

The Twelve | Enrolled in the School of Jesus (B)

The Lord of the Storm (Seeking Jesus, Jesus Seeking)

John 6.14-24

January 16, 2020

Therefore when the people saw the sign which He had performed, they said, "This is truly the Prophet who is to come into the world."

¹⁵ *So Jesus, perceiving that they were intending to come and take Him by force to make Him king, withdrew again to the mountain by Himself alone.*

¹⁶ *Now when evening came, His disciples went down to the sea, ¹⁷ and after getting into a boat, they started to cross the sea to Capernaum. It had already become dark, and Jesus had not yet come to them. ¹⁸ The sea began to be stirred up because a strong wind was blowing. ¹⁹ Then, when they had rowed about three or four miles, they saw Jesus walking on the sea and drawing near to the boat; and they were frightened. ²⁰ But He said to them, "It is I; do not be afraid." ²¹ So they were willing to receive Him into the boat, and immediately the boat was at the land to which they were going.*

²² *The next day the crowd that stood on the other side of the sea saw that there was no other small boat there, except one, and that Jesus had not entered with His disciples into the boat, but that His disciples had gone away alone. ²³ There came other small boats from Tiberias near to the place where they ate the bread after the Lord had given thanks. ²⁴ So when the crowd saw that Jesus was not there, nor His disciples, they themselves got into the small boats, and came to Capernaum seeking Jesus. ²⁵ When they found Him on the other side of the sea, they said to Him, "Rabbi, when did You get here?"*

²⁶ *Jesus answered them and said, "Truly, truly, I say to you, you seek Me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate of the loaves and were filled. ²⁷ "Do not work for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give to you, for on Him the Father, God, has set His seal." ²⁸ Therefore they said to Him, "What shall we do, so that we may work the works of God?" ²⁹ Jesus answered and said to them, "This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He has sent."*

We've been looking at "discipleship", how Jesus Christ recruited/chose, formed and then deployed His twelve disciples ... AND how that process (or something LIKE it) also takes place in the lives of modern believers.

And now we come to what scholars call The Galilean Crisis. It's a point in the public teaching of Jesus in which His original audience has a defining moment. A lot of people are amazed at the "signs" Jesus is doing and are just as amazed at His words ...but the crowds are tracing out the

implications of His words... and suddenly, a fork in the road... a mass withdrawal (at the end of this CH [6] - “many of His disciples withdrew and were not walking with Him anymore” [66]).

So Jesus braces His disciples for the spiritual whirlwind they're about to experience... they're not ready for the flight of so many apparent disciples.

The chapter has four parts to it: the sign (miraculous feeding of the 5000) the storm, the sermon (vv. 25-59) and the sifting (the withdrawal at the end).

Today, we look only at the storm in the context of the whole chapter (the Galilean Crisis) and we'll learn that WHEN PEOPLE SEEK JESUS they really don't know what they're in for BUT when they begin to see Him for who He IS... it's traumatic (like Peter: “depart from me, Lord...”) AND yet to those who admit Him INTO the trauma, who trust Him, THEY FIND HIM TO BE unimaginably better than they once thought.

There are three SEEKINGS in this “Storm Story” and that'll be how we look at it - the 1st seeking the 2nd seeking and the 3rd seeking

When people first seek Jesus Christ, they don't really know what's in store. WE may consider ourselves “spiritual” people and we see Jesus as the height of spirituality. OR we might think of ourselves as anti-establishment types and we seek Jesus Christ because He is the ultimate “rebel” (He overturned the tables!)... OR we're traditional values people and we THINK of Jesus Christ as a conservative champion of family and God and country. OR we just need a hand... just need some help getting into grad school or getting clean and sober and we're seeking “Jesus the helper” ...to give me what's missing from my life.

AND most often THAT is the first seeking. We think we know what we need/want and we think HE fits the bill... He can get me to heaven or make me feel good about myself or “maximize my potential” or help me do the right thing. He's a means to an end. That's how it starts... and for many that's where it ends.

Now after this miraculous feeding at the start of this chapter...the 5000 people who were fed became convinced that they should be seeking Jesus... Some saw Him as a free lunch (and that's as far as it went). Others, maybe a bit more sophisticated, saw that there was something really significant about this miracle ... IT WAS A SIGN (v.14) and as such it **SIGN**ified that this was the new and improved Moses.

Moses fed the people bread in the wilderness and Jesus was matching Moses; He was “the prophet” Moses promised. (end v. 14). But for whatever DIFFERENT reasons, everyone was excited!

And, again the disciples would've been easily swept up in that kind of excitement... that kind of fame and instant popularity changes people (U2 – Vertigo!)

But Jesus (v. 15) “perceives” what’s happening and, in fact, He engineered the moment so this WOULD happen... the motives behind the 1st seeking are now coming up to the surface.

The crowd (v.15) wants to make Jesus a king...even if they have to force him to be king... but of course that'd be like our taking a vote to make the earth round: we can't MAKE the earth a sphere - it already IS a sphere... AND they couldn't MAKE Jesus a king... He IS King! (One like they'd never imagined!)

And Jesus, it says in John CH 2, He knows what's IN a person, knows their motives, that they want to use Him to further their political agenda...expel the bad Romans, restore Israelite patriotism, give us bread, fix our unemployment!

“So let's hoist 'im up on our shoulders and sing 'for he's a jolly good fellow'... make him our candidate!”

But Jesus knows this sentiment is toxic! So, He sends the disciples away by boat. Matthew and Mark both say, “He MADE the disciples get into a boat.” He's saying, “This is the call of the Sirens... and you will NOT be able to resist it... you have to leave NOW!!”

Then HE goes up to the mountain alone to pray... pray what? Well, it doesn't say... maybe pray for the starry-eyed disciples who thought Jesus was making a real campaign mistake... OR maybe to pray for Himself and guard His own heart against temptation (He'd faced this temptation before, “And he led Jesus up and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time.” Luke 4.5)

Now, the 2nd Seeking: the disciples are out on the Sea of Galilee and it's night (Mark says 3-6 am) and there's a violent windy storm...AND Jesus...sent them there! And HE was not with them! (not asleep in the boat this time! Mat 8.23ff)

And in the middle of this six-mile-wide lake they're stalled... and Jesus comes walking over the water...

Now again, this is a miracle and people may struggle with miracles... notice that these ancient people didn't know what to do with it any more than WE do ...v.19 says they were scared and the other accounts say the disciples thought they were seeing a ghost... in other words they couldn't explain this...they did not expect miracles to happen (not that they had some sort of pre-scientific world-view).

Theologically LIBERAL SCHOLARS saw this as a myth ...a symbol... an emblem – AND I’m actually ok with that... as long as we DON’T say it’s “MERELY a symbol... or ONLY a myth... or SIMPLY an emblem and not an actual event.” The point is it IS an actual event (unexpected) but also highly significant/symbolic.

And when the disciples see this Person...they are “beholding” (v.19) someone MORE than just a rebel candidate... or a healer... or a family values guy... or a free lunch... or a patriot...or even a prophet!

This is someone, more than a consultant who can help us maximize our potential. They’re traumatized by the sight of Him... as they would be again and again.

This is the 2nd seeking (many people never get there). It’s an encounter with a Person whom You had not rightly estimated... this is not a jolly good fellow.

In fact, I think what John is indicating here is that they didn’t even want Him there... and it wasn’t until He spoke and said, “It is I; don’t be afraid” ... that they were even willing to let him in the boat!

On another occasion they ask, “Who IS this that even the wind and waves obey Him?” (Mat 8.27)

It’s a pretty common type question in the Gospels ...people are always asking, “Who IS THIS... who forgives sins (Luke 5.21) ... who speaks with such authority that even spirits obey Him (Lk 4.36) ...who stirs the WHOLE city? (Mt 21.10) Herod (last week): “but who is this Man about whom I hear such things?” (Luk 9.9)

See... in our first seeking, we may call Him a king but we really don’t know what kind of King He is...what kind of Sovereign who is NO consultant and no candidate begging for our vote ...and whom WE will enthrone... Like we’re doing Him a favor.

AND He’s not a Savior come to make me into a nice person or come to get me a job or come to make me well adjusted...and upper-middle-class...He’s come to get to the depths of me and my real problem...and sort me out... and fix what I could NEVER fix.

He comes to traumatize me... and He plans to do it: 1) BY LOVING ME TO DEATH and 2) BY COMING TO ME IN THE STORM

See...He’s getting the disciples ready so that they will begin to see the reason for the Cross... He’s graciously engineered a situation in which He will be rejected in a pretty big way...at the end of this chapter: “As a result of this, many of His disciples withdrew and were no longer following Him”

And this was going to be hard for the twelve to understand but Jesus Christ was preparing them to see His rejection. The storm on the sea is preparing them to face the storm on the land (defection!)

And eventually they would see Him rejected by everyone and even rejected by God the Father... This is the kind of Savior I am... not the kind who fixes your unemployment situation and gives you a free lunch or helps you just get by... Tony Robbins and Oprah can help you with that... "I AM the kind who is come to take your rejection...to come down from the Mountain and INTO the storm WITH you!"

"I've come to be consumed for you in the furnace of God's justice... come to take what you deserve ... I want you to look at this coming rejection differently... it's not a public-relations problem, IT'S WHY I CAME...to be rejected for you...to LOVE YOU TO DEATH... that's the kind of Savior I AM.

AND, #2: Jesus often communicates this to people IN THE STORM... here when it's dark...when He is absent and when we are stuck and barely holding on. HE OFTEN comes and finds us depleted and exhausted and says, "I sent you INTO this storm and now I want to get inside the boat ... NOT the consultant, realize-your-potential candidate you THOUGHT I WAS but the absolute Ruler and THE ONE LOVER OF YOUR SOUL who was willing and able to give Myself so that you could become new..."

In all the accounts...it's only when Jesus Christ gets in the boat that the wind and waves die down... It's essential to the lesson... "I send you into the trial, the difficulty ...the hardship...the sickness... the failure in order that you be able to see your limitations and weakness and to say, 'I didn't need a bigger paycheck... I didn't need more people to like/respect me... I didn't need to realize my potential... TRUTH IS I DIDN'T EVEN KNOW what I needed... but now I see it... the storm made it clear (the unemployment made it clear...the cancer made it clear... the adultery made it clear): "I need Him! The Savior who would love me to death...the LORD of the seas and waves who alone can govern me and rule me like I can't even govern myself!"

It's quite often in the storm that I become the 2nd seeker... it's when I realize that Jesus Christ is not a puny Savior and Lord...but the One who really FACED the storm for me...and that forever changes the nature of the storms in my life...He uses them to change me (not to destroy me!)

That brings us to the 3rd seeking... when the disciples get to the other side... the bread people were back. People came to Capernaum, (very last words) "seeking Jesus"... and many of them were just looking for a free lunch/healing; some of the deeper types were looking for a new Moses who could free them from the new Pharaoh and give more law for them to obey. But now the disciples were beginning to see the crowds differently, and they themselves were changed in the storm.

And it brings out the point with which we end this sermon and that is...even in this room there are different kinds of seekers...AND one kind CAN become another kind.

Especially if IN THE STORM, you will welcome Jesus Christ into the boat... If you're traumatized enough to see Him as bigger and different than you first thought and hear Him say, "Don't be afraid...it is I... I who sent you into this storm and I who faced the ULTIMATE storm for you... AND I AM using this present storm to show you: what you really need is WHO I AM."

Some see ONLY their need for a new apartment ...a different boyfriend... a bit more happiness ... and maybe religion or spirituality to help you GET that.

For others...Jesus is a great leader...the greatest leader, the ultimate example - even better than Moses. And if you try to follow Him and do what He tells you and be a good person... and pray – all will be well!

For others, you are sincerely hoping for Jesus to get to the bottom of the well and change you ...if He would suffer the consequences of my sin IN MY PLACE... I want Him to rule My life... and I'm starting to see that ONLY He knows how to make me complete/fulfilled in a way I don't even know.

If you're in this third category, you will increasingly see the storms of life in a different way... these are not so much things to fear/escape (even though they are often indescribably painful/scary!) but they are also opportunities for the LORD of the Storm to come to me in a new way... reveal Himself in a new way... to gain access to me in a new way.

This person sees that the real Seeker is not I ... but Jesus Christ... the Lord of the Storm. Not a means to an end – but the All-In-All!

And that what He wants from ME at this point (in the storm or NOT) what it means to do the will of God, is that you believe in Him whom God has sent." (John 6.29) – to rest and receive, to welcome Him into the boat, to trust the One who came down from above and who is seeking YOU!

Faith consists not in doing something but in receiving something. To say that we are justified by faith is just another way of saying that we are justified not in slightest measure by ourselves, but simply and solely by the One in whom our faith is reposed... faith means receiving something, not doing something or even being something... At bottom, faith is in one sense a very simple thing; it simply means that, abandoning the vain effort of earning one's way into God's presence, we accept the gift of salvation which Christ offers so full and free.

- J. Gresham Machen, *What is Faith?* (1925)