

Lessons Learned At The Feet of Deity

Matthew 14:22-33

Introduction. 1). When one is in the presence of deity, he can never be certain about what is going to happen. God is often in the business of doing the unexpected and the unusual. Just when you think you have Him figured out, He surprises you and takes things in a direction that stuns and amazes. Sometimes you walk away, scratching your head asking, “What just happened?” Other times you are driven to your knees in awe and worship because of the lessons you just learned at the feet of deity.

2). This is exactly what happened to the disciples after Jesus fed the 5,000 and then took an early morning walk on the Sea of Galilee. They learned some very valuable lessons at the feet of deity, at the feet of the Son of God, lessons we need to learn as well.

I. Learn From Jesus The Importance Of Solitude. 14:22-23

- Jesus has performed one of his greatest miracles, the feeding of the 5,000 men. This is the only miracle, besides the resurrection, recorded in all 4 gospels.
- Matt. 14:21 is specific: “5,000 men, besides women and children.” All total the number must have been close to 20,000!
- John 6:16 provides a valuable insight: because of this miracle “they were about to come and take Him by force and make Him King.” What an opportunity! What a decision. Certainly this was an easy decision for Jesus, what we would call a “no-brainer.” The time is right. He is their man. He is the Messiah, God’s Son. God said so Himself (Matt. 3:17). What an opportunity to bring in the Kingdom and avoid the cross. What will He do? What would you do?

1. Take Time To Pray.

- “Immediately” he sent the disciples away and on ahead. “Made” is a strong word meaning to compel or urge. Perhaps they were caught up in the fervor of the crowd. He quickly got them out of there.
- He also sent the crowds away. What would He do now? V. 23 tells us: “He went up on the mountain to pray.” The crowd wanted to make Him King. He wanted to talk to His Father. Satan was again tempting Him (cf. Luke 4:13) to take the easy and popular route to the kingdom (cf. Matt. 4:8-9). Jesus determined to seek the face of His Father and the place of prayer.

2. Find A Place Of Privacy.

- V. 23: “He went up...by Himself to pray.”
- V. 23: “He was alone there.”
- Prayer is best done where you will not be distracted or disturbed, where you can give your full attention to talking and listening to your heavenly Father.

Application. All of us face times of enormous opportunity and serious crisis. Crucial and important decisions have to be made. What will you do? Where will you go for counsel, guidance and direction? Jesus teaches us to find a place of solitude, a place of prayer and a place of privacy. Seek the face of your heavenly Father, listen to His Word. Believe that “even when you cannot trace His hand, you can still trust His heart.”

II. Learn From Peter The Essence Of Salvation. 14:24-31

- The text indicates that the disciples were to go on ahead of Jesus until He was free from the crowds, after which He would join them, but after He had spent some time alone in prayer. However, His prayer time went on much longer than anticipated. He prayed almost all night! The disciples apparently decided not to wait any longer and started across the lake on their own. This would be another occasion for them to learn a lesson at the feet of deity.

1. **Keep Your Focus On Jesus.** **14:24-27**

- We suddenly find the disciples in the middle of the sea (many furlongs from the shore). The waves are tossing the boat, torturing it, tormenting it, harassing it! Further the wind was contrary (against them). Pushed out into the middle of the lake and in a fierce storm, the disciples were in serious trouble and they knew it. Jesus had sent them on ahead and then never showed up. But...he was about to!

A. **Look For The Real Jesus.** **14:24-25**

- In the midst of the storm, the Savior suddenly appears. Following Roman time it was the 4th watch, somewhere between 3-6 a.m. His arrival, however, is not ordinary, it is not the norm. Deity comes strolling down from the mountain and across the water. For a brief moment the disciples fall into an error that afflicts so many. They fail to see Jesus for who He really is. The text says they were troubled, fearful and screaming. We really can't blame them. They needed to get their focus.
- Jesus is not a ghost, a phantom (Greek word is *phantasma*). Nor is He some fictional creation or ancient fable. No! He is God in the flesh who walks on the land or the waves of the sea with equal ease.

B. **Listen To The Real Jesus.** **14:27**

- Seeing their fear, Jesus speaks to them:
 - Be of good cheer (pre.imp.)! Take courage.
 - It is I (*ego eimi*) "I am!"
 - Do not be afraid (*me* with the pre.imp.) "Stop being afraid."

The "I AM" statement is bracketed for emphasis and to highlight it as the reason for His words of encouragement. Echoes of Ex. 3:17 linger in the background.

- He does not explain where He has been, why He is there or how He got there. What was important was He was there and He spoke words of encouragement, words He could also back up!

Application. He will do the same for you! Keep your focus on Jesus. He will be there when you need Him.

2). **Keep Your Faith In Jesus.** **14:28-31**

- Peter knows this voice, and it is a voice he can trust. Emboldened by his Lord's presence, Peter acts with great courage and asks the Lord, "Command me to come to you on the water."
- Our Lord, as He always does, honors Peter's faith. He commands him, "Come." Peter then does what no normal human being has ever done before or since, he walks on the water. What courage! What faith! What confidence! But, it is only for a moment. Faith in Jesus is not for a moment, it must continue. Faith in Jesus requires that you keep your focus on Him and not the storms and troubles about you.

- Peter is on his way. What an experience! But suddenly, and we don't know why, he got his eyes off of Jesus. Suddenly the storm had his attention more than the Savior. This, after all, was a boisterous wind. Suddenly fear gripped his heart, his eyes were on the storm, and he began to sink, The Savior so near, yet death is beginning to engulf him. Down, down, down he goes.
- Peter then turned again to his only hope, our only hope. He turned to Jesus and cried, "Lord, save me." Peter must have been close. Jesus simply stretched out His hand and caught Him. Still a valuable lesson was in the offering as Jesus kindly chided him, "O you of little faith, why did you doubt?" Why? He forgot 2 important lessons which are the essence of salvation:
 - Keep your focus on Jesus.
 - Keep your faith in Jesus.
 Only He can keep you from sinking into the stormy waves of sin and trouble that can destroy you.

III. Learn From the Disciples Our Response To The Savior. 14:22-23

- When one is in the presence of deity, the supernatural, the unexpected is to be expected. And yet, an important question naturally presents itself: What will be our response? When we see God act, what should we do? The disciples teach us 2 important lessons.

1). Only Jesus Is Worthy Of Our Worship. 14:32-33

- Jesus steps into the boat and the storm stops. But the stilling of the storm is not the climax of the story. It is the disciples' response. Who is this who can walk on water? Calm the sea? Feed 20,000? He must be God, for God is worthy of our worship. The disciples' response is entirely appropriate. They came, fell down, and worshipped Him, and only Him.

2). Only Jesus Is Worthy Of Our Confession. 14:33

- The disciples spoke as they worshipped, "Truly you are the Son of God." Exactly what they meant by this at this time we can't be sure. The gospels are quite clear and honest in their depiction of the disciples. They understood in degrees, theirs was a growing understanding of who Jesus was that would reach full fruition only after the resurrection. Still, even now they knew this one is different than anyone we have ever known before. He has a relationship with God like no other. He must be God's Son. Only later would they understand the full impact of their confession, but already they were headed in the right direction.

Conclusion. There is a wonderful song in some of our hymnals that we do not sing very often anymore. I can't be certain, but it sounds like the writer was reflecting on this passage of Scripture when he penned these words.

Stanza #1

I was sinking deep in sin, far from the peaceful shore.
 Very deeply stained within, sinking to rise no more.
 But the Master of the sea heard my despairing cry.
 From the waters lifted to me, now safe am I.

Stanza #2

Souls in danger look above, Jesus completely saves.
 He will lift you by His love, out of the angry waves.

He's the Master of the sea, billows His will obey.
He your Savior wants to be, be saved today.

Chorus

Love (the Son!) lifted me! Love lifted me!
When nothing else could help, Love (the Son!) lifted me.
Love lifted me! Love lifted me!
When nothing else could help, Love lifted me.

When Peter was sinking in the depths of the sea, he cried to the Lord and was saved. If today/tonight you are sinking in the depths of sin, cry to the Lord and He will save you.