

The Magic Formula [Text - Mark 6:41-52]

Pastor Dave Shackle
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Of the four New Testament Gospel accounts, *Mark* is the shortest and most compact. That's why, in this morning's brief 11 verses, we get not just one - but two - of the major miracles attributed to Jesus: the feeding of the 5,000, and walking on the water. And while each individual story can spark multiple questions in the mind of a 21st Century reader, the two of them together could cause a circuit overload! However, for Mark's 1st Century audience, the miraculous details of those stories really weren't that big of a deal. For them, the singular point of both stories would have been clearly apparent: That what the Holy One began through *Moses*, was now being brought to its fruition through the *Messiah*, Jesus of Nazareth.

With Moses, God sends manna from heaven to feed the people; but Jesus feeds people with the resources that are right there among them. Moses delivers the people from danger through the parted sea; but Jesus walks right across those turbulent and threatening waves, to reach-out and rescue those who are struggling and afraid. Moses is the great Law-giver, who goes up Mount Sinai to receive the 10 Commandments; but in Jesus Christ, the whole heart of Hebraic Law comes down to earth - and is perfectly embodied in one person, time, and place. In Jesus, the essence of Divine Truth is clearly expressed and freely lived-out, in an extraordinarily compassionate way.

For Mark and the other Gospel writers, the stories of Jesus feeding the multitude and walking on water have more to do with comparing him with Moses, than with trying to assert that he possesses some kind of magical powers. Back in that pre-scientific era, stories about miracles were fairly commonplace. It's

actually because of a relatively recent preoccupation with taking the Bible literally, that people today get tangled-up in debating the details of how those remarkable things could [or could not] have happened. Sadly, that's missing the essential point. These incredible stories are *intended* to provoke our imagination and wonderment! But chiefly they are meant to stir-up our compassion, generosity, and faith; to inspire our trust in Divine Abundance and Care; and to stimulate our caring for others, as active participants in the on-going miracle of Christ-like love and service.

The feeding of the multitude is a *Sign*, which points us toward an even greater miracle: the Divine Transformation of the human heart. A transformation that inspires and empowers us to feed the hungry and help the hurting; to stand-up for the outcast and the oppressed; to proclaim the Divine Realm of Compassion and Grace, through our words *and* our actions! It's a *Sign* which points to the amazing abundance of Divine blessings all around us - blessings that you and I can freely share. And it's a *Sign* which spotlights Jesus as "the Bread of Life" - the One who willingly shares his life, and gives his all, for the sake of all people.

In the same way, the story of Jesus walking on water isn't intended to encourage you and me to try to stroll across the sea, or to foolishly "skate on thin ice" as a way of proving our faith. It is told to remind us that no matter how difficult or frightening our life's circumstances may be, you and I are never left hopelessly adrift! Our Divine Source is always with us, within us, and around us. And through the tangible presence of one another, the Holy One continues to offer us the help we need. Like the ever-rolling sea, our lives will consist of ups and downs; periods of peaceful calm, and times of tremendous turmoil. In the person of Jesus Christ, you and I are given a perfect example of how a deep and abiding *trust* in our Divine Source can help us move faithfully and

fearlessly forward - regardless of the circumstances that surround us.

Jesus completely trusts that his Creative Source is ultimately in charge. And because of this fundamental trust, he is able to live fully and freely. By worldly standards, Jesus lives far-below the poverty level; yet the richness of his relationships, the abundance of his joy, and the wholeness and holiness of his inner peace are absolutely amazing! Jesus' life and love aren't constricted by social pressures, or religious boundaries, because his abiding trust in Divine Grace allows him to reach-out to every person he meets. And his profound connection to that Eternal, Boundless Source, gives Jesus the ability to do some truly miraculous things:

- To feed the hungry, regardless of the odds;
- To offer healing and wholeness the afflicted, wherever he encounters them;
- To boldly speak-up for the outcast and the oppressed, in spite of the personal dangers;
- To welcome and raise-up *all* people, no matter who they are, or how deeply they may have fallen.

Now I'll readily admit, that seeing Jesus walk on water would have been a pretty spectacular sight! Nevertheless, I am far more interested in seeing the day-to-day miracles that continue to be performed, in and through *this* Living, Loving Body of Christ:

- As we consistently feed hungry people with our food-bank donations and Hunger Meal events;
- As we provide healing through our contributions of money, medicines and medical supplies to the S.A.R.A. Program;
- As we joyfully open our doors and our hearts to *all* people - particularly those who religion and society often push-aside;
- As we continually share our gifts and blessings, making a tremendously positive difference in the lives of others.

The bottom line is, that when you and I realize that our entire lives are a Divine Gift - a Genuine Miracle - and we truly trust in the abundance of Divine Love, then there is nothing that we cannot achieve. For whenever we join our hands, unite our hearts, combine our resources, blend our hopes - and are *stirred* with Divine Compassion - then we've got the magic formula for making miraculous things happen today! We may not be able to multiply food or manipulate physics, but we most certainly can work together to make this world a much better place. And *that* is more wonderful than waling on water; far more spectacular than strolling across the sea!