

John 6:16–21

- 16 Now when evening came, His disciples went down to the sea,  
17 got into the boat, and went over the sea toward Capernaum. And it was already dark, and Jesus had not come to them.  
18 Then the sea arose because a great wind was blowing.  
19 So when they had rowed about three or four miles, they saw Jesus walking on the sea and drawing near the boat; and they were afraid.  
20 But He said to them, “It is I; do not be afraid.”  
21 Then they willingly received Him into the boat, and immediately the boat was at the land where they were going.

## **“Jesus Walking on the Water” John 6:16-21**

INTRO:

If I ask what is it like to be in the will of God, what images flash on the viewscreen in your mind? Do you see gentle breezes and warm hues? Do you hear the peaceful sound of waves lapping contentedly on the beach? Do you feel warm, secure, and confident? Or are the images in your mind more of a violent storm and aching muscles screaming at you as you sweat to save your life? Most of us would see the former set of images more often than the latter.

Undeniably, being in the will of God is the place of blessing. However, we must never forget it can at times also be a place of great opposition and struggle. Paul wrote to the Corinthians about his circumstances while pursuing God’s will for his life. ***“I will tarry in Ephesus until Pentecost. For a great and effective door has opened to me, and there are many adversaries.”*** 1 Corinthians 16:9-10 Plainly, the open door in Ephesus was a place of great opportunity, but it was also a place of fierce opposition!

This is one of the great lessons Jesus was about to teach His disciples in **John 6:16-21**. Remember what has already transpired. Jesus taught His disciples about assessing situations in terms of their own resources when He did the impossible and fed the five thousand. Now the time has come to apply these lessons. In a sense this was a mid-term exam to see if the disciples were paying attention when He taught and did His miracles. As we work our way through the events in this passage there are three lessons we need to learn alongside the disciples.

- I. The Center of God’s Will May Be in the Midst of a Storm (v. 16-18)***
- II. The Center of God’s Will May be a Place of Struggling (v. 19)***
- III. The Center of God’s Will is a Place of Christ’s Deliverance (v. 20-21)***

***I. The Center of God’s Will May Be the Midst in of a Storm (v. 16-18)***

***“Now when evening came, His disciples went down to the sea, got into the boat, and went over the sea toward Capernaum. And it was already dark, and Jesus had not come to them. Then the sea arose because a great wind was blowing.” John 6:16-18***

A. The first thing we notice about this night is that when the disciples got into the boat to go to the other side of the Sea of Galilee, they obeyed the Lord’s direct order.

1. While this is not stated plainly in John’s account, in the parallel account in **Mark’s** Gospel we learn that Jesus compelled them to get into the boat and to cross the sea. ***“Immediately He constrained His disciples get into the boat and go before Him to the other side, to Bethsaida, while He sent the multitude away.” Mark 6:45***

Jesus compelled them to leave because the disciples would be reluctant to leave Jesus with no transportation to the other side of the sea.

2. Another difference between the **Mark** text and **John** is that we read that Jesus sent the multitudes away in **Mark**, while John wrote Jesus departed into the mountain alone. Mark also adds the detail about why Jesus went into the mountain. He went there to pray.

3. Whatever the sequence of events, we know that when the sun set, the disciples were in the boat headed across the sea, and they were doing exactly what God the Son wanted them to do. It was absolutely impossible for them to be any more in the will of God than they were at that moment in their lives.

B. So, what happened? They had smooth sailing, right? WRONG!

***“Now when evening came, His disciples went down to the sea, got into the boat, and went over the sea toward Capernaum. And it was already dark, and Jesus had not come to them. Then the sea arose because a great wind was blowing.”***

They were in the midst of a storm. This is the first lesson we learn about being in the center of the Lord’s will. Sometimes God’s will lands us in the heart of a storm.

1. Storms come when we are in the will of God for at least two reasons. The tempest can come because Satan is trying to blow us off track. That is what happened with Job. He did not know about the challenge Satan gave to God. Nor did he know how God had bragged about him. All that Job knew was that he tried to live in God’s will. Suddenly, out of the blue, the greatest storm he had ever faced hit him with gale force. God allowed it, but Satan did it.

2. The storm here in **John 6** had a second reason. This storm was educational. Good education sometimes includes exams. This was a mid-term exam for the disciples. Jesus taught them many things. However, did these truths filter down to become part of the fabric of their lives? As always, this was an applicational mid-term. Did they pass? In answer, let me quote from a comment Mark made at the end of their ordeal.

***“And he went up unto them into the ship; and the wind ceased: and they were sore amazed in themselves beyond measure, and wondered. For they considered not the miracle of the loaves: for their heart was hardened.” Mark 6:51-5***

It looks as if they flunked again. Still, my professors reminded me over and over again, even the process of taking a test is educational.

## ***II. The Center of God's Will May be a Place of Struggling (v. 19)***

A. The second lesson we learn about being in the Lord's will is a corollary to the first lesson. The Center of God's will can be a place of struggle.

***"So when they had rowed about three or four miles, they saw Jesus walking on the sea and drawing near the boat; and they were afraid."***

1. John described this work in terms of distance. He wrote that they had rowed twenty-five or thirty stadia. A stadion was about 600 feet. Multiply this out and you find that they rowed somewhere between two and three quarters to three and a half miles against a contrary wind.

2. In Mark's parallel account we can almost feel the aching muscles, smell the sweat, and experience the exhaustion.

***"Now when evening came, the boat was in the middle of the sea; and He was alone on the land. Then He saw them straining at rowing, for the wind was against them."***

The word translated toiling means to be ***"tortured, afflicted, or pained."*** This rowing was a load of work and no fun at all!

B. There are people out there who will tell you that in the will of God all you have to do is to ***"let go and let God."*** There is no way these disciples could let go and let God. They would have been blown off the course. No, sometimes being in the center of the Lord's will means struggling against the flow. It can mean working until your muscles ache and you are exhausted. And they did this until the third watch of the night. Let's say they launched about 7 PM. By 3 AM they had been rowing eight hours straight.

## ***III. The Center of God's Will is a Place of Christ's Deliverance (v. 20-21)***

A. But before we are thoroughly discouraged, let's move on to the third lesson we learn about being in God's will. In the place of God's will, the Lord Jesus sees us in our struggles and comes to us with deliverance. John recorded nothing about the Lord's actions, while the disciples spent a sleepless night trying to make headway against the storm. In Mark's Gospel, Mark gave us precious insight into our Lord, and into His actions in helping His people in storms.

1. First, notice He saw them while they were rowing. Although the Lord was praying in the mountains, we never read of the disciples praying in the boat. Although they were prayer-less, we read in **Mark 6:48**

***"And he saw that they were making headway painfully, for the wind was against them. And about the fourth watch of the night he came to them, walking on the sea."***

Our Lord saw them while they struggled. We never endure storms except that our Lord sees us in the midst of our struggle. The Lord is not ignorant of the struggles that we are going through.

2. Second, we can be assured He also feels our pain. In **Isaiah 63:9** we read, ***"In all their affliction He was afflicted, and the angel of His presence saved them; in His love and in His pity He redeemed them; He lifted them up and carried them all the days of old."***

Isaiah prophesied about the sufferings of the Children of Israel in Egypt. In all their suffering, He suffered. I don't understand this, but I am glad it is true. Remember what Jesus said to Saul on the road to Damascus?

***"Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?"***

Saul persecuted the Lord Jesus by persecuting His church!

3. Third, He came to them and delivered them from the storm.

***"So when they had rowed about three or four miles, they saw Jesus walking on the sea and drawing near the boat; and they were afraid. But He said to them, 'It is I; do not be afraid.' Then they willingly received Him into the boat, and immediately the boat was at the land where they were going."***

He came and walked to them upon the water. Their first reaction was fear. Frankly, if we were in the same situation, we would have a similar reaction. How many people have you seen walking across a stormy sea? But look what happened when He got into the boat. Mark added,

***"Then He went up into the boat to them, and the wind ceased. And they were greatly amazed in themselves beyond measure, and marveled. For they had not understood about the loaves, because their heart was hardened."***

The storm ceased. The final phrase of this verse is very interesting. It says literally, ***"and very much, exceedingly, in themselves they were astonished."*** Mark 6:51 They were blown away. In the next verse we are told why. They were blown away because ***"they had not understood about the loaves, because their heart was hardened."***

They were so filled with their own selves, they forgot about the Lord who could bring them through the storm.

Have we learned the lessons that Jesus tried to teach His disciples?

**(1)** Have we learned that sometimes there are storms in the center of God's will?

**(2)** Have we also learned that being in the center of God's will can mean a lot of effort on our part?

**(3)** Third, have we learned that even in the center of God's will, we still need to pray? Whether we learn these lessons or not, let us be assured, the Lord will watch over us and He still will come and deliver us, because He remains always faithful to us.

***Turn Your Eyes Upon Jesus***