

What Does Jesus Reveal About Himself?

Matthew 14:13-36

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June 19, 2016

If you don't spend a lot of time with a person, you have an incomplete picture of them. I was struck by this again recently in the two funerals we held at the church. There was a little I knew about our friends Freda and Maureen. But there was much I didn't know that came out at the funerals and discussions with their families. I didn't know that Freda took on the city when she was seventy about their refusal to pick up some garbage bags she'd put out. I didn't know Maureen was born in Northern Ireland nor the wooden fork that hung on her kitchen wall used for disciplining the kids. It started with four tongs, then three, then two, then one.

The more you get to know a person, the more complete the picture about why they might act, or think like they do. The less we know someone, the more likely we make snap judgments and conclusions about them. Someone drives below the speed limit in front of us. So we immediately conclude they're an idiot and don't know the law of the road. But maybe they've just gotten really bad news and can barely see through their tears. Maybe they were in an accident recently. Maybe they've never driven that road before and they're trying to find their way. You don't know until you get to know more about the person.

The same is true when it comes to Jesus. If we don't know Him well or aim to keep getting a more complete picture of Him, we can live with a distorted view of Him. Then we're in danger of interpreting His care or concern or love for us through our distorted views rather than reality. So today, we're going to have a tremendous opportunity to get to know more about Jesus. We come to a passage rich with revelation about Him. If you will invest the next few moments in this talk, you can leave here with a clearer picture of Jesus that will help you in your life this week and beyond.

The picture comes from the next part of the Gospel of Matthew. Two weeks ago, we saw Jesus rejected in His home town of Nazareth. Then we saw John the Baptist rejected by Herod Antipas. In answer to the question, who is Jesus, we learned He is the rejected prophet leading a rejected people who are accepted by God. Now the account continues where we will learn much more about the identity of Christ. I pray God will use this to encourage us today and give us a more complete picture about Jesus.

Matthew 14:13-36 (ESV)

¹³ Now when Jesus heard this, he withdrew from there in a boat to a desolate place by himself. But when the crowds heard it, they followed him on foot from the towns. ¹⁴ When he went ashore he saw a great crowd, and he had

compassion on them and healed their sick.¹⁵ Now when it was evening, the disciples came to him and said, “This is a desolate place, and the day is now over; send the crowds away to go into the villages and buy food for themselves.”¹⁶ But Jesus said, “They need not go away; you give them something to eat.”¹⁷ They said to him, “We have only five loaves here and two fish.”¹⁸ And he said, “Bring them here to me.”¹⁹ Then he ordered the crowds to sit down on the grass, and taking the five loaves and the two fish, he looked up to heaven and said a blessing. Then he broke the loaves and gave them to the disciples, and the disciples gave them to the crowds.²⁰ And they all ate and were satisfied. And they took up twelve baskets full of the broken pieces left over.²¹ And those who ate were about five thousand men, besides women and children.

²² Immediately he made the disciples get into the boat and go before him to the other side, while he dismissed the crowds.²³ And after he had dismissed the crowds, he went up on the mountain by himself to pray. When evening came, he was there alone,²⁴ but the boat by this time was a long way^[b] from the land,^[c] beaten by the waves, for the wind was against them.²⁵ And in the fourth watch of the night he came to them, walking on the sea.²⁶ But when the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they were terrified, and said, “It is a ghost!” and they cried out in fear.²⁷ But immediately Jesus spoke to them, saying, “Take heart; it is I. Do not be afraid.”

²⁸ And Peter answered him, “Lord, if it is you, command me to come to you on the water.”²⁹ He said, “Come.” So Peter got out of the boat and walked on the water and came to Jesus.³⁰ But when he saw the wind,^[d] he was afraid, and beginning to sink he cried out, “Lord, save me.”³¹ Jesus immediately reached out his hand and took hold of him, saying to him, “O you of little faith, why did you doubt?”³² And when they got into the boat, the wind ceased.³³ And those in the boat worshiped him, saying, “Truly you are the Son of God.”

³⁴ And when they had crossed over, they came to land at Gennesaret.³⁵ And when the men of that place recognized him, they sent around to all that region and brought to him all who were sick³⁶ and implored him that they might only touch the fringe of his garment. And as many as touched it were made well.

What does Jesus reveal about Himself? (Who does Jesus reveal Himself to be?)

The first reality is found in verses 13-21. Jesus receives the news of John the Baptist’s execution. So he tries to slip away in a boat to go to a desolate place to be alone. But the crowds see him leave. So they walk by foot to the place they suspect he’s going to.

By the time he gets to shore a large crowd awaits him. He is filled with compassion and heals their sick. When evening arrives, the disciples recognize it’s past the normal meal time. So they tell Jesus to dismiss the crowds so they can go into the local towns to buy some food.

However Jesus tells the disciples to give the crowds something to eat. The disciples respond incredulously about the impossibility of such a request. They only have 5 loaves and 2 fish. But Jesus takes over. He asks the disciples to bring these meager rations to him. They instruct the crowds to sit down on the grass. Then Jesus pronounces a blessing while

looking to heaven. He instructs the disciples to go feed the crowds. The meager rations multiply so that the entire crowd gets fed and there is an abundance of leftovers.

Now this act is a phenomenal miracle. But we must also recognize how much this incident recalled a key moment in Israel's history. Think about it, a multitude of hungry people; a desolate place; a miraculous provision of bread? Back in Exodus 16, God delivered the Israelites from slavery in Egypt. They have crossed the Red Sea and now the multitude finds themselves in the desert. But they lack food for survival. So God miraculously provides for them something called manna every morning. They gather it up so they can make bread. This bread comes on account of the Prophet Moses' intercession before God. Here in Matthew, the great prophet Jesus takes the small rations of a boy and multiplies them to feed a multitude.

So what does Jesus reveal about Himself? **He is the great provider of bread for a multitude in a desolate place.** Just as God provided manna for the Israelites in the desert, Jesus provides bread for this massive crowd in the desolate place beside the Sea of Galilee. Jesus reveals himself as God constantly provides for His people.

Notice He is not intimidated by the magnitude of the problem. There were probably 10,000 people present that day. Jesus only had 5 little loaves and 2 fishes. But He provided for all of them. The disciples saw the size of the need and the smallness of human resources. But Jesus saw the size of the need and recognized the greatness of God's available resources.

Some of you here today face situations or problems that loom large. They are serious, complicated and beyond your resources. If we only have our resources to face the problems before us, we have good reason to worry. But in such moments, it is important to stop and remind ourselves of the greatness of God and His resources.

Sometimes God provides by bringing relief in a situation. Other times He provides by bringing a person into our lives that can help us. Sometimes He provides peace or a new perspective. Sometimes He provides very practical help.

A young Muslim man began secretly reading the Bible, away from his parent's home. Matthew 7:7 stood out to him: "Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you." He accepted Jesus as his Savior and repented of his sins. Rest and peace came into his life and he continued to read about Christ, who he realized was more than a mere prophet as Islam taught.

But one day, his Mom found his Bible in his backpack. “This is a Muslim home,” she said. She demanded that he leave. So this young man began walking the streets of Chicago looking for a place to stay. God brought along a Filipino Christian who took him in for a few days. Then a friend offered him a place to stay until he could find a job. He kept on praying and reading the Bible and joined a church. He eventually married and continues to walk with the Lord today. Yet on that day, he was kicked out of his house, God provided this Christian who met him and took him in. God cares deeply for His people and for you. Don’t believe the lies that He has abandoned you or doesn’t care. One way you might discover more about this aspect of God’s character is by asking other Christians how God has provided for them in their lives.

Jesus is the great provider for a multitude in a desolate place. The next revelation flows from the circumstances following the feeding. There is apparently a huge uproar following this meal. Matthew doesn’t let us into what was actually going on. But John tells us the people intended to make Jesus king by force. They recognized the magnitude of the miracle and believed this person who could fulfill their political ambitions of making Israel great again. So what does Jesus do? Verse 22 – “Immediately, he made the disciples get into the boat.” Jesus didn’t want the disciples to get caught up with the political ambitions of the crowd. The disciples struggled with their own ambitions and their desire to be great in Jesus’ coming kingdom. So Jesus gets the disciples going in a boat and then dismisses the crowds. He puts down their rally to make him king. Can you imagine how much self-control that took? When a crowd of people proclaim your greatness, most men would bask in that and run with it. Jesus dismisses the crowds because their way is not God’s way.

Finally, Jesus is able to get alone to the top of a mountain to pray. Meanwhile, the disciples are on the sea. They have bad sea-faring conditions. The wind blows against them. The waves batter their boat. They have been out at sea for hours and are likely exhausted by this point. Somewhere between 3 and 6 AM, Jesus comes to them walking on the water. This is the second revelation from Jesus about Himself. **(14:22-25) – He is the Lord over nature who can walk on water.**

The Israelites viewed the sea or water as a symbol of chaos and evil. God demonstrates His authority over the sea throughout Scripture. In the very beginning, God set limits on the sea. Genesis 1:9 states “And God said, “Let the waters under the heavens be gathered together in one place, and let the dry land appear.” And it was so. God called

the dry land Earth and the waters that were gathered together he called Seas.” People would live on the Earth. So God limits the seas so that man can have a safe place to live.

Then God demonstrates His lordship over the seas again with Noah’s flood. He allowed the sea to burst the borders set in creation. This was all under His authority as a judgement upon the wickedness of man. But then God makes the waters recede so man could begin again. Later, the Israelites escape Egypt but get trapped by the Sea. So God parts the sea before them. They go through the sea to dry land. Then God closes the sea over the pursuing Egyptian army. God rescues people from the deep waters. This is even pictured in immersion baptism. We are buried under the water and raised to new life coming out of the water.

Now in this Gospel, Jesus displays that He is Lord over the Sea. Back in Matthew 8:23-27, Jesus calmed a storm. The wind and the sea obey him. Here he defies the sea by walking on top of it. What a moment and an image for us to meditate on. Jesus walks above any problem or swirling challenge we face in our lives. Jesus has authority over that problem. Jesus comes to us in our problems. Why did Jesus go out to walk on the water? Did He just decide “I want to go for a stroll and I don’t want anyone to bother me so I’m going to walk out on the sea?” No. Matthew 14:25. “And in the fourth watch of the night, he came to them, walking on the sea.” Jesus walked on the water to get to his “in trouble” disciples. Jesus walks towards you and me in the midst of our troubles and churning lives.

But when the disciples first saw Jesus on the water, they did not take it well. Verse 26 – “When the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they were terrified and said, “It is a ghost!” and they cried out in fear. I’d probably do the same thing. Talk about freaky. It’s dark in a storm with high waves and it looks like there’s something on the water over there. What would you say? “Oh, there’s something you don’t see every day.”

But Jesus responds with comforting words. “But immediately Jesus spoke to them saying, “Take heart, it is I. Do not be afraid.” Remember Matthew was in that boat. He pictures Jesus as seeing the disciples need and immediately offering reassurance. This was no ordinary assurance. It wasn’t just “It’s okay guys, it’s me.” The text literally says, “Take heart, I am. Do not be afraid.” I AM. When Moses stood before the burning bush in Exodus 3, he received his mission from God to lead Israel out of Egypt. Moses didn’t want to go. So he made multiple excuses. One excuse was he did not know God’s name. So he argued that when he went to the slaves and told him God sent him for deliverance, they would ask “what is the name of this God.” So God answers Moses. “My name is I AM WHO I AM.”

This is the third piece of revelation offered by Jesus. **(14:26-27) – He is the divine encourager who uses the name of God.** “Take heart. Don’t be afraid. I AM is here.” Jesus walks out on the water to them. He calls out encouragement to them. In his encouragement He continues to teach them that He is God. God is on their side. They don’t have to be afraid.

It’s no different for you and me today friends, if we know Christ. We just can’t see Him physically. But He constantly calls to us “Take courage, it is I – your divine and all powerful Lord. I am with you. Don’t be afraid!” It doesn’t mean we don’t go through tough stuff. But it does mean that if we keep our faith focused on Christ, we won’t go through it alone.

Then things get really interesting. For the first time in this Gospel, Matthew begins to focus on Peter. I think the way the Gospels portray the disciples is one of the strongest arguments for their authenticity. If you wanted to make something up about this Jesus and his followers, you wouldn’t tell the faulty side of the followers. Yet Peter is so real and relatable to us.

Verse 28 – Peter answered him, “Lord, if it is you, command me to come to you on the water.” Would that be our first response to Jesus’ assuring words? I think I would have said, “thank you Lord for coming to us. Please help us in this storm.” But Peter thinks walking on water would be really cool. He would be the guy that would volunteer to try bungee jumping. Some commentators think this was a pretty presumptuous and almost arrogant request. But Jesus affirms it by saying “Come.” And Peter walks on the water. We immediately jump to his fail in the next phrase. But let’s pause for a moment and give Peter his due. Do you know anyone who has walked on water lately? I’ve probably told you the story already of when I tried to walk on water.

I was a kid who was at a swimming pool. I had recently heard this story in Sunday School. So I thought that if I had enough faith, I could do the same thing. So I stood by the edge of the pool and believed that God could help me walk on water. Then I stepped out into the water. Never once did it hold me up. After trying about 10 or 15 times, I was tired. No human can just walk on water. But Peter did for a few moments in a great step of faith and focus on Christ.

Then, he allowed the magnitude of the situation to overcome his faith. He got scared and immediately began to sink. So he cries out “Lord, save me.” Jesus immediately, there’s that word again, reached out his hand and took hold of him. This is the fourth revelation from Jesus.

(14:28-31) – **He is the savior who rescues His own “struggling in faith” people from death.** Jesus gently rebukes Peter.

“O you of little faith, why did you doubt?” He doesn’t say, “have you no faith.” Peter had faith but it was little. Yet it would grow. Peter experienced Jesus life saving work. The other disciples didn’t because they never got out of the boat. John Ortberg writes “If you want to walk on water, you’ve got to get out of the boat. If you want to experience the power of God in your life, you’ve got to take a step of faith. It involves risky obedience.” Yet Peter’s faith at that moment is somehow a mix of little faith and an emotional burst of energy. That’s where we need to discern if our stepping out is actually faith or just emotional energy and confidence because we’re excited at that moment.

Jesus saves Peter and they come to the boat. As soon as they step foot into it, the storm ends. The other disciples experience a salvation of sorts. Then the disciples respond in the midst of the suddenly calm sea. No longer is Jesus just an impressive teacher. No longer is he just a prophet. No longer do they see him as a miracle worker in Moses’ league. They worship him as Son of God. Revelation #5 - **(14:32-33) Jesus is the Son of God.** They probably didn’t fully understand the implications of that conclusion or statement. In fact, it took a while for them and the early church to flesh out what that really meant. Later, the church would clarify this title to mean – “the eternally generated Word of the Father or the only begotten Son. And Son of God means the true image bearer of God; the faithful son unlike the unfaithful Adam; the loyal firstborn son unlike the disloyal nation of Israel. He is God the Son, the second person of the trinity, not some lesser god to the Father.

Finally, the boat reaches shore. You’d think after a night like that where we have no indication that Jesus got any sleep, he’d just want to check in at a bed and breakfast. But people at this town of Gennesaret recognize him. They spread word of his arrival, begging him to heal based on the simple touch of his garment. He agrees. Maybe because he was exhausted, He agreed to this method. But whoever touched it was healed. **(14:34-36) - The compassionate healer who responds to pleas for mercy.** We have seen this again and again throughout this Gospel.

Now I don’t know about you, but in preparing this passage, I found it pretty stunning. What an amazing revelation of Jesus! How encouraging to know Jesus as the divine provider, the lord over water, divine encourager, savior, Son of God and compassionate healer. That’s a much clearer vision of Jesus.

How will we respond? **Jesus’ revelation of Himself demands our worship and reorienting to Him.** The disciples worshiped proclaiming, ‘Truly, He is the Son of God’. That does not only mean Sunday morning. Worship means to

give worth to – to recognize as valuable and worthy of praise. Worship involves honoring, serving and respecting God and abandoning loyalty or devotion to anything or one that hinders our whole hearted worship of Him.

So coupled with worship is a need to reorient our lives to Him. To reorient means to adjust or align in reference to something else. We need to evaluate who has lordship over our lives – us or Jesus? Do we make decisions only based upon our thoughts, wisdom and resources? Or do we live like the Lord is our commanding officer who gives orders, cautions and encouragement for the day ahead and life ahead?

Will you worship Jesus as Son of God? Will you reorient your life to Him?

I'll close with this. Max Lucado imagined what a journal would have been like if one of the disciples had made his entry on the morning after Jesus calmed the storm.. He writes: *I had never seen Jesus as I saw him then. I had seen him as powerful. I had seen him as wise. I had witnessed his authority and marveled at his abilities. But what I witnessed last night I know I'll never forget. I saw God. The God who can't sit still when the storm is too strong. The God who lets me get frightened enough to need him and then comes close enough for me to see him. The God who uses my storms as his path to come to me. I saw God. It took a storm for me to see him. But I saw him. And I'll never be the same.*