

Jesus walks on Water.
Mark 6:45-56

Psalm 107
1 Corinthians 10:1-13
Congregation Psalm 46:1-7

Today we are going to be closing out Chapter 6 which contains another record of Jesus' authority over nature. Even though it is going to be a bit of a read I think that we should actually go back and read the verses from last week as well, for verse 45 here starts with the word Immediately linking these 2 accounts one right after another. So for this morning, let us read starting in 30, we will read to the end of chapter 6.

This passage that we read here today having to do with Jesus walking on the water to meet up with the disciples in their boat has been an area of hot debate for a long time. There has been a movement by so called rational, scientific skeptics to attempt to explain away this act of Jesus defying the laws of nature. In the book *The Quest for the Historical Jesus*, Alber Schewietzer documents different opinions of scholars who have tried to explain this passage. Some claim that it must have only just been an optical illusion which was caused by Jesus who was actually walking along the shore. Or another idea that he was actually just walking on a sandbar.

But of course we don't believe any such theories for we come at this story from a completely different presupposition. 1st, we believe that the bible is true and is not just a collection of cute tales, or a book of propaganda written by a group of men. But we believe rather that it is in fact the written word of God, given to us so that we may know God, who he is, and what he has done, and our standing toward him. 2nd, we come from the presupposition that Jesus is the God Man, he is God, incarnate in the flesh. We do not believe that he was just simply some prophet, or teacher, but rather that he is the promised messiah, sent from God. And since that is true, it is not out of the realm of possibility that the one who has created all things, can bend, or change nature to his own will and purpose for he is the one that set the laws of nature and is the one who rules over it.

Mankind in its so called wisdom has always sought to explain the miraculous, to take away from God's ability to do as he wills, and limit these fantastic stories to some sort of explainable phenomenon in nature. But if God is not a God over his own creation, if he is not the ruler with all authority over the nature that he himself has created then he truly isn't God, for he would be subject to his own creation, giving his creation authority over himself. OF course we know that is absurd, but it is the implications of the carnal mind trying to explain such things within their own knowledge limited to what they know of nature.

So this morning, as we saw here in verse 45, it starts out with the word immediately. This is not uncommon for Mark as we have seen so far in his writing he seems to focus on keeping the story moving forward and never bogs down in one spot for very long. There is always a sense of urgency in his writing as if he is summarizing and just trying to get to the good stuff. That being said, I find it interesting that Jesus sends the disciples away and dismisses the crowd himself. Previously he would depart with his disciples, but not this time. Well if we go over to the book of John, we can will see there the likely reason why Jesus told his disciples to depart and dismissed the crowd so hastily. Starting in verse 12.

“So when they were filled, he said to his disciples, Gather up the fragments that remain, so that nothing is lost. Therefore they gathered them up and filled twelve baskets with the fragments of the five barely loaves which were left over by the those who had eaten. (And here is our clue) Then those men, when they had seen the sign that Jesus did. Said, this truly is the prophet who is to come into the world. Therefore when Jesus perceived that they were about the come and take him by force to make him king, he departed again to the mountain by himself alone.

We must remember that the Israelites where waiting for the messiah to come, and they believed that he would come and rescue them from their oppressors, which was the Roman government at this time and that he would become king and rule and reign in this kingdom of God. And it appears that there were many who were in this multitude who wanted to make sure that this was going to happen. As John says, these men wanted to take him by force and make him king. So it became very important for Jesus to send his disciples and to disperse the crowd before it got out of hand. There is the likely hood that even his disciples may have gotten caught up into this act of revolution against the Roman government for as we have seen with some of the other accounts here in Mark, they did not fully understand Jesus purpose and his ministry yet, and they have actually acting rather harsh toward him at times for the things that he had said or done.

Mark has only recorded Jesus going off by himself seeking solitude 3 times. The First was in chapter 1 when he had left the multude and went off and pray and his disciples where looking for him. This here is the 2nd time and the 3rd and final time is his prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane before he was betrayed by Judas. Each of these 3 accounts of Jesus going off by himself and praying are all at night and in a secluded place, and each time is met with misunderstanding by his disciples, and is usually around a pivotal decision, or crisis. In chapter 1, when Jesus disciples find him in solitude praying they are pressuring him to return to the crowd, but Jesus instead tells them that it is time that they move on to another town so that he can teach to more people. Here in this second account was the near uprising of the Jewish people ready to claim them their king and rally behind him against the Roman empire. But as we know that was not Jesus intention or purpose here on earth, so he leaves to a secluded place and prays expressing his divine Sonship as a servant to his Father's will rather then a revolutionary freedom fighter against the Roman Empire.

So now we find the disciples, on their own going across the sea of Galilee again. It would seem that whenever the disciples are left to their own devices it doesn't take long before they find themselves in some sort of distress. Even during poor sailing conditions on average it would take between 6 to 8 hours to get across the sea of Galilee, but here we find the disciples in the middle of the sea after hours of attempting to row against the wind. The word here used to describe their straining to row the boat is *basanizein*, which translates to torment. It is a word that was often used in reference to someone who was demon possessed, or the pain of childbirth, it has was also used in the description of the suffering of hell, or the torment of a righteous person having to live among the unrighteous. So these disciples were not just struggling, the were tormented, fearful, helpless, and desperately trying to keep the boat going.

Does this sound familiar to anyone? It should because I think we have all been here probably more times then we would like to admit. We go off by ourselves, thinking that we are fine and capable of handling whatever it is by our own strength and merit. And after much struggling, and even torment, when our own strength has finally failed us and we are in an hour of desperation and helplessness we finally cry out to God for strength, or wisdom, or deliverance whatever may be needed at the time and Jesus comes, walking across the water as it were, through our trials giving us the strength, or the deliverance we need, Much in the same way he always did for his disciples, he always came when their need was the most dire, and they had no more hope in their own abilities.

God is constantly teaching us the lesson over and over again to rely solely on him. As Paul wrote, in 2nd Corinthians. Chapter 12 if you want to follow along. Verse 1. “It is doubtless not profitable for me to boast, I will come to visions and revelations of the Lord. I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago, whether in the body I do not know, or whether out of the body I do not know, God knows, such a one was caught up in the third heaven. And I know such a man whether in the body or out of the body I do not know, God knows. How he was caught up into Paradise and heard inexpressible words which it is not lawful for a man to utter. Of such a one I will boast, of myself I will not boast except in my infirmities. For though I might desire to boast, I will not be a fool. For I will speak the truth, but I refrain lest anyone should think of me above what he sees me to be or hears from me. And lest I should be exalted above measure by the abundance of the revelations, a thorn in the flesh was given to me, a messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I be exalted above measure. Concerning this thing I pleaded with the Lord three times that it might depart from me. And he said to me, My grace is sufficient for you, for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong.”

Paul is talking about this very lesson that we seem to need to learn over and over again, so God allows for trials, he allows for persecutions, distresses, reproaches and infirmities so we are driven to a point that we must cry out and find our strength, our wisdom, our patience, and our hope in our Savior. This is also an area in the Christian walk that I think becomes easier over time. You learn after time and time again that instead of trying to row against the wind, and struggle under your own strength that it is best to just turn to God in prayer right away. That is what we see Jesus do when faced with difficulties, or temptations. He goes off alone, quietly and prays. This should also be our practice, seeking quiet, one on one communication with God our father. Not only when the trials and temptations arise but often, so that when those trials and temptations arise you are already well on your way prepared to properly deal with them through the strength granted to you by God.

The next few verses are worded in a way that I found interesting. Verse 47, “Now when evening had come, the boat was in the middle of the sea and he was alone on the land. Then he saw them straining, for the wind was against them.” Jesus, on land, saw them in the middle of the sea straining against the wind. Previously in this chapter Jesus and his disciples were on the boat and saw the crowd along the shore, like sheep without a shepherd and Jesus had compassion on them and directed them to go to shore so that he may teach them. In much the same way here, Jesus see his disciples struggling and he has compassion on them and heads out to help. Mark does not really go into any details here about what is meant by Jesus seeing them, whether he saw them physically off in the distance, or by some other supernatural means. But either way makes little difference, Jesus sees the disciples in their helpless struggle and has compassion on them and goes out to save them.

Continueing in verse 48, it says that when he came to them walking on the sea he would have passed them by. This seems to be an odd statement since he went out to save them, why would he have passed them by? Upon thinking on this I think this statement here shows the absolute dire situation that the disciples were in. They were rowing for all their might, and they were going no where, so much so that Jesus could have easily walked past them. Can you imagine, being out on a rough sea, in high wind, struggling for all you are worth only to look over and see what you perceive to be a ghost walking toward you? I can only imagine how fearful they must have been. But Jesus hearing their cries says, Be of good cheer, it is I, do not be afraid.

James Edwards said of this verse. “ There is no possibility of translating walking on the water in any other way. The Phrase can not be translated in such a way to avoid the problem of open water sustaining a human body. If such an attempt is made, the point of the story is forfeit. For in the OT only God can walk on the water. In walking on the water toward the disciples Jesus walks only where God can walk. As in the forgiveness of sins, and his power over nature, walking on the lake identifies Jesus unmistakably with God. And this identification is reinforced when Jesus says, Take courage, it is I. In Greek, it is I, ego eimi is identical with God's self disclosure to Moses. Hus Jesus not only walks in Gods stead, but also takes his name.

The God of Israel, the one who was mysterious and hidden in laws, and traditions, foretold by the prophets, the majestic and awesome God is now knowable, face to face in Jesus. Jesus here now answers the disciples question that they posed in chapter 4 when he calmed the storm. Verse 39 of chapter 4, “Then he arose and rebuked the wind and said to the sea, Peace be still. And the wind ceased and there was a great calm. But he said to them why are you so fearful? How is it that you have no faith? And they feared exceedingly and said to one another, Who can this be, that even the wind and the sea obey him.” I the one who calmed the storm is now the one who appears in the storm, walking only where God can walk.

In closing this morning we will look at the last few verse of this chapter. Starting in verse 53. 'when they had crossed over they came to the land of Gennesaret and anchored there. And when they came out of the boat, immediately the people recognized him, ran through that whole surrounding region, and begane to cary about on beds those who were sick to wherever they heard he was. Whenever he entered, into a villages, cities, or the country, they laid the sick in the marketplaces and begged him that they might just touch the hem of his gament. And as any as touched him were made well. “

These last few verse Mark speeds back up and does an overall summary of Jesus ministry in this region. Not taking much time focusing on any particular encounter but speaking in general terms other then the location which was a densely populated area on the west shore between Capernaum and Tiberius. There are a few things that we can glean from these last few paragraphs. One, is that Jesus ministry was expansive, I included areas, and people beyond what all is recorded in the gospel accounts. It would seem that everywhere that Jesus went he was met by large crowds. People came from all the surrounding villages and cities bringing their sick to be healed. As we read in the closing lines of this chapter, “ so that they may touch the hem of his garment and be made well.”

Another thing that we can take from this, is that fact that Jesus ministry reached all types of people. It was not just limited to the synagogues, to the rich, or the powerful, or the educated. But Jesus engaged with all people, rich and poor, scribes and pharisees, fishermen, and tax collectors. His message was given to all, and was for all. Throughout his ministry Jesus always engaged and had compassion on the crowds full of suffering people.

The final conclusion that Mark says in this chapter is that all who touched Jesus were made well. While in the context of what is being said here this is referring to those with physical infermaries, but it also holds true to the spiritual application as well. All those who come to Christ in faith are made well in his atoning blood. The physiscal act of healing only serves to point to the greater healing that was the purpose of his arrival. To reconcile man back to God, to heal the gap that was when sin entered the world. And just like his ministry around the Sea of Galilee, this message, and this spiritual healing and salvation is not only for the rich, or the powerful, or even just the Jews. But it is for all who will hear, all who will reach out and touch the hem of his garment in faith and believe.

