

John 6:16–21—Jesus Walks on Water

The story of Jesus walking on water is told in three of the four Gospels. We still possess a hymn written about this incident in the fourth-century.

Matthew 14:24–33	Mark 6:47–52	John 6:16–21
<p>By this time the boat, battered by the waves, was far from the land, for the wind was against them. 25 And early in the morning he came walking toward them on the sea. 26 But when the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they were terrified, saying, “It is a ghost!” And they cried out in fear. 27 But immediately Jesus spoke to them and said, “Take heart, it is I; do not be afraid.”</p> <p>28 Peter answered him, “Lord, if it is you, command me to come to you on the water.” 29 He said, “Come.” So Peter got out of the boat, started walking on the water, and came toward Jesus. 30 But when he noticed the strong wind, he became frightened, and beginning to sink, he cried out, “Lord, save me!” 31 Jesus immediately reached out his hand and caught him, saying to him, “You of little faith, why did you doubt?” 32 When they got into the boat, the wind ceased. 33 And those in the boat worshiped him, saying, “Truly you are the Son of God.”</p>	<p>When evening came, the boat was out on the sea, and he was alone on the land. 48 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. 49 But when they saw him walking on the sea, they thought it was a ghost and cried out; 50 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.” 51 Then he got into the boat with them and the wind ceased. And they were utterly astounded, 52 for they did not understand about the loaves, but their hearts were hardened.</p>	<p>When evening came, his disciples went down to the sea, 17 got into a boat, and started across the sea to Capernaum. It was now dark, and Jesus had not yet come to them. 18 The sea became rough because a strong wind was blowing. 19 When they had rowed about three or four miles, they saw Jesus walking on the sea and coming near the boat, and they were terrified. 20 But he said to them, “It is I; do not be afraid.” 21 Then they wanted to take him into the boat, and immediately the boat reached the land toward which they were going.</p>

Prudentius (348–ca. 405) was a Roman Christian poet who lived in Spain and wrote numerous hymns based on biblical or theological themes. His meditation on the birth of Christ, “Of the Father’s Love Begotten,” remains a popular Christmas hymn in many churches to this day. Here is his hymn inspired by Jesus walking on the water:

He walks dry-shod upon the flowing tide
And bears upon the flood with footsteps sure.
He chides the winds and bids the tempest cease.
Who would command the stormy gales: “Be still,
Your strongholds keep and leave the boundless sea,”
Except the Lord and maker of the winds? . . .

Excerpt from “A Hymn on the Trinity”¹

1. Aurelius Prudentius, *The Hymns of Prudentius*, trans. R. Martin Pope (London: J. M. Dent and Co. Aldine House, 1905).