

**Weekly Edition – October 13, 2017**  
**Gospel According to St. John – Second Year**

## Jesus Walks on the Water

<sup>16</sup> When evening came, his disciples went down to the lake, <sup>17</sup> where they got into a boat and set off across the lake for Capernaum. By now it was dark, and Jesus had not yet joined them. <sup>18</sup> A strong wind was blowing and the waters grew rough. <sup>19</sup> When they had rowed about three or four miles, they saw Jesus approaching the boat, walking on the water; and they were frightened. <sup>20</sup> But he said to them, "It is I; don't be afraid."<sup>21</sup> Then they were willing to take him into the boat, and immediately the boat reached the shore where they were heading.

<sup>22</sup> The next day the crowd that had stayed on the opposite shore of the lake realized that only one boat had been there, and that Jesus had not entered it with his disciples, but that they had gone away alone. <sup>23</sup> Then some boats from Tiberias landed near the place where the people had eaten the bread after the Lord had given thanks. <sup>24</sup> Once the crowd realized that neither Jesus nor his disciples were there, they got into the boats and went to Capernaum in search of Jesus.

### The Gospel of St. John

#### Part I

- Prologue 1:1-14
- First Year 1:15 – 2:22
- Second Year 2:23 – 6:71
- Third Year 7:1 – 12:50

#### Part II

- The Last Discourse 13:1 – 17:26
- The Arrest and Trial 18:1 – 19:16
- Death and Resurrection 19:16 (b) – 21:25

## Entering into Scripture: A Meditation on Jesus Walking on the Water

*Just a moment ago I watched Jesus stand-up and slip into the crowd. No sight of Him now. He is going up on one of the surrounding mountains alone to pray. We are used to this. He does it every night. He went earlier than usual this evening. There was a buzz in the crowd about anointing Him king, and He said He wanted nothing to do with it.*

*He told us to collect the leftover barley cakes and give them to the poor while He went off to pray. He told us to put out for Capernaum when we were done. I thought we would have finished some time ago, but my basket is stuffed and everywhere I turn are more leftovers.*

*The crowd is still quite large, though some have begun to make their way back to the surrounding villages. As for me? Well, what can I say? Yes, there is a certain satisfaction associated with*

*being front and center in all this excitement. I like being recognized as one of the Teacher's friends. It's an odd combination, really. On the one hand, I want to be protective of Him – the crowds can be so daunting, so unruly, so rude. On the other, time and again He points us toward them – they are so needful; so lost.*

*And I wouldn't be honest if I left this part out, too. They can aggravate me more than a little. Many that were here today were here solely for the circus – Jesus puts on a good act. He is a real crowd-pleaser. It seems so many are here just for the show. And why not – free food too! All you can eat! Come and get it. Frankly, I am happy to get out of here tonight. Imagine what a zoo tomorrow will bring once the people hear that we are now serving a free buffet. Jesus – what were You thinking?*

*It is more profitable to know Jesus than to know about Him.*

*The twelve of us now huddle up on the mound, each with an overflowing basket of leftovers. Peter takes charge of sending them away with some women with instructions to feed the poor. It is now last light as we make our way down to the water. I look back to take in the last ribbon of fading blue-yellow on the western horizon as the sun retires for the night. There must be thousands of people still on the meadow. I guess they are bedding down here for the night. Glad we are getting out of here.*

*It is dark as we ready to launch the boat. The air is still and the stars seem so bright and so close you think you can touch them. The Pascal moon is nearly full – lighting the surrounding hills and glimmering on the water. It has been another emotional day. No one said a word about all the left-overs we collected. Not even Andrew. There was just enough spoken to coordinate our efforts to get underway. We launch. I feel at home out here on the water.*

*It was little while before we could hoist sail. The usual calm in the air at sunset makes a sail listless and useless. But now a gathering breeze comes up as we make our way toward Capernaum. John had taken the helm, and the rest of us zone-out. The boat is eerily quiet, broken only by the rhythm of lapping water against the haul. Each is lost in his own thoughts.*

*I am snapped back to attention by a wave that washes up over the sideboard and slaps my arm. Lost in my thoughts about the day's events, I hadn't noticed the growing swells, the gathering wind, or the fact that our boat was no longer advancing. We are headed nearly due west, and the winds are becoming ferocious. Odd, I think. Where did this come from? Sunset was clear.*

*It was Peter who stated what is becoming obvious. The winds are chaotic, even swirling. To trim a sail the winds must follow a more or less certain path. But I can see from the flapping sail what my body was telling me. The choppy chaotic waves announce a brooding storm is upon us and quickly gathering strength. This isn't a driving gale but a confused, swirling, choppy*

*sea. It is the worst kind of danger for a sailor, amplified by the darkness of the night.*

*We quickly scramble to pull the sail in and secure it. It took all of us to do so. The winds are now howling and confused; even angry. And the boat is being heaved and tossed about on what now are gigantic waves. We are being lifted by one wave and slammed down into the face of another. Peter calls for us to mount oars, which proves to be a gargantuan task. It is hard to set them when you can't keep your balance. It seems to take forever as we are literally thrown into each other. Thankfully, we don't lose any oars overboard. It seems to take forever before all are mounted and we are arrayed to begin pulling against them. Our strength is no match to the power of the sea. More than once the waves snapped the oar in the direction of our pull – once smacking me in the face so hard I wonder if my nose is bleeding.*

*The flickering lights on the distant shore do nothing to calm my terror. We are a long way out. Good sailors die out here when caught-out in a bad storm – and we are not all good sailors. The man sharing my oar is a tax collector, and he isn't much good as an oarsman. Anxiety wells up as I realize we have been at this a good while and have made precious little way. My strength is failing me. To quit is to die; to be swallowed up by this angry sea. But to keep going seems impossible. Is this it, I wonder? Is this how it will end for me?*

*Initially we had been taking turns on the watch, hugging the mast tightly while attempting to search for any sightings of distant shore points. Not now. It is too dangerous to move about.*

*"I see a spirit on the water!" I don't know who said it. A ghost! My heart stops beating. The reaper is coming to gather up the dead. I am frozen in terror. This is it. I am as good as dead. We double down against the oars – if that were possible – as if we might somehow out-run him. But it is no use. Now I see him coming on the water, un-phased by the waves that mercilessly*

*It is more profitable to know Jesus than to know about Him.*

*pound away at us. We drop oars – all eyes fixed on this angel of doom advancing on us.*

*“Peace! It is I. Do not be afraid!” Oh my god. I think I am going to pass out. It is the Lord! My heart is pounding. It feels like it wants to explode right through my chest. My hands and forearms cramp up.*

*As Jesus steps over the sideboard into the boat, Peter reaches out a hand to help steady Him. All*

*of us just stare at Him. Astounded and relieved at once – a swirl of confusion – no one says a word. Not even Jesus.*

*The sudden jerking of the haul run aground startles me. I turn to see what we have hit. Shore? We are here! Never been so happy to get out of a boat. I am the first to leap out and pull her to rest.*

### Reflection 1: Consolations and Desolations

A time of magnificent beauty – feeding of five thousand; a mountaintop experience followed by the deepest despair of pounding waves. Consolations followed by desolations. Light followed by utter darkness and terror. Peace and rest followed by a bruising storm. This is

what we can expect in this life as Your followers. One preparing us for what is to follow, neither more real than the other. Neither indicating Your presence nor Your absence. Just different times, different experiences, but the same God. The same love.

**Application:** *Why is it so hard for me to turn to God in times of spiritual desolation?*

### Reflection 2: Awakenings

No matter how dark the terrors of this world, they are quickly eclipsed by spiritual terrors. Strong men fearing for their lives at sea are quickened to the ready at what they believe to be ghost. All the terror of the waves is immediately forgotten. We saw a similar quickening of the spirit in the example of the woman at the well. No matter how far our minds may be focused away from You, Lord, or

anything of the religious sort, our hearts are quickened immediately when spiritual forces break through. We may wish to hide our nakedness under fig leaves of worldly things, but our fig leaves, once removed, expose things of the Spirit we can no longer deny. The great irony is that we never find rest until the fig leaves are gone.

**Application:** *When have I found great peace and rest as a result of exposing something I had been afraid to reveal?*

*It is more profitable to know Jesus than to know about Him.*

### Reflection 3: Destination Attained

The disciples were willing to take You into the boat. We should not miss this; it is significant. As soon as You enter the boat, immediately they make land in Capernaum. When You enter the boat of our lives, immediately our goal is attained. This is life: that we know You and the

One who sent You. As soon as we abide together – You in me and me in You – my destination is reached. There is no other place to go. But for You to abide in me, I must be willing to take You into the boat of my life. Here I am, Lord.

*Application: Am I busy trying to attain something that is already mine in Jesus Christ, my Lord?*

### Reflection 4: Present in Storms

The twelve did not expect to find You in their storm. They were not looking for You. No one considered, for example, that had You been there the storm may have been different. There was no thought of You at all. You did not wait for them to cry out to You. While they were yet battling the storm amid great fear and anxiety You came to them. You were watching them,

even when they were not watching for You. You came walking over the waves, drawing near to them, speaking Your word of peace. Likewise, in the storms of my life You also watch. You come. You help. But I need to be ready at the watch to see You over the waves. Help me to recognize You in the storms of my life.

*Application: Before the crisis comes upon me in my circumstance, Jesus is already here. When have I had that kind of confidence?*

### Reflection 5: Promised Haven

Moses walked through the water on dry land. But You mount up upon the waves, walking over them like stepping stones. You part the waters for Your servant, but have no need to do so for Yourself. You prove Yourself greater than Moses, upon whom the crowd has set their hopes. Immediately upon entering the boat it reaches safe-haven. Moses could not deliver that; he wasn't even permitted to enter the promised land. That land was just as promised: flowing with milk and honey. It was filled with

wells they dig not dig and vineyards they did not plant. That haven was a precursor and forerunner to the haven You bring us into – namely, abiding restful union. Here we discover all that had been promised through Moses: springs of spiritual milk and sweetness. Wells of life that spring up from within and that refresh our souls for which we do no labor. The continually renewing vineyard of Eucharistic wine that nourishes us. And the new manna – Bread of heaven - Your body broken for us.

*Application: The feeding of five thousand. The storms of life. Attaining a safe haven through the storm. All of these are wrapped in the mystery of a feast – a Eucharist-like feast. What does the Eucharist mean to me?*