

Mark 6:45-52

Sunday Morning – 23JUN13

45

And straightway he constrained his disciples to get into the ship, and to go to the other side before unto Bethsaida, while he sent away the people.

- Jesus hustles His disciples out of the area very quickly (“immediately”)
 - Possible reasons¹
 - The crowd saw Him as a political leader. They misunderstood what He came to do. **John 6:15 - When Jesus therefore perceived that they would come and take him by force, to make him a king, he departed again into a mountain himself alone.**
 - He wanted to be alone to pray
 - The text suggests a forceful compulsion – “*Immediately* Jesus made his disciples get into the boat” (NET)
 - He didn’t want His disciples to be tainted by the wrong ideas of the crowd. They were just as liable to error as the next men were. He had to get them out of the area for their own good²
 - While they left, He dealt with the crowd

46

And when he had sent them away, he departed into a mountain to pray

- Christ only prays alone three times in the Gospels. Each time is a moment of supreme crisis for our Savior³
 - Each is at night in a lonely place
 - Each is brought about by misunderstanding of Him and His ministry
 - Early in ministry after disciples misunderstand Him (Mk 1:35)
 - Now, as crowd misunderstands Him (Mk 6:46)
 - In the garden, before His betrayal (Mk 14:32-36)
 - Each is marked by a severe crisis or decision

¹ D. A. Carson, “Matthew,” vol. 8, *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelin (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1984), 343. Carson also suggests Christ still wanted to be alone to give His disciples some rest (Mk 6:31-32). Bearing in mind that the disciples were immediately beset by a terrible storm on the Sea of Galilee and the fact that Jesus’ ministry continues immediately upon exiting the boat on the other shore (Mk 6:53), it is extremely unlikely rest was still on the agenda!

² James R. Edwards, *The Gospel According to Mark* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel, 2002), 197. “The disciples are not unsusceptible to the messianic contagion of the crowd.”

³ Ibid.

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- “Each incident involves the temptation not to carry out God’s mission for Him – a mission that would ultimately bring suffering, rejection and death.”⁴
- This is not a heartless robot who has come to die for our sins, this is both the sinless Son of God and a man who experienced the same temptation we do
 - **Hebrews 4:15 - For we do not have a high priest incapable of sympathizing with our weaknesses, but one who has been tempted in every way just as we are, yet without sin.**
- Christ has a deep need to pray to His Father in times of stress. Do we?
 - We should, or we’re in danger of hypocrisy
 - Christ prays *alone* and for *comfort* and *guidance*
 - True Christians will do likewise, unless they’re in the grip of cold, emotionless formalism or some pathetic selfish pride
 - “A good man is never less alone than when alone with God”⁵
 - Do we ever get alone with God?

47	And when even was come, the ship was in the midst of the sea, and he alone on the land
48	And he saw them toiling in rowing; for the wind was contrary unto them: and about the fourth watch of the night he cometh unto them, walking upon the sea, and would have passed by them

- From the mountain on shore, Christ sees the boat being tossed about in the middle of the sea
- They had only to cross the northern part of the Sea of Galilee; the fact the boat was in the middle of the Sea meant they were facing a very dangerous and swift wind⁶
 - *Toiling in rowing; for the wind was contrary unto them . . .*
- *Fourth watch* = sometime between 0300 – 0600

⁴ Walter Wessel, “Mark,” vol. 8, *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1984), 675.

⁵ Matthew Henry, *Commentary on the Whole Bible*, Mk 6:46.

⁶ James A. Brooks, “Mark,” vol. 23, *The New American Commentary*, ed. David S. Dockery (Nashville, TN: B&H, 1991), 111. “The site of the feeding is unknown, but it was also somewhere along the northern shore. Therefore if the expression ‘in the middle of the lake’ is to be taken literally, the boat must have been blown well to the south by a strong north wind.”

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- The incident occurred in the evening, after the miracle of the loaves and fish. Christ did not intervene until the dark hours of early morning.
Disciples were undoubtedly very tired by this point by the storm
 - Why did He not intervene sooner?
 - Was it cruel for Christ to sit on the mountain and watch this for several hours?
- The lesson of Habakkuk and the precept of “the just shall live by his faith” (Hab 2:4) as the antidote to questions amidst suffering
- Disciples are being training for ministry, and everything which happens to them must be viewed through this lens. It was a character-building exercise of living by faith in Him
 - They had just witnessed a miracle with clear OT overtones where they had participated in Christ’s work
 - Do they view Him as the Son of God or a mere man?
- . . . *he cometh unto them, walking upon the sea . . .*
 - This is a clear miracle which demonstrates that Christ is divine
 - Only God has the power to walk on water or transcend natural law
 - **Job 9:8 - he alone spreads out the heavens, and treads on the waves of the sea**
 - Christ is coming to aid His disciples, and doing it in a very deliberate way that proves He is not a mortal man at all. He is, literally, God!
- . . . *and would have passed by them*
 - This is how it appears to the disciples in the boat⁷
 - It almost pictures Christ walking parallel to the boat, toward the distant shore
 - How would they react? With understanding or confusion? Christ *knows* how they’ll react, but again – *this is a teaching exercise*

49	But when they saw him walking upon the sea, they supposed it had been a spirit, and cried out:
50	For they all saw him, and were troubled. And immediately he talked with them,

⁷ Wessel, “Mark,” 676. He appropriately avoids the temptation for *parallelomania* by not highlighting apparent similarities between God “passing by” Moses at Sinai (Ex 33:19-22) and Christ “passing by” the boat here. Jesus’ divinity is made plain, succinctly and unmistakably, as Christ walks upon the water. Edwards (198-199) and Brooks (111) push this clear Christophany too far by drawing upon unnecessary parallels. See also NET Bible note on v. 48.

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	and saith unto them, Be of good cheer: it is I; be not afraid.
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- . . . *they supposed it had been a spirit, and cried out:*
 - The disciples are not superstitious people⁸ – they were commonsense folks like you and I
 - There is a tendency to think that anybody in history past must be dull, superstitious and a little stupid
 - No evidence that ghosts or apparitions were common sightings in the NT⁹
 - They were seasoned, professional fishermen who knew the Sea of Galilee as well as we know our own workspaces
- *For they all saw him, and were troubled . . .*
 - They reacted with fear and terror
 - They had a very low view of Christ, despite all the miracles they had seen
 - This was terror, not awe
 - He immediately comforts them¹⁰
 - Other Gospels have Christ declaring He is God. Mark has Him *showing* it – over and over again¹¹

51	And he went up unto them into the ship; and the wind ceased: and they were sore amazed in themselves beyond measure, and wondered
52	For they considered not the miracle of the loaves: for their heart was hardened

- . . . *and the wind ceased . . .*
 - Another clear miracle. The wind stopped immediately once Christ got into the boat. He has powers over His creation – a clear demonstration of deity
 - **John 1:3 - All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made.**

⁸ *St. Mark Vol. I*, ed. H. D. M. Spence-Jones, The Pulpit Commentary (London; New York: Funk & Wagnalls Company, 1909), 255. “The superstitious fishermen, naturally enough, take the figure approaching them for a spectre.”

⁹ See Edwards, *Mark*, 200. The appearance of angels or other supernatural phenomena is always a rather terrifying event in Scripture.

¹⁰ Once again, Wessel avoids the temptation to clutter up the plain sense of the text with OT parallels, this time with the “I am who I am” of Ex 3:14 and “It is I” of Mk 6:50. Edwards (198) and Brooks (112) push too far once again in this regard. Wessel admits the parallels are intriguing, but concludes with, “It is, however, simplest and best to regard the expression as a way by which Jesus was identifying Himself,” (676).

¹¹ Edwards, *Mark*, 199.

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- The disciples were amazed (“completely astonished” – NET). They did not understand who He was – they completely misunderstood Him
- . . . *for their heart was hardened*
 - They were astonished *because* they didn’t understand! If they had grasped the significance of the miracle of the loaves (and numerous others) they would have understood who just walked across the water towards them!¹²
 - This is one of the harshest statements in the Gospels about the disciples’ lack of understanding¹³

CONCLUSION:

- This passage is *not* about clinging to Christ during stormy times in life
- It *is* about a proper understanding and reverence of Christ
 - Do we view Christ as Lord, or as something else?
 - Is He nothing more than a magic genie, to be employed whenever we get ourselves into trouble?
 - *EX: the crowd’s wrong political understanding of Christ*
 - **Jeremiah 21:2 - Inquire, I pray thee, of the LORD for us; for Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon maketh war against us; if so be that the LORD will deal with us according to all his wondrous works, that he may go up from us.**
 - God’s response:
 - **Jer 21:5-6: ⁵And I myself will fight against you with an outstretched hand and with a strong arm, even in anger, and in fury, and in great wrath. ⁶And I will smite the inhabitants of this city, both man and beast: they shall die of a great pestilence.**
 - Is He only a vague, distant concept without form or substance?
 - Is our view of Christ intellectual and cold?
 - Do we show more enthusiasm for sports teams, guns or televisions shows than for our Savior?
 - Christ is a living, ever-present fact of life. He is active in this world, not some cold, intellectual concept

¹² Brooks, “Mark,” 112.

¹³ Ibid.

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- Christ is grieved when His children misunderstand Him. We were not saved by a magic genie or a vague, abstract entity.
 - **John 16:32-33:** ³² Behold, the hour cometh, yea, is now come, that ye shall be scattered, every man to his own, and shall leave me alone: and yet I am not alone, because the Father is with me. ³³ These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.
- Christians must have the proper understanding of who Christ is and treat Him as such