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He Meant to Pass by Them

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He Meant to Pass by Them

Abstract

"In passing by his disciples, Jesus reveals his divinity and utter mastery of the Creation."

Posting about Jesus' sovereignty from *In All Things* - an online hub committed to the claim that the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ has implications for the entire world.

<http://inallthings.org/he-meant-to-pass-by-them/>

Keywords

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Disciplines

Christianity

Comments

In All Things is a publication of the [Andreas Center for Reformed Scholarship and Service at Dordt College](#).

He Meant To Pass By Them

 inallthings.org/he-meant-to-pass-by-them/

Mike Janssen

“Immediately he made his disciples get into the boat and go on ahead to the other side, to Bethsaida, while he dismissed the crowd. After saying farewell to them, he went up on the mountain to pray. When evening came, the boat was out on the sea, and he was alone on the land. When he saw that they were straining at the oars against an adverse wind, he came towards them early in the morning, walking on the sea. He intended to pass them by. But when they saw him walking on the sea, they thought it was a ghost and cried out; for they all saw him and were terrified. But immediately he spoke to them and said, “Take heart, it is I; do not be afraid.” Then he got into the boat with them and the wind ceased. And they were utterly astounded, for they did not understand about the loaves, but their hearts were hardened.” -Mark 6:45-52

When I was young, I was not much of an outdoorsy person. I tended toward more intellectual and artistic pursuits, and despite my dad’s best efforts to take me hunting and fishing, this seemed destined to remain the case. Then, ten years ago, I spent the summer living, working, and ministering in Yellowstone National Park. I was looking for a chance to live out my faith in a new context, outside of the familiarity of the upper Midwest, and what could be more different than in the middle of a giant wilderness, with coworkers from all around the world?

It was an incredible, formational summer. I took in some of the most breathtaking wonders God’s creation has to offer: boiling mud, stunning canyon views, awesome wildlife, and scalding water hurled hundreds of feet into the air. And through it all, in my readings, discussion with friends, and ministry, I was continually pointed back to the greater majesty of its Creator.

The account of Jesus walking on water appears in Matthew, Mark, and John, but Mark’s account struck me as I was preparing this. In particular:

v. 48: “[...] he came to them, walking on the sea. He meant to pass by them [...]

When I read this initially, I confess I was uncertain as to what was meant by the phrase “He meant to pass by them”. According to my study Bible, this is not so that the disciples would fail to see him, but precisely so that they *would* see him. The act of Jesus walking on the water reveals a glimpse of God’s glory. The same phraseology appears in Exodus 33:19, where Moses asks to see God’s glory, and God allows his goodness to “pass before” him.

Moreover, the entire scene echoes Job’s declaration in Job 9:8: “who alone stretched out the heavens and trampled the waves of the sea.” In passing by his disciples, Jesus reveals his divinity and utter mastery of the Creation. This same Jesus is also sovereign over all the wonders of Creation that we see and experience, including the canyons, geysers, and wildlife of Yellowstone I experienced so profoundly ten years ago.