

## The Four Boats

Jesus meets us where we are! The New Testament is full of stories about Jesus meeting people as they were going about their everyday business. Saul (who later became the apostle Paul) had planned to go to Damascus to round up more believers and take them to jail. However, God had a very different plan! Jesus met him on the road and turned his life around (**Acts 9:1-9**). Jesus also met the disciples where they were! *“As He walked by the Sea of Galilee, He saw Simon and Andrew his brother casting a net into the sea; for they were fishermen. So Jesus said to them, ‘Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men’. They immediately left their nets and followed Him. When He had gone a little farther from there, He saw James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, who were also in the boat mending their nets. Immediately He called them, they left their father in the boat with the hired servants and followed Him”* (**Mark 1:16-20**).

Jesus wants to meet you where you are right now! In fact He would like this to be a ‘face to face’ encounter because He loves intimacy. Jesus wants to get involved in our everyday lives, to be with us and meet all our needs. When Jesus came into the world in human form, He changed our relationship with God forever. He made it possible for us to become adopted sons and daughters in God's family, but He also gave us another gift that too few appreciate – His friendship! The Lord experienced firsthand the loneliness of being human, and He saw that as much as we need a saviour, we also need a **friend**. What better friend could you have? Jesus is steadfastly loyal. He supports and encourages you when you need it most, and He listens whenever you want to talk. He loves you unconditionally and wants you to reach your full potential. And as a true friend, Jesus is happy to meet you wherever you may be!

Today, we're going to examine four situations where Jesus met with people, and each one involves a boat. Therefore, I have called the message **The Four Boats**...

- (1) **The Boat of Your Fears**. During the storms of life, Jesus meets you in your strongest fears. **Mark 4:35-41**, *“...That day when evening came, he said to his disciples, ‘Let us go over to the other side.’ Leaving the crowd behind, they took him along, just as he was, in the boat. There were also other boats with him. A furious squall came up, and the waves broke over the boat, so that it was nearly swamped. Jesus was in the stern, sleeping on a cushion. The disciples woke Him and said to Him, ‘Teacher, don't you care if we drown?’ He got up, rebuked the wind and said to the waves, ‘Quiet! Be still!’ Then the wind died down and it was completely calm. He said to his disciples, ‘Why are you so **afraid**? Do you still have no faith?’ They were terrified and asked each other, ‘Who is this? Even the wind and the waves obey him!’”*

Note how the disciples reacted to this storm. They were in **fear**. Yet, many of them were fishermen! So how strong can we surmise this storm was? These seaworthy fishermen were accustomed to storms on the Sea of Galilee so this one must have been exceptional for them to fear for their lives. When you are **fearful**, do you ever get annoyed because it looks like God is sleeping and ignoring the situation that threatens to overcome you? In this story the disciples woke Jesus up. Why? Did they want Him to calm the storm? Well, with their total surprise at His calming of the storm, we can assume that they didn't expect Him to do so. Hence, they must have wanted Jesus to tell them what to do – how to get out of danger. But that wasn't the case.

The Lord chose to exercise His authority over the wind and the waves, and the sudden stillness terrified them. In what areas of your life are you tempted to respond with **fear** rather than faith? For many of you it seems like you have been abandoned, left exposed to the elements. But you need to rest in faith during every storm. Your boat isn't going down because Jesus is on board. At any moment now He will rebuke the *wind and waves* of your fearful and daunting situation, and it will become still. And don't be fearful if He does it His way!

- (2) **The Boat of Your Disappointments**. Jesus meets you in the very place where your best efforts have failed. **Matthew 14:25-32**, *“...Shortly before dawn Jesus went out to them, walking on the lake. When the disciples saw him walking on the lake, they were terrified. ‘It's a ghost,’ they said, and cried out in fear. But Jesus immediately said to them: ‘Take courage! It is I. Don't be afraid.’ ‘Lord, if it's you,’ Peter replied, ‘tell me to come to you on the water.’ ‘Come,’ he said. Then Peter got down out of the boat, walked on the water and came toward Jesus. But when he saw the wind, he was*

*afraid and, beginning to sink, cried out, "Lord, save me!" Immediately Jesus reached out his hand and caught him. "You of little faith," he said, "why did you doubt?" And when they climbed into the boat, the wind died down. Then those who were in the boat worshiped him, saying, "Truly you are the Son of God."*

Peter had the courage and determination to step out of the boat and venture where he had never gone before. But he **failed**. Think of the disappointment he must have felt. He was actually walking on water! If only he had not taken his eyes off Jesus! Yet, this didn't prevent the Lord from immediately reaching out and carrying Peter back to the boat (to safety). Jesus met him where he was – in His limitations!

The question is always, do you stay in the safety of the boat, as the other disciples did, and wait to see what will happen? Or, do you step out, alone? You'll have to take that first step. You'll have to focus on God. As Peter climbed over the side of the boat he had his eyes fixed on Jesus. All about him was water that was hitting hard against the boat. It was splashing his clothes and face. He asked the Lord, *"Can I come to you?"* Jesus told him that he could come. Very tentatively he put his foot on the water, it didn't sink. What a miracle! Then the second foot also stepped onto the surface and still he was not sinking. Like a toddler taking his few steps he slowly made his way towards Jesus. But as he neared Him, Peter looked around and for a moment lost his concentration. Suddenly he could feel the water rising up his legs as he sank into the lake. What disappointment!

Feeling scared he shouted out "Lord save me" And Jesus reached out his hand and caught him. Can't you just see that? Can't you feel the fear leaving Peter's body as he finally gives himself over to the Lord's care? If you reach out to Jesus, then he will take hold of your hand and lift you to safety. So remain focused and to keep your eyes on His power rather than your inadequacies. Each time that Peter failed he managed to gather himself up and come good in the end. He never failed, despite his disappointments and limitations. We too must have this sort of determination and drive to ensure that we also come through. Remembering all the time that Jesus comes to us in spite of our shortcomings!

(3) **The Boat of Your Lack**. Jesus will meet you in a time of need, where there is a severe deficit. A place where all your attempts have produced nothing. **John 21:3-8**, *"I'm going out to fish," Simon Peter told them, and they said, "We'll go with you." So they went out and got into the boat, but that night they caught nothing. Early in the morning, Jesus stood on the shore, but the disciples did not realize that it was Jesus. He called out to them, "Friends, haven't you any fish?" "No," they answered. He said, "Throw your net on the right side of the boat and you will find some." When they did, they were unable to haul the net in because of the large number of fish. Then the disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, "It is the Lord!" As soon as Simon Peter heard him say, "It is the Lord," he wrapped his outer garment around him (for he had taken it off) and jumped into the water. The other disciples followed in the boat, towing the net full of fish, for they were not far from shore, about a hundred yards. Notice, Jesus met these disciples in their professional capacity. While they were actively doing their business. He didn't tell them that they should not have been fishing that night, or that they should have been fishing in another lake. He simply met them where they were! He will do the same and meet you where you have chosen to fish.*

How are we to apply this lesson in our own lives? In this instance, Christ's teaching affected the disciples' livelihoods (their businesses). Had Peter failed to obey Christ's command, he would have failed to experience both the miracle and the resulting blessing. No one obeys God without being fully **compensated**. When we sacrifice, testify, or stand for Him, He will suitably reward our efforts. When God asks us to invest our time, effort, talent, or anything else, we must not resent the opportunity. No one pays dividends on any investment more abundantly than God does... *"Good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over."* If you've been fishing all night and haven't caught a thing, don't be discouraged. All you need to do is **listen**. And when you hear His voice, simply cast out your net in the exact location He tells you. **Obey** His voice. There's a miracle catch awaiting you!

(4) **The Boat of Your Disasters**. No matter how tragic the situation may be, Jesus will meet you and guide you to safety. He will deliver you from all harm. **Acts 27:21-26**, *"...After they had gone a long time without food, Paul stood up before*

*them and said: "Men, you should have taken my advice not to sail from Crete; then you would have spared yourselves this damage and loss. But now I urge you to keep up your courage, because not one of you will be lost; only the ship will be destroyed. Last night an angel of the God to whom I belong and whom I serve stood beside me and said, 'Do not be afraid, Paul. You must stand trial before Caesar; and God has graciously given you the lives of all who sail with you.' So keep up your courage, men, for I have faith in God that it will happen just as he told me. Nevertheless, we must run aground on some island." If you were to read on you will notice that in spite of impossible odds and extremely dangerous circumstances, all 276 men on board made it to shore unharmed.*

*"And so it came to pass, that they all escaped safely to land."* In verse 23, God had given to Paul all that sailed with him. The Word of the Lord "came to pass" (verse 44). I like the phrase "***it came to pass.***" Whatever God promises, even the smallest and insignificant portion of it, will come to pass! No weapon formed against you can prosper. Are you riding the storm in your life today with unwavering trust that God is in control and that He stands above the storms? Or are you like the passengers on board the ship who saw neither the sun nor the stars because the sky was totally overcast? Or are you like Paul who saw the comforting and reassuring smile of the Lord Jesus behind the every storm cloud? God's promise can be trusted. You can be assured that whenever you are in a disastrous situation, God is in total control. He is there with you!