

Intro:

Life Changing Events

TV Show – 24 Hours in Emergency – Life Changing Injuries

Insurance companies talk about life changing injuries, but also life changing events as well, such as house fires, car crashes and job losses.

But not all life changing events are negative. They can be positive events, such as the birth of a child, or a new job or relationship.

Some events are so big they don't just change your life but have impacts on lots of other people as well.

The event recorded in this passage is one of these. It is an event that changes the disciples' lives, but should also change our lives too.

Context

Matthew's Gospel – Jesus' life, death and resurrection. Written mainly to a Jewish audience to prove that Jesus is the Messiah promised in the OT.

Ch11-13 – rising tide of disappointment to Jesus and opposition to him, from religious and secular leaders, as well as those who were following him.

Ch. 14 – John the Baptist beheaded. When Jesus hears about John's death, he withdraws to a solitary place, probably to grieve. Crowd follows him, he has compassion on them and heals them and feeds them miraculously.

Our passage starts immediately after feeding the 5,000.

Jesus Walks on Water

Matt 14: 22 Immediately Jesus made the disciples get into the boat and go on ahead of him to the other side, while he dismissed the crowd.

Going back to where they came from. (Show map).

23 After he had dismissed them, he went up on a mountainside by himself to pray. Later that night, he was there alone, 24 and the boat was already a considerable distance from land, buffeted by the waves because the wind was against it. 25 Shortly before dawn Jesus went out to them, walking on the lake.

Try to put yourselves in the disciples place.

- Afraid b/c Herod had killed JTB – is he now after Jesus and his disciples?
- Boat ride to a private place, which turns out to be the opposite – people everywhere.
- Jesus heals and teaches for ages – end of the day he feeds the crowds miraculously.
- Straight after that Jesus makes disciples get back into boat and go ahead of him while he dismisses the crowd and goes off to pray.
- In the boat all night (v25 - shortly before dawn) sailing and rowing but getting further away from shore not closer b/c of the wind and waves.
- Emotionally and physically exhausted and then Jesus turns up in the middle of the lake, walking on the water.

26 When the disciples saw him walking on the lake, they were terrified. "It's a ghost," they said, and cried out in fear.

I'd be frightened too.

27 But Jesus immediately said to them: "Take courage! It is I. Don't be afraid."

They have seen him do other miracles, including ones similar to this one – he stilled the storm in Matt 8 on the same sea. They should know who he is and what he is able to do by now. They should not be afraid, but rather trust in him. Let me read you the stilling of the storm story from Matt 8 so you know what I am talking about.

Matt 8:23 Then he got into the boat and his disciples followed him. 24 Suddenly a furious storm came up on the lake, so that the waves swept over the boat. But Jesus was sleeping. 25 The disciples went and woke him, saying, and "Lord, save us! We're going to drown!" 26 He replied, "You of little faith, why are you so afraid?" Then he got up and rebuked the winds and the waves, and it was completely calm. 27 The men were amazed and asked, "What kind of man is this? Even the winds and the waves obey him!"

Haven't worked out who he is at this point. But by our passage Peter is starting to get it.

28 "Lord, if it's you," Peter replied, "tell me to come to you on the water." 29 "Come," he said. Then Peter got down out of the boat, walked on the water and came toward Jesus.

Starting to work out who Jesus is, and starting to put his trust in him.

30 But when he saw the wind, he was afraid and, beginning to sink, cried out, "Lord, save me!" 31 Immediately Jesus reached out his hand and caught him. "You of little faith," he said, "why did you doubt?" 32 And when they climbed into the boat, the wind died down.

Not total trust yet. Still gets afraid, and loses his trust/faith in Jesus.

Very similar to previous miracle isn't it. Both miracles show Jesus' power over nature (wind and waves/water) and the disciple's response to his show of power. The interesting thing is in the differences.

Matt 8 – Jesus Calms the Storm	Matt 14 – Jesus Walks on Water
Disciples in boat on Sea of Galilee	Disciples in boat on Sea of Galilee
Huge storm, waves swept over the boat	Boat buffeted by the waves because the wind was against it
Jesus asleep	Jesus walking on the water
Disciples afraid of storm	Disciples afraid of Jesus
	Jesus tells them not to be afraid
	Peter walks on the water
Disciples cry out to Jesus "Lord save us!"	Peter cries out to Jesus "Lord save me!"
Jesus says they have little faith and then saves them	Jesus says Peter has little faith and then saves him
Disciples ask "What kind of man is this? Even the winds and the waves obey him!"	Disciples worship him, saying "Truly you are the Son of God."

In the first miracle the disciples can't work out who Jesus is, but by this miracle they have got it.

The title Son of God refers to the status of Jesus as the divine Son of God the Father. God's son, God in human form, with all of God's power over the creation.

It's a huge claim for the disciples to make, but given what Jesus has just done, I think that it is completely justified.

By Ch 16, Peter will have worked out that Jesus is the Messiah (God's appointed King some to save and rule his people) as well as the Son of God.

16: 16 Simon Peter answered, "You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God."

But at this point the disciples have only worked out the Son of God bit.

34 When they had crossed over, they landed at Gennesaret.

35 And when the men of that place recognized Jesus, they sent word to all the surrounding country. People brought all their sick to him

36 and begged him to let the sick just touch the edge of his cloak, and all who touched it were healed.

Crowd have worked out who Jesus is, at least to some degree – miracle worker, healer.

Sum up: Jesus walks on water and his disciples realise that he is the Son of God/start to put their trust in Him.

The disciples' understanding of Jesus has grown over time and therefore their willingness to trust him has grown over time.

This is the normal way relationships work. It's usually not like in the movies, where a man meets a woman and they fall in love instantly. In real life, people meet and slowly get to know each other. Over time, as they talk and see how the other reacts, as they meet and see how they relate to friends and family, they might start to trust each other. Trust grows over time as people get to know each other.

As the disciples have got to know Jesus, they have started to put their trust in him.

Why does Jesus walk on water?

Why does Jesus do this miracle? He doesn't have to. He could have just waited until they finally got back to him in the boat. Or not sent them out in the boat in the first place.

Jesus always has a reason for doing what he does.

The reason was that Jesus was showing the disciples exactly who he is so that they will put their trust in him. Jesus proved Himself to be in command of nature, something only God can do. This was the first time Jesus was called the Son of God by the disciples, a statement that, in fact, built on what they had said earlier about Him in Matthew 8:27: "What kind of man is this? Even the winds and the waves obey him." Here they answer their own question: "Truly you are the Son of God."

But these miracles are not just about Jesus showing his power. Jesus also shows what he is going to use that power for: saving people.

Saving people from drowning, healing sick people, feeding hungry people – most of Jesus' miracles show his compassion for people. Jesus loves people and uses his power to save people, not to harm them.

By saving them from the storm and saving Peter from drowning, Jesus is showing that he is God's son, with all of God's power, but that he is someone to be trusted, not feared. He has come to save people, not destroy them.

And the disciples are starting to work this out. Though they had a long way to go in their spiritual understanding, the disciples were growing in their faith in Jesus. Also, this was the first time the disciples are said to have worshiped Jesus. And they worship him because they have worked out who he is (Matthew 14:33) and what he is like.

And this is what worship is, acknowledging who God is and praising Him both for who He is and for what He has done. It was in this story that the disciples took the first step and worshiped Jesus as the Son of God.

Jesus walks on water and saves Peter to show the disciples who he is, so that they will put their trust in Him and worship Him.

Where are you in your journey of understanding who Jesus is?

Idea of a path – start at one end far away from Jesus and move closer to him as your understanding grows.

- Right at the end of the path - Don't believe he exists – won't really bother with him at all
- Step a little bit down the path - Think he was a good teacher but nothing more – worth listening to, might learn something, but won't take him too seriously.
- Step a bit further down the path – Think he was a healer, miracle worker like the crowds did – might be fascinated by him or entertained by him – might call out to him in an emergency, but nothing more.
- Step right up to Jesus – Think he is the Son of God with all of God's power over nature etc. – rubber hits the road here doesn't it? If he is God in human form, then the right response is to worship him – to bow down before him, praise him for who he is and what he has done, and to offer your life to his service. Especially when you realise that the reason he came to earth was to die on the cross, taking the penalty for your ignoring of him in the past. You see the story of Jesus doesn't finish with him walking on water. As amazing as that is, it is nothing next to his biggest miracle. Jesus' biggest miracle is when he dies on the cross and pays for all of our sins, then rises to life again to prove that he has done it. He is God in human form, and he uses his power to save people, not harm them. And he calls on everyone to worship him.

So where are you in your journey of understanding who Jesus is? Will you take a step closer to him today?

If you want to do that or have questions about Jesus, please come and see me or Stu or John after the service and we will talk it through with you.

What about those of us who have already come to know that Jesus is the Son of God and have committed our lives to Him? What should we do in response to this passage?

I want to say that this passage is a good reminder to us of who Jesus is but I think that it is **way** more than that. Jesus does this miracle and Matthew records it for us so that we will be in no doubt about who we are dealing with here. Jesus walks on water. In the middle of a lake. He enables Peter to do it. When they get in the boat he stops the wind. And the disciples do the only logical thing they can do in that situation – they worship him.

I think the challenge for us who have been Christians for a while is to not gloss over stories like this – to not lose our awe at just how huge Jesus is. To keep on worshipping him with all of our lives, instead of taking him for granted. When we forget how huge Jesus is our tendency is to move back down that path – to move back away from living as if Jesus really is the Son of God and starting to treat him like he is just a miracle worker or a good teacher – someone to be interested in but not someone to worship. But when we read passages like this one, we realise treating Jesus like this makes no sense at all.

So Jesus walked on water and his disciples worshipped him. If you are not worshipping him I challenge you to start doing so today and if you are worshipping him, I challenge you to do so more and more.

Want to finish with a quote from CS Lewis, who wrote the Narnia stories. In it he is talking about Jesus' teaching about himself, but I think it applies just as well to Jesus' actions.

"I am trying here to prevent anyone saying the really foolish thing that people often say about Him: I'm ready to accept Jesus as a great moral teacher, but I don't accept his claim to be God. That is the one thing we must not say. A man who was merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He would either be a lunatic — on the level with the man who says he is a poached egg — or else he would be the Devil of Hell. You must make your choice. Either this man was, and is, the Son of God, or else a madman or something worse. You can shut him up for a fool, you can spit at him and kill him as a demon or you can fall at his feet and call him Lord and God, but let us not come with any patronizing nonsense about his being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to."
— C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*