

August 9, 2020

He Came Down

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ, last week we began a sermon series coming from the Gospel of Matthew; a sermon series that took a look at Jesus feeding the 5000. One of the things that's unique about Matthew is the way he handles his account of Jesus's ministry and his disciples. Matthew has firsthand knowledge. He was one of those disciples. And yet when we look at what Matthew writes, we see that unlike many firsthand writers, you know an autobiography or something like that. Matthew doesn't use the word I instead he includes himself with the disciples and he typically portrays the disciples and himself as having little faith. The disciples in the book of Matthew often fail, in spite of their good intentions. And think of Peter saying to Jesus, 'far be it from you Lord,' when Jesus tells him about his upcoming crucifixion. Jesus has to say, 'get behind me Satan.'

Last week we saw some of that failure. Jesus had those disciples on the go, they were moving from place to place and Jesus sent them out to go throughout all of Israel. We saw that they were so busy that they didn't even have time to eat. When Jesus told them it's time for us to go away to a desolate place, you need some rest and the crowds ended up following. Jesus even took them up a mountain in this desolate place and the crowd still followed. Jesus took the time to deal with the crowds, which seems to have given rise to some certain emotions within those disciples. They were little jealous, I fact they said to Jesus, 'send them away,' because it was getting close to dinnertime. Jesus's response to send them away was most unique. He said, 'you give them something to eat.' What did they do? They first questioned, 'how could we do it, we don't have enough money or even if we do have enough money, it's way too much to spend!' Then when they go, they look where they can get the food. Now remember, Jesus had told them, 'we need to go away to a desolate place.' Basically, we're going on vacation. Do you not think the disciples pack some food? If they were going to a desolate place, they would have needed to bring food along. But but instead they went to the crowds who had run to follow Jesus, who didn't pack lunches. All they found was you know five little dinner rolls, and two small fish. Jesus took that and performed the miracle.

That's where our gospel picks up today. The next word is immediately. Immediately after feeding the 5000 and picking up the 12 baskets full of fish; immediately He made the disciples get into the boat and go before Him on to the other side. I can just imagine one of the disciples saying, 'does that mean there's no vacation? We just crossed over the sea of Galilee to get here Lord; now do you want us to go to the other side?' But immediately He sends them on the way while, Matthew records, He, Jesus dismissed the crowds. And once the crowds have been dismissed and told go back home, Jesus went back up the mountain to pray. Matthew records that it was now evening, so it was between 5:00 and 6:00 PM.

Matthew also records that at that time the boat was a long way off, but that it also was beaten by the waves because the wind was against them. It was a much easier trip going to the East of the sea of Galilee; but now going West, they're fighting the wind. They're

fighting a storm. So, this is evening five-six o'clock. We then move forward to the 4th watch. The 4th watch would have been between 3:00 and 6:00 in the morning; so, 9 to 12 hours after they had set off and what do we read? Well we read that He came to them walking on the sea.

Now, let's just break this down for a minute. When we look at John chapter 6, we see that they were three to four miles out, they hadn't made much progress. This is in 9 to 12 hours. They were going about 1/3 of a mile per hour and they've been doing this rowing for 9 to 12 hours. They've got to be tired! They've been fighting this storm and now here comes Jesus walking on the sea. But remember the waves are breaking, the wind is blowing, He's walking on the sea. Where He is walking the sea is calm, but everywhere else it's choppy, it's stormy. And He is speeding. He's walking, He's doing 3 - 4 mph. In fact, in Mark 6, we read he meant to pass by then literally he was in the passing Lane and he's going to go by; and literally He in essence, is saying 'follow me I'm going to pass you. I'm just walking by and just follow me. I'll meet you over on the other side.' They see Him and what's their interpretation? What's their reaction? Well Matthew records they were terrified because they thought it was a ghost. Jesus who is omniscient, knows all things. He knows this and so He says, 'take heart, it is I.' It's almost like the 'I Am' of the Bible. 'It is I, do not be afraid.'

And here again Matthew picks up some of that lack of faith of the disciples. Some of the failures that they have peter's first word is *if*. *If* it is you, command me to come to you on the water. So, *if* it's really you Lord, command me to come to you. Well there is faith there because he knew Jesus could do it. So, he's putting faith in Jesus, if it is Him. In other words, he is saying, 'you, give the order so I know it's OK.' And Jesus simply says "come." Peter gets out, he starts walking on the water towards Jesus, and then we read that he sees the wind, or he sees the effect of the wind on the waves, he began to sink. And in here is a good statement of faith. "Lord save me." We can all learn from Peter in that you know it was only Jesus could save him at that time and in all reality, only Jesus can save us for all eternity. It's amazing how desperation can build our faith. When we are on the brink of death, suddenly we've come to realize we need a Savior.

And what do we see from Jesus? It's beautiful words that Matthew records; "immediately" He didn't look at Peter and say, 'oh how's that faith doing Peter?' No, Peter cries out, "Lord save me!" And Jesus immediately reaches out His hand and takes hold of him and pulls him up. But He does say to him, "oh you of little of faith, why did you doubt?" He had just seen Jesus feed 5000 with or more than 5000 with a very small amount of food and then have 12 basketfuls left. In other words, Jesus has total power over nature. He can take a little and make more. One of the laws of science is you can't do that. And to further show the disciples who He was, to build their faith, He got on the boat and the wind ceased. That's a miracle!

We often look at this account in Matthew and we don't take the time to compare it to the account in Mark 6 or John 6. When we look at John 6, John records something else and

again remember John is an eyewitness. He records that immediately the boat was at the land to which they were going. So, Jesus got in the boat, they had only gone three or four miles. He can send the wind starts and instantly they're in port. That is a massive miracle and did the disciples notice it? You bet they did; because Matthew records, 'they worshipped Him saying, "truly You are the son of God."' He had fed the 5000 and He had walked on water and He had stopped the storm and He had transported them instantly the next 20 miles. Amazing!

You see what happened is at that moment in time, they realized Emmanuel, God is with us, or God has come down. And you know that name; Emmanuel, God with us or God come down is an intrinsic part of the Bible. It is God's nature to come down. He came down at the Tower of Babel and confused their languages. He came down following the 10th plague in Egypt and He led the children of Israel out using the pillar of cloud and the pillar of fire, which we will reference later as we celebrate communion. He used that pillar of fire to separate the Egyptian army from the Israelites. He used the pillar of cloud to guide them and lead them through the Red Sea and to Mount Sinai where God came down on the mountain in cloud and fire and literally spoke to the people giving them the Ten Commandments. We usually think of Moses going up and getting it but when you read the scripture God spoke the Ten Commandments to all of Israel from Sinai which was covered in cloud and fire and when the children of Israel heard it they told Moses you go up and talk to Him. God came down and it was impressive. And at the same time God came down and it was quiet because when Elijah was out in the wilderness in the cave, thinking that only he was left, what happened? Well there was a giant earthquake, but God wasn't in that. There's a massive fire, God wasn't in that. There's a windstorm that broke the rocks, God wasn't in that. But God came to Elijah in a still small voice.

And God the Son, came down. He came and was with us Emmanuel born In Bethlehem. The light as John calls him in John chapter 1, the Light of the world. He left his place of glory, His place of light. Revelation describes heaven as not needing a sun because the glory of God lights it. Jesus left that light and He came down to this dark world. It was a dark beginning. He was conceived in the darkness of the womb. He came to us and was born in Bethlehem in the darkness of night. He ministered to a world that was stuck in spiritual darkness primarily because the religious leaders could not see Jesus because of their spiritual blindness and their spiritual hardness of heart. They were in the darkness. Jesus died in the darkness of this world. Literal darkness because the sun quit shining; and if it quit shining there was no moon shining. He died in the darkness of night on the cross yet in the middle of the day. And he was buried in a dark tomb.

But, don't you love that word? It erases everything that's just been said. As John wrote in John 1:5 the light, Jesus shines in the darkness. On Easter morning, He was brilliant. You see when Jesus was born darkness fled that night when the Angels came to the shepherds and told them about this miracle. And when Jesus was raised from the dead, the darkness of sin, the darkness of death, and the darkness of the devil all fled at that resurrection. The darkness of sin; we're all sinners. We're all affected by it, but the

darkness of sin has been covered by the righteousness of Christ. The darkness of the tomb, it has no power over us because we know when these eyes close in death, it's not dark for us. When these eyes close in death, our spiritual eyes immediately open to heaven and the glory, the light of our Lord. The darkness of the devil, he has been defeated. He will never torment us again. In fact, I want you to think of something this comes from my background as a teacher and teaching science. Do you know what the definition of darkness is? Scientifically speaking, the definition of darkness is, I quote: "the absence of light." And so, here's Jesus the light of the world like a flashlight. You turned it on and well there's light. Light is something we can see. Light is something we can measure. But when there's light there is no darkness. Darkness flees from it because light is light. Can darkness overcome the light? No, light is light. This is why Jesus is referred to as the Light of the world. He brings the light of Salvation to us and nothing can take that light away. Light is light and Christ is Christ. He is the Savior. Our salvation is sure. This is what the psalmist looked forward to in Psalm 116. He asks, "What shall I render to the Lord, for all His benefits to me?" And what are His benefits to me? His benefits to me are salvation, light overcoming the darkness of sin, death, the power of the devil. What does the Psalmist say about those benefits? How does it impact him? He says four great things. Number one, I will offer sacrifices of Thanksgiving. Think about that, a sacrifice means giving up. It costs us to give thanks to the Lord, but it's worth giving thanks. Consider that woman the widow who dropped 2 little mites in the offering box. Jesus said she gave more than all the others because she gave everything. She sacrificed to give thanks to God.

The psalmist says, I will pay my vows to the Lord. In other words, if we say, "Lord I am going to do devotions every day, we do devotions every day. If we say, I am going to get up and I am going to start my day with prayer, we do that. We follow through on what we say to the Lord. Third, the psalmist says, I will call on the name of the Lord. When we run into troubles, I don't know, maybe a pandemic. Do we look to the government? No, we call on the name of the Lord. For He is the One who is over governments and over this world.

The psalmist ends with saying, "I will praise the Lord." That is so against human nature because we want to take all the credit. This is saying 'I'm not going to take any credit.' Why would you bother with credit? He is the Light. I'm not. Because of sin, I'm part of the darkness. But He has given His light, His Son to us who has covered our sin with His righteousness, has taken away the darkness of death and traded it for seeing the glory of God. And He has told us that will be our eternal home where the glory of God is always shining and therefore the darkness of the devil will never be there.

As you consider that, I hope and I pray that you too will say, "oh Lord when I consider all that you have done for me, I will render to you sacrifices of Thanksgiving. I will keep my vows to you Lord. I will call on your name in the day of trouble and I will praise You and You alone for You alone have saved me.

In our savior's name, Amen