

Introduction to Mark 6:45-52

Sunday, May 22, 2016
Pastor Ben Cuthbert

Who is Jesus? Many people who would not call themselves ‘Christian’ still have an answer to this question. Who doesn’t have an opinion about Jesus?

Jesus’ earliest followers had a hard time coming up with an answer that made sense. They had followed Him for some time and had seen Him do many miracles, but they struggled to understand who Jesus really is.

Jesus recognizes their weakness and comes once again to their aid. In both a physical and spiritual sense, Jesus reveals Himself to His followers, but they have a hard time coming to grips with who He is.

Context

When people have encountered Jesus in the book of Mark, their most common response has been fear and amazement—even among His disciples (1:22, 27; 2:12; 4:41; 5:15, 20, 42). Most people simply don’t understand who Jesus is or why He came to Earth.

In the previous story (6:30-44), Jesus miraculously and spontaneously created a banquet for well-over five thousand people. Over and over again, Jesus is revealing more about who He is and why He came.

Structure

- I. Jesus dismisses the disciples/crowd (45-46)
- II. Jesus walks on water while the disciples struggle (47-50)
- III. The Disciples can’t believe what just happened (51-52)

Reflect *(Use this section to write down any insights you received from the sermon. Make sure to note any questions you had about something in the passage or in the sermon as well.)*

I. Jesus is Authoritative

II. Jesus is Aware

III. Jesus is God

Discuss

- 1) Jesus demonstrates His authority in dismissing the crowd and in commanding the disciples to get in the boat. Can you give an example of how Jesus has demonstrated His authority in your life?

- 2) Jesus reveals Himself as God in all of His “water-walking glory” as He comes to meet the disciples in the boat. What does this teach us about how God interacts with us?

- 3) The disciples were hard-hearted in their response to Jesus. Pastor Ben mentioned two types of “hard-heartedness”: outright rebellion, and self-righteousness. Have you ever been hard-hearted toward Jesus? What did that look like in your life?

- 4) How can you learn to grow not only in your understanding of who Jesus is, but how to love Him more?

- 5) How can we as a community of Jesus’ disciples encourage one another “as long as it is called ‘Today’” so that we aren’t hardened by sin? (See Hebrews 3:13)

Go Deeper *(This section is especially for leaders to consider as they prepare for the Growth Group meeting)*

Gospel Connections: Jesus often does things in Scripture that can be difficult for us to understand. But what is unmistakable, is His care and compassion for humans like us in our weakness. When Jesus walked on the water to meet the disciples in the midst of their distress, He did something that they couldn't understand but ultimately was for their good. In the same way, our greatest weakness as humans is not our inability to understand God or to row a boat. Our greatest weakness is that we are sinners who are condemned to suffer eternal punishment because we have offended God. It is in the midst of that weakness, utter weakness, that Jesus once again did the unthinkable—He died in our place. To any human who witnessed it, Jesus' death on the cross seemed like weakness and defeat. What really happened, was Jesus accomplished the greatest victory, a victory that no mere human could accomplish. He defeated the spiritual powers and authorities that rule over the present world.

Whole Bible Connections: When God was rescuing the people of Israel from slavery, He revealed Himself to Moses as “I am” (Ex. 3:14; 33:19, 22). The same Greek phrase used in the Greek OT for “I am” are the same words which Jesus says to His disciples as a means of self-identification (denoting His presence). Accompanying that self-identification is the command to not fear (Mark 6:50). When the people of Israel were about to enter the Promised Land, God's presence was the basis given for them to overcome their fear (Deut. 31:6). Just as it was for Israel, it was for the disciples in the boat, and it is the same for Jesus' followers today.

Theological Connections: Jesus reveals in this passage that while He was fully human, He retained His divine sovereignty over the physical elements. In Job 9:8, one of the key characteristics that distinguishes God from creatures is His ability to “tread upon the waves of the sea.” Thus Jesus is revealed by Mark to have attributes which only God possesses. Likewise, mankind's utter inability to recognize God due to sin is also revealed in Job 9:11 where despite God's “passing by,” the author does not perceive or recognize Him.