

Sermon on

Get Jesus onto your team for the game of life

Kwabena D. Akufo

6/6/2007

Text:

John 6:15-21 ¹⁵ Jesus, knowing that they intended to come and make him king by force, withdrew again to a mountain by himself. ¹⁶ When evening came, his disciples went down to the lake, ¹⁷ where they got into a boat and set off across the lake for Capernaum. By now it was dark, and Jesus had not yet joined them. ¹⁸ A strong wind was blowing and the waters grew rough. ¹⁹ When they had rowed three or three and a half miles, they saw Jesus approaching the boat, walking on the water; and they were terrified. ²⁰ But he said to them, "It is I; don't be afraid." ²¹ Then they were willing to take him into the boat, and immediately the boat reached the shore where they were heading.

1 Introduction

I had a brother called, Kwadjo, who was a good and strong soccer player. He could work his way through the defense like a bulldozer and score a goal. I always loved it when he was around to play for our team in pick-up soccer matches. When he was not around our team will lose. But when he arrives even late his involvement will move our team forward to either tie or win. Kwadjo was indispensable for our team's success.

Our passage tells us of another type of player called Jesus together with his team called the disciples. This Jesus is a great man with the strength and power that overcomes all situations. In fact, the Bible tells us that he created the world and everything in it and hence has

power over all creation. We learn in this passage that when this man Jesus is not with the team called the disciples the team loses. The disciples cannot win without Jesus. They need Jesus on their team all the time. You also need Jesus on your team. The Apostle Paul describes this life as a race or a fighting match. In order to successfully finish this race of life or win life's fighting match you need Jesus on your team. You must get Jesus onto your team for the game called life.

Why is this necessary? Let's explore our passage to answer this question.

2 Jesus went to prepare for the next crusade

2.1 Disciples failure to wait for Jesus showed impatience and lack of care

Right after the hillside crusade where Jesus fed the 5,000+ he retreated to a mountain, I believe, to recharge himself for the next crusade. I am certain he told his disciples where he was going and asked them to wait for him so they can cross the lake together to go to Capernaum. I say this because our passage says, "By now it was dark, and Jesus had not yet joined them." The words, "not yet", means there was an expectation that Jesus will join them. After waiting for Jesus till the evening the disciples decided to wait no longer and set off on the lake for Capernaum. They knew the goal was to arrive at Capernaum and as expert fishermen they felt they could get there without Jesus. I have to question why they would leave Jesus there to potentially get stranded. Were they getting impatient with his junkets to the mountain for retreats without coming back on time? Why didn't some of the others stay behind to come with Jesus? Their actions seemed to lack patience and care.

2.2 You must be patient to wait upon Jesus to join your team

As we serve God we have to be careful not to pursue certain things without patience and care for the things of God. God is patient with us and so we must also be patient with others especially when it comes on waiting on God. I remember attending a national church business meeting for which I was the secretary. We had a long agenda. But at the beginning of the meeting the leader of the meeting took us through an extensive prayer session. At the end of the prayer session I wondered whether we were going to finish that agenda after spending so much time away from it. When we began discussing the agenda items everything went very fast and smoothly. You see, Jesus had joined the meeting and removed any obstacles to progress. I learnt never to rush when we are called to wait on the Lord because when Jesus is not there yet we cannot reach our goal. We need Jesus on our team, even if it means waiting extensively, for us to be successful.

3 The disciples left without Jesus and got stranded until Jesus arrived

3.1 The disciples made no headway toward their goal without Jesus

The disciples left without Jesus and encountered a huge storm on the lake. The storm kept them on the lake and they made no progress toward their destination. When the storms of life hit you without Jesus on your side, you cannot make any progress no matter how hard you work at it. You see, your productivity in this life is greatly enhanced when Jesus is on your side. You need Jesus to be with you in order to navigate you through the storms of life. You need Jesus on your side to make progress in this world in all aspects of your life.

3.2 Jesus approached them in his full divine nature

While they were stranded on the lake in the middle of the storm they saw the shape of a person approaching. The Bible tells us that they were terrified. They didn't know what to make of it: was it a ghost, was it a demon, was it a water spirit, or was it an angel? They didn't know what was going to happen to them. Then the person shouted, "It is I; don't be afraid." It was Jesus! The Greek words translated into the English words, "It is I," literally means "I am." In other words Jesus declared to them that he is the "I am," the God of hosts, the creator God, the one who has power over all creation, the one who has power over all circumstances. The "I am" himself was approaching them and he said further "don't be afraid," which is the typical divine greeting to human beings. In whatever storm you are currently in Jesus is saying to you "Don't be afraid." You must not be afraid because he is in control. He is the "I am" and will take you through this particular storm also.

In this engagement with the disciples Jesus proclaimed that he is God and to show his control over creation he defied the laws of gravity and defied the laws of nature as he walked over water. Let me ask you: What situation in your life can withstand this man who defies gravity? What situation in your life can withstand this man who defies the natural laws? What situation in your life can withstand this man who confounds the doctors? What situation in your life can withstand this man "who gives life to the dead and calls things that are not as though they were?" (Romans 4:17) You need this Jesus on your team to overcome your life's storms. Ask Jesus to come on your team today and you will overcome your troubling situations.

3.3 The disciples discerned who approached them

Note that the disciples didn't invite Jesus in until they knew who it was who was approaching them. In this case they used discernment. When you are in the middle of a storm you will be approached by all kinds of spirits. You need to discern the spirit that is of God. Your difficult situation may make you susceptible to accepting any spirit that appears to offer relief. And as we see in this example spirits don't appear in the air but they come in human form.

One of our Worcester brothers told us of a time he had serious marital problems. A friend of his urged him to call some prophet in Ghana. Out of desperation he called the prophet and the man prayed for him, which appeared to be fine. In a subsequent call, the man asked him to buy a doll to go throw into the ocean and that this will cause his wife to make peace with him. Discerning that this recommendation smacked of idolatry, he rejected it. You see a demonic spirit had used his friend to approach him. Just as in this example, when you are in one of life's storms you may be approached by a friend, a coworker, a church brother or sister who may point you to a relief that is not of God. You have to discern the spirit by prayer and through the Word of God. You must look only to God and reject any idolatrous recommendations.

3.4 They invited Jesus into the boat and reached their goal immediately

After ascertaining that the person approaching them was Jesus, the disciples invited him into the boat and our passage says, "And immediately the boat reached the shore where they were heading." After lingering for hours on the lake without Jesus, as soon as they got Jesus into the boat immediately the boat got to shore. So, leaving without Jesus did them no good. They did not arrive sooner. In fact, if they had waited for Jesus they would have arrived sooner than they did. That day, the disciples must have learned the lesson that apart from Jesus they can do

nothing. So, you must also learn that if Jesus is not on your team you cannot win life's race. You will run as hard as you want, you will fight as hard as all your energy will allow you but you will not get anywhere. You need Jesus on your team in order to be successful in life.

You cannot get your financial breakthrough without Jesus on your team.

You cannot get your career breakthrough without Jesus on your team.

You cannot get marital bliss without Jesus on your team.

You cannot get your health breakthrough without Jesus on your team.

I urge you today to get Jesus on your team for you need him to be successful.

4 Conclusion

Beloved in Christ, we have learnt from this passage that it is important to get Jesus on your team so you can successfully finish the race of life and victoriously fight life's battles.

Our passage has told us that while Jesus was in a retreat to prepare for his next crusade the disciples out of impatience and lack of care failed to wait for him on their journey across the lake to Capernaum. They got stranded on the lake in the middle of a storm until Jesus arrived walking on the lake. They were frightened by his presence and having ascertained that it is Jesus they let him into the boat. As soon as Jesus joined the boat with his full divinity and power of over creation the boat arrived at the shore.

You must be patient to wait upon Jesus to join your team. We have learnt from this passage that when Jesus is not with your team you will loose. You cannot win without Jesus. You need Jesus on your team all the time. In order to successfully finish the race of life or win life's fighting match you need Jesus on your team. You must get Jesus onto your team for the game called life.

If you do not have Jesus on your team, I want you to invite him into your team today by praying this short prayer with me:

Dear God. I recognize that I am a sinner and that Jesus died for my sins. From this day forward, I reject sinful living of the world and I accept Jesus Christ as my Lord and Savior. I promise to live a new life in Christ. Amen.