

Jesus Walks on Water: “I Am” (19th Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year A)

1 Kings 19:9, 11-13—Elijah and the Theophany Atop Mt. Sinai

1. Context: Elijah is fleeing from the wicked Queen Jezebel (cf. 1 Kings 19:1-3)
2. Theophany: “the LORD *passed by*” (19:11; cf. Cajun expression)
3. The Presence of God:
 - a. Strong Wind: no
 - b. Earthquake: no
 - c. Fire: no
 - d. “Still Small Voice”: yes (NAB “tiny whispering sound”) (Hebrew *qōl demamah daqah*, “small whispering voice”)
4. Elijah “hides his face in his cloak” (cf. Exod 33:20)

Psalm 85—Lord, Grant Us Your Salvation

1. His Salvation: is “at hand for those who fear him” (v. 9)

Romans 9:1-5—St. Paul’s Anguish for His Fellow Israelites

1. Paul’s “sorrow” and “anguish” for his fellow “Israelites”.
- 2 Inheritance: sonship, glory, covenants, law, worship, promises, patriarchs, Christ!

Matthew 14:22-33—Jesus and Peter Walk on Water

1. Setting: after Jesus multiplied the loaves and withdrawn to pray (Matt 14:13-20, 23)
2. Jesus Walks on the Sea:
 - a. Distance: “many furlongs distant from the land” (note; not near the shore!)
 - b. Time: “the fourth watch of the night” (between 3am and 6am) (cf. Mark 13:35)
 - c. Miracle: Jesus comes “walking on the sea”
 - d. Revelation: “Take heart, I am (Greek *egō eimi*)”
 - e. RSV/NAB: “It is I” (cf. Exod 3:14 LXX; John 8:58; 18:5-6)
3. Peter Walks on the Sea:
 - a. Impetuous Peter: “Lord, *if it is you*, bid me come to you on the sea...” (!)
 - b. Peter walks “on the water”; until “he was afraid”
 - c. His problem: he has “little faith”; “Why did you doubt?”
4. Theophany: Jesus is revealing his divinity
 - a. Setting: on the sea in the middle of the night
 - b. Participants: small group; just Jesus’ disciples
 - c. Reassurance: fear and terror; “Take heart... have no fear”
 - d. Confession of Faith: “You are the Son of God” (cf. Matt 16:16; 27:54)
 - e. Response: they “worshiped” (Greek *proskyneō*) him

The Jewish Annotated New Testament

Walking toward them on the sea. [L]ike God, Jesus has power over the seas (Gen

1.9-10,21; Ex 14.21-22; Isa 43.16; 51.9-10...) *Son of God*, here indicating Jesus’ divine nature... (see Aaron Gale, “Matthew,” in *Jewish Annotated New Testament* [ed. Amy-Jill Levine and Marc Zvi Brettler; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011], 28)

Questions for Discussion and Reflection (19th Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year A)

1. Why do you think the Church use the theophany of God to Elijah (1 Kings 19) as the Old Testament reading for the account of Jesus walking on the Water (Matthew 14)?

2. What aspects of Jesus’ walking on the water reveal that he is not merely human but also divine? How does the Old Testament shed light on the deeper meaning of this miracle?

3. In the first reading, God does not appear in the miraculous but in the still small voice. In the Gospel, God appears in the miraculous walking of Jesus on the water. What ways does God appear and speak in your own life? Through the miraculous? Or in the quiet? Or both?

For Further Study

1. Brant Pitre, *The Case for Jesus* (New York: Image, 2016), 119-136. This chapter, which is entitled “Did Jesus Think He Was God?”, walks the reader through the evidence in the Synoptic Gospels that Jesus claimed to be divine. There is a discussion of the walking on water and the elements in Matthew’s account in particular which show Jesus’ divinity from an ancient Jewish perspective.