

“Guard Against a Hard Heart”  
(Mark 6:45-52)

I. Introduction.

A. Orientation: Last time we considered the love and care Jesus has for you.

1. We looked at the love He showed His Old Covenant people.
  - a. When He saw them without a shepherd, He provided guidance – He taught them many things.
  - b. When He saw them hungry, He provided food – He fed five thousand with five loaves and two fish.
  - c. He didn’t just do any miracle to prove He was who He said He was, He did miracles that specifically helped His people in some way.
2. His love has also moved Him to make the same provisions for you.
  - a. He has given you His Word and Spirit; ministers/shepherds; books to guide you.
  - b. He promised if you will put His concerns first, He will meet your needs.
  - c. In both of these ways, He helps you towards heaven.
3. He does this not only to care for you, but to be an example to you.
  - a. He wants you to bring His truth to those who have no guide.
  - b. He wants you to relieve the suffering of your neighbor.
  - c. This morning, He gives you something else to help you towards heaven and another example of what you can do for others: warn them.

B. Preview.

1. After Jesus fed the five thousand, He sent His disciples ahead of Him by boat to Bethsaida, while He sent the crowd away and went to the mountain to pray.
  - a. When evening came, and Jesus had finished His prayers, He looked out to see how far the disciples had gone.
    - (i) They hadn’t gone far, because the wind was against them – they had only reached the middle; about three or four miles, according to John (John 6:19).
    - (ii) It was about the fourth watch of the night, or around 3:00 AM. If they had left about 6:00 PM, they had been rowing for about 9 hours.
  - b. And so Jesus came to help them – walking on the water.
    - (i) But in order to help them, He first tested them – by looking as though He was going to walk right by.
    - (ii) When they saw Him, they thought He was a ghost – since He was out in deep water and wasn’t sinking – and they all cried out in terror.
    - (iii) But Jesus immediately comforted them – He spoke with them, got into boat, and the wind immediately stopped.

- c. Mark writes that they were utterly astonished. Why were they so surprised?
  - (i) You'd think by this time they'd be getting used to it; but they weren't.
  - (ii) They hadn't learned from the loaves or the other things He did.
  - (iii) Instead, their hearts were hardened.
- 2. There are at least two things Jesus wants you to learn from this:
  - a. The first is that Jesus did what He did in His ministry to strengthen your faith.
  - b. The second is that you need to guard your heart from becoming hard.

## II. Sermon.

- A. First, let's consider that Jesus did what He did in His ministry to strengthen your faith.
  - 1. Mark writes that the fact they were surprised by His walking on the water and calming the wind means they had not gained insight from the loaves.
    - a. What did they miss?
      - (i) They should have known by now what He was capable of.
      - (ii) And therefore, they should have known who He was.
    - b. What was Jesus capable of? He could do whatever He willed.
      - (i) He had power to command evil spirits (Mark 1:27; 5:1-20).
      - (ii) He had the ability to heal every sickness (v. 34), even leprosy (vv. 40-42) and paralysis (2:3-12).
      - (iii) He had the authority to forgive sins (2:3-12).
      - (iv) He could declare what was lawful on the Sabbath Day (2:23-28).
      - (v) He could foretell the future (kingdom parables, Mark 4).
      - (vi) He could command the Creation – the wind and the waves – and they immediately obeyed (4:35-41).
      - (vii) He could raise the dead (5:41-43).
      - (viii) He could even give His disciples authority over sickness and the spiritual realm (6:7-13).
      - (ix) And He could feed five thousand with fives loaves and two fish and have enough left over to fill twelve baskets (vv. 35-44).
  - c. And so what should they have known about Him? That He was God.
    - (i) His human nature seemed to be getting in the way – to them, He appeared to be just a man.
    - (ii) And Jesus was (and still is) a man – He became man for our salvation.
    - (iii) But He was (and still is) also the eternal God.
      - (a) That fact is essential to your salvation.
      - (b) You can't be saved without believing this.
      - (c) You don't owe your salvation or the glory due for it to any mere man, but to One who is God and man.
  - d. If they had known this was the case from the things He did, they wouldn't have been so surprised now that He was now walking on the water.

2. We really can't fault them too much, because we have the same problem.
  - a. You weren't eye-witnesses to these events.
    - (i) But you do have eye-witness accounts, inspired by God.
    - (ii) You do have the Holy Spirit's testimony in your heart.
    - (iii) You should believe as well.
  - b. But do you believe?
    - (i) Do you believe Jesus exists?
      - (a) Do you believe He is the Son of God, the Creator?
      - (b) Do you believe He has sovereignty over this Creation?
    - (ii) Do you believe Jesus is the Savior?
      - (a) That He became a man to save you and others?
      - (b) That everything you need for salvation is in Him?
      - (c) That He prays for you in heaven?
      - (d) Have you taken this seriously enough to trust Him and confess Him before others?
    - (iii) Do you believe Jesus is Lord?
      - (a) That He has the right to tell you what to do?
      - (b) That you should obey Him?
      - (c) Are you obeying Him?
    - (iv) Do you believe He is sovereign over the things that happen in your life?
      - (a) That what happens to you is no accident?
      - (b) That He is working all things together for your good?
      - (c) That He does answer your prayers?
      - (d) Knowing that, are you praying?
    - (v) Have you gained any insight from reading what is true about Him in the Bible? Or from your own personal experience of His working in your life?
      - (a) Or do you still get angry when things don't go your way? Do you still worry when difficult times come?
      - (b) Are you surprised when God answers your prayer?
      - (c) Are you still struggling with what's going to happen after you die?
      - (d) If so, you are like the disciples – you haven't yet learned what you should learn.
- B. When these things fail to strengthen your faith, it means that in some degree your heart has become hard. You need to guard against this.
  1. This was clearly the disciples' problem.
    - a. Mark writes, "For they had not gained any insight from the *incident of the loaves*, but their heart was hardened" (v. 52).
    - b. In other words, they were still having a hard time believing.
      - (i) They actually saw these things happen, and they were still having a hard time.

- (ii) This shouldn't surprise us because there were many more who saw these miracles who didn't believe at all – the Pharisees for instance.
  - (iii) Seeing isn't necessarily believing.
    - (a) You need to be thankful this is true – you'll never see what they saw with your own eyes.
    - (b) What you really need is faith.
      - (1) The evidence of things not seen (Heb. 11:1).
      - (2) The faithful of the OT seemed to have more faith than the disciples – even though many times they never saw what the Lord promised.
- c. Why didn't they believe?
- (i) It really boils down to sin.
  - (ii) And therefore a lack of God's Spirit in their heart.
- d. Are you struggling with these things as well?
- (i) The more you doubt God and His Word, the more you grieve the Spirit.
  - (ii) The more you grieve Him, the less you will have of His influence.
  - (iii) The less you have His influence, the harder your heart will become.
  - (iv) And the harder your heart, the weaker your faith.
2. And so what should you do? Three things.
- a. First, stop doubting and start believing.
- (i) Read your Bible and believe what it says – God doesn't lie.
  - (ii) Stop living as though the Bible isn't true, as though God doesn't exist, or as though Jesus doesn't stand ready to help you and answer your prayers, or as though He really isn't sovereign.
  - (iii) Believe what He says and live in the reality that He is in control.
- b. Second use the means the Lord has given to help you more diligently.
- (i) Spend more time in prayer.
    - (a) Prayer will bring down more of the Spirit's influence.
    - (b) It will strengthen your faith.
    - (c) Maybe it's because you don't pray enough that you struggle so much.
    - (d) Jesus often prayed – if He needed prayer, how much more do you?
    - (e) Martin Luther once wrote, "If I fail to spend two hours in prayer each morning, the devil gets the victory through the day. I have so much business I cannot get on without spending three hours daily in prayer."
    - (f) E.M Bounds writes, "The little estimate we put on prayer is evident from the little time we give to it."
    - (g) If you pray more, your faith will be stronger.
  - (ii) Don't forget about the other means as well.
    - (a) Reading, hearing the Word preached, fellowship, the sacraments.
    - (b) If you draw near to God more often, you will have a stronger faith.
- c. Finally, warn others.

- (i) As long as they harden their hearts against the truth, they are in danger.
- (ii) But if they will listen and believe, they will be saved.
- (iii) The more you are able to warn them, the stronger your faith will be.
- (iv) May the Lord help us all to do these things. Amen.

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