answering His promises in a box. But when we do that... we are taking Jesus off his throne and inserting ourselves there.

You know, this season has the power to be a defining point for all of us. I know for me and Bre it has changed a lot about how we live day to day in this season, but we are also asking how this could be a defining point for our family moving forward. Right

now we are going to take another three minutes. Again, write down the following questions, and choose one to begin processing through. Then, schedule some intentional time this week to process through all of these by yourself with a journal, with your spouse, with a friend, or with your small group!

Discussion Questions: (3 minutes)

- What has this season revealed is most important to me?
- What would it look like for Jesus to truly be my *ultimate* focus (or the ultimate focus of my family)?
- How could my future schedule, budget, and decision making reflect this truth?

After the disciples recognized Jesus, we are told in verse 21:

²¹ Then they were willing to take him into the boat, and immediately the boat reached the shore where they were heading.

Don't miss Jesus in this season. Jesus specializes in showing up in the chaos. Jesus doesn't just make the storm stop, but he gets into the boat with us. Jesus specializes in displacing fear with His presence. Notice in this story it is not a miracle of making a lame man walk, or turning water into wine... Not a miracle of provision like multiplying the bread. Here it is His simple presence. Suffering along with you. Could He do a miracle in your situation or provide like that? Sure. But, I think more often than anything, He simply just shows up. Jesus *IS* present. Not was. Not will be. **IS.**

But this requires us to take Jesus on *His terms*. He won't settle for being our crutch. He is the provider and the source of life. He Himself is the treasure and source of security in the midst of chaos; not some other *thing*. Will you take a step in trusting him in the midst of the chaos? He will not let you down. He is present.

PRAY

'Before you log off, we want you to know that we would love to connect with you so we are doing something new this weekend, a bit of a virtual Welcome Center! Niki and Ross are going to let you know how to join us there now!'

The idea is that you (Andrew) would take about 30 seconds to say hello to everyone and post your email in the chat to encourage people to connect with you there if they have questions about the sermon or want to chat more with you 1-on-1.