

Date:

The miracles of Jesus

PRAY Lord, I pray that as I come to your Word today, you would use it to meet the deepest needs in my life.

READ Mark 4:35–41

REFLECT

The facts of this passage are fairly straightforward: Jesus and his disciples are in a boat when a storm blows in. Jesus commands the storm to stop, and it does. This dramatic miracle reveals another aspect of our supernatural Jesus: *he has power over the forces of nature*. That's pretty impressive.

But if I had been in that boat with the disciples, I might have felt Jesus' questions at the end (4:40) were a little unfair. 'You bet we were afraid. While you were sleeping *we almost got killed!*' Anyone who's ever been out on a boat in a big storm (or even a rough sea) knows the feeling of powerlessness and fear that comes from being out of control.

Fear is something everyone struggles with at some point. Occasionally we may find ourselves in physical danger. But more often our fears come from pondering the endless number of worst-case scenarios that threaten us: failure at work, financial disaster, broken relationships, being alone, deteriorating health, death.

But that's the point behind Jesus' seemingly unfair questions: things are never out of control when we are with him. When we belong to Jesus it doesn't matter what happens, it doesn't matter how bad things get. Jesus has the power to change not only the wind and the waves, but also every force at work in our lives.

Of course, it would be nice to think that believing in Jesus would immediately remove all fear from our lives. But the truth is, like the disciples in the boat, we are human; we lose control and become fearful. It happens to me all the time. But that's when we need to force ourselves back to the message of this miracle: with Jesus we have nothing to fear. Faith doesn't mean that we'll never face danger, or even that bad things will never happen to us. Instead, faith means believing that Jesus is all-powerful and knowing that we belong to him.

APPLY What are your biggest fears? Look at each one in turn. What are the root causes of those fears?

PRAY Honestly talk to Jesus about the things that you fear. Ask him to give you a surer faith in his control of your life.

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PRAY Sometimes I feel I don't have the resources to solve the biggest problems in my life. Please open my eyes, Lord, to your perspective on the challenges I face.

READ Matthew 14:13–21

REFLECT

It must have been difficult at times to be a disciple of Jesus; he was constantly testing them. Sometimes he led them into tough situations. At other times he asked them tough questions. But, all the time, you get the sense that Jesus was trying to build their trust in him. He still does that with us today.

That's what's going on in this familiar miracle. Jesus already knows he can feed the 5,000 men plus twice as many women and children (14:21). But, before he does, he challenges the disciples to solve the problem. What's your first instinct when you face a big problem? Do you come up with a plan? Do you complain? Do you go into high-energy mode? Do you get paralysed with worry?

Here, the disciples' first instinct was to look at their own resources (14:17), and their conclusion was they didn't have enough to solve the problem. Not even close. But what Jesus was probing was whether or not his disciples would look to him first to solve the problem. Note that he says, 'Bring them here to me' (14:18). In other words, 'Remember who I am; look to me first in everything that happens.' It was the very same principle he taught in the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 6:33).

I've always been curious about how Jesus did this miracle; at the critical point, the text simply says, 'They all ate and were satisfied' (14:20). I once saw a play about Jesus that included this miracle. In it, the empty-handed disciples huddled with Jesus in a rugby scrum – and then suddenly burst out with armloads of Italian bread. I don't know how they did that either!

We don't know how or when Jesus will intervene in our lives. All we need to know is that he can, and he has resources far greater than we can ever imagine (Psalm 50:10). And that was the point of this miraculous picnic.

APPLY What is the single biggest problem you face now? What would it mean for you to 'look to Jesus' for a solution?

PRAY Lord Jesus, life is filled with problems. I'm thankful that you know my needs and want me to come to you.