

Lesson 19 Matthew 14.22-24 The LORD'S teaching on Good-byes
Jesus did not detain longer than necessary

Jesus constrained his disciples to embark and begin the crossing of Galilee by force of argument. (Greek **αναγκαζω**) It was not a problem for men experienced in these waters to embark as the shadows fell-but there were family considerations. The task on the east side of the lake was complete with the gathering up of the fragments. By any standards they should be able to sail across the intervening 5 or 6 miles to Bethsaida within an hour or so. Some of them had families and the LORD was solicitous for their wives and children. Above these natural considerations he knew very well they had had a long day and one unexpectedly busy if unforgettable. Tired of the crowds and longing for home these men would not have needed, one imagines, very much persuasion. Nonetheless there was the consideration of Jesus. You can hear them saying, "We don't want to leave you here!" You have much further to go than us. We can sail back to Bethsaida (North of the lake) in an hour-you will take two or three hours to get to Capernaum (Mid way along the Western shores of the lake) and it will be dark by then." The Lord may even have said He had to stay or that He had business with the Father-certainly He was insistent. So there was no more discussion and they pushed the boat off from the shore in happy if concerned mood.

How would Jesus get back to Capernaum-His own city?

The LORD gave no indication that He would be crossing by water later. There was nothing in the history of relations with Jesus that even hinted that capability. We do not hear of Jesus and the disciples swimming for pleasure although we know Peter could swim. The disciples assumed the LORD would walk homewards. Maybe they had suggested if He called at Bethsaida they could take him back to Capernaum-and if they did they would have been startled if He declined evening hospitality. There may have been a number out there in the desert who had donkeys or even litters so maybe the question of "getting a lift" was not in doubt.

Loosing the crowds

Jesus clearly did not just enjoy "throwing a party" or "spreading a table in the wilderness" but he who knew what was in man deeply desired to meet the need of the soul. To encourage those who were deeply wounded by the death of righteous John and to bring wholeness to those who desired to speak with Him. Above all He wanted to meet the need of the soul where that need surfaced and where men were seeking answers to the problems and issues they faced. Some of these people might never again have a close encounter with Jesus-so it mattered to talk with them of things that mattered. Some of these people would grow closer to Jesus so it was important to develop fellowship with them.

The word "loose" is quite a special word-(Greek **απολυω / απολουτρεω** means to "set free by payment of a ransom") and may have meant that He was not just bidding "good-bye" but speaking of spiritual things to those who sought teaching and counsel. It must have been for quite special reasons that He stayed available. The LORD was always

Prayer in the mountain

Following the last good bye when all five or six thousand people had moved off on foot or by donkey Jesus went uphill to the hills of Bashan. By now it was growing dark. The LORD began conversing in that other dimension with which He was so familiar for He lived in the unseen world of the Spiritual as much as in the seen and Physical. When you divide 5000 by 9 hours you get 6/7 seconds for each person. If they are taken by groups of 50 and 100 as we read in Mark 6.40 each group would have had 7 minutes in the prayer life of the Saviour. I recall a Korean Pastor who visited with us in Scotland going for a long walk along the Afton Road naming his people before the LORD. Such is prayer at its best. Paul said, "in my prayers I always remember you with thanksgiving" It is the prayerful Christian who has quality time for people.

Meantime the boat was taking a battering from the **Lailaph**-a sudden whirling storm familiar to Galilee. They were making little headway. Indeed in Mark 6 we learn that from the elevation where Jesus had been praying on a hill (Greek **ορος**) He saw the disciples toiling with the sea. They were desperately trying to tack the ship in the teeth of the storm and all their seamanship was tested to the limit. They had been at it for the best part of 9 hours for it was now the fourth watch (3am)-and Jesus had been praying on the hill for just short of that period of time.



From paper to practice

How does treating people as "Spiritual beings" enable us to greet them more kindly?

How does prayer feed into our quality treatment of others we know and meet?