

Good morning everybody. Welcome to Christ Fellowship. We're so glad that you are here today. If you are a guest with us for the first time, we especially want to welcome you. My name is Rick and I serve as the lead pastor here. We are in a study of the gospel of John. We've been there for the past year, and today we are at chapter six, verse fourteen. We are studying what are called "miracles". I want to begin today by reading a section of the text that we are going to look at. It begins like this: (John 6:16) *"When evening came, his disciples went down to the lake, (the Sea of Galilee) where they got into a boat and set off across the lake for Capernaum. (18) A strong wind was blowing and the waters were rough."* Stop right there and let me set this up by sharing this with you.

Recently, I was sitting in a doctor's office waiting room reading a magazine. As I was reading, I stumbled onto this fascinating story about a man named Michael Plant, a popular doctor. Here is what I learned as I read. A few years back, Michael Plant begins a solo crossing of the Atlantic Ocean from the United States all the way to France. But folks, two weeks into the journey, something went wrong with his sailboat, and Michael Plant was lost at sea. I want you to follow the story because when Michael Plant prepared to sail, his friends and loved ones all gathered at the dock for an enthusiastic farewell. Nobody had cause for concern because looking at his sailboat, which by the way was called Coyote, looking at Coyote above the waterline, everything looked perfect because everything was top of the line, and everything was also perfectly maintained. The sails were perfectly maintained; the decks were perfectly maintained; the cabin, the radio equipment. Looking at Coyote above the waterline, she looked amazing, so nobody expected anything to go wrong with that boat. But something did go wrong with it, but not above the waterline. Something went wrong with the boat below the waterline.

Stay in the story, because eleven days into the journey, radio contact was lost with Michael Plant. Subsequently a search and rescue mission was launched. Days went by with no sign and no signal from Michael Plant. Folk's, then came the news that nobody expected to hear. Coyote was found floating upside down in the ocean, with no sign of Michael Plant. But folks, the Coyote found floating upside down was shocking to the people of the sailing world, because sailboats normally don't capsize. In fact they are built to take the ocean storms. Even if a sailboat does capsize, even if a wave does push it over on its side, a sailboat will always right itself, and here is why. Sailboats have what is called a ballast, a very heavy weight that is bolted to the keel of the boat - the bottom of the boat. You see folks, for a sailboat not to capsize in a storm, there has to be more weight below the waterline than there is above the waterline. Let me

say that again. For a sailboat not to capsize in a storm, there has to be more weight below the waterline than there is above the waterline. Any violation of that principle of weight distribution spells disaster. That is why when Coyote was built, its builders bolted an eight thousand three hundred pound ballast to the boat's keel. Folks, that kind of weight below the waterline guaranteed stability. That kind of weight below the waterline made Coyote unsinkable. But check this out. That ballast below the waterline, that ballast that was below the waterline had not been properly cared for. It had not been properly maintained. Apparently, Michael Plant concerned himself with things that were above the waterline, but had not concerned himself enough with that secret place below the waterline, where storms always strike. Inexorably, that ballast on that keel broke away from the boat, and folks when it did, the boat's stability was compromised, and the first wave of any magnitude, the first storm of any magnitude is probably what dealt the death blow to Coyote, and Michael Plant was lost forever. Now, let me turn a corner and draw an analogy to all of that, because what the ballast is to a sailboat, that is what your soul is to your life. Let me say that again: What the ballast is to the sailboat, that is what your soul is to your life. Your soul is that part of your person that can right the ship of your life in the storms of life. Your soul is that dimension of your person that can stabilize you in the storms of life. In fact, listen to what Hebrews 6:19 says. It says this: *"We have this hope as an anchor for the soul."* The word "soul" there is translated from the Greek word *"psyche"*. I always tell you your Bible is originally written in koina Greek and then translated into English, French, Spanish, whatever. But that word "soul" translated from the Greek word *psyche*, is the word from which we get psychology. Your soul is your psychological person. Folks, here is what you need to know. Listen: Your soul is so important. It exist somewhere below the waterline. It is unseen, and it exists below the waterline of your physical person. Your soul is that part of you that can be happy or sad. It is that part of you that can be content, or depressed. Your soul is that part of you that can be hopeful, or it can feel hopeless. Listen to what Hebrews says again: *"We have this hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure."* Folks, I love that, because no matter how insane the storms of your life get, your soul has the capacity to right the ship and keep you firm and secure in the storms of life. But, unfortunately, because our souls are unseen, because our souls exist somewhere below the waterline, out of sight, our souls are often both the neglected and ignored part of our person. So, consequently, our souls often lack the weight, so to speak; they lack the substance to right the ship of our life when the storms blow in. So instead of being unsinkable in the storms of life, our souls

become unstable and destabilized when storms blow in. Any time we can capsize into anxiety, into panic attacks, into despair and depression.

Here is my proposition for you today. This is what I want you to walk out the door with. God wants you to take care of your soul. Let me say that again: God wants you to take care, to maintain your soul, because it is your soul that makes you unsinkable in life's storms. You might be saying, "Well Rick, how do I take care of my soul? How do I maintain my soul? What does that look like?" Well, we are going to find out today as we go back to the gospel of John. I want to give you two major thoughts, because the storms of life will come. Let me give you two thoughts that will keep your soul strong and will keep your soul intact during the storms. Number one: You need to be aware that storms will come. By that I mean, expect them to come. I mean, anticipate their arrival, because storms are a part of the human factor. They are part and parcel of life. If you are not going through a storm right now, hang around. They will show up. With that in mind, listen to verse 16. *"When evening came, his disciples went down to the lake – That's the Sea of Galilee – where they got into a boat and set off across the lake to Capernaum. By now it was dark and Jesus had not yet joined them.* Look at verse 18. *"A strong wind was blowing and the waters grew rough."* Stop right there and let's look into the scene.

To begin with, it was spring time, and during this time of the year the moon would light the Sea of Galilee brilliantly. Folks, as often occurred on those waters, a storm blew in and swept those waves up to a foam. In fact, Matthew's gospel says this: *"The boat was already a considerable distance from the land, and was being buffeted by the waves because the winds were against it."* Stop right there again, because the word "buffeted" there is a graphic word. That is translated from a Greek word that was used of demons tormenting people. The idea is that this storm was tormenting this boat. It was like the waves, it was like the wind was tormenting this boat and it was rocking the world of those men inside the boat. Have you ever had a storm in your life that just felt like it was tormenting you mentally, emotionally, physically, and just rocking your world? Storms on the job, storms in your business, storms of disease, storms in the family, marriage storms, children storms, storms of disease, storms of death, the death of a child, the death of a mate? Some of you have been through that storm. Storms of fear, storms of anxiety, storms of panic, storms of depression? Folks, have no illusion; those kinds of storms do blow in, sometimes out of clear blue sky, and they can torment you. So, here is what we need to know to keep our soul stable in these kinds of storms.

Here is what you need to know. You need to know that God may not deliver you out of your storm. Listen to verse sixteen. (John 6:16) *"When evening came, his disciples went down to the lake 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."* Stop right there and put your thinking caps on for a moment. Because Jesus is God, that means He is omniscient. He knows everything. That also means that He knew there was a storm out there on that lake, and He could have said to the disciples, "Don't go out there right now. The storm is too rough. He could have kept them out of that storm. But He didn't. He let them go into that storm. I'm just telling you, you need to know that sometimes God will do the same thing in your life. By that I mean there are times when God may not choose to deliver you out of the storm, but here is why. Sometimes God wants to deliver you in the storm, which He seems to do a lot. Right? Think about it: God did not deliver Daniel out of the lion's den. God delivered Daniel in the lion's den. God did not deliver Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego out of the fire. God delivered them in the fire. Jesus did not deliver His disciples out of the storm, as we are about to see. He delivered them in the storm. I'm just telling you: You study the pages of scripture and you will find that this is typical protocol for God, that He often chooses to deliver us in the storm, not out of the storm. You need to know that, because a lot of times when the storms blow into our lives, Satan loves to whisper into your soul. "If God really loved you, He wouldn't allow you to be in this storm." "If God really cared about you, God wouldn't have allowed this storm to be in your life." "God must be mad with you." "You need to keep your distance from God." Listen: God is not mad at you. God is mad about you. But if you swallow that lie of Satan's during the storm, that God somehow doesn't love you and somehow doesn't care about you, and somehow God has it in for you, if you swallow that lie in the middle of a storm, I'm telling you, it is going to destabilize your soul. By the way, if you remember, the disciples were in another storm on that same lake, just like this one. Jesus was in the boat. Do you remember what happened? Jesus stood up and calmed the storm. "Stop it!" And it stopped. I'm just telling you, God has that kind of power to overpower your storm.

Very often, God wants to show you His power in the storm. So here is what you need to know. There are three factors that stabilize your soul when you are in a storm. You need to know that in a storm, God's eyes are on you in the storm. His eyes are on you. With that in mind, look at what Mark's gospel says about this. (Mark 6:47) *"Later that night the boat was in the middle of the lake, and he – that is Jesus – was on the land."* Slip back into the scene, because the disciples had left land. They got out onto that lake and now they are in the middle of a storm. Jesus meanwhile is back on the land

miles away. But watch what verse forty-eight says. (Mark 6:48) I love this. It says *“He saw the disciples straining in the water – and folks, I love it. In spite of the storm, in spite of the waves, in spite of the fact that Jesus was miles away on the land, He still saw them. They may not have been able to see Jesus, but He saw them in the storm in the dark. I’m telling you, no matter how dark the night gets; no matter how it seems – the storm seems - God has not lost sight of you on His radar. You may not see God, but God still sees you. He is watching you and He is guiding you, and there is never a split second when His eyes are not on you.*

Let me give you an image of this. My first flight on a commercial plane was from St. Louis, Missouri to Charlotte, North Carolina. It was the first time I had ever flown. I was in college in Missouri. Christmas came and I had a short break to go back to Charlotte, so I flew out of Lambert air field in St. Louis to Charlotte. I’ll never forget that day as we were leaving St. Louis, leaving Lambert air field. It was a gorgeous winter day. It was crystal clear. When our plane lifted off out of Lambert air field, I was sitting right at the window, and I could see the control tower. In fact, I could see the man in the control tower. In fact, I saw the little green radar’s in the control tower. I thought to myself, that man sees all of these planes in the air. That man sees the location of every plane in the air, and he is guiding us so that we all take off and land safe. I thought it was pretty cool. Fast forward about four days, because as I was coming back into St. Louis, the weather conditions had changed drastically. In fact, a winter snowstorm had blown in. As we were flying in, I’m sitting at the window again, and all I could see out the window was like white cotton. Have you ever seen that? It’s like a white cloud. So, visibility was zero, and just then the pilot came over the intercom. He said, “Ladies nd gentlemen, we are going to be eighteenth in line to land, so we are going to be circling for awhile.” I thought to myself: “Whoa! Wait a minute. You mean there are eighteen other hunks of metal flying around up here, and we can’t see each other? “ I’m looking around like, “Did anybody hear what he just said?” My heart started beating and I started to get panicky. I started to have like a panic attack. My heart was panicking until I remembered the man in the control tower. I thought to myself, we can’t see him, but he is there. He sees us. In fact, he sees the location of all of these planes. We can’t see him, but he sees where each of us are in this storm and he is guiding us to safety.

Child of God, what an image of you and God. As you are going through your storm, you may not be able to see God, but God sees you. Let me tell you something: God sees the balance in your check book. God saw the X-ray that scares you like you’ve never been scared before. God sees the abuse that some of you are going through

today. God sees you in the storm, and I'm telling you, when you recognize that, when you know that, that He is watching, that His eyes are on you, that seeing what you are going through has a way of stabilizing you through the storm. Back to the Sea of Galilee, because not only are God's eyes on you, God's power is for you. Verse 19: *"When they had rowed about three or four miles, they saw Jesus approaching the boat, walking on the water."* Folks, that is a true miracle. Amen? We have been saying through this series that a miracle is an event that suspends the laws of physics. A miracle is an act of God, that only God can do, that defies, that over rides physical law. Finding a place to park at the mall at Christmas time is not a miracle. God may help you, but it is not a miracle unless it defies the laws of physics. Walking on water is a miracle that defies the physical laws of gravity. You ought to sink. Folks, only God has that kind of power, because He created the laws of physics. Listen, sometimes seeing that kind of power of God; sometimes knowing that God has that kind of power is frightening.

Listen to verse 19: *"When they had rowed about three or four miles, they saw Jesus approaching the boat, walking on the water, and they were frightened."* The Greek word there is "phobas", the word we get phobia. They weren't just frightened. They were freaked out. They were terrified. They were panicked. When they saw Jesus, they were afraid of His power. Listen: Who knows? Maybe that is what you feel about God. When you think about God's power; when you think about the holiness of God, and then you think about yourself, you don't have pleasant thoughts. You have frightening thoughts. When you think about the power of God, and then you think about how sinful you are, and how fragile you are, maybe you tend to think that with all of that power, that God doesn't like you. Maybe that is what you think when you think about God. What do you think about when you think about God? What do you think God thinks about when God thinks about you? What do you think about what God thinks about when God thinks about you? You think He doesn't like you. You think He is against you, so your tendency is to say, "I need to stay away from that power. I just don't think He likes me. I'm afraid of that."

I'll never forget my first semester in collage. I was a black belt on the Karate team. I loved that first semester because there was nobody on the team that could beat me up, because none of us were that good. But the semester that all changed, because this guy named Tony Isaacs walked in: six foot five. Tony is on staff here, just so you will know. He was six foot five, long arms, and fast, and this guy just starts destroying everybody. I thought to myself, "I've got to get out. I don't want to fight that guy. I don't even want to be in the same room with that guy", So I got to thinking, "I've got to

quit." I got to thinking, "I'm just going to tell everybody that my studies had gotten too busy, and I've got to quit the Karate team." But get this: This powerful guy reached out to me and made me this grip. I liked that, and even when I did have to fight Tony, I could tell he was holding back his power. It was like when we squared off it was like he was saying, "You're not so" But I'll never forget this one time I was fighting this guy named Stan Caldwell. I was testing for a degree. I wouldn't be able to test for it for a year, but I had just had surgery on my kidneys, and so I wanted to test, so the instructor told Stan, he said: "Look: You can hit Blackwood in the head; you can hit him in the chest, but whatever you do, don't hit him in the side. Don't kick him in the side. The first thing Stan does is kick me right where the surgery was, and I just fell over. Tony saw that, and Tony asked to fight Stan Caldwell. Tony returned the favor to Stan, with a kick that looked a lot like this: I loved it! All of that power was not against me. That power was for me.

I'm telling you child of God, no matter what you have done; no matter what you have become, God's power is not against you. God's power is for you: on your side, on your team. In fact, I think this is what God would love to say to you today. Listen to verse 20: Jesus said, "*It is I. Do not be afraid.*" I think that is what He would want to say to you. "It is I. Do not be afraid." By the way, Jesus didn't really say "It is I". In the Greek text, this is what He said. "I AM. Do not be afraid." Whose name is that? It is God's name. Moses said, "God, what is your name?" God said, "My name is I AM that I am." Jesus was saying to the disciples: "Guys, it is me, God.. Don't be afraid." I think that is what God wants to say to some of you today. "It is me, God. Don't be afraid. I made you. I made the decision to bring you into this world. I'm the one who gave you life. I love you. I care about you. I have a plan for your life and all of the power that I have in my Godhead has got your back; it is on your team, it is on your side."

Folks, here is how that translates to the storm. Don't focus on the power of your storm. I can think of no better way to discourage you than to look at the power of your storm. Don't focus on the power of your storm. Focus on the power of your God. I'm talking about the One who created the heavens and the earth; the One who spoke and the universe, the galaxies, came into existence; the One who walked on the water; the One who gave sight to the blind; the One who healed the sick; the One who raised the dead. He loves you, and all of that power has got your back. In the storm, don't forget this: God's presence is with you. His presence is with you. "He said to them: 'I AM. Don't be afraid.'" "*Then they were willing to take Him into the boat.*" Folks, I love that, because Jesus didn't just stand off at a distance and yell at them. No. Jesus came into the boat. Jesus came out and stepped into the storm with them. You say, "Why?"

Because His presence was there with them in the storm to calm their souls. That is exactly what He does with you and me. God does not stand off aloof and distanced and yell at you or me. God gets into your boat with you. God gets into your storm with you. Why? Because His presence is there to calm your soul in the storm; to calm you down so you are stable and don't freak out.

Then they were willing to take Him into the boat and immediately the boat reached the shore where they were headed/ Translation: He got them through the storm. You know what? I think that is the message God wants me to give to some of you today, that you are going to get through this; that you are going to get through the storm that you are in; that God's eyes are on you; that God's power has got your back; and that God's presence is with you in this storm; and God is going to get you through it. When you know that God is going to get you through the storm, do you know what happens? Let's all say, "I'm going to get through this." Let's all say, "God is going to get me through this." That's the message that some of you need to hear from the Word of God today, that God will get you through this storm.

I want to close by saying this: God also wants to get you through the greatest storm of all. Folks, I'm talking about this storm of your death. God wants to help you cross over that storm from death to life. God wants to help you cross over that chasm between hell and heaven. God want to help you make that crossing between eternal death and eternal life. God will help you cross that chasm but watch what this verse says. It says, *"Then they were willing to take Him into the boat."* Listen: The only way God can get you across the chasm of death is for you to bring Him into the boat. The only way Jesus can get you from hell to heaven, from eternal death to eternal life, is for you to be willing to take Him into the boat of your life, into your heart, into your life. The moment you let Him into your life, at that instant you cross over from death to life. You cross over from hell to heaven. You cross over from eternal death to eternal life, and that can never be taken from you. My prayer today is that if you have never invited God into the boat, if you have never taken Christ into the boat of your life, you are going to do that today.

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where they got into a boat and set off across the lake for Capernaum. (18) A strong wind was blowing and the waters were rough.” Stop right there and let me set this up by sharing this with you.

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To begin with, it was spring time, and during this time of the year the moon would light the Sea of Galilee brilliantly. Folks, as often occurred on those waters, a storm blew in and swept those waves up to a foam. In fact, Matthew’s gospel says this: *“The boat was already a considerable distance from the land, and was being buffeted by the waves because the winds were against it.”* Stop right there again, because the word “buffeted” there is a graphic word. That is translated from a Greek word that was used of demons tormenting people. The idea is that this storm was tormenting this boat. It was like the waves, it was like the wind was tormenting this boat and it was rocking the world of those men inside the boat. Have you ever had a storm in your life that just felt like it was tormenting you mentally, emotionally, physically, and just rocking your world? Storms on the job, storms in your business, storms of disease, storms in the family, marriage storms, children storms, storms of disease, storms of death, the death of a child, the death of a mate? Some of you have been through that storm. Storms of fear, storms of anxiety, storms of panic, storms of depression? Folks, have no illusion; those kinds of storms do blow in, sometimes out of clear blue sky, and they can torment you. So, here is what we need to know to keep our soul stable in these kinds of storms.

Here is what you need to know. You need to know that God may not deliver you out of your storm. Listen to verse sixteen. (John 6:16) *“When evening came, his disciples went down to the lake 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.”* Stop right there and put your thinking caps on for a moment. Because Jesus is God, that means He is omniscient. He knows everything. That also means that He knew there was a storm out there on that lake, and He could have said to the disciples, “Don’t go out there right now. The storm is too rough. He could have kept them out of that storm. But He didn’t. He let them go into that storm. I’m just telling you, you need to know that sometimes God will do the

same thing in your life. By that I mean there are times when God may not choose to deliver you out of the storm, but here is why. Sometimes God wants to deliver you in the storm, which He seems to do a lot. Right? Think about it: God did not deliver Daniel out of the lion's den. God delivered Daniel in the lion's den. God did not deliver Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego out of the fire. God delivered them in the fire. Jesus did not deliver His disciples out of the storm, as we are about to see. He delivered them in the storm. I'm just telling you: You study the pages of scripture and you will find that this is typical protocol for God, that He often chooses to deliver us in the storm, not out of the storm. You need to know that, because a lot of times when the storms blow into our lives, Satan loves to whisper into your soul. "If God really loved you, He wouldn't allow you to be in this storm." "If God really cared about you, God wouldn't have allowed this storm to be in your life." "God must be mad with you." "You need to keep your distance from God." Listen: God is not mad at you. God is mad about you. But if you swallow that lie of Satan's during the storm, that God somehow doesn't love you and somehow doesn't care about you, and somehow God has it in for you, if you swallow that lie in the middle of a storm, I'm telling you, it is going to destabilize your soul. By the way, if you remember, the disciples were in another storm on that same lake, just like this one. Jesus was in the boat. Do you remember what happened? Jesus stood up and calmed the storm. "Stop it!" And it stopped. I'm just telling you, God has that kind of power to overpower your storm. Very often, God wants to show you His power in the storm. So here is what you need to know. There are three factors that stabilize your soul when you are in a storm. You need to know that in a storm, God's eyes are on you in the storm. His eyes are on you. With that in mind, look at what Mark's gospel says about this. (Mark 6:47) *"Later that night the boat was in the middle of the lake, and he – that is Jesus – was on the land."* Slip back into the scene, because the disciples had left land. They got out onto that lake and now they are in the middle of a storm. Jesus meanwhile is back on the land miles away. But watch what verse forty-eight says. (Mark 6:48) I love this. It says *"He saw the disciples straining in the water – and folks, I love it. In spite of the storm, in spite of the waves, in spite of the fact that Jesus was miles away on the land, He still saw them. They may not have been able to see Jesus, but He saw them in the storm in the dark. I'm telling you, no matter how dark the night gets; no matter how it seems – the storm seems – God has not lost sight of you on His radar. You may not see God, but God still sees you. He is watching you and He is guiding you, and there is never a split second when His eyes are not on you.*

Let me give you an image of this. My first flight on a commercial plane was from St. Louis, Missouri to Charlotte, North Carolina. It was the first time I had ever flown. I was in college in Missouri. Christmas came and I had a short break to go back to Charlotte, so I flew out of Lambert air field in St. Louis to Charlotte. I'll never forget that day as we were leaving St. Louis, leaving Lambert air field. It was a gorgeous winter day. It was crystal clear. When our plane lifted off out of Lambert air field, I was sitting right at the window, and I could see the control tower. In fact, I could see the man in the control tower. In fact, I saw the little green radar's in the control tower. I thought to myself, that man sees all of these planes in the air. That man sees the location of every plane in the air, and he is guiding us so that we all take off and land safe. I thought it was pretty cool. Fast forward about four days, because as I was coming back into St. Louis, the weather conditions had changed drastically. In fact, a winter snowstorm had blown in. As we were flying in, I'm sitting at the window again, and all I could see out the window was like white cotton. Have you ever seen that? It's like a white cloud. So, visibility was zero, and just then the pilot came over the intercom. He said, "Ladies nd gentlemen, we are going to be eighteenth in line to land, so we are going to be circling for awhile." I thought to myself: "Whoa! Wait a minute. You mean there are eighteen other hunks of metal flying around up here, and we can't see each other?" I'm looking around like, "Did anybody hear what he just said?" My heart started beating and I started to get panicky. I started to have like a panic attack. My heart was panicking until I remembered the man in the control tower. I thought to myself, we can't see him, but he is there. He sees us. In fact, he sees the location of all of these planes. We can't see him, but he sees where each of us are in this storm and he is guiding us to safety.

Child of God, what an image of you and God. As you are going through your storm, you may not be able to see God, but God sees you. Let me tell you something: God sees the balance in your check book. God saw the X-ray that scares you like you've never been scared before. God sees the abuse that some of you are going through today. God sees you in the storm, and I'm telling you, when you recognize that, when you know that, that He is watching, that His eyes are on you, that seeing what you are going through has a way of stabilizing you through the storm. Back to the Sea of Galilee, because not only are God's eyes on you, God's power is for you. Verse 19: *"When they had rowed about three or four miles, they saw Jesus approaching the boat, walking on the water."* Folks, that is a true miracle. Amen? We have been saying through this series that a miracle is an event that suspends the laws of physics. A miracle is an act of God, that only God can do, that defies, that over rides physical law.

Finding a place to park at the mall at Christmas time is not a miracle. God may help you, but it is not a miracle unless it defies the laws of physics. Walking on water is a miracle that defies the physical laws of gravity. You ought to sink. Folks, only God has that kind of power, because He created the laws of physics. Listen, sometimes seeing that kind of power of God; sometimes knowing that God has that kind of power is frightening.

Listen to verse 19: *"When they had rowed about three or four miles, they saw Jesus approaching the boat, walking on the water, and they were frightened."* The Greek word there is "phobas", the word we get phobia. They weren't just frightened. They were freaked out. They were terrified. They were panicked. When they saw Jesus, they were afraid of His power. Listen: Who knows? Maybe that is what you feel about God. When you think about God's power; when you think about the holiness of God, and then you think about yourself, you don't have pleasant thoughts. You have frightening thoughts. When you think about the power of God, and then you think about how sinful you are, and how fragile you are, maybe you tend to think that with all of that power, that God doesn't like you. Maybe that is what you think when you think about God. What do you think about when you think about God? What do you think God thinks about when God thinks about you? What do you think about what God thinks about when God thinks about you? You think He doesn't like you. You think He is against you, so your tendency is to say, "I need to stay away from that power. I just don't think He likes me. I'm afraid of that."

I'll never forget my first semester in collage. I was a black belt on the Karate team. I loved that first semester because there was nobody on the team that could beat me up, because none of us were that good. But the semester that all changed, because this guy named Tony Isaacs walked in: six foot five. Tony is on staff here, just so you will know. He was six foot five, long arms, and fast, and this guy just starts destroying everybody. I thought to myself, "I've got to get out. I don't want to fight that guy. I don't even want to be in the same room with that guy", So I got to thinking, "I've got to quit." I got to thinking, "I'm just going to tell everybody that my studies had gotten too busy, and I've got to quit the Karate team." But get this: This powerful guy reached out to me and made me this grip. I liked that, and even when I did have to fight Tony, I could tell he was holding back his power. It was like when we squared off it was like he was saying, "You're not so" But I'll never forget this one time I was fighting this guy named Stan Caldwell. I was testing for a degree. I wouldn't be able to test for it for a year, but I had just had surgery on my kidneys, and so I wanted to test, so the instructor told Stan, he said: "Look: You can hit Blackwood in the head; you can hit him

in the chest, but whatever you do, don't hit him in the side. Don't kick him in the side. The first thing Stan does is kick me right where the surgery was, and I just fell over. Tony saw that, and Tony asked to fight Stan Caldwell. Tony returned the favor to Stan, with a kick that looked a lot like this: I loved it! All of that power was not against me. That power was for me.

I'm telling you child of God, no matter what you have done; no matter what you have become, God's power is not against you. God's power is for you: on your side, on your team. In fact, I think this is what God would love to say to you today. Listen to verse 20: Jesus said, "*It is I. Do not be afraid.*" I think that is what He would want to say to you. "It is I. Do not be afraid." By the way, Jesus didn't really say "It is I". In the Greek text, this is what He said. "I AM. Do not be afraid." Whose name is that? It is God's name. Moses said, "God, what is your name?" God said, "My name is I AM that I am." Jesus was saying to the disciples: "Guys, it is me, God.. Don't be afraid." I think that is what God wants to say to some of you today. "It is me, God. Don't be afraid. I made you. I made the decision to bring you into this world. I'm the one who gave you life. I love you. I care about you. I have a plan for your life and all of the power that I have in my Godhead has got your back; it is on your team, it is on your side."

Folks, here is how that translates to the storm. Don't focus on the power of your storm. I can think of no better way to discourage you than to look at the power of your storm. Don't focus on the power of your storm. Focus on the power of your God. I'm talking about the One who created the heavens and the earth; the One who spoke and the universe, the galaxies, came into existence; the One who walked on the water; the One who gave sight to the blind; the One who healed the sick; the One who raised the dead. He loves you, and all of that power has got your back. In the storm, don't forget this: God's presence is with you. His presence is with you. "He said to them: 'I AM. Don't be afraid.'" "*Then they were willing to take Him into the boat.*" Folks, I love that, because Jesus didn't just stand off at a distance and yell at them. No. Jesus came into the boat. Jesus came out and stepped into the storm with them. You say, "Why?" Because His presence was there with them in the storm to calm their souls. That is exactly what He does with you and me. God does not stand off aloof and distanced and yell at you or me. God gets into your boat with you. God gets into your storm with you. Why? Because His presence is there to calm your soul in the storm; to calm you down so you are stable and don't freak out.

Then they were willing to take Him into the boat and immediately the boat reached the shore where they were headed/ Translation: He got them through the storm. You know what? I think that is the message God wants me to give to some of you today,

that you are going to get through this; that you are going to get through the storm that you are in; that God's eyes are on you; that God's power has got your back; and that God's presence is with you in this storm; and God is going to get you through it. When you know that God is going to get you through the storm, do you know what happens? Let's all say, "I'm going to get through this." Let's all say, "God is going to get me through this." That's the message that some of you need to hear from the Word of God today, that God will get you through this storm.

I want to close by saying this: God also wants to get you through the greatest storm of all. Folks, I'm talking about this storm of your death. God wants to help you cross over that storm from death to life. God wants to help you cross over that chasm between hell and heaven. God want to help you make that crossing between eternal death and eternal life. God will help you cross that chasm but watch what this verse says. It says, *"Then they were willing to take Him into the boat."* Listen: The only way God can get you across the chasm of death is for you to bring Him into the boat. The only way Jesus can get you from hell to heaven, from eternal death to eternal life, is for you to be willing to take Him into the boat of your life, into your heart, into your life. The moment you let Him into your life, at that instant you cross over from death to life. You cross over from hell to heaven. You cross over from eternal death to eternal life, and that can never be taken from you. My prayer today is that if you have never invited God into the boat, if you have never taken Christ into the boat of your life, you are going to do that today.