

More than Enough Pt. II

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Mark 6:45-56

Mark, writing under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit pens these words:

Immediately he made his disciples get into the boat and go before him to the other side, to Bethsaida, while he dismissed the crowd. And after he had taken leave of them, he went up on the mountain to pray. And when evening came, the boat was out on the sea, and he was alone on the land. And he saw that they were making headway painfully, for the wind was against them. And about the fourth watch of the night he came to them, walking on the sea. He meant to pass by them, but when they saw him walking on the sea they thought it was a ghost, and cried out, 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." And he got into the boat with them, and the wind ceased. And they were utterly astounded, for they did not understand about the loaves, but their hearts were hardened. When they had crossed over, they came to land at Gennesaret and moored to the shore. And when they got out of the boat, the people immediately recognized him and ran about the whole region and began to bring the sick people on their beds to wherever they heard he was. And wherever he came, in villages, cities, or countryside, they laid the sick in the marketplaces and implored him that they might touch even the fringe of his garment. And as many as touched it were made well. Mark 6:45-56

Brothers and sisters, "The grass withers and the flower fades, but the Word of our God stands forever" Isaiah 40:8.

I. JESUS TEACHES US TO REST IN HIS PRESENCE. (v.30-32)

II. JESUS TEACHES US TO REFLECT HIS COMPASSION. (v.33-34)

III. JESUS TEACHES US TO RELY ON HIS RESOURCES. (v.35-42)

IV. JESUS TEACHES US TO RECEIVE HIS BLESSING. (v.43-44)

V. JESUS' PLANS ARE SOMETIMES DIFFERENT FROM YOURS. (v.45-46)

Immediately he made his disciples get into the boat and go before him to the other side, to Bethsaida, while he dismissed the crowd. And after he had taken leave of them, he went up on the mountain to pray.

After Jesus satisfied the hunger of the crowds, He sent His disciples away before He dismissed the crowd. There is a distinct urgency in verse 45. Mark tells us that Jesus “made His disciples get into the boat and go before Him to the other side”. The word “made” is the Greek verb, **ἀναγκάζω** (anankazo). It means to “force,” “compel,” or “constrain”. It suggests that Jesus’ disciples were reluctant to leave. But Jesus wasn’t asking questions; He was making statements. Why do you suppose Jesus sent His disciples away? Mark doesn’t give us any further detail, but John fills in some of the gaps. John tells us, “When the people saw the sign that he had done, they said, “This is indeed the Prophet who is to come into the world!” Perceiving then that they were about to come and take him by force to make him king, Jesus withdrew again to the mountain by himself” John 6:14-15.

Why did Jesus send His disciples away? He sent His disciples away because He knew that they were susceptible to the prevailing push of the crowd to try and force Him to be king. Jesus’ disciples were young in their faith, spiritually immature, and easily susceptible to wrong thinking. Jesus was concerned that the excited crowd might begin a revolution that would, from a human perspective, stifle his ministry prior to the cross. It’s interesting to note that this was the very thing that Jesus denied when Satan tempted Him in the wilderness (cf. Matthew 4:1-11). Remember, Satan, in Matthew 4, took Jesus to a very high mountain and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. And he said to Him, “These I will give you, if you will fall down and worship me” (cf. Matthew 4:8-9). But Jesus wasn’t interested in Satan’s lie or the lure of the people to try and make Him king. Jesus is already King, but His kingdom isn’t of this world. So Jesus sent His disciples away in order that he might calm the crowd without His disciples being swept up in the moment. After the crowd is calmed, Jesus dismissed them back to their homes before going up on a nearby mountain to pray.

The disciples probably didn’t understand why Jesus asked them to depart. As a matter of fact, the text implies that they didn't want to go. As they rowed away from shore, it was likely with mixed emotions. They were likely buzzing with excitement but at the same time they were probably disappointed by the seeming change of plans. Jesus, the infinitely wise Shepherd had a different set of plans for these guys. He was about to teach them a lesson they’d never forget. Wise Solomon reminds us, “The heart of man plans his way, but the Lord determines his steps” Proverbs 16:9.

Here’s the reality, friends: You and I don’t know what the sovereign Lord has planned for us outside of what He has already revealed in His Word, but when Jesus says, “Get into the boat and go,” we better obey. Remember, God sent Abraham out from Ur, not knowing where he was going (cf. Hebrews 11:8). Jesus is in control of your life, and the best and wisest thing for you to do is to simply obey Him – even when his plans don't seem to line up with yours. There are two things we know for certain: Jesus in control of whatever is coming, and He has purpose in all that

He ordains for us. It may not be easy, but He knows what He's doing. We need not argue, complain, grumble, or try and teach Him how our way is better. Instead, just get in the boat!

VI. JESUS IS WILLING TO SEND YOU INTO A STORM TO GROW YOU. (v.47-48)

And when evening came, the boat was out on the sea, and he was alone on the land. And he saw that they were making headway painfully, for the wind was against them. And about the fourth watch of the night he came to them, walking on the sea. He meant to pass by them,

Jesus knows exactly what we need. The disciples had just completed a largely successful mission. They had returned from Nazareth after having preached the gospel, healed the sick, and cast out demons (cf. 6:12-13). You can imagine that they were probably sailing on cloud nine. But they had also just been apart of a miracle of epic proportion when they served alongside Jesus as He multiplied 2 fish and five loaves to feed 5,000 people. The excitement must have been palpable. Things were humming right along. But herein lies the danger. *Success is often a precursor to self-reliance.* Jesus loves us enough to not let us wander too far down the path of self-sufficiency. It's okay to be on a mountaintop as long as we don't get careless and step of the cliff. Unfortunately, when we are doing well, we tend to think that we are the source of our own success.

Spiritual blessings need to be balanced with burdens and battles, otherwise we run the risk of becoming pampered children instead of mature sons and daughters.¹ Blessing balanced with burdens is often the development plan that Jesus implements with followers. Remember the last storm the disciples found themselves in (cf. Mark 4:35-41)? It, too, followed an exciting day of teaching. Later in Acts, the "storm" of persecution begins right on the heels of the disciples preaching and 5000 people coming to know Christ. In the first storm, Jesus was in the boat with his disciples. In this storm, He was on the mountainside praying for them. What a beautiful truth. Paul reminded Timothy, "There in God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus" (1 Timothy 2:5). Likewise, Jesus said to Peter, "Simon, Simon, behold, Satan has asked to sift you like wheat; but I have prayed for you, that your faith may not fail" (Luke 22:31-32). Our resurrected Lord is praying for us this very moment in heaven.

Friends, storms have a way of humbling us. They resize us. They remind us that we aren't as big as we think we are, we aren't as smart as we think we are, and we aren't as strong as we think we are. Jesus' prerogative has much less to do with our comfortability in this life. As a matter of fact, He told His disciples, "In this world you will have trouble..." John 16:33. Instead, Jesus is using every moment, every circumstance, and every trial to grow us before we get to Heaven. Trust and obey, for there's no other way, to be happy in Jesus, than to trust and obey!

¹ Warren Wiersbe, 132.

Did you notice that it was the obedience of the disciples that landed them out in the turbulent sea? There is a great lesson for us here. If you submit your life to an obedient pursuit of Christ, this doesn't relieve you of life's sorrows. As a matter of fact, it may very well intensify them. But these sorrows, difficulties, and pains are being used by God to ready you for Heaven. By the way, this stands in stark contrast to the prosperity gospel – does it not?

VII. JESUS NEVER HAS YOU OUT OF HIS WATCHFUL SIGHT. (v.48)

And he saw that they were making headway painfully, for the wind was against them.

Though the disciples enjoyed no visible presence of their shepherd leader, He had not taken His eyes off of them. Oh, what comfort this truth brings to the believer. Wherever you are and whatever your circumstances may be, the watchful eye of your Savior is ever on you. Whether you are alone or with company, in sickness or in health, in distress or at ease, in calm waters or in raging seas, the same eye that saw the disciples on the lake, is watching you. Our ways is never hidden from Him. He may not take away our troubles in the time we like best, but rest assured He hasn't left us or forsaken us (cf. Hebrews 13:5). The writer of Hebrews encourages us with the truth, "We do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as *we are*, yet without sin. Therefore let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need" Hebrews 4:15-16.

If you're looking for a passage to memorize, let me commend Psalm 139:1-10 to you. Take a verse or two at a time and hide them in your heart and mind:

O Lord, You have searched me and known me. You know when I sit down and when I rise up; You understand my thought from afar. You scrutinize my path and my lying down, And are intimately acquainted with all my ways. Even before there is a word on my tongue, Behold, O Lord, You know it all. You have enclosed me behind and before, And laid Your hand upon me. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; It is too high, I cannot attain to it. Where can I go from Your Spirit? Or where can I flee from Your presence? If I ascend to heaven, You are there; If I make my bed in Sheol, behold, You are there. If I take the wings of the dawn, If I dwell in the remotest part of the sea, Even there Your hand will lead me, And Your right hand will lay hold of me.

VIII. JESUS ALLOWS YOU TO STRUGGLE AS A REMINDER THAT YOU NEED HIM. (v.48)

... they were making headway painfully, for the wind was against them. And about the fourth watch of the night he came to them, walking on the sea. He meant to pass by them,

I love this phrase, "Jesus saw that they were making headway painfully". The word "painfully" is the Greek adjective, (**βασανίζω** - basanizo). It means to "suffer," "be pained," "tormented," "agitated," or "tossed". Jesus' disciples were being tossed by the waves and they were suffering to get anywhere. I grew up fishing with my dad. During the summer months, we would often rent a canoe and float a nearby river fishing for smallmouth. Inevitably, there were times when we couldn't put the lure where we wanted it and instead found ourselves caught in a tree or brush alongside the riverbank. When that happens at the beginning of the day, you just snap the line, cut your losses and keep on moving. But later in the day, when that has happened a number of times already, you let out some slack out of the line and paddle upstream to retrieve your lure. Paddling against the current is difficult. You don't get anywhere fast if you get anywhere at all. It's wearying.

Jesus looked out from the mountainside and saw His men struggling on their own. These guys are in a spiritual storm. Satan would love nothing more than to send this whole bunch straight to the bottom of this Sea. This is Christ's Church, 12 guys in a boat about to sink. But that's not going to happen. Christ is faithful! He will not allow us to be tested beyond what we are able, but will with the test provide a way to escape so we can bear it (cf. 1 Corinthians 10:13).

If you have a cinematic mind, you can almost picture the scene. Peter, with his soggy beard blowing in the wind, had likely taken charge and was giving instruction to the other disciples. You can image the constant spray of ocean water made it hard to see and howling wind made it difficult to see to keep the bow of the small boat pointed in the right direction. Their feet were probably freezing as the bottom of the vessel filled with standing water. This was the situation for the better part of 7-8 hours. It seemed as if there was no relief.

Look at verse 48 again. Mark writes, "And about the fourth watch of the night he came to them, walking on the sea. He meant to pass by them." The Jewish night started at 6PM, ended at 6AM, and was divided into four watches. 6PM - 9PM, 9PM - midnight, midnight - 3AM, and 3AM - 6AM. It wasn't until sometime between 3AM and 6AM, That Jesus came walking out on the sea toward His disciples. Mark tell us , "Seeing His disciples in trouble, He came to them walking on the sea." But then Marks adds, "He meant to pass by them." What does this mean? It almost sounds like Jesus intended to walk past the disciples.

In the Old Testament, this nondescript phrase, "passed by," is charged with significance. It's use signaled a special revelation of God. At Mt. Sinai, the transcendent Lord "passed by" Moses (cf. Exodus 33:22, 33:19, 34:6) in order to reveal His name and compassion. Again at Mt. Horeb, the

Lord revealed His presence to Elijah by “passing by” (cf. 1 Kings 19:11). In Job 9:8 and 11 Job says, “[He] alone stretched out the heavens and trampled the waves of the sea; Behold, he passes by me, and I see him not; he moves on, but I do not perceive him.” What do these verses reveal? They reveal the immense separation between God and humanity. God can do what humanity cannot do. His wisdom is beyond compare, he moves mountains, shakes the earth, obscures the sun, arrays the heavens in splendor, and treads on the waves of the sea. By meaning to “pass them by” Jesus wasn’t intending to hang His disciples out to dry. Instead, He was humbling their overconfidence and answering their question back in the previous storm, “Who is this?” (cf. Mark 4:41).²

Jesus wanted His disciples to see Him in the midst of the storm. We need to see Jesus in the midst of our storms. You have two choices when you find yourself in the middle of difficult circumstances. You can let your view of God be overshadowed by your circumstances, or you can let your view of God grow as you see your circumstances as being sovereignly ordained by God who will walk with you through them. Jesus doesn't always stop the storms of life immediately. Sometimes, He lets us painfully struggle at the oars in order that we might be broken of our tendency to trust in our own little human remedies and fleshly efforts and instead rely on His presence and power. Is there a storm you’re going through right now? Where are your eyes, my friend? One of my favorite hymns, *He Giveth More Grace*, captures God’s grace in our trials:

*He giveth more grace when the burdens grow greater,
He sendeth more strength when the labors increase;
To added afflictions He addeth His mercy,
To multiplied trials, His multiplied peace.*

*When we have exhausted our store of endurance,
When our strength has failed ere the day is half done,
When we reach the end of our hoarded resources
Our Father’s full giving is only begun.*

*Fear not that thy need shall exceed His provision,
Our God ever yearns His resources to share;
Lean hard on the arm everlasting, availing;
The Father both thee and thy load will upbear.*

² James R. Edwards, *PNTC: The Gospel According to Mark* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2002), 198-199.

*His love has no limits, His grace has no measure,
His power no boundary known unto men;
For out of His infinite riches in Jesus
He giveth, and giveth, and giveth again.³*

IX. JESUS WILL MEET YOU IN YOUR DIFFICULTY AND CALM YOUR ANXIOUS HEART. (v.49-52)

but when they saw him walking on the sea they thought it was a ghost, and cried out, 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." And he got into the boat with them, and the wind ceased. And they were utterly astounded, for they did not understand about the loaves, but their hearts were hardened.

Many critics have sought to discredit the Bible because it speaks of Jesus walking on water. Starting from the premise that the "laws of nature" are inviolable and that all things in the universe must be capable of a rationalistic explanation, they have proposed theories that seek to explain this text in some imaginable or conceivable manner. Some have proposed that Jesus walking on water was merely an optical illusion as He walked along the shore. Others insist that He must have been walking on a sandbar. But these possibilities eclipse the deity of Christ as well as the meaning of the story. As a matter of fact, there is no way to translate the phrase "walking on the sea" any other way. There is massive significance to this key feature of the story.

In the Old Testament, only God can walk on water. Job tells us, "[He] alone stretched out the heavens and trampled the waves of the sea" Job 9:8. The Psalmist writes, "Your way was through the sea, your path through the great waters; yet your footprints were unseen" Psalm 77:19. Isaiah says, "The Lord... makes a way in the sea, a path in the mighty waters" Isaiah 43:16. When Jesus walks on the water toward His disciples, He walks where only God can walk. Notice also that Jesus calls out to the disciples saying, "Take heart; it is I". Jesus says, "Ego eimi," literally "I AM". Just as God disclosed Himself to Moses as "I AM," so Jesus calms His disciples' fear by saying, "I AM here." A sweeter voice these disciples have never heard! He doesn't first stop the trial. He wants us to see Him, to know Him, to trust Him. Trials don't always go away. But where the trials increase, His grace is always sufficient. Jesus speaks words of comfort to His men. He lets them know He is the great I AM of the Old Testament, that He is indeed deity and sovereign over all things, including their storm. Jesus now looks on His disciples with the same compassion with which He earlier looked on the hungry crowd (6:34).

Brothers and sisters, here is a precious truth: When the hour seems the darkest, Jesus will show Himself as near and we will reach the shore. Reaching shore may be in this life or reaching the shore may be our passing from this life into glory, but we will unquestionably reach the shore!

³ Annie J. Flint (1866-1932), *He Giveth More Grace*.

There are two miracles in Mark 6 – the feeding of the 5000 and the calming of the storm the disciples found themselves in. I would submit that in each of these miracles Jesus is teaching us something about His character. In the feeding of the 5000, Jesus reveals Himself as the *Provider*. When He calms the disciples' wind tossed boat, Jesus reveals Himself as the *Protector*. Remember David's words, "The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want (provider)... Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I fear no evil, for You are with me (protector)" Psalm 23:1,4. To trust Christ is to know that we have His sufficiency and security even in the most difficult trails of life. You're not alone.

X. JESUS REMINDS US THAT THERE IS NEVER A SHORTAGE OF MINISTRY. (v.53-56)

When they had crossed over, they came to land at Gennesaret and moored to the shore. And when they got out of the boat, the people immediately recognized him and ran about the whole region and began to bring the sick people on their beds to wherever they heard he was. And wherever he came, in villages, cities, or countryside, they laid the sick in the marketplaces and implored him that they might touch even the fringe of his garment. And as many as touched it were made well.

Chapter 6 closes with a much different response to the gospel than we saw earlier. In Nazareth, Jesus and His disciples were met with hard-hearted unbelief. Jesus told His disciples, "A prophet is not without honor, except in his hometown and among his relatives and in his own household" Mark 6:4. He went on to tell them, "If any place will not receive you and they will not listen to you, when you leave, shake off the dust from your feet" Mark 6:11. But Mark closes chapter 6 with a much different picture.

CLOSING BENEDICTION

As we bring our corporate worship to a close this morning, hear these words of blessing from the writer of Hebrews, "I will never desert you, nor will I ever forsake you" Hebrews 13:5. And all God's people said, "Amen!" Go in peace!