

Do Not Be Afraid; John 6:16-21

I. It Was Dark

- A. John 6:16–18 (ESV); ¹⁶ When evening came, his disciples went down to the sea, ¹⁷ got into a boat, and started across the sea to Capernaum. It was now dark, and Jesus had not yet come to them. ¹⁸ The sea became rough because a strong wind was blowing.
- B. There is a theological difference between dark and light
 - 1. Light represents God and His righteousness
 - 2. Dark represents Satan and evil — or maybe times when Satan is trying to tempt you away from the Father
 - 3. While this may just be a statement about the time of day, it represents a theological situation that all of us can relate to
- C. We have all experienced darkness
- D. We have all been afraid — Jesus' statement, "It is I, do not be afraid" should reach out to us and bring us comfort

II. Rough Seas

- A. It is good for us to remember that these disciples were seasoned fishermen
- B. They were familiar with the lake and its weather patterns
- C. "The Sea of Tiberias or Galilee is a deep gouge in the Jordan rift surrounded by hills so that winds frequently sweep down and stir the waters into a frenzy." ¹
 - 1. Josephus puts the lake size at 4 x 16 miles
 - 2. Matthew and Mark put the time at the 4th watch of the night (between 3 and 6 AM)
 - 3. It took them from about 6 PM ("when evening came") til, at minimum, 3 AM to row 4 miles — that is about 9 hours
 - 4. I'd say it was a strong wind blowing!
 - 5. They had barely made it a quarter of the way across the lake
- D. Even "seasoned" Christians experience rough seas
 - 1. Satan is always on the prowl
 - 2. 1 Peter 5:6–10 (ESV); ⁶ Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may exalt you, ⁷ casting all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you. ⁸ Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. ⁹ Resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same kinds of suffering are being experienced by your brotherhood throughout the world. ¹⁰ And after you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you.
 - 3. What are you dealing with right now?
 - a) Is it money? Are you not sure how you are going to pay your rent, how you are going to put food on the table, gas in the car, etc?
 - b) Is it a tragedy? A loved one (father, mother, son, daughter, etc.)
 - c) Is it a job? Do you not have one, is your boss giving you fits?
 - d) You might feel hopeless, desperate, lonely (I'm sure the disciples felt some of these feelings after rowing all night and only making it 4 miles)
 - 4. The good news is that Jesus is about to pass by you in the middle of the rough seas

III. It Is I

- A. John 6:19–20 (ESV); ¹⁹ When they had rowed about three or four miles, they saw Jesus walking on the sea and coming near the boat, and they were frightened. ²⁰ But he said to them, "It is I; do not be afraid."
- B. God tells Moses, "'I am who I am.'" And he said, "Say this to the people of Israel: 'I am has sent me to you.'" (Exodus 3:14)

¹ Gerald L. Borchert, John 1–11, vol. 25A, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1996), 258.

- C. Jesus says, “Before Abraham was, I AM” (John 8:58)
 - D. “It is I” are the same words as “I AM” just in reverse order — *eimi ego verses ego eimi*
 - E. The Great I AM (It is I) has come to your side in the middle of your distress and says to you, “do not be afraid”
 - F. How can we “not be afraid?”
 - 1. I find comfort in hymns
 - 2. I find comfort in the Psalms
 - 3. God says to me, “It is I, do not be afraid” in many of my favorite texts (those may not be the words on the page, but that is the message I get)
 - 4. The God who parted the Red Sea and rescued His people from the Egyptian army is right beside me (Exodus 10:1ff)
 - 5. The God who defeated the 185,000 Assyrians with one angel rescuing His people in Jerusalem is right beside me (2 Kings 19:35)
 - 6. The God who came to Earth in the form of man to rescue me is right beside me!
 - G. We still suffer (and will continue to suffer)
 - 1. “If the King (God) wants a new coat, the sheep get sheared — If the King (God) wants a banquet, the sheep get sacrificed.”
 - 2. The new testament is full of God’s people suffering
 - 3. 2 Timothy 3:10–12 (ESV); ¹⁰ You, however, have followed my teaching, my conduct, my aim in life, my faith, my patience, my love, my steadfastness, ¹¹ my persecutions and sufferings that happened to me at Antioch, at Iconium, and at Lystra—which persecutions I endured; yet from them all the Lord rescued me. ¹² Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted,
 - 4. Surround yourself with people who understand suffering and will suffer along with you
 - a) “Misery loves company”
 - b) Not making other people miserable with your suffering, but other people suffering with you because they love you
 - 5. Surround yourself with people that will give you Godly counsel
 - a) Too often we are afraid of Godly counsel
 - b) We would rather have worldly counsel because it is easier to follow
 - H. Soon, we will find ourselves, “at the land to which we are going”
- IV. Into the Boat
- A. John 6:21 (ESV); Then they were glad to take him into the boat, and immediately the boat was at the land to which they were going.
 - B. Jesus carried them 12 miles to their destination in an instant!
 - C. The disciples went from frightened distress to safety instantaneously
 - D. That is the Savior we serve!
 - E. Invite Him into the boat!