

29. WALKING ON WATER (JOHN 6:16-21) 10/07/12
FIRST CHRISTIAN CHURCH, ATCHISON, PASTOR LEE HENDON

THERE WAS A NEW MINISTER IN TOWN AT THE FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH. SO THE METHODIST & PRESBYTERIAN PASTORS STOPPED BY TO INVITE HIM TO GO FISHING. WHAT A TERRIFIC WAY TO BOND. AFTER THEY HAD BEEN SITTING IN THE BOAT FOR AWHILE THE METHODIST PASTOR ANNOUNCED HE WAS THIRSTY & DID THEY WANT A DRINK AS WELL. "YES," THEY SAID. SO HE STEPPED OUT OF THE BOAT ONTO THE WATER & WALKED TO THE MARINA FOR DRINKS & PROMPTLY RETURNED WALKING ACROSS THE WATER. THE NEW BAPTIST MINISTER WAS FLABBERGASTED BUT DID NOT SAY A WORD. THEY STARTED CATCHING SO MANY FISH THE PRESBY-TERIAN MINISTER SUGGESTED SHE'D GO GET MORE BAIT. SHE STEPPED OUT OF THE BOAT ONTO THE WATER & WALKED TO THE MARIANA FOR BAIT & PROMPTLY RETURNED WALKING ACROSS THE WATER. THE NEW BAPTIST PASTOR WAS ASTONISHED - WAS DETERMINED TO NOT BE OUT DONE - HIS FAITH WAS STRONG TOO - SO HE SUGGESTED THEY HAVE SOMETHING TO EAT. "GREAT IDEA!" THEY SAID. THE BAPTIST PASTOR STUCK HIS FEET OUT ONTO THE WATER & PROMPTLY WENT UNDER - GASPING FOR AIR. GOT BACK IN THE BOAT. WENT AFTER IT AGAIN - DRENCHED AGAIN. SO THE METHODIST PASTOR TURNED TO THE PRESBYTERIAN PASTOR TO SAY, "I THINK WE SHOULD TELL HIM WHERE THE STEPPING STONES ARE, DON'T YOU?"

THAT'S HOW IT IS IN REAL LIFE - YOU DON'T WALK ON WATER UNLESS YOU KNOW WHERE THE STEPPING STONES ARE. IT DEFIES PHYSICS - WATER IS NOT DENSE ENOUGH TO SUPPORT A PERSON'S WEIGHT - PURE & SIMPLE. I HAVE TO ADMIT THAT I DID NOT TAKE "WALKING ON WATER, 101" IN SEMINARY - SO DON'T EXPECT ME TO GIVE IT A TRY. MANY CHURCHES THINK THEIR PAS-TORS CAN WALK ON WATER - THAT IS UNTIL THEY GET TO KNOW US BETTER TO DISCOVER THAT WE ARE BOUND BY NATURAL LAW SAME AS THEY ARE. SO NO PRETENDING HERE....PEOPLE CANNOT WALK ON WATER - UNLESS OF COURSE IT IS FROZEN!

WE GOTTA PUT THIS MIRACLE INTO ITS CONTEXT IN JOHN: JESUS HAD WITHDRAWN TO THE HILLS BY HIMSELF FOLLOWING THE MOB'S ATTEMPT TO FORCE HIM TO BE THEIR EARTHLY KING. JESUS WOULD HAVE NOTHING TO DO WITH THEIR, OR OUR,

POLIT-ICAL & MILITARY ENDEAVORS. THE DISCIPLES, LEFT ALONE BY JESUS, SET SAIL ACROSS THE SEA OF GALILEE TO CAPERNAUM. IT WAS NIGHT - PITCH BLACK DARK - SCARY - NOT A LIGHT HOUSE IN SIGHT. I DON'T KNOW IF THEY WERE CONFIDENT OF THEIR SAILING ABILITIES OR JUST FOOL HEARTY? JOHN WOULD HAVE US UNDER-STAND THAT IT WAS **DARK** BECAUSE OF THE ABSENCE OF JESUS. THERE WAS THE PHYSICAL DARKNESS, OF COURSE, BUT THERE WAS AN EVEN DEEPER SPIRITUAL DARKNESS WHEN JESUS WAS NOT WITH THEM. THEY HAD LAUNCHED OUT ON THEIR OWN.

DID YOU EVER PLAY "***GHOST IN THE GRAVEYARD?***" IT IS A GAME OUR YOUTH GROUP WOULD PLAY ON SUNDAY NIGHTS. THE RED BRICK CHURCH WAS SURROUNDED BY CORN & COTTON FIELDS WITH A GRAVEYARD TO THE SIDE OF THE PROPERTY. A YOUTH WOULD BE "***IT***" & BE CHOSEN TO GO HIDE AMONGST THE HEAD-STONES. AS THE DESIGNATED **GHOST** THE YOUTH WOULD HONKER QUIETLY DOWN - THE REST OF THE YOUTH GROUP WOULD MAKE THEIR WAY THRU THE GRAVEYARD UNTIL THEY CAME UPON THE **GHOST** WHO WOULD JUMP OUT FROM BEHIND THE TOMBSTONE & TAG ONE OF THE UNSUSPECTING KIDS. THE TAGGED KID WOULD SCREAM LOUDLY, "***GHOST IN THE GRAVEYARD***" TO ALERT THE OTHER KIDS AS TO WHERE THE GHOST WAS. THIS WAS DONE AT DUSK WITH A CREEPY EFFECT. A NEW GHOST WAS TAGGED & IT WOULD HAPPEN ALL OVER AGAIN. I GUESS KIDS ENJOY BEING SCARED OUT OF THEIR WITS?

NOT SO FOR US ADULTS. I DON'T, ADULTS DON'T LIKE THE SENSATION OF FEAR. US GUYS GROWING UP ARE TAUGHT TO NOT SHOW FEAR OR BE AFRAID. NATURAL FEAR, OK, IS USED TO GET US OUT OF THE WAY OF AN ON-RUSHING MAC TRUCK, TO RUN AWAY FROM A RATTLE SNAKE, TO NOT TEMPT SOMEONE WITH A LOADED GUN - ETC. BUT BEING FEARFUL IS JUST NOT MANLY - OR SO WE ARE TAUGHT. BUT TO BE HONEST, MEN DO AT TIMES BECOME FEARFUL.

HERE WE HAVE A WHOLE BOAT FULL OF FEARFUL MEN. OUR PASSAGE IN JOHN WRITES THAT THE DISCIPLES WERE **TERRIFIED** WHEN THEY SAW JESUS WALKING OUT TO THEM ON THE WATER. SOME COMMENTATORS TRY TO WATER IT DOWN BY STATING THAT JESUS WAS WALKING ON THE SEASHORE - BUT EXCUSE ME, THERE IS NOTHING SO TERRIFYING ABOUT SEEING JESUS WALKING ON THE SEASHORE. HUMANS CANNOT WALK ON WATER SO WE MUST

PRESUME THE DISCIPLES MISTOOK JESUS AS A GHOST OR SOME OTHER SPOOKY PHENOMENON. HE APPEARED OUT OF NOWHERE, LIKE A GHOST FROM BEHIND A TOMBSTONE.

NOW THE THING ABOUT SPIRITUAL POWER IS THIS - WILL IT BE USED FOR HARM OR HELP, FOR FORTUNE OR MISFORTUNE, TO MAIM & DESTROY OR TO GIVE LIFE? THAT WAS UNDECIDED AT THE GET GO HERE. STRANDED IN A BOAT - HIGH WINDS & ROUGH WATERS ALL AROUND - PITCH BLACK DARK - A GHOSTLY FORM APPROACHED THE BOAT. I WOULD THINK THEY WERE ROWING AS FAST AS THEY COULD AGAINST THE HIGH WINDS & WAVES TO GET AWAY FROM WHATEVER HAD JUST APPEARED. MATTHEW & MARK STATED THAT THEY BELIEVED IT WAS A GHOST - JIMMY-NEE-CRICKET GET ME OUTA HERE. ANYONE THEN & THERE WOULD HAVE BEEN FEARFUL. NOW REMEMBER WHAT I HAVE OFTEN TOLD YOU - IT IS ABSOLUTELY TRUE - 9 TIMES OUT OF 10 FEAR IS FALSE EXPECTATION APPEARING REAL. **F E A R!**

JESUS USED HIS SPIRITUAL POWER OF WALKING ON THE WATER FOR GOOD NOT FOR BAD, FOR FORTUNE NOT MISFORTUNE - JESUS IS THE POWERFUL PRESENCE OF GOD THAT CAN BE TRUSTED - IN WHICH WE CAN FIND COMFORT & STRENGTH. THAT IS HOW JESUS, HOW GOD IS. STORM ON THE WATERS, GHOSTLY TERROR - TAKE JESUS INTO YOUR BOAT. FEAR IS CONQUERED WITH THE POWERFUL PRESENCE OF JESUS IN OUR LIFEBOATS. THE DISCIPLES WERE GLAD, OVERJOYED TO TAKE JESUS INTO THEIR BOAT.

INDEED, IT WAS NOT A TERRIFYING GHOST AT ALL. FALSE EXPECTATION APPEARING REAL. NO, IT WAS THE ONE THEY HAD COME TO LOVE & TRUST IN - JESUS. NEVER UNDERESTIMATE OR UNDERVALUE THE POWER OF JESUS' PRESENCE - TO TAKE HIM INTO YOUR LIFEBOAT. **THE POWER OF PRESENCE** IS OFTEN TIMES OVERLOOKED & NOT APPRECIATED.

THE PRESENCE OF BEING THERE FOR YOUR CHILDREN & FAMILY EVEN WHEN YOU ARE AT A LOSS FOR WORDS OR ACTION.

THE PRESENCE OF BEING WITH A BELOVED SICK, ILL OR DYING FRIEND OR FAMILY MEMBER - WORDS, ACTION NOT NEEDED.

THE PRESENCE OF BEING IN WORSHIP THOUGH YOU MAY NOT FEEL LIKE IT AT THE TIME. THE POWER OF PRESENCE.

THE PRESENCE OF JESUS IN OUR LIVES OVERCOMES THE **TERROR** OF BEING ALONE. I HAVE BEEN THROUGH MANY HORRIBLE EVENTS IN MY LIFE BUT I HAVE NEVER BEEN ALONE

BECAUSE THE PRESENCE OF JESUS IS WITH ME. YOU MIGHT DISCOUNT IT WITH, "OH YEAH, I KNOW THAT" & THEN ALLOW FEAR TO SWAMP THE BOAT. NOT SO, NOT WITH THE PRESENCE OF JESUS IN OUR LIVES - DO NOT BE AFRAID - HAVE NO FEAR. "I AM IS HERE!" JESUS GIVES US HOPE & PEACE IN PLACE OF FEAR. WE CAN FIND HIM IN THOSE MOMENTS WHEN WE NEED HIM. AND PERHAPS, JUST PERHAPS, WE CAN ALSO SERVE AS THE PRESENCE OF JESUS FOR SOMEONE ELSE IN NEED THAT IS FACING THEIR STORMS OF LIFE.