

Matthew 14:22-36 Part 1 Bible Study Transcript

We begin the last section of Matthew chapter 14, Matthew 14:22-36. This will be a bit two-parter. So, today our focus will be on Matthew 14:22-27 and we will seek to finish out the chapter next week. We are in this important section where Jesus is taking the disciples and through circumstances teaching them the valuable spiritual principles of life. And last week we studied from chapter 14 of Matthew verses 15 to 21 The Provision for the Five Thousand. And in it we studied seven principles of problem-solving. It makes it sound like it should be a booklet that we just sit down and practice any one of the seven principles and it will solve all of our problems. That's not what these principles are for. It is to point out the seven spiritual principles that apply to all of our circumstances and all of our situations as we seek the solution to the issues in which we suffer through in life.

We saw those seven principles, first of all in verse 15, the people had a need. They needed food and the disciples came to Jesus and said, "It's getting late. There's five thousand men not counting women and children, so there's about twenty thousand people out here. It's getting late, there's no food, there's no money for food. Dismiss the crowd so that they go into the villages and find something to eat." We studied in verse 15 that the Lord creates all circumstances. They are all under His design. And we will see that especially today as we study verses 22 through 27. The Lord creates all circumstances.

Secondly, we saw in verse 16, that Jesus said, "There is no need to send the people away. The people have no need to go anywhere but here," which tells us there is no need for the Lord to get rid of any circumstances, or to send them away. And that is the primary thing that we do when we seek the Lord, we seek Him to resolve, or solve, the circumstances so that they go away. And the Lord's response is, "They have no need to go away." Why? Because He's there. He's the solution. He can take care of anything that He creates to have happen. I can't, but there's where the relationship begins to develop in this learning process. The learning process is the Lord designed the circumstances for Him to take care of and He plopped me right in the middle of them, so that I would learn to trust Him.

Thirdly, we learned that God gave the command to the disciples, "You give them something to eat." We studied from John 6:6 that Jesus said this knowing all the time what He, Jesus, was about to do. He created the circumstances. He had the solution to the circumstances, but He said to the disciples, "You feed them." Of course, they couldn't do it.

The Lord put them in an impossible situation, to cause them to try to solve the problem as we naturally do, which is the fourth principle that we studied in verse 17. They used their human resources to solve the problem. A little boy had lunch, "But what are they among twenty thousand people?" Can't share it. It's not enough. Even Philip said, "Two hundred days wages," as it's recorded in the Gospel of John, "Two hundred days wages is not enough to buy food to feed all these people." So, "We'll never have enough money to buy food and this little boy's lunch, this is all the food that's around. The situation is impossible." And that's exactly the conclusion the Lord wanted them to come to. See, our natural tendency is to use the human resources, after all, and I've heard it before, "The Lord has given us a brain to figure things out before we bother Him." Again, not understanding that He designs the circumstances and it is for

us to learn to trust Him. So, He makes the situation become impossible, so that we will have to trust Him.

The fifth thing, we saw in verse 18, was a command for the disciples, "Bring them, the little boy's lunch, bring them to Me." That's the proper order. No matter what the problem and what the situation is, bring it to Jesus. Remember that we are followers of Jesus Christ. That's what we learn from their verses 13 and 14, the crowds followed Jesus, and He called for people to follow behind Him. Not to look to Him for resources and then move on ahead and handle it ourselves, but rather follow behind Him, follow His lead. So, He gives us the proper order.

And then sixthly, in verse 19, that the Lord is in charge and we are the servants. He said, "Have the people sit down." So, the disciples went out and had the people sit on the grass. And then Jesus took the little boy's lunch and began to multiply it out. But He gave it to the disciples and the disciples gave it to the crowd. That is the proper order. Jesus is in charge, He gives the directions. We take what He gives us and follow His orders and instructions. We are in service to Christ even in our own circumstances. I am a servant in my own circumstances. The Lord is in charge.

And then lastly, in verses 20 and 21, it says, "The crowds were satisfied with the food." The Lord's will was completely fulfilled because the Lord did it. The only way the Lord's will can be fulfilled is if the Lord does it. We can try all we want to, we will fail, because it was all created for Him to handle and Him to take care of.

For today, we are in the section verses 22 through 33, Peter Walking upon the Water. All of these situations and circumstances are all connected. We are going from one to the other, to learn in them these principles of problem-solving. The lessons that the Lord wants us to learn. Peter Walking on the Water. First of all, in verses 22-27, before we get to Peter walking on the water - we are going to save Peter for next week - this week it is Jesus walking on the water. But I want to bring out the technical points to show what the text is actually teaching, over and against what many people teach that it says.

In verses 22 to 24, we have The Circumstances Surrounding Peter Walking upon the Water. **And straightway** (or immediately) **Jesus constrained His disciples**. The word *constrained* means *to compel* or *to force*. Its root word is the word for *pressure*. Jesus immediately, after the feeding of the five thousand, **forced His disciples to get into a ship** (or a boat) **and go before Him into the other side, until which time He should dismiss** (or send) **the multitudes** (or crowds) **away**. So, the first item in understanding the circumstances, which this all has important play in how to understand the teaching that's going on here. Jesus designed this circumstance. He forced the disciples to get into a boat and to take off for the other side, leaving Him behind.

We will see, as the story develops, that when the disciples get out into the middle of the Sea of Galilee that a storm arises. And that storm is going to go on through the entire episode until Jesus and Peter get into the boat at the end. The wind is going to be howling. The waves are going to be beating up against the boat and we are going to be told, to add insult to injury, the

wind is contrary to them. The wind is opposing them, but they are rowing to get to the other side because Jesus told them to. So, Jesus purposely sent them out into a storm. You have to be able to comprehend that. It has to register. He purposely sent them out into a storm. He forced them to get into the boat and go out into the sea. At that time everything was calm, but the storm is coming.

He wanted them to go before Him to the other side. This would be the western side of the Sea of Galilee between Capernaum and Magdala, there is a place there called Gennesaret. So, the disciples were heading from East to West. **And He did this until he should dismiss the crowds.** So, the crowds could spend the night near Bethesda, Julius it's called, a few miles inland from the lake. There were Jesus fed the five thousand, they bedded down for the night, all twenty thousand of them.

In verse 23, **And after having dismissed the crowds,** He told them to go and find a place to sleep for the night, He (Jesus) **went up into the mountain privately to pray.** **And when evening came,** or had come, please take note of the technicalities because it tells us important details about the circumstance. Evening hours were between 6 and 9 PM. So, He dismisses the crowd. He has sent the disciples out in into the Sea, to go across the Sea to the other side, and He Himself goes up on a mountain, privately, to pray and to be alone, when evening came which was between 6 and 9 PM. **And He was there alone.** Get the picture in your mind if you can. Jesus is up on the mountain now, all alone, privately. The twenty thousand people have been dispersed and they're out finding a place to sleep. And the disciples are rowing across the Sea of Galilee to get to the other side, and they are probably, if they are like you and me, they are probably saying, "Why did the Lord send us ahead and He stayed behind?" And, "Well, we are just doing what He told us to do, so here we go." And, "He told us to go starting evening time."

Verse 24, **But the ship** (or the boat) **was now already in the midst of the sea,** in the middle of the Sea of Galilee, **being tossed by the waves, for the wind was contrary,** that is *against them*. So now, the situation and circumstance develops. They were already in the middle of the Sea and there are alternate Greek texts that tells us how far into the Sea they were - that they are at a distance of many stadia. A stadia is about 1/8 of a mile.

John 6:19 tells us that they were out about 25 to 30 stadias, which means that they were between 3 and 4 miles, close to 4 miles out from the shore when the storm arose, and they are fighting against the winds.

Mark 6:48 tells us that they were straining at the oars, fighting against the wind, fighting against the waves, all through the night.

Mark 6:48 also says that Jesus was watching them from His vantage point up on the top of the mountain. That blows my mind. He's watching them. He sees them. He's waiting. Why didn't He run down there with His lifeguard vest on, you know? To say, "My boys are in trouble, we've got to deliver them from the storm."

There has been more than once in the Scriptures where it tells us that Jesus waited to bring help until things got worse. Remember John chapter 11, Mary and Martha sent to Jesus and said, "Our brother, the one whom you love, is sick and he's dying." So, John chapter 11 says that Jesus waited. He said, "Okay." He waited a couple of days and then He went. And the sisters met Him as he came into the village and said, "Had You been here my brother would not have died." That's true, He let him die. He waited for him to die because He, Jesus, was going to raise him from the dead. You can't raise a live person from the dead, so he's got to die.

In every circumstance and in every situation the reason why God puts us in difficult times is so that the resurrected Christ can be revealed in a very difficult, in fact dead situation. Something that's impossible, that Jesus can be manifested.

In His wisdom Jesus waited to come to them. How many times we find ourselves in situations where we say, "Why doesn't the Lord help me? Why doesn't He answer prayer?" Or, as the old saying goes, "Rejoice, things could get worse, and sure enough I rejoiced, and things got worse." Sometimes things get worse until they get better. All in the Lord's plan, all in His wisdom because, remember, the circumstance was not created in order to be solved for being solved sake, but to reveal the resurrected Jesus Christ to a sin sick world and situation.

In verses 25 to 27, we have The Coming of Jesus. **And in the fourth watch of the night, Jesus went or came to them, walking upon the sea.** The fourth watch of the night. The Jews divided the nighttime into three watches, so we are using Roman time here. Romans divided the night into four segments. The Jews divided up into three segments: the first one was from 6 to 10 pm; the second segment 10 pm – 2 am; and the third segment 2 am - 6 am, in the morning. So, Matthew is using Roman time because he says, "In the fourth watch of the night." In Roman time, and this is important for us to understand what's going on here, the first watch was from 6 to 9 pm, that would be the evening watch that we just studied, when Jesus went up to pray. The second watch is from 9 pm to 12 am. The third watch is from 12 am to 3 am. And the fourth watch is from 3 to 6 in the morning, right before sun up. The Jewish day went from sundown to sundown. For us, it's morning to morning, or midnight to midnight, but they divided the watch up into segments, or phases. So, the fourth watch of the night, Roman time, that is 3 to 6 AM.

Now, if you're calculating, if you are a mathematician and you've been calculating this, that when Jesus went out to pray during the evening watch, and He's watching them all this time and He comes to them in the fourth watch of the night, they've been out there rowing they went about 4 miles and the been out there rowing for about nine hours. Nine hours.

Verse 26 says, **And when the disciples saw Him walking upon the sea, they were troubled.** Literally **ταράσσω** (tarasso) is the Greek word that means *they were terrified*, not just troubled like, "This is pretty disturbing, somebody is walking out here on the water," they were terrified, they became terrified.

Saying, "It is a spirit!" Except the Greek word is not the normal word for spirit, **πνεῦμα** (pneuma) is the word for spirit, this is the word for ghost. **φάντασμα** (phantasma) is

the Greek word and it means *a phantom*. They believe they saw an apparition, a ghost, walking out upon the top of the water. **And they cried out**, notice the literal translation, **and they cried out from fear**. Fear was the source of them crying out. They weren't calling out, they were crying out. They are in the midst of the storm toiling all through the night, fighting with the storm and its elements, and now they see a ghost. So, they are just beside themselves. I mean what could get worse. They are stuck! There is nowhere to go. And they are out there in this situation.

Another item from Mark 6:48, that we need to impart here in order to understand the situation, that when Jesus came walking upon the sea He was walking as though He was going to pass by them. So, understand that they were terrified because they saw what they thought was a ghost, but He wasn't coming to them He was walking by. It has a lot to do with the lesson of the story.

So, there were three responses, (1) they were terrified, first of all. Three responses by the disciples, they were terrified.

This is different from the storm in Matthew 8:23-27. In that storm Jesus was in the boat with them and Jesus was sleeping; and when the storm came up and they were bailing water, again using human resources to solve the problem, they were bailing water and saw that they weren't bailing fast enough, so they woke Him up and said, "Lord, don't you care that we're perishing here?" And the Lord gets up and He calms the sea. In that instance in Matthew 8 they were terrified because of the storm. I point out to you that the disciples were not terrified that by the storm here. They were fighting with this storm all night long, but they weren't terrified of the storm. They were terrified because they saw a ghost, a phantom ghost. So, there's no problem with the storm. The storm is not really the problem. The problem is with Jesus. They don't know it's Him and they don't know what's going on. They don't recognize Him in the midst of the storm.

(2) And secondly, what they said, the second response was, "It's a ghost." They thought they had seen an apparition.

(3) And the third thing they did is, they cried out from fear as a source.

Well, the Lord has three things in answer to this, which is the bottom line message of the lesson.

First of all, they were terrified. I want you to notice what Jesus said in verse 27. **And immediately Jesus spoke**. He saw that they were terrified so, immediately, He had to address the issue. **"Be of good cheer,"** the English text says. It has nothing to do with being happy. It doesn't mean *think positive*. It is the Greek word that means *courage*. It is literally translated, *have courage*.

The second thing Jesus said, the English text says, "**It is I,**" as if He's identifying Himself. In the Greek text, it is the great name of Yahweh God from the Old Testament, just two words, "**I AM.**" That is all He says. "**Have courage, I AM.**"

And thirdly, "**Do not be afraid,**" to the fact that they were crying out from fear.

So, in relation to them being terrified Jesus has three answers to their three responses. The first response was they were terrified, and Jesus says, "Have courage. You're terrified, have courage."

The same message in Joshua 1:5-6. Moses had died, Joshua was taking over from Moses, and God says, "I will be with you so lead with courage and with strength." Here's what He said in Joshua 1:5-6, **There shall not any man be able to stand before your face all the days of your life.** Part of courage is realizing nobody's going to be able to stand before you, nobody. I found that out over the years. You face life with courage, not human courage, or human ability but when you face life with courage because you have Christ, no one will be able to stand before you. If they come up against you, and you are in Christ, you're in God's will they will be defeated because of courage in Christ. **No one will be able to stand before you: just as I was with Moses, I will be with you: I will not abandon you, nor will I forsake you.** That's repeated in Hebrews 13:5, "I will never leave you and I will never forsake you." Verse 6 of Joshua 1, **Be strong and have courage: because this people you shall divide an inheritance of the land, which I swore unto their fathers (or ancestors) to give them.** "I already promised it, Joshua, so you get out there and lead." A leader leads with courage because of the confidence in Christ.

Secondly, they said, "**It's ghost.**" The Lord's return answer to this is the great, "I AM," from Exodus 3:14. You remember when Moses was being sent to Pharaoh, and Moses said, "Well, when I go, who will I say has sent me? What is your name?" Exodus 3:14, **God said to Moses, "I AM."** EHYEH ASHER EHYEH "**I AM what I AM.**" The I AM name of God. And God says, "**This is what you will say to the sons of Israel, I AM has sent you to them.**" You'll tell Israel what God's name is. You'll tell Pharaoh what God's name is. The word I AM, EHYEH ASHER EHYEH actually means *The Presently Eternally Existent One*, the One who always is.

I can't help but think again from Hebrews chapter 13, where it says that Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever. He was the I AM two thousand years ago. The same Jesus that is in this specific situation, is the same Jesus that is with us. He has not changed. He is still the I AM. So, here Jesus is proclaiming that He is God the Creator, the I AM of the Universe. And He has authority and control of all circumstances and situations, and He's revealing Himself to them as the great I AM.

The third thing we see in response to the disciples, in verse 26, saying, **And they cried out from fear.** "**Do not be afraid,**" Jesus said. Easier said than done, but the first two that come before it makes it all possible. We are to have faced life with courage because the great Creator of the universe, the One who is in charge, and who controls all of nature, and every

circumstance, and every situation lives inside of us. Therefore have no fear. He's planned it. He knows about it. He wants us to trust Him.

Interesting, in Isaiah 43:1-2 God says to Israel, "**But now know this,**" says **the LORD that created you, O Jacob, and he that formed you, O Israel, "Fear not: for I have redeemed you, I have called you in My name; you are Mine. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow you,"** (they are not going to swamp you, or sweep you away) **when you walk through the fire, you shall not be burned; neither shall the flame consume you."** "When you go through the water it is not going overwhelm you. I'm with you wherever you go, so do not fear," was His message to Israel and message to His people.

In our study of this section, Jesus was not teaching the disciples how to walk on water. That was not the lesson. Rather, He was revealing Himself as the Creator and Controller of all of nature. Remember I told you earlier, important piece of information, He was walking by and they freaked out. He was just revealing that He can walk on water because He's the Lord God Almighty, and they should've had comfort and encouragement. It looked as though Jesus was going on ahead of them, as if to say, "I am going to pave the way for you to make it the rest of the way." But He didn't come to calm the storm. He didn't come to get rid of the storm. He came to reveal Himself in the midst of the storm. So, just as He does with us, He created these circumstances, He designed the storm, not to judge our performance, but to reveal to us who He really is, the Lord God Almighty.

I cannot help but think over the years, of how many people take these stories from the Bible and they focus on the human element. "Here is Jesus walking on the water," and they focus on the disciples, "Look at them freaking out! They should have done something totally different. They failed!" and really get into this focusing on the disciples. The scene focuses on Jesus Christ, not the disciples. They had every right to freak out. They thought they saw a ghost. How many times do you see a spirit walking across the sea, or the ocean, when you're out there in a boat? You freak out. Jesus was revealing Himself.

So, all this lines up again with the two things that we've always told you as to what Jesus is doing in our lives:

(1) He puts us in circumstances that we might experience Him. It doesn't make any difference how hard the circumstances are, and they don't have to go away, because He is bigger than the circumstances and He's in charge. So, we are to have courage and know that the great Creator of the Universe is with us and not fear and trust Him through it all. So, (1) every experience is there for us to experience Christ through.

(2) And secondly, so that other people might see Christ in our situation, so they too might be encouraged. That's what *testimony* means, *that people see Christ in your life*. Not what you say about Him, not your sales pitch, but actually see you trusting the Lord. Because there is no greater need in life than people finding Christ, and not just finding Him but trusting Him and experiencing Him in every situation in life.

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And life is getting harder, in case you didn't know that and had to come to church to find that out. The world is getting worse. Times are getting more difficult. It's time seek the Lord. Trust Him for who He is. Not for me to try to be a stronger Christian, but me and my weakness trusting Christ for who He is. Letting Him carry me through the storm.

Let's close with prayer.