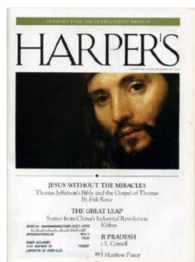


Christ Community Covenant Church
The Power of Christ Revealed Over Nature
Pastor Dave Scherrer - January 25, 2015

Jesus without miracles

We've been making a pretty big deal of late talking about the power of Jesus Christ by noting somewhat without discussion some of the miracles recorded in the Scriptures. Casting out demons, healing the sick, raising the dead; overall pretty spectacular. But not everyone believes in these accounts.



In 2005, *Erik Reece*, son of a Baptist preacher wrote Jesus Without the Miracles.

Then there was another effort more recently called Reclaiming Jesus: Making sense of the man without the miracles, 2008 by *Ian Breckenridge* John Hunt publishing. But this isn't a new idea. Thomas Jefferson in 1804 produced The Philosophy of Jesus of Nazareth, by chopping out the miracles and supernatural from the Gospel accounts leaving what he thought was pure doctrine and profound ethical teachings. Jefferson wrote that "Jesus did not mean to impose himself on mankind as the son of God." He called the writers of the New Testament "ignorant, unlettered men" who produced "superstitions, fanaticisms, and fabrications."

Discussion: What do you think of that notion? If you take away the miracles, what do you have? If there were no miracles would you still believe in Jesus?

Miracles are signs that point to Christ as God. They demonstrate that Jesus had the power and authority to declare His equality with God the Father. Do you remember that others in the Old and New Testament did miracles as well? But, these always pointed away from God. It was the Father who was at work in the Son.

Hebrews 2:3-4

How shall we escape if we neglect such a great salvation? It was declared at first by the Lord, and it was attested to us by those who heard, while God also bore witness by signs and wonders and various miracles and by gifts of the Holy Spirit distributed according to his will.

The source and nature of Christ's signs always revealed that His character and His purposes are at one with the Father's. And Christ's miracles alone are backed by the authority of the Resurrection. Yet again this morning we are going to see Mark's intention to bring to light the deity of Jesus Christ by recording an amazing account:

Mark 6:45-52

⁴⁵ Immediately he made his disciples get into the boat and go before him to the other side, to Bethsaida, while he dismissed the crowd. ⁴⁶ And after he had taken leave of them, he went up on the mountain to pray. ⁴⁷ And when evening came, the boat was out on the sea, and he was alone on the land. 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. He meant to pass by them, ⁴⁹ but when they saw him walking on the sea they thought it was a ghost, and cried out, ⁵⁰ for they all saw him and were terrified. But immediately he spoke to them and said, "Take heart; it is I. Do not be afraid." ⁵¹ And he got into the

boat with them, and the wind ceased. And they were utterly astounded,⁵² for they did not understand about the loaves, but their hearts were hardened.

The Power of Christ Revealed over Nature

We have seen in the last several weeks that demons, disease and even death all submit to the power of Christ and now we see that even Mother Nature has to relinquish her authority to Father God.

The heart of Christ's miracle of walking on the water is that of Jesus' direct control over natural law. His paradoxical action against the known laws of gravity and of the properties of liquid water did not change, suspend, or cancel these universal laws themselves; instead, it was the exercise of a stronger power.

III: Magnet – showing that gravity is not undone but a greater power is being demonstrated that holds gravity in abeyance, a power of nature that the power of God trumps.

The law of gravity is not set aside when the magnet holds the iron weight; it is only that the superior force of magnetism has overcome gravitation. So what happened that stormy night was the exercise of Christ's omnipotence, as He, the Creator of seas and winds revealed His authority over them, and they being His, He could use them as He desired. It was His will which bore Him triumphantly above those waters.

All things are possible with the Father and Jesus Christ. To doubt that they can accomplish such things is faithlessness. One who has learned to trust in God and believe in His Word does not wonder whether God can intervene on his behalf, although he may wonder at the method or the way it is carried out.

Psalm 62:11

Once God has spoken; twice have I heard this: that power belongs to God,

This account of Mark's is another story within a story. We are really right in the middle of the account of the feeding of the 5,000 and we break into this amazing feat of walking on water. We can see this by noticing the editorial written into this passage:

Another story within a story:

"They did not understand about the loaves, but their hearts were hardened"

Mark characteristically records details that the other writers do not, and here, he describes the condition of the disciples' hearts and minds;

And they were utterly astounded, for they did not understand about the loaves, but their hearts were hardened.

This is an Exodus reference here. To lack faith in God and to be hard hearted is to be like Pharaoh of old in Egypt. It is the worst you can accuse a Jew of. Hard heartedness.

But the disciple's hearts were hard. If they had truly believed in the Creating Compassionate God who fed the 5,000, nothing should have amazed them. They knew He was the Messiah, but their faith was too weak to believe deeply that He was indeed the powerful God of creation. Mark explains that His multiplying of the loaves and fish just hours earlier should have demonstrated Jesus' true identity to them but neither that miracle nor the appearance of Jesus on the water could open their hearts to the reality of His divine nature.

If we read a little deeper then we see another great Exodus truth being revealed in the walking on the water account. Jesus says "Don't be afraid, it is I." These three words are in Greek only two words - *ego eimi* (*Egho eemeñ*), and they are much more powerful and significant than most Bible readers realize.

"Don't be afraid, it is I" – Ego Eimi

Jesus says not, "It is I" but "I am," which is a direct assertion of His deity. Do you remember when Moses had asked God what His name was?

Exodus 3:13-14

"Indeed, when I come to the children of Israel and say to them, 'The God of your fathers has sent me to you,' and they say to me, 'What is His name?' what shall I say to them?" And God said to Moses, "I AM WHO I AM." And He said, "Thus you shall say to the children of Israel, 'I AM has sent me to you.'"

Clearly, Jesus is declaring that He is the *Yahweh* of the Old Testament. Throughout the New Testament, there are a number of significant amplifications of this: Christ is the "I AM" that is the bread of life; the light of the world; the good shepherd; the resurrection; the way, the truth, and the life; and the Alpha and Omega. Jesus was clearing up any doubt they might have had.

And I want to comment in passing on another important theological subtlety imbedded in this account, the idea that Jesus was intending to "pass by them."

V48

'He meant to pass by them, but when they saw him walking on the sea they thought it was a ghost, and cried out, for they all saw him and were terrified.'

This expression of God "passing by" reminds us of another Old Testament Exodus story. When Moses was up on the mountaintop, the text teaches us in Exodus, that he revealed himself to Moses in his time of fear and faithlessness by "passing by:"

Exodus 33: 18-23

Then Moses said, "Now show me your glory." And the Lord said, "I will cause all my goodness to pass in front of you, and I will proclaim my name, the Lord, in your presence. I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. But," he said, "you cannot see my face, for no one may see me and live." Then the Lord said, "There is a place near me where you may stand on a rock. When my glory passes by, I will put you in a cleft in the rock and cover you with my hand until I have passed by. Then I will remove my hand and you will see my back; but my face must not be seen."

For Jesus to "pass by" is not for him to walk past in indifference to the dire circumstances of the disciples or some kind of smug pride. Rather, it is just the opposite, it is for Him to reveal himself in His Glory and summon the disciples to greater faith. Their natural fear keeps them from seeing Christ in His glory. This story is about more than just faith; it is about *fear and faith*. Let's read on in another account something that is not included in the Mark account, the walking on water account of the Gospel writer Matthew:

Matthew 14:28-33

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

Faith and fears. We have fears. Maybe I should be more personal. I have fears. One of my great fears is that people won't like me. Psychologists call it the fear of rejection. So I alter my projection of myself in ways that I think will make you like me better. Or maybe even at all. I have this desperate need for significance and when that need seems to go unmet, I get afraid. A need for significance stimulates the fear of rejection. But enough about me, let's talk about your fear.

You're afraid of failure. You have such a need for security that you live your life in such a way so as to try and make sure that you'll be safe and taken care of.

You place your security in relationships, in meaningful work, in enough money, in important positions. Your need for security, when it is challenged, manifests itself in fear of failure and at times it controls your life. A fear of failure that comes from your desperate need for significance.

This story we are reading this morning reminds us who Jesus is and where our need for true significance and security can be fully met. We are significant in Christ and no one can ever take that away and we need never be afraid of rejection again. And this need to be safe, no one can ever pluck you from the hand of the God who loves you. We would never have to be afraid of failure again ***if we only understood about the loaves***. When Jesus passes by us to show us his glory we would fall down and worship in gratitude and peace, not clutch at him and whine about the storm we are in that threatens our safety and makes us feel alone.

The wonderful 20th century writer and working class theologian George Macdonald said it well:

A perfect faith would lift us absolutely above fear. George Macdonald

CS Lewis said the same thing another way.

Perfect love, we know, casts out fear. But so do several other things — ignorance, alcohol, passion, presumption, and stupidity. (“The World’s Last Night” in C. S. Lewis: Essay Collection and Other Short Pieces, 51)

You see Jesus wants us to have a new kind of fear and a new kind of faith.

A new kind of fear – A new kind of faith

He wants us to put our fear where it belongs – on the majesty of an infinitely holy God:

Matthew 10:28

And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell.

[Then he goes on to comfort us in our fears of failure and rejection]

Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? And not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father. But even the hairs of your head are all numbered. ***Fear not***, therefore; ***you are of more value than many sparrows***. So everyone who acknowledges me before men, ***I also will acknowledge before my Father who is in heaven***, but whoever denies me before men, I also will deny before my Father who is in heaven.]

Psalm 112:1

Praise the Lord! Blessed is the man who fears the Lord, who greatly delights in his commandments!

If we fear the Lord, we are finally safe and significant. Jesus said “No longer do I call you servants, for the servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends” (John 15:15).

In Christ I am free to enjoy and offer Fearless Love.

No more fear of failure, no more fear of rejection, in fact no more fear of a judging God as He has declared us not guilty in our relationship with His Son Jesus Christ. The hard and ruthless man, John Newton, the slave trader for so many years, stood in judgment by God till He found Christ’s mercy. Then late in life he became an Anglican Priest and wrote the song “Amazing Grace” and also penned these words.

How sweet the name of Jesus sounds, in a believer’s ear!

It soothes his sorrows, heals his wounds, And drives away his fear. John Newton

(Benediction verse) Mark 6:50

Jesus spoke to them and said, "Take heart; I am! Do not be afraid."