

Sermon Notes from the Church's Ministry Among Jewish People

Proper 12 – Year B

RCL Readings¹ – II Kings 4:42-44; Psalm 145:10-18; Ephesians 3:14-21; John 6:1-21

ACNA Readings – II Kings 2:1-15; Psalm 114; Ephesians 3:1-21; Mark 6:45-52

Seasonal Introduction. The Christian calendar revolves around two principal feasts: Christmas (involving Advent, Christmas, and Epiphany) and Easter (involving Lent, Easter, and Pentecost). Then there is a large section in the middle called ordinary time. This season often focuses on the growth of the Church, ending in a season known as Kingdome tide which concludes with the feast of Christ the king. During this time we read and hear the bulk of the teachings of Jesus in relation to the kingdom of heaven and how we are called to live as disciples of the Messiah.²

Common Theme. God can seem so great and far away, powerful beyond our imagination. God is powerful but He may not be as far away as we think. God works with people to accomplish amazing things. These people aren't only the most holy and righteous of saints. Sometimes God works through people of great faith, Scripture records many faithful Jewish followers of God. But God also works with people who once were far off, whether they were sinful Gentiles or Israelites or simply those who were hungry and afraid.

Hebraic Context. We have mentioned this before but it is worth reminding ourselves again that food is a significant concern and blessing in the Bible. Genesis records the Fall of Man occurring around the eating of forbidden fruit. Opposite to this negative connotation with food, Israelite sacred history notes that food also accompanies acts of redemption, such as the Exodus story with eating of lamb and unleavened bread and latter the daily provision of manna by Moses in the desert.³

Almost all worship of God in Judaism includes some inclusion of food. Today, each of the Biblical feasts has some kind of specialty food. At Passover, the Biblical meal is lamb and unleavened bread. Today, unleavened bread is still eaten along with a whole table of representative food such as bitter herbs and a sweet apple mixture reminiscent of mortar. During *Rosh haShanah* (originally *Yom Teruah*), apples and honey are eaten for Nehemiah, Ezra, and the Levites told the people to "Eat the fat and drink sweet wine" on that day.⁴ To

¹ Alternative RCL Readings: II Samuel 11:1-15; Psalm 14

² Usually from the Synoptic Gospels. This year, year B, the Gospel of Mark is studied. We also study passages with similar themes to the Gospel or go through several books of the Bible (largely from I Samuel-I Kings and the writings from Proverbs, Job, and Ruth in the Alternate reading of year B).

³ The importance of family meals and hospitality in Jewish tradition is demonstrated in Berakhot 55a.3 "When the Holy Temple was in existence, the Altar atoned for Israel; today, a person's table atones for him."

⁴ Genesis 27:28, 39 speaks of the fat of the earth as a blessing from heaven. Along with the fat is grain and wine and so Nehemiah 8 is translated as fruit, the food that grows in abundance in Israel from the earth.

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celebrate Hanukkah, fried foods (particularly jelly donuts) are eaten to remember the miracle of the oil. Even Yom Kippur has a special connection with food—for it is a required fast day.

King David writes that the Lord has 'prepared a table for me in the presence of my enemies' indicating how important food and table fellowship is. When enemies sit together and dine, during the dialogue they may find something that they had not noticed in their opponent before and perchance rise from the table no longer as enemies but as friends. The prophets mention future heavenly banquets for all peoples as Isaiah 25:6 says; "On this mountain the Lord Almighty will prepare a feast of rich food for all peoples." In Jewish exegetical tradition the beginnings and endings of theological concepts and themes often are the same in name and nature. The Bible begins with the problem of sin and food in the Garden of Eden and ends with a redemptive heavenly meal.

II Kings 4:42-44. Elisha, along with Elijah, worked many miracles in the north of Israel, many of them revolved around food—three of which are recorded in II Kings 4.⁵ First, God provided economically for a widow of a prophet by giving a continuous supply of oil until the widow had supplied all her neighbours with fresh oil.⁶ Then, after a poisonous plant was added to a stew, Elisha restored the stew that the people could eat.⁷ Finally, a man brought twenty loaves of bread from his firstfruits along with grain.

⁵ Many of Elijah and Elisha's miracles would have occurred within visible sight of Nazareth, where Jesus grew up. One of the mercies of God spoken of often by the sages of Israel was that God fed the hungry. This was demonstrated by God's miracles through and for Elijah and Elisha. Due to their proximity to where Jesus would have studied, played, and worked, it seems likely Jesus would have heard the stories of Elijah and Elisha more often than some prophets. It should come as no surprise that Jesus acted as His father had done in the past and showed compassion by feeding the hungry.

⁶ Feeding the hungry isn't something that is only for God to do through miracles. Josephus' *Antiquities of the Jews* IX 4.2 stated that the widow's husband was Obadiah. Obadiah, according to I Kings 18:3-4, not only hid 100 prophets from Jezebel when she sought to kill the prophets of God, he also fed them with food and water. Josephus continued by stating that he had to borrow money from Ahab to feed the prophets. Obadiah was simply a servant to Ahab, albeit one who was well-trusted, and possibly even a foreigner (similar to Obed-Edom), according to *Sanhedrin* 39b.15. How would he too become a prophet?

The Rabbi's in *Sanhedrin* 39b read that even Abraham was said to only "fear God" while "Obadiah feared the LORD greatly". While Obadiah was trusted by Ahab, Obadiah feared God even more than he feared his earthly master. And so, the Rabbi's conclude, that even a foreign servant could become a prophet of God because feared God and did the work of God on earth—to preserve life and feed the hungry. He did so even at his own expense. Jesus, when He tells the disciples to buy bread for the people in John 6:5, would surely have remembered Obadiah and the sacrificial giving to feed 100 men without any miracles from heaven. (Obadiah means, "servant of God" and so there were likely many people so-named. The author of the book of Obadiah was likely a different person from a later period, although the two are sometimes conflated in writings.)

⁷ There was a famine in the land, which meant the people would have scrounged for any food they could find (even wild plants from the field) and that losing an entire meal would have been devastating.

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Firstfruits, isn't simply the first fruit of the year, but specifically the part of the harvest that was to be set aside for God. God promised that He would provide for the priests and Levites and one of the main ways He did that was through the sacrificial system, such as the firstfruit sacrifice.⁸ As the people hoped the famine would end,⁹ this man did not take his offering to the Temple in Judah nor to the cultic sites in Israel, he brought them directly to Elisha.¹⁰

Elisha did not accept the gift for himself, instead commanding the 20 barley loaves to be shared amongst the 100 men.¹¹ Elisha's servant protested, believing the people would not all be able to eat enough.¹² And yet, when the food was placed before them, they all had enough to eat with food left over just as Elisha promised. Through the physical and monetary gift of one man at the end of a famine and the miraculous work of God there was plenty of food for all the people.

⁸ Blood sacrifice was actually rarer than vegetal sacrifice in the Bible. With every blood sacrifice, there was also a sacrifice of grain, oil, and wine (Numbers 15:1-10, Exodus 29:40-41). This is in addition to firstfruit offerings (Leviticus 23:9-14), grain offerings (Leviticus 2, 6:14-23), table of shewbread (Leviticus 24:5-9), and even things like incense (Exodus 30:34-38) along with tithes. The priests and Levites working in the temple would be fed through these gifts.

Additionally, for those priests and Levites who were not working at the temple, they had land for agriculture and normal jobs as did everyone else in Israel.

⁹ II Kings 4:42 specifically states that the bread was barley bread. Barley is the first harvest of grain in the spring and would signal the end of the famine. Barley is the harvest collected during Passover. The feast of First-fruits is one the seven levitical festivals mentioned in the Hebrew Bible that occurs two days after the Passover on the 16th of Nisan. Seven weeks after the Feast of First-fruits falls Shavuot, the Feast of Weeks and more firstfruits are offered, namely wheat.

¹⁰ The fact the offering is presented to a prophet indicates, perhaps, that the apostasy of the Israelites caused the people to consider non-clergy to now be their spiritual shepherds and worthy of the offerings that would have otherwise been given to the priests. Or it may indicate that they had a lack of knowledge as they weren't taught the *Torah*.

¹¹ This is reminiscent of the 100 prophets that Obadiah had saved from Jezebel in the time of Elijah.

¹² The disciples, and Andrew in particular in John 6:9, echo Gehazi, the servant of Elisha. Gehazi, according to *Mishnah Sanhedrin* 10.2, was one of four commoners who would have no part in the world to come, along with the likes of Balaam, Doeg the Edomite, and Ahithophel. And yet

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Psalm 145:10-18.¹³ Psalm 145, entitled “A song of praise,” is unique in being the only psalm to bear this title. This psalm lives up to its designation, overflowing with praise for the Lord. In contemporary Jewish practice, it is recited daily in the *Siddur* (the Jewish prayer book) during *Shacharit*, the dawn prayer, as a way to begin the day with praise and adoration for God.

Psalm 145 has strong kingdom themes describing how powerful and great the kingdom of God is. While some Psalms and much of the prophets remind us that Israel (the people) and Israel (the land) are tied together and will always be tied together, in Psalm 145, the emphasis isn't on land or boundaries. The kingdom of God is wherever God is ruling and reigning—where God's will is being done. What starts as God's people declaring all the works God has done to one another in Psalm 145:4 by Psalm 145:10 turns into a reminder for the singers that they are the works of God. All of God's works, including His creation (trees, birds, Jews, and Gentiles) will praise the LORD—David includes each generation, the children of man, and all who look up to God. “The LORD is near to all who call on Him, to all who call on Him in truth.”

As people prayed and sang this psalm to glorify God, His kingdom would be in their midst. We are encouraged by the psalmist to speak of the glory of God's kingdom. The kingdom of heaven expands as we verbally share the love and mercy of God and more people accept the Lord as their king. God is the perfect monarch. Yet His kingdom is comprised of imperfect people who will not always walk upright and righteous. The psalmist reminds the worshipper that God is compassionate towards those who stumble and fall. There is no rejection of the fallen. Rather, the Lord will come to our aid.

The psalmist tied in the redemptive mercy of the Lord towards the fallen with food in Psalm 145:15-16, as he does in many other places in his poetry.¹⁴ The extent of God's mercy goes beyond only humans to all of creation where the Lord will “satisfy the desire of every living thing”. How quickly we forget that one of the mighty acts of God is to provide food for all, just as we forget that we are His creation and that He redeemed us with mighty acts. One way to remember is to continuously sing the praises of God to one another and to God.

¹³ Psalm 145 is an abecedary psalm, with each successive verse beginning with a successive letter of the Hebrew alphabet. However, in the traditional (Masoretic) Hebrew text there is no verse beginning with the letter nun. Verse 13 begins with the letter mem and so following normal acrostic rules verse 14 should begin with nun but instead skips to samech.

The Dead Sea Scrolls, Septuagint, and Syriac peshitta provide the non-masoretic text of Psalm 145 which does include a verse beginning with nun. The Septuagint labels it as verse 13a and reads, “The LORD is faithful in all his words and kind in all his works.” It's not clear if the Septuagint version was a later addition by a redactor or if it preserved the original version of the psalm that wasn't in our Masoretic texts. Several other Abecedary psalms miss one or even up to three letters (such as Psalm 25) or have a different alphabetical order.

¹⁴ Psalm 22:26, 104:14, 27

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Ephesians 3:14-21.¹⁵ Ephesians 3 starts with Paul reminding the Ephesians that he was a prisoner. Even though Paul was chained to a roman soldier (Acts 28:16, 20; Ephesians 6:20) he declared that he was actually a prisoner of Jesus for the sake of the Gentiles. Paul was given a ministry to the Gentiles by God and it blossomed, showing the power, grace, and wisdom of God.

While Paul called God's calling of the Gentiles a mystery, it wasn't a mystery like that of certain Greek temples which kept their mysteries hidden from all but the select few. Paul bowed before God, "from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named..." David certainly understood that God would be king over all who looked to Him and that God would provide for all—not just Israel.¹⁶ Psalm 22:27 even uses a similar term in the LXX, "πασαι αι πατρια των εθνων" to Paul in Ephesians 3:15 "πασα πατρια..."—every family from every ethnicity; every family in heaven and earth. Of course, David's family was infamous for having gentiles who turned to God.¹⁷ He also employed foreigners who may have been even more faithful at times than David himself.

Going back further in time, many Egyptians joined Israel as they went to Mount Sinai and heard the word of God. God wanted to dwell in the midst of His people, specifically both in the midst of their camp and in their hearts. These Egyptians and foreigners would have continued with Israel to the land of promise and settled down with them. Before Moses God called Abraham, a Chaldean, and before him Noah.

Paul should have always known from sacred history that God desired to dwell with both Jews and Gentiles. Paul embraced and preached this truth since his encounter with Jesus in Acts 9. Paul wanted the community to remain strong and that strength would be grounded in love—the love of God, the love of the Messiah, even Paul's own love and willingness to be a prisoner for them.

Paul concluded his appeal for strength and faith with a doxology.¹⁸ The Lord has done more for us and His creation than we ever thought He would or that we deserve. God has invited both Jews and Gentiles into His glorious kingdom, the response is to give Him praise and glory.

¹⁵ ACNA Reading: Ephesians 3:1-21

¹⁶ See Psalm 145

¹⁷ Ruth, and possibly Judges, may have partially been written to justify that David, though descended from Canaanites and Moabites, was a worthy king. There were many in Israel who turned away from God and caused all kinds of trouble (particularly, in Judges, the Benjaminites) but there were also foreigners who turned to God.

¹⁸ Doxologies are short hymns or songs of praise. Many Jewish prayers in the synagogue were doxologies, one of the most famous being the Kaddish.

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John 6:1-21. The miracle of the loaves and fishes is one of only two miracles recorded in all four gospels, the other being the resurrection. There were many eyewitnesses to the account but even so, John was the only one that recorded that it was nearing the time of Passover and that the loaves of bread were barley. He is also the only one that mentioned that the people recognized that Jesus must be “the Prophet who is to come into the world.” John ensured that the connection to Elisha and, more significantly for John, Moses was clear.

While Matthew and Mark focused on the compassion of Jesus, here the problems and solutions are more clearly delineated. Phillip described the magnitude of the problem of feeding so many people in giving a numerical value of the bread required—200 denarii. This problem is twofold: they almost certainly didn't have the cash on hand nor was the actual quantity of bread available even if they did have the financial means. Jesus was offered a small portion of fish and bread and proceeded to make the people sit on the grass.¹⁹ Jesus made a blessing for the food, which in the Greek text reads as εὐχαριστέω *eucharisteō* or thanksgiving.²⁰ When exactly the miracle of the multiplication occurs is not clear in the text but Jesus had the disciples distribute the food. The labour of the disciples in the miracle and the gift of the boy demonstrates the partnership with man that God delights to have in blessing the world.

But, as the multitude made the connection between the miraculous provision of bread in front of them with Moses and the manna in the wilderness, the gospel of John presents the miracle of the loaves and fish as the last of Jesus' public miracles in the Galilee. According to John's account, the Galilean ministry of Jesus had become so popular there was the burgeoning danger of major civil unrest and potential rebellion and so He withdrew to a mountainside alone.

Moses had proclaimed a coming prophet like him in Deuteronomy 18:15. This prophecy was developed during the 2nd Temple period into the messianic idea that the Messiah would, like Moses, produce miraculous food. The crowd of witnesses to this miracle read the sign the wrong way as they proceeded to seek to seize Him (Jesus) by force to make him the messianic king in their own image.²¹ This was obviously something Jesus could not yet be a part of and so He withdrew from public ministry in the Galilee.

While Jesus no longer would do public miracles in the Galilee (in the book of John), He still taught His disciples (who, according to Mark, had also hardened their hearts after the previous

¹⁹ We were informed this event occurs near Passover, which is a spring festival. It is also during the time of the ending of the season of 'latter rain' and the beginning of the barley harvest. At this time the Galilee would be flourishing with spring growth and lots of grass, Mark 6:39 specifically mentions that the grass is green. Here the gospels are reflecting a historical narrative of the local ecology—not surprising if the writers interviewed locals and even lived or visited the region themselves.

²⁰ At the time of Jesus the blessing for bread, used to this day, had been in practice for over a generation.

²¹ Jesus rebuked them for their response in John 6:22-59.

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miracle). While Matthew and Mark both note that Jesus instructed His disciples to use the boat to cross the lake, in John's version, the disciples simply left. It was dark and Jesus had not returned. But the disciples found themselves fighting another storm on the sea when they were trying to get to their home.

During an earlier storm, recorded in all three Synoptic gospels, Jesus had actually been with them and had calmed the storm. This time Jesus wasn't with them, in fact, Mark 6:49 states that Jesus was just going to walk past His disciples. Jesus could see the disciples struggling and the disciples noticed something like a ghost, for it started to walk on the water. Unlike the first storm, where they were terrified of the waves, this time they were full of fear of this apparition. Jesus could have left them there, they were near the shore (Jesus could see them from shore, Mark 6:47-48, at night during the storm), and they were almost to their destination.²² But instead Jesus stopped, spoke to the disciples, got into the boat (at which point the wind died down), and then got out of the boat with His disciples in tow.

Nonetheless, many of Jesus' disciples remained hardened in their heart and were rebuked even as the rest of the Galileans were. They still did not understand. And yet, just as in Psalm 145, God was merciful towards those who were fallen—providing food and redemption. God still allowed the disciples to perform redemptive acts, they could still repent, and would follow Him even after they had fallen.

Hebraic Perspective. The gospels record the differences in the reactions of the witnesses to the two miracles of the feeding of the five thousand and the walking on water. Following the miracle of the loaves and fishes the reaction of the multitude is to want to make Jesus the messianic king. Even the disciples' hearts were hardened (Mark 6:52) and many of Jesus' disciples left him (John 6:66) when they were rebuked regarding their reaction to the multiplication of bread and fish. In contrast, following the walking on water Peter worshiped Jesus (Matthew 14:32) as the Son of God.

Miraculous bread did not produce a response of worship but miraculous transportation over water did! The question should be asked: why would the action of walking on water carry messianic or divine attributions? In answering the counsel of one of his three friends, Job said,

²² John estimates that they had rowed for 25 to 30 stadia, 4.6-5.5 kilometers. The Sea of Galilee is only 21 kilometers in length and 13 kilometers wide. There is some confusion as to where they started from and where they were going to. Bethsaida, Capernaum, and Gennesaret are all mentioned at different points in the story in Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. Whether they were coming from Bethsaida and headed towards Capernaum they ended in Gennesaret, on the northwest shore. John, in particular, places Jesus back in Capernaum after the wind died down, which could be considered to be the edge of the valley of Gennesaret—which is slightly less than 25 stadia from Bethsaida if the wind weren't pushing them away the whole time.

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“[God] alone stretched out the heavens and trampled the waves of the sea” (Job 9:8). In context, Job and his friends were trying to understand suffering, Job's response was to declare how powerful and beyond comprehension was the Lord, including His ability to walk on water.

Another answer is, perhaps, found in Daniel 12. Daniel, in a vision, looked up and saw “the man clothed in linen, who was above the waters of the stream”. Daniel encountered a divine being standing on water prophesying wondrous things concerning the end of days and the messianic era. As they describe the majesty of the Lord they both note a common divine attribute: God rules the waves and can tread the seas! As Jesus walked on water Peter may have understood it as a divine statement.

ACNA Readings

II Kings 2:1-15. Elijah, one of the two great prophets that Jesus would meet on the mountain of transfiguration, was about to depart the world in a whirlwind and flaming chariot. His impending departure seems to have been common knowledge as the passage itself begins by stating, ‘When the Lord was about to take Elijah up to heaven.’²³

At first, Elijah attempted to distance himself from Elisha. But Elisha refused to leave his master's side.²⁴ So they traveled together to Bethel to encounter a company of prophets who were residing there.²⁵ With so many prophets in Israel, and even schools of prophets, God chose Elisha, who seems to be neither a prophet nor the son of a prophet.²⁶ But as Elijah traveled to

²³ Elijah, in I Kings 19:4 was tired, depressed, and ready to finish his ministry (and life). However, before God provided him the rest he desired, Elijah was given three jobs: anoint Hazael to be king over Syria, anoint Jehu to be king over Israel, and anoint Elisha “to be prophet in your place.” II Kings 2 is about the transition of the prophetic role from Elijah to Elisha. Now that Elijah had finished all the work God had called him to, the prophets of Israel were able to recognize (whether through prophetic means or an understanding of the accession of Elisha to replace Elijah) that this was the moment Elisha would replace Elijah.

²⁴ The sign of a true disciple is never to leave the master's side or abandon him in an hour of need. This is precisely the opposite of what the disciples of Jesus do at the garden of Gethsemane. Elisha proved himself to be a true and loyal disciple of Elijah and worthy to be his successor. Had Elisha not followed Elijah from Bethel to Jericho and from Jericho across the Jordan, he would not have seen Elijah be taken away from him and, thus, not received his request.

²⁵ The journey of Elijah and Elisha started in Gilgal before they walked to Bethel. Both of these locations had very strong religious significance. While there are several Gilgals throughout Israel and it is hard to say precisely where Gilgal is (or which Gilgal is spoken of), we read that Samuel traveled a circuit from Bethel to Gilgal and Mizpah. There, where the ladder to and from heaven stood in the time of Jacob and where Samuel judged and prophesied, it would seem a school of prophets had been established.

²⁶ We know that Bethel was also co-opted by Jeroboam I to be a place of worship (in order to replace Jerusalem). And so Bethel became a major centre of Israelite idolatry. It is of interest that there is no mention of whether the school of prophets were among those God had promised Elijah to be true or if

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his death, many prophets knew what would happen but only one man crossed the Jordan into the enemy lands of Moab to accompany Elijah to his supposed death.²⁷ Only after Elijah was taken away did the prophets dare cross the Jordan, and that to search for a body that would never be found.

An obvious question that comes out of the reading of II Kings is, why did Elijah go across the Jordan? Elijah's mission was complete and yet he traveled some distance to a country that had just rebelled against Israel (II Kings 1:1). Elijah, the Tishbite, was likely from a small Israelite village from Transjordan, but Moab is far south of Tishbi. One reason may have been to test Elisha to see if he would follow and receive the blessing of a double portion of Elijah's spirit. This was also the land where Moses died.²⁸ It was here, where the successor of Elijah would follow in the footsteps of Moses' successor, Joshua, in the miracle of the parting of the Jordan river.²⁹

Psalm 114. Psalm 114 is part of a series of prayers and declarations from Psalm 113-118 called the *Hallel*, specifically it's given the term, the Egyptian *Hallel*. They are read during Passover to commemorate the Exodus, however, Psalm 114 is the only one that mentions Egypt. No author is given nor is the place of its declaration. It does not have to be sung by the Levites at the Temple, rather, it has no mention of status.

Israel had been slaves but now they were under the protection of the God who could cause the sea to flee, the mountains to skip, and the earth to tremble.³⁰ All of the people were under God's protection, great and small. The people of God were born in Egypt, not in a time of peace and prosperity but out of a place of slavery and darkness. God redeemed them and God provided for them.

they were false prophets. If they served God in such a difficult place, what an encouragement for us. But we do not know if they challenged the false temple, if they did not, what a warning to us.

²⁷ The prophets told Elisha, "Do you know that today the LORD will take away your master from you?" Despite being prophets and understanding, rightly, that Elijah would no longer be present, they seem to have assumed that Elijah would die as, after Elisha returned, they insisted on searching for Elijah's body.

²⁸ Of interest is that the two prophets who met Jesus on the mountain of transfiguration both left this earth from Transjordan. This was not part of God's promised land (else God would have lied when He said Moses would not enter the promised land) and yet the land of Israel's enemy was still a place where God's power could clearly be seen.

²⁹ As Elijah ascended, his coat fell to the ground and Elisha picked it up. When Elisha hit the water, the water separated to the right and to the left and Elisha crossed the river.

³⁰ Nature is often personified throughout Scripture, particularly in the Psalms. That isn't to say that nature has nature spirits or is some form of deity. But nature does seem to recognize the power of God. If people don't sing the praises of God, surely even the stones will (Luke 19:40); the land will vomit out the people of Israel if they defile it, as it did the people before them (Leviticus 18:28); all of creation has been groaning, waiting for redemption (Romans 8:22); and, here in Psalm 114, nature responded to the commands and presence of God.

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Mark 6:45-52. The account of Jesus walking on the waters of the Galilee occurs in three of the gospels, only Luke fails to mention it. In each case the 'walking on water' proceeds immediately after the miracle of the feeding of the 5,000. Each version of the story contains different unique elements.

In Mark 6:45 Jesus compelled the disciples to go into the boat. The word 'compel' *anankazo* is quite strong and so suggests He saw a real reason to remove His disciples from the multitude. Perhaps the disciples were caught up in the moment and wished to also seize Jesus to make Him king. They certainly didn't understand something about the loaves as their hearts were hardened.

In Matthew 14 Peter gets out of the boat and also walks on water, while in Mark 6 Jesus appears to be about to pass by the disciples. He may have been willing to do so because John 6 points out they were practically at their destination.

Common to each of the three narratives is that the disciples failed to recognize who Jesus was and considered the apparition before them to be a ghost. Verse 50 notes that the disciples were 'troubled'—something had gotten them agitated.³¹ Perhaps for the disciples in the boat they assumed Jesus had perished that night alone due to some wild animal and now His 'angel apparition' was coming towards them. But fear, astonishment, and seeing a miracle did not appear to soften their hearts.³²

³¹ In 2nd Temple period Jewish tradition believed in guardian angels who would watch over every person (or at least followers of God). Shabbat 146a.1 states that everyone's guardian angel was present at Mount Sinai even if they weren't born yet. Jesus, in Matthew 18:10, seems to recognize the existence of guardian Angels. However, there was another belief that guardian angels could take the form of people on earth and even change their guise, such as in the Shepherd of Hermas. Devarim Rabbah 2.29 states that "Bar Kappara said, 'An angel came down in the form of Moses and they fled, for they believed that the Angel was he'"

There seems to have been an additional belief that these guardian angel's would take the form of a deceased relative or friend to comfort the mourning, such as in Acts 12:15.

³² See RCL, John 6:1-21