

Chapter 16

AT HIS COMMAND

Matthew 14:13-33

" Immediately Jesus made His disciples get into the boat and go before Him to the other side, while He sent the multitudes away" (v:22)

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Verses 13-21 speak of the multitudes following Jesus to the "deserted place" where He had gone and that *"He was moved with compassion for them, and healed their sick."* Then, when it was evening, the disciples asked Him to send the multitudes away, so that they might go to the villages and buy food. From verse 16 on, we read of the miracle of the feeding of the five thousand, with just five loaves and two fishes: *" He blessed and broke and gave the loaves to the disciples and the disciples gave to the multitudes."* (v.19)

After this. *" Immediately Jesus made His disciples get into the boat and go before Him to the other side, while He sent the multitudes away."* (v.22)

We see that the disciples were instructed to move on 'immediately'. They may have thought to linger, to watch the multitudes leave and perhaps join the chatter following the miracle that had taken place. But it was God's time for them to leave that situation and go on. They were told to *"go before Him to the other side"* (v.22). It was evening, and they were being sent out into approaching darkness, without Jesus. They were to go forward into whatever lay ahead with their focus set on reaching the place to which they were being sent by the word spoken.

The Master was not with them as the darkness closed in on their boat and soon they were in the grip of heavy, storm-lashed seas with strong winds buffeting their small craft. They were alone, or so it seemed to them, the darkest hours,

know to be the hardest time to keep going, and then, only then, when at their lowest ebb, did Jesus reveal His presence.

However alone we may feel when the 'storms' of life buffet us and when it seems that He is not aware, He is in full control, His 'finger' is on the situation. He is able to step in at any moment, and, in His perfect time. Will do so. He is Almighty God and the 'storms' are subject to His will; they must obey.

Much of scripture puts into focus the things we set our hearts and minds on. Will we, in our storms, focus on Christ our Saviour and Lord, and on His never-failing faithfulness, instead of on our situation; encouraging ourselves in the assurance that He will bring about His good will in it, and that His promise is " As your days, so shall your strength be."(Deuteronomy 33: 25).

We may reflect on the fact that the boat was, in spite of the storm, proceeding in the right direction Jesus gave them. - *'go to the other side'* and they were doing that, in spite of the tremendous opposition of the storm against them. If they had decided to abandon the instruction of Jesus and to turn around and go back, the boat may well have been swamped and all could have been lost.

Surely the message here is, if God sends us in a certain direction, then we are to keep going, and not turn back in spite of it leading into a 'storm'. He may well let us battle the storm for quite a long time. The way may seem dark, and it may not seem we are making any progress: there may be opposition and even a complete absence of the awareness of His presence. We may seem to be alone, but his word assures us that this is not so.

May we be steadfast in trust that His perfect purpose is being worked out in the storm, although it may not be, at the time, at all evident to us. Let us *"walk by faith, and not by sight"* (2 Corinthians 5:7), choosing obedience to the way He has shown.

"... God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it."

(1 Corinthians 10: 13)

The Lord Jesus spoke of His desire for every believer to live in *'My joy ' and 'my peace'* . From what did the joy and peace of the Lord Jesus flow? It flowed from His relationship with the Father, living every moment in absolute dependence upon His Father.

We too, are created to live in a relationship with our Father in absolute dependence and so, also to experience living in His Joy and His peace.

We may like to pray and ask the Father to teach us to live in a fuller and constant dependence upon Him, and so experience more fully the peace of an ensuing rest of trust.