

The Healings at Gennesaret
Matthew 14:34-36
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The account of Jesus walking on the water is followed in Matthew and Mark's Gospel by the events in Gennesaret, where the disciples land the boat. The Gospel of John leaves out the account of the healing ministry and simply describes the boat as immediately landing where they were going (John 6:21). Gennesaret was about three miles southwest of Capernaum, along the shore of the Sea of Galilee.

Since Jesus had been living in Capernaum and much of His public ministry was in this vicinity, it would be expected that *"the men of that place recognized Him"* (Matthew 14:35). Once again, news spread about Jesus, which brought more people to look for Him (cf. Matthew 3:5; 4:24-25; 14:13-14). In particular, the people found Jesus, even though it would have been fairly early in the morning, since He came to the boat in the fourth watch, or after 3:00 a.m. (Matthew 14:25). This gives evidence of the enormous popularity of Jesus.

People came to Jesus from the surrounding district. Mark gives more detail of how people found Jesus, *"when they got out of the boat, immediately the people recognized Him, and ran about that whole country and began to carry here and there on their pallets those who were sick, to the place they heard He was"* (Mark 6:54-55). So those who recognized Jesus went out to get those in need of healing.

We again see the widespread nature of Jesus' ministry (Matthew 4:23-25; 8:16; 9:35) and Jesus graciously waited for the sick to arrive to heal them. Jesus was turning His ministry toward the disciples, yet He continued to extend Himself to all people. All who were sick were brought to Him, showing the variety of people whom Jesus healed.

Mark expands the account of the healing by describing Jesus going to the areas where the sick were. *"Wherever He entered villages, or cities, or countryside, they were laying the sick in the market places, and imploring Him that they might just touch the fringe of His cloak; and as many as touched it were being cured"* (Mark 6:56). Like Matthew, Mark notes people being healed by touching His cloak. This also shows the willingness of Jesus to engage the masses of people. Jesus granted people such close access to Him that complete strangers were able to touch Him.

The eagerness for healing by the crowds made them want to simply touch His garment in hopes of being healed. This was done earlier in Matthew 9:20, where a woman who suffered from a hemorrhage for twelve years sought to be healed by touching the fringe of His cloak. Mark 3:10 and Luke 6:19 state that many with afflictions sought to touch Him. This is more than simply another way in which Jesus healed people.

The Pharisees would never have put themselves in this position that Jesus allowed. They would have been concerned that by allowing random people to touch them, they would have potentially become ceremonially unclean through this contact. As was seen in Matthew 8:1-4, Jesus did not become unclean by touching a leper to cleanse him, but the leper actually became clean by the touch of Jesus. This issue of defilement transitions to the following chapter, where *“some Pharisees and scribes came to Jesus from Jerusalem and said, ‘Why do Your disciples break the tradition of the elders? For they do not wash their hands when they eat bread.’”*