

The Lord of the Storm

February 6, 2022

Lesson Summary

Main Passages

John 6:16-21

Session Outline

1. The Outward Reality (John 6:16-18)
2. The Love of Christ (John 6:19)
3. The Appropriate Response (John 6:20-21)

Theological Theme

Jesus of Nazareth is God. He was with God in the beginning, and He was God. All things were made for Him and through Him. As the creator God, He has complete power over all of creation.



Leader Guide

The Lord of the Storm

Introduction

- ❓ What are some ways people cope with difficult or even traumatic events in life?
- ❓ What are some things that have helped you heal after going through trials or tribulations?

One of the best-known chapters of the Psalter is Psalm 23. This psalm is all about walking in faithful obedience and dependence upon the Good Shepherd. In the first three verses, we are reminded to love and trust God when things are going well in our lives. We remember that all the good gifts and blessings that comfort us are provided by our heavenly Father and are meant to point us toward Him. In verse 4, the psalmist helped us remember that the Good Shepherd is also present when circumstances around us begin to crumble into a chaotic mess. God is our Shepherd in the rough and tumble of life too.

Upon emerging from the dark valley, we are secure, but not unscathed. Our Shepherd's arm isn't too short to protect, but He has the right to allow us to be struck, to fall, or to stumble. His wisdom and will, we have learned, must be met with an "amen" instead of a "why?" Job taught us as much. Our wounds, it turns out, are another occasion for the Shepherd's grace and kindness to be made manifest. As Job said, "For he wounds but he also bandages; he strikes, but his hands also heal" (5:18).

Jesus said in John 10 that He is the Good Shepherd and His sheep know His voice. He also said that the sheep are secure. The facts of Psalm 23 are true about those who have heard the gospel and believed. What is the gospel? It is the joyful news of forgiveness and new life through the sacrifice of Christ. If you have heard and understood the gospel and God has opened your heart to believe it and repent of sin, then you can read, sing, and pray Psalm 23 with the assurance that these facts are personal. They are yours to take hold of, take root in, and take comfort from.

In our passage today, we will see the facts of Psalm 23 play out in real life.

Session Summary

In John 6:1-15, we read of Jesus's feeding of the five thousand. The claims here are astounding. How could Jesus take a few pieces of bread and fish and use them to feed thousands of people? Either John was lying, or Jesus is God. The account following this miracle is no less incredible. John reported that Jesus walked on top of the water. How can this be? For those who have ears to hear and are being drawn by the Father, the answer is clear. Jesus of Nazareth truly is the Messiah. But this passage of Scripture isn't only about Jesus. We also read of how the disciples went down into the sea as the sky darkened. We sense their fear and anxiety as the sea became rough and the wind began to blow strongly. We can relate to their complete shock and dismay when they saw the Man walking toward them across the waves. Jesus Christ is the Lord of the storm, even when we must face the storm itself. Let's consider the disciples' experience, the nature of Christ, and the disciples' response.

God Over Our Storms

John wrote his Gospel so that those who read it might believe Jesus of Nazareth is the Messiah and have eternal life. In this account of Jesus's supernatural power, we learn important truths about the nature of Christ. We also see in this episode an illustration of every person as they walk the narrow way through this sin-soaked world on their way to the celestial city.

1. The Outward Reality (John 6:16-18)

Most people know the sense of anxiety and dread that rears up when potential bad news is on the horizon. For example, you receive a text message that says, "Hey, this person from work is really upset with you." Or the mechanic says, "This is going to be at least \$1,000 to fix." Or the doctor says, "We are going to need to do more tests." We all know this feeling. It is a punch to the gut, a tightening of the chest, and a knot in the stomach. Some people call it worry or stress, but if we want to get to the heart of the matter, it is *fear*.

The disciples had just witnessed something unfathomable. Jesus of Nazareth, their Rabbi, had made much food out of little. Then, He withdrew to the mountain by Himself. The disciples were alone. As the sky grew dark, they went down to the sea, got into a boat and began to cross the sea. Several of these men were experienced fishermen. They knew how to handle a boat on the open sea. But the sea grew rough, and the waves swelled high.



How were the outward circumstances of the disciples like the circumstances we experience in life? What do the Scriptures teach about trial and tribulation in the life of Christians?

Jesus Christ is the Lord of the storm, but the storm still must be faced. The disciples had their own test to face, and those who follow Christ today must also be tried by their Master. Just like the disciples, Christians know Jesus is mighty to save and good to His sheep, but those truths can sometimes be overshadowed by the outward reality of a sickness, a broken relationship, the loss of a job, or persecution.

Anyone who desires to live a godly life will face persecution (2 Timothy 3:12). In this world, Christians will have trouble (John 16:33). But those who are in Christ have many promises in the Scriptures that should comfort them in times of trial. For example, Psalm 23:5 teaches that God prepares a table for His children in the presence of their enemies.

What do Christians learn about their enemies according to Psalm 23? Surprisingly, this passage indicates that sometimes enemies of the child of God continue in their presence. This may refer to a difficult circumstance, a person, or Satan himself. The term “enemies” here is general and may be applied to anything that is causing suffering or trial. But there is a great comfort found here too.

In Psalm 23:5, Christians have a passive role. Elsewhere they are encouraged and commanded to actively fight against their enemies, but they must not read the psalmist to be in contradiction against admonitions to “resist” the enemy. These are two sides of the same coin. In fact, a believer’s resistance against their enemies amounts to placing themselves in a position where God may protect them and fight on their behalf. This isn’t abandoning oneself to fate, but an active sitting at God’s table and allowing Him to act. A believer’s enemies are powerless to prevent them from resting in and partaking of God’s generous grace and peace that He offers to His children, even in the storms.

 Should Christians seek vengeance when trials take the form of enemies who attack?

The Old Testament presents Yahweh as the God who rules over the seas and makes His paths across them. Psalm 89:9 says, “You rule the raging sea; when its waves surge, you still them.” Even more relevant to our passage, Job 9:8 states, “He alone stretches out the heavens and treads on the waves of the sea.” People throughout the Old Testament feared both the presence of God and the treacherous seas. In today’s passage, the disciples expressed fear of the Lord and of the seas that demonstrate His power. By walking on water, Jesus established that He is this same God who created the universe and even in His incarnation, He reigns over the sea.

 Application: What storm are you facing? Are you resting in the power and presence of the Lord during it? What can you do to make sure you are seated at the Lord’s table?

2. The Love of Christ (John 6:19)



Imagine you saw a man walking on water. How would you react? How can you relate to the disciples' fear?

Jesus came to them on the water, and He spoke to them in verse 20. Jesus Christ brought peace to His disciples in the storm. From the very beginning, we see that God is the initiator of a relationship with people by expressions of love. For example, God created Adam and Eve and they responded to that act of love by loving Him back. Also, when Adam and Eve sinned, God sought them out even though they were hiding. We also see that God went to Cain to warn him against sin. God is the initiator. As John wrote, "We love because he first loved us" (1 John 4:19).

God first loved us, and as a Christian grows in Christ, they will see more and more that any acts of devotion they offer up to God are always preceded by God's lovingkindness. Of course, the Bible commands Christians to love God and one another, but they should never take those commands to eclipse the fundamental reality that God's love is the prime motivation in all demonstrations of godly love.



How did Jesus's actions in this verse further reveal the truth that He is God?

Matthew also wrote about this event in his Gospel. His account is found in Matthew 14:28-33. In Matthew's account, still unsure it was Jesus, Peter asked Him to prove His identity. Jesus didn't have to prove anything to Peter, but He chose to do so. Peter wanted to walk on the water toward Jesus, so Jesus said, "Come!" Then Peter threw caution to the wind, climbed out of the boat, and started walking across the water to Jesus.

But Peter's faithful walk didn't last long. The second his focus shifted from Jesus to the reality of his circumstances, he lost trust and began to sink, so he cried out to Jesus to save him. And that's exactly what Jesus did. Jesus reached out His hand and caught hold of Peter. Although Jesus did question Peter about his lack of faith, He still got him back into the boat. In that moment, the storm swirling around them calmed (along with the disciples' anxiety): "Then those in the boat worshiped Him and said, 'Truly You are the Son of God!'" (Matthew 14:33).



Application: How can we learn to trust Jesus more? What actions show that we trust Jesus in all circumstances?

3. The Appropriate Response (John 6:20-21)



What is the significance of Jesus using the phrase “It is I” (or “I am”) in verse 20?

By including Jesus’s words to the disciples, John suggested that we are correct to view Him as identical with the God of the Old Testament. The use of the Greek phrase *ego eimi* (translated “I am”) in this passage probably alludes to the way God described Himself as the “I AM” in the Old Testament (see Exodus 3:14; Isaiah 41:4; 43:10-11; 48:12). The phrase *ego eimi* appears in the verses as they are found in the Septuagint—the Greek translation of the Hebrew Scriptures and the Bible of the apostles and early church. Jesus used the “I am” phrase several times in John. Thus, both this passage and others in John’s Gospel are highly charged in their teaching about Jesus’s deity.

When a child is afraid in the night, he runs to his parents. It is a great comfort to children when they are afraid to be near their parents. It’s the same with Christians. They desire to be near their heavenly Father, especially during times of tribulation. The text says, “they were willing to take him on board.” They hesitated in bringing him on board for a moment only because they could hardly believe their eyes. But as soon as they realized it truly was Jesus, they gladly received him on the boat.



How should Christians take comfort in Christ’s presence today?

Those who are in Christ take comfort in the presence of Christ in their lives for two reasons. First, Jesus Christ is strong and mighty. He is a powerful King, and He can accomplish all His holy will. Second, those who are in Christ truly love Christ. Their love for Him is drawn out by his love for them. He is their treasure, their joy, their obsession. Jesus of Nazareth, the Messiah, is strong and good; and He shepherds His own even in the dark valley of death.

Jesus has promised to be with His own, and He will not abandon them (see John 10). Those are the facts for those who are in Christ, and the believer ought not to let their feelings eclipse those critical facts. But if they don’t continually remind themselves of these facts, then feelings will get the last word. Sally Lloyd Jones wrote, “Have you noticed that when it’s cloudy you can’t see the stars? And that sometimes clouds can even hide mountains from you? For a moment it seems as if there are no stars shining, no mountain standing. Have the mountains moved? Have the stars stopped shining? No. The clouds have just hidden them. Feelings can be like clouds—they blow in and hide things from us. Sometimes they tell us God doesn’t care. Or that God is far away.”¹

- ❓ Application: When you face trials, how do you respond? Does your heart move toward faith or fear? Do you battle an anxious heart, or do you rest in the Savior?

Conclusion

Jesus is the Lord of the storm. He is the Son of God who took on flesh, lived a life of perfect obedience to the Law, and died the death of a sinner as an atoning sacrifice for all those who would believe in Him. Jesus not only died, but He rose again, and He ever lives to make intercession for those who the Father has given to Him. Jesus Christ promised that He would be with His disciples and that He does not leave His own as orphans. In this world, Christians will face difficulties, trials, and temptations. But Jesus Christ has overcome the world, and those who are in Christ can take heart, for their Savior is fully divine and able to save completely. When they meet with any dark cloud along the way, they don't need to fear but exercise faith.

- ❓ Are you facing trials and tribulations now? Have you responded to those with faith or fear? How can you remind yourself this week of the character of God that inspires faith?
- ❓ What is one way you can display that kind of faith rather than fear?
- ❓ How might living according to faith rather than fear help you share the good news of Jesus with others?

Prayer of Response

Ask the Lord to help you to face the storms of this life with a childlike faith. Pray that God would give you the strength to repent of anxiousness and nourish your trust in Him. Ask the Lord to give you a clearer picture of the love that has been shown to you in Christ Jesus, so that you may love Him more fiercely and freely. Pray that this love would spill over toward neighbors.

Additional Resources

- *John 1-11* by John MacArthur
- *John* by George R. Beasley-Murray
- *John* by Gary M. Burge

Disciples Multiplying Disciples



DxD This Week

Group Emphasis

Let people share their fears and discuss how they have/can trust Jesus in these issues.

For Next Week

Session Title

- The Good Shepherd

Main Passages

- John 10:1-18

Session Outline

1. The Sheep Hear His Voice (John 10:1-5)
2. The Shepherd is the Gate (John 10:6-10)
3. The Shepherd Lays Down His Life (John 10:11-18)

Memorize

After they had rowed about three or four miles, they saw Jesus walking on the sea. He was coming near the boat, and they were afraid. ²⁰ But he said to them, "It is I. Don't be afraid."

- John 6:19-20

Historical Context of John

Purpose

The purpose statement in 20:30–31 indicates that John wrote with an evangelistic purpose, probably seeking to reach unbelievers through Christian readers of his Gospel. If the date of composition was after AD 70, the time of the destruction of the Jerusalem temple, it is likely that John sought to present Jesus as the new temple and center of worship for God’s people in replacement of the old sanctuary.

Author

A close reading of the Gospel of John suggests that the author was an apostle (1:14; cp. 2:11; 19:35); one of the Twelve (“the disciple Jesus loved,” 13:23; 19:26; 20:2; 21:20; cp. 21:24–25); and, still more specifically, John, the son of Zebedee (note the association of “the disciple Jesus loved” with Peter in 13:23–24; 18:15–16; 20:2–9; 21; and in Lk 22:8; Ac 1:13; 3–4; 8:14–25; Gl 2:9). The church fathers, too, attested to this identification (e.g., Irenaeus). Since the apostolic office was foundational in the history of the church (Ac 2:42; Eph 2:20), the apostolic authorship of John’s Gospel invests it with special authority as firsthand eyewitness (Jn 15:27; 1Jn 1:1–4).

Setting

The most plausible date of writing is the period between AD 70 (the date of the destruction of the temple) and 100 (the end of John’s lifetime), with a date in the 80s most likely. A date after 70 is suggested by the references to the Sea of Tiberias in 6:1 and 21:1 (a name widely used for the Sea of Galilee only toward the end of the first century); Thomas’s confession of Jesus as “my Lord and my God” in 20:28 (possibly a statement against emperor worship in the time of Domitian); the reference to Peter’s martyrdom, which occurred in 65 or 66 (21:19); the lack of reference to the Sadducees, who ceased to be a Jewish religious party after 70; and the comparative ease with which John equated Jesus with God (1:1, 14, 18; 10:30; 20:28).

Special Features

The Gospel of John is different from the Synoptic Gospels—Matthew, Mark, and Luke—in that more than ninety percent of its material is unique. John’s Gospel does not focus on the miracles, parables, and public speeches that are so prominent in the other accounts. Instead, the Gospel of John emphasizes the identity of Jesus as the Son of God and how we, as believers, should respond to his teachings.

Extended Commentary

John 6:16-21

6:16–18. The Sea of Galilee lies six hundred feet below sea level, and the prevailing winds still blow from the west. According to John, his disciples went down to the lake. But both Matthew and Mark specify that Jesus sent his disciples away. We see here a lesson in authority for the disciples. Several of them were fishermen, and this east-west route across the lake toward the town of Capernaum would not have been unfamiliar. But it was dark and the waters were treacherous. This miracle also appears in Matthew 14:22–33 and Mark 6:45–52. Presumably, Jesus had set a time and perhaps even a place where he would meet them on the west coast of the lake.

6:19–21. The distance across the northern end of the Sea of Galilee is about five miles, so they were more than half way across when they saw Jesus walking on the water. He knew their problems with faith and fear; Mark tells us he had been watching them (Mark 6:48). This was no ghost, no mystical apparition brought about by their terrified emotions. His words are so like the Lord: It is I; don't be afraid.

This miracle revealed Jesus' authority to the disciples and his purpose of ministry to the crowds. The requirements for help in their distress were simple enough—recognize their own need and take Jesus into the boat. That has not changed much in our day. But just seeing Jesus and recognizing him were not enough; they had to take him into the boat. As we shall see in our continuing study of this chapter, intellectual assent must be accompanied by spiritual appropriation and personal commitment to gain eternal life, or—as in this case—to gain physical safety.

Let us not move too quickly over the word immediately in verse 21. With little fuss and no intent to make a point, John probably indicated another miracle which few count in numbering the miracles in John. Some interpreters opt for the natural explanation (they were already near shore). Or perhaps the remainder of the voyage seemed as nothing compared to what they had already been through. I stand with Godet's interpretation: "One can scarcely imagine, indeed, that, after an act of power so magnificent and so kingly as Jesus walking on the waters, he should have seated himself in the boat, and the voyage should have been laboriously continued by the stroke of the oar. At the moment when Jesus set his foot in the boat, he communicated to it, as he has just done for Peter, the force victorious over gravity and space, which had just been so strikingly displayed on his own person" (cited in Morris, Leon. *The Gospel According to John*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1971, p. 351).²

References

1. Sally Lloyd-Jones, *Thoughts to Make Your Heart Sing*, vol. 3 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zonderkidz, 2012).
2. Kenneth O. Gangel, *Holman New Testament Commentary: John*, ed. Max E. Anders (Nashville, TN: Holman Reference, 2000).

Author Bio

Sally Lloyd-Jones (Thoughts to Make Your Heart Sing)

Sally Lloyd-Jones is a New York Times bestselling author whose books include: *Thoughts To Make Your Heart Sing*, a children's devotional which won the ECPA Christian Book of The Year award in adult inspiration, and *The Jesus Storybook Bible*, now available in a format for adults with a new design and title, *The Story of God's Love for You*. Sally also has a new picture book coming this spring, *Baby Wren and the Great Gift*.

Kenneth Gangel (John)

Dr. Kenneth O. Gangel (1935-2009): A prolific author and an experienced leader has been influential in the field of Christian education for over forty years. He's written numerous articles and over 50 books, while pastoring, teaching, raising a family and leading schools. His impact reaches around the world through students, co-authored books, and working with leaders of churches and schools.

John MacArthur (John 1-11)

John MacArthur has served as pastor-teacher of Grace Community Church in Sun Valley, California, since 1969. His ministry of expository preaching is unparalleled in its breadth and influence. In more than five decades of ministry from the same pulpit, he has preached verse by verse through the entire New Testament and several key sections of the Old Testament. He is Chancellor of the Master's University and Seminary, and can be heard daily on the Grace to You radio broadcast (carried on hundreds of radio stations worldwide). He has authored numerous bestselling books, including *Twelve Ordinary Men* and *One Perfect Life*.

George R. Beasley-Murray (John)

Dr. George R. Beasley-Murray is former Principal of Spurgeon's College, London, and has served as James Buchanan Harrison Professor of New Testament Interpretation at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky. He holds the M.A. from Cambridge University and the B.D., M.Th., Ph.D., and D.D. from the University of London. Among Dr. Beasley-Murray's many important publications are *Revelation in the New Century Bible Commentary*, *Baptism in the New Testament*, *Jesus and the Kingdom of God*, *Jesus and the Last Days*, and *Gospel of Life: Theology in the Fourth Gospel*.

Gary M. Burge (John)

Gary M. Burge (PhD, King's College, Aberdeen University) is visiting professor of New Testament at Calvin Theological Seminary. Gary has authored a number of books, including *Who Are God's People in the Middle East? What Christians Are Not Being Told About Israel and the Palestinians*; *John and Letters of John in the NIV Application Commentary series*; *The New Testament in Antiquity* (coauthored with Gene Green); and the first three volumes in the *Ancient Context, Ancient Faith series*: *The Bible and the Land*, *Jesus, the Middle Eastern Storyteller*, and *Encounters with Jesus*. Gary specializes in the Middle East, its churches, and its history in the Hellenistic period.