

DON'T FANTOMIZE JESUS

INTRODUCTION

Have you sometimes wondered why you have prayed and there is just no answer? Are you possibly going through a trial right now and you desperately need God to move on your behalf?

This morning I want to encourage you about who our Lord and Saviour actually is. I want to build up your faith and I want to let you in on one of Jesus secrets to success. Maybe not in exactly that order.

MESSAGE

Matthew 14:22-33 (NKJV) Immediately Jesus made His disciples get into the boat and go before Him to the other side, while He sent the multitudes away. And when He had sent the multitudes away, He went up on the mountain by Himself to pray. Now when evening came, He was alone there. But the boat was now in the middle of the sea, tossed by the waves, for the wind was contrary. Now in the fourth watch of the night Jesus went to them, walking on the sea. And when the disciples saw Him walking on the sea, they were troubled, saying, "It is a ghost!" And they cried out for fear. But immediately Jesus spoke to them, saying, "Be of good cheer! It is I; do not be afraid." And Peter answered Him and said, "Lord, if it is You, command me to come to You on the water." So He said, "Come." And when Peter had come down out of the boat, he walked on the water to go to Jesus. But when he saw that the wind was boisterous, he was afraid; and beginning to sink he cried out, saying, "Lord, save me!" And immediately Jesus stretched out His hand and caught him, and said to him, "O you of little faith, why did you doubt?" And when they got into the boat, the wind ceased. Then those who were in the boat came and worshiped Him, saying, "Truly You are the Son of God."

I believe Jesus wanted to teach his disciples something in this account. If we look a bit deeper some of the words here, we will understand:

It says, "Jesus made His disciples get into the boat and go before Him to the other side". He didn't ask them nicely, He instructed them to go even though He was still sending the multitudes away. He MADE them go... In some translations, the word "made" is translated as COMPELLED.

Why didn't He just tell them to wait for Him? Or why didn't He go with them. Nothing Jesus did was without purpose! He wanted them to learn something, and though this account, He wants us to learn something too!

EVEN JESUS NEEDED TO PRAY

John 1:1-3 (NKJV) In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 He was in the beginning with God. 3 All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made.

Colossians 1:17 (AMPC) And He Himself existed before all things, and in Him all things consist (cohere, are held together).

Jesus, by His very nature and existence, is God! Yet if we go to our text today, we see that He remained behind and went up to the mountain to pray. It says "He went up on the mountain by Himself to pray. Now when evening came, He was alone there."

The first lesson we can learn is from Jesus is that no matter how great and how sinless and how perfect He is, regardless of the fact that everything that exists was made through Him. He still needed to spend time alone with our heavenly Father.

Could it be that sometimes our prayers don't seem to be answered and our breakthrough doesn't come because we are too casual about our relationship and dependency towards God? We throw up a quick prayer here and there, we ask others to pray for us, but we don't go and spend proper alone time with Father God?

Could it be that we see ourselves a bit like Peter in this account... He was the hero wasn't he? Didn't he walk on water?

*The truth is that **Peter couldn't even walk on solid ground if Jesus didn't decree it!** When we have a need and we don't spend enough time with God about it, we risk being subject to the hero syndrome, where it's us that are so good because we receive a miracle instead of Jesus, the true hero and miracle maker!*

Let us realise today that we need to spend quality time in God's presence, in TOTAL DEPENDENCE, seeking true relationship with Him and seeking His face about every facet of our lives, then we can expect answered prayers.

DON'T PHANTOMIZE JESUS

In our text we then read this: "the boat was now in the middle of the sea, tossed by the waves, for the wind was contrary. Now in the fourth watch of the night Jesus went to them, walking on the sea. And when the disciples saw Him walking on the sea, they were troubled, saying, "It is a ghost!"

Have you ever been in a small boat in the sea when the wind is blowing? We experienced it on our first fishing charter...It can be scary. The boat rises to the crest of the swell and then sinks down into the valley. It's hard to focus on the horizon to avoid sea sickness if when you are in the trough, it's higher than the horizon. The skipper and workers on the boat joked about us feeding the fish when we got bilious!

Imagine that happening at night, its dark, the boat is creaking around you, bouncing around on the water; water splashes in over the side, the sails are flapping wildly in the wind and the next thing you see a cloaked figure coming

towards you walking on the water. I think I can understand how the disciples must have felt!

- They thought they saw a Ghost or a "spirit" – If you look up the Strong's Concordance original Greek name for this it is "*fantasma*", meaning a spectre or a spirit – we get the English word "Fantom" from this, hence me naming this message, "Don't phantomize Jesus".
- They should have known better! They had been around Jesus, they had seen Him casting demons out with just a word.
- They knew His authority...maybe they themselves had already flowed in that authority and cast demons out.
- But immediately it says, they were troubled. They thought He was a ghost.

Just think...Here came Jesus, the One who holds the whole universe together, the one who created all things and the one with the power to still the wind and the waves, and they think He is a ghost and they are afraid!

Where did this come from? I believe that the fishermen of the day were filled with **deep seated fears as a result of superstition.**

Think of the sailors on the ship that Jonah was on. They faced an identical situation, the wind and waves were tossing them around and they were afraid! We read in Jonah 1:7 that they said to one another, "Come, let us cast lots, that we may know for whose cause this trouble has come upon us." So they cast lots, and the lot fell on Jonah.

Imagine casting lots – in reality, that's superstition... and they were willing to throw Jonah overboard because of it... based on superstition!

I believe there's another way we can see this and learn from it... Just like Jesus was not a ghost or a phantom spirit yet they initially believed that He was one, we are at risk, particularly in the day in which we live where there are so many stories we read and movies we see, that we reduce Jesus Christ, to a story book character or a character based in superstitions or even just see him as a superhero.

- We cannot see Jesus as just a story book character
- We cannot not see Him as a phantom or a ghost.
- We must never see Him as a belief or a superstition
- The word "fantasize" has the same root as "*fantasma*"– it refers to our imagination. We must not see Jesus as an object of our imagination! He is NOT a superhero – He is much, much more!
- Jesus Christ is the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords
- The whole universe is held together in Him
- In the Old Testament we see God opening the Red Sea and piling up the waters of the Jordan river.
- We see Joshua asking God to make the sun stand still and God does it!
- Our God is the one who moves supernaturally contrary to the forces of nature. He created nature, and He controls it!

- He is the one who can still the storms and calm the winds rough seas that we are facing.
- He is capable of dealing with whatever situation we face, nothing is impossible for Him and nothing is greater than Him.
- He is not a superhero, He is not a fantasy, a figment of our imagination, He is very real, the Great Creator of heaven and earth. And He is the very reason we breathe. We NEED HIM!

Every time we put Jesus in the category of a story character, or even a fictional superhero, **we deny His power.**

When we see Him as a phantom, we put him in the same category of one of Marvel's superhero's. **We love to hear stories about them but in our hearts, nothing is real...**

When we do this it's impossible to act by faith.

- **Hebrews 11:1** (NKJV) Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.
- **2 Corinthians 5:7** (NKJV) For we walk by faith, not by sight.

The disciples were afraid because didn't see Jesus for who He was.

Even though they had been around Him and seen what He was capable of, they still doubted. Therefore, I say this morning, "Don't phantomise Jesus"!

IT WASN'T ABOUT PETER WALKING ON WATER

Jesus allowed Peter to walk on water, but did you notice that when they got back in the boat, the other disciples don't congratulate Peter for doing pretty well and wish him better luck next time!

It was all about Jesus, the Lord of all creation who even has power over the wind and the waves.

Our text from Matthew ends with these words: "And when they got into the boat, the wind ceased. Then those who were in the boat came and worshiped Him, saying, "Truly You are the Son of God."

- The wind and waves stopped when Jesus Got in the boat – there is no record that He said, "be still". It just god calm!
- Then the disciples worshiped – the penny had dropped – "Truly You are the Son of God."
- This is what Jesus wanted to show them and it's what He wants to show us today!

Have we possibly been praying to Jesus but in our heart of hearts we don't really see Him as the King of all Creation? Have we been seeing him as a Bible Story, a "fantastic superhero", but just a superstitious

character that we pray to from time to time to comfort us when we have a need, but deep down we don't believe anything will change?

Today is the day to change our mind and see Jesus Christ, the ALL POWERFUL ONE for who He really is. He is the true, living SON OF GOD!

CONCLUSION

In Jesus, we serve the One and Only True God. The creator of heaven and earth. Nothing is impossible for Him.

Even Jesus spent time alone with His Heavenly Father in prayer – it was one of His secrets to success.

Our own prayers will remain flimsy and unanswered if we don't change the two things we have learned about today:

1. We need to spend time alone with God, getting to know Him and making our requests known – we must pray believing that He is with us and He will meet us in our need.
2. We must not phantomize Jesus, making Him something He is not. He is not just some spirit or phantom, an object of our fears, superstitions or fantasies. He is also not just a nice storybook character that we fondly send off a prayer to every now and again. No, Jesus is very real. He is the creator of heaven and earth. He is our creator. He is all-powerful and all-knowing and all-present, He is the Son of God and He is seated at the right hand of Father God right now making intercession for you and I. When we pray we need to pray by faith trusting that what we don't see right now is more real to us as we trust God by faith, than that which we do see.

Let us stop phantomizing Jesus and call on Him in a new and powerful way from this day forward.