

Crossing Over

This talk looks at the story of Jesus, his disciples, the storm, the boat, the power of Jesus and crossing over to the other side. We'll look through the story bit by bit and see what we can learn from it and apply in our every day lives. There are 7 points as 7 is a nice and tasty Biblical number!

Prayer

Father God, as we read your Word, please speak to us by the power of your Holy Spirit. I pray that you would fulfil everything you say you will from your Word as we read it, discuss it and learn from it. Lord thank you that you gave us your Word and every part of it is useful for our lives. I pray that you would speak to each person individually and specifically, encouraging them and giving them direction for their life and their future. Amen.

Mark 4.35-41

That day when evening came, he said to his disciples, "Let us go over to the other side." Leaving the crowd behind, they took him along, just as he was, in the boat. There were also other boats with him. A furious squall came up, and the waves broke over the boat, so that it was nearly swamped. Jesus was in the stern, sleeping on a cushion. The disciples woke him and said to him, "Teacher, don't you care if we drown?"

He got up, rebuked the wind and said to the waves, "Quiet! Be still!" Then the wind died down and it was completely calm.

He said to his disciples, "Why are you so afraid? Do you still have no faith?"

They were terrified and asked each other, "Who is this? Even the wind and the waves obey him!"

1. Jesus is the Head and the Initiator (the starter)

Notice that Jesus took the lead in the story. He was the one who spoke to his disciples. Many times we have plans and ideas (and this is great as often God puts them there!) but we must be sure that we are hearing from God first and following his plan for our lives and every day things. Our pattern is Jesus and he only did what he heard God saying and saw God doing.

In John 5.19-20 Jesus said this to his disciples, "I tell you the truth, the Son can do nothing by himself; he can do only what he sees his Father doing, because whatever the Father does the Son also does. For the Father loves the Son and shows him all he does."

2. Jesus spoke his Word (and his Word was fulfilled)

In the Old Testament, God spoke through a man called Balaam and said this:

Numbers 23.19 – God is not a man, that he should lie, nor a son of man, that he should change his mind. Does he speak and then not act? Does he promise and not fulfill?

Balaam was saying something that we need to hear and get right into the core of our hearts and minds so we really believe it. The truth is that God always does what he promises. He is totally true and faithful. Yep, we all struggle to believe this. Usually because we often mis-hear what God says to us or think he's said something when he hasn't. Then if it doesn't happen (and it won't ultimately if God hasn't said it or has said something different!) we start to doubt...

But when God speaks (and he does in his Word), we know that we can trust his promise completely. God has said certain things like he will never leave us or forget us. This is a fact, no matter how we feel (lonely at times) or what we think (when we can't feel God we may think he's not with us).

In Mark 4, Jesus said to his disciples, 'Let us go over to the other side.' Jesus said it and so it would happen (and it did!) But in between the promise of Jesus and its fulfilment (reaching the other side), there was a time span and there were things that happened. The disciples (just like us) forgot what Jesus said. But Jesus always does as he promises. If God has said something to you, then no matter what happens, he will do it so you have to keep believing him and continue to follow him and obey him.

3. When God calls, it's time to go!

Credit to the disciples. When Jesus spoke they obeyed and went with him. Jesus said later on that people who were his disciples are those who obeyed him (John 14.23) and that's what the disciples did and what we must do.

But there's also an interesting verse in the story that we can often miss: "Leaving the crowd behind, they took (Jesus) along, just as he was, in the boat."

I once went hiking in some mountains in Colorado. As part of this, I needed to be prepared for the weather, with food, water and even survival/medical kit just in case. I went prepared. But sometimes God calls you to do things in the moment and you have to respond.

Jesus had called the disciples to cross to the other side, but the Bible seems to suggest that he may not have been fully prepared – he went 'just as he was'. Perhaps he didn't have his coat and it was getting cold in the evening – we just don't know!

But there is a wider principle here and that is to be ready. In Matthew 25, we learn about 12 virgins. This is a parable about being ready for the return of Jesus (the bridegroom). The wise virgins had their lamp ready and had some spare oil. The truth Jesus was getting across was that we always need to be ready – ready to obey Jesus and ready to do what he asks us to do. Jesus is our example – when he said to cross over in the boat in Mark 4, he went and so did his disciples. So do we when he calls!

4. Use what you have

How were the disciples going to get to the other side of Lake Galilee? Well, they used what they had (and what was best) – the boat. In Exodus 4.2, God was talking with Moses...

"Then the LORD said to him, "What is that in your hand?"

"A staff," he replied.

The lesson here is that God has given each of us gifts and skills. We need to use them by simply offering God what we have. If you're good with people, God wants to use that. If you're good with computers, God will use that. If you enjoy sport, God loves the fact that you enjoy sport and will use you in sport! But always be open to what else God wants to show you and do through you that may stretch you and make you a better all-round person for God and generally!

5. A furious squall blew up – opposition

"A huge storm came up. Waves poured into the boat, threatening to sink it."

Jesus had spoken, they had acted on his Word. But when the storm came, the men who were fishermen on the lake suddenly became fearful. Clearly this was no natural storm or there was a great fear that came on the disciples – likely this storm had some kind of evil that caused it.

This is what often happens: God speaks something and it's incredible and you believe God. But then opposition rises up or things happen that seem to be opposite to what God has said. This is always inspired by the devil – the accuser and the one who seeks to kill, destroy and oppose what God does and says.

For the disciples, Jesus had promised to get to the other side but the storm threatened to overwhelm the boat and sink the word that God had spoken. For you the opposition (the 'storm') may well come in another way. It's often fear, doubt, discouragement, self-pity, sickness, something opposite happening or the whispers from the evil one who tells you God didn't really mean what he said. Time after time this is what has happened in my life. Each time we have to make a choice – to believe what God has said – in his Word and things he's said to you personally!

Abraham was told by God that he and his wife Sarah were going to have children. They were around 100 years old and the Bible says Sarah's womb was 'dead'. How ridiculous it seemed – what a crazy thing that God appeared to be doing. It seemed against what was natural and sensible – not even possible... But God did it. Despite his human weaknesses, we find in Romans 4.20-21 how Abraham responded. And this is what God asks us to do, with the help of his Holy Spirit who we need to ask for help...

Yet (Abraham) did not waver through unbelief regarding the promise of God, but was strengthened in his faith and gave glory to God, being fully persuaded that God had power to do what he had promised.

Take a moment to think about this Bible verse and consider what it means, what it means to you and how we can show this. One clue is the Bible which tells us that faith comes... it comes from reading, knowing and believing the Bible.

6. One Word from Jesus changes everything

He got up, rebuked the wind and said to the waves, "Quiet! Be still!" Then the wind died down and it was completely calm... He said to his disciples, "Why are you so afraid? Do you still have no faith?" They were terrified and asked each other, "Who is this? Even the wind and the waves obey him!"

Jesus is in complete charge of this world. One word from him, one act from him changes everything. He can bring healing, restoration, deliverance, change, peace, hope, encouragement and open people's eyes spiritually to the truth about himself.

In 1 Corinthians 15, Paul gives us a small hint of the power of Jesus, who will one day return the 'reigns of power' to his Father...

For (God) "has put everything under his feet." (referring to Jesus). Now when it says that "everything" has been put under him, it is clear that this does not include God himself, who put everything under Christ. When he has done this, then the Son himself will be made subject to him who put everything under him, so that God may be all in all.

So there can be no doubt – Jesus is in charge of everything and one day every knee will bow to him – on earth, under the earth and in heaven. He has complete power and there is nothing in your world or life that cannot change with one word from the King. Sometimes it's hard for us to believe this, but it is true. There is no situation too big for God that he cannot handle it or bring change.

Often times we have to hold on to God's Word and speak it out over situations – literally apply God's Word to the things going on in our world. For example we may say, "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me." Or maybe if someone doubts that God really hears their prayers we can say / pray for them, "Thank you Lord that your Word says that if we ask anything according to your will, you hear us. And because I know you hear me, I ask for (...insert name and situation here...) and thank you that we know that we have what we asked of you, Lord." Of course what you ask has to line up with God's Word and his will!

7. The Other Side

And so we reach the end of the talk, the 'other side'. You're probably feeling pretty relieved! But the disciples did reach the other side of the lake.

You may be facing something that seems impossible today. But nothing is impossible for God. The same God who touched a teenage Mary who gave birth to Jesus – the same God who gave a son to the OAP couple of Abraham and Sarah – is the same God who loves you and is passionate about whatever you are going through. And it's important to know that Jesus is the 'author and finisher'. If you love God and follow Jesus, he will bring things to the finish. If he's made a promise to you, he will fulfil it as you walk and talk with him.

Isaiah 43.2 says this:

When you pass through the waters,
I will be with you;
and when you pass through the rivers,
they will not sweep over you.
When you walk through the fire,
you will not be burned;
the flames will not set you ablaze.

You will come through the storm, the fire, the water... Like the disciples, you will reach the other side. You will cross over. God is faithful and he is not like a man, he does not lie. He will do everything he says he will do and so much more. Just believe him and keep on walking, talking and obeying Jesus.

Amen!