

Mark 6:45-56 "The Night He Walked on Water"*

Main Idea: There is something very special about Jesus, **very** special. He can do what no one else can do and consequently deserves what no one else deserves from us. In Mark 6:45-56 He demonstrated His complete authority over three realms.

I. Jesus has authority over people (45-46).

A. He sent the disciples away.

B. He sent the crowd away.

1. They wanted to make Him king.

2. He chose to please His Father, not them.

C. He went to pray.

II. Jesus has authority over nature (47-52).

A. He can see what no one else can see (47-48a).

B. He can do what no one else can do (48b).

C. He can get our attention like no one else can get our attention (49-50a).

D. He can comfort like no one else can comfort (50b-52).

1. We're in trouble when we don't apply what we learn.

2. We're in trouble when our hearts are hard.

III. Jesus has authority over disease (53-56).

A. People brought the sick to Him (53-55).

B. When the sick touched Him, they were healed (56).

1. This happened everywhere.

2. This happened to everyone.

Take it to heart: If Jesus really walked on water...

1. You can be sure He sees you today.

2. You can be sure He can change your life today.

3. You can be sure you need Him today.

Do you recognize any of these names: Owen D. Young, Pierre Laval, Hugh S. Johnson, James F. Byrnes, Mohammed Mossadegh, Harlow Curtis? You should, at least according to *Time* magazine, for these are all people who at one time were designated as "Man of the Year" by *Time*. That indicates there was a time when these folks were considered by some to have had the greatest impact in that year of all persons living on earth. Isn't it interesting how the celebrity of today is often all but forgotten tomorrow?

What makes Jesus different? What makes Him not only a great person, but the greatest person who ever walked on this planet? Is that just someone's opinion? No. The facts speak for themselves.

The fact of the matter is that He did what no one else has ever done. "Like what?" you ask. For starters, as we'll see in our study of His life this morning, *He walked on water*. And it wasn't frozen water either. He walked out onto a lake as if He were traveling down a dirt road.

Yes, there is something very special about Jesus, *very* special. He can do what no one else can do and consequently deserves what no one else deserves from us. In Mark 6:45-56 He demonstrated His complete authority over three realms.

I. Jesus has authority over people (45-46).

The context of our story is, as always, important. In the first part of Mark 6 Jesus went to His hometown of Nazareth. Following a cool response there He sent out the Twelve two by two for ministry throughout Galilee.

The result was an explosion of popularity, with so many people coming to see Jesus that He and His men had no time even to eat. Jesus suggested a get-away, so He and the apostles got into a boat and headed for Bethsaida for some r & r. But the crowds ran ahead and were waiting when they arrived. Jesus had compassion on them, taught them the rest of the day, and even fed them later in the afternoon. He miraculously fed the multitude of 5,000 men (plus women and children) by multiplying a boy's lunch that consisted of five barley loaves and two fish. Everybody ate until they were thoroughly satisfied.

At that point Jesus did three strange things, strange to us that is, both of which illustrate His inherent authority over people.

A. He sent the disciples away. Verse 45—"Immediately Jesus made his disciples get into the boat and go on ahead of him to Bethsaida, while he dismissed the crowd." The Lord didn't ask the disciples for their opinion in the matter. Mark says He made them leave, telling them He would join them later.

Why did He stay behind? To dismiss the crowd. Why didn't He allow the disciples to participate in the crowd's send off? We'll discuss that momentarily. For now, please note that Jesus sent them. He directed them to go, and as we'll see shortly, He directed them *right into a storm*. They faced a storm *because* they obeyed God. It was His will. Some of our storms are self-inflicted, but some of them aren't. In all occasions, if we face a storm it's because the Sovereign Lord purposed it.

B. He sent the crowd away. Verse 45 concludes, "While He dismissed the crowd."

That action raises the question, *why?* Why did Jesus send the disciples and crowd away? Mark doesn't tell us, but in his parallel account John does. John 6:15 states, "Jesus, knowing that they [the crowd] intended to come and make him king by force, withdrew again to a mountain by himself." There's the reason for the sudden move...

1. *They wanted to make Him king.* After seeing Jesus turn five loaves and two fish into a banquet for 15,000 people, the crowd went crazy. "Let's make Him our king!" they began exclaiming to one another. "If this Miracle-Worker can do that with five loaves and two fish, just imagine what He could do to the pesky Romans! And talk about a good economic program for a depressed economy! What could be better than a leader who can turn sack lunches into hillside banquets? There's no question about it. We want Him to be our king!"

But that's the last thing Jesus had in mind at this point. Oh, Jesus is a king, for sure. But not that kind of king, not a king who does the whims of sinful people. No, He came to rescue sinners, not gratify their greed.

And so, first, He sent the disciples away. Then He sent the crowd home. Barclay explains, "He did not want his disciples to be infected and caught up in this nationalistic outburst. Galilee was the hotbed of revolution. If this movement was not checked, there might well emerge amongst the excitable people a rebellion which would wreck everything and lead to disaster for all concerned."

I get the sense the disciples didn't want to go. Jesus *made* them get into the boat and leave. It made no sense to these men. Here were thousands of people gathered before Jesus. He had them eating out of His hands, *literally*. This crowd was ready to do whatever Jesus asked. Leave now? No way. Yes, Jesus said, you are leaving now.

Why? The bottom line...

2. *He chose to please His Father, not them.* Jesus loved people but didn't live to please them.

Answer this. While on earth, when was Jesus tempted? We tend to think of the forty days and nights in the wilderness as being His time of temptation, and it was. But the Lord faced temptation His entire incarnation.

Here in Mark 6 we see the tempter again. No, he's not mentioned by name in the text, but he's at work. Listen to him: "Jesus, you can be king right now if you want to." The devil, through the crowd, is offering Jesus a short cut to the power, as Jones puts it, "a short cut that would avoid the garden and the cross; that was the bait Satan held out before the mind of Jesus."

Though packaged differently, it was the same temptation the devil offered earlier when he took Jesus to a high mountain, showed Him all the kingdoms of the world, and said in Matthew 4:9, "All this I will give you if you will bow down and worship me."

On that occasion Jesus responded, "Away from Me, Satan! For it is written: 'Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only (Matt 4:10).'" How did Jesus respond this time?

C. He went to pray. Verse 46—"After leaving them, he went up on a mountainside to pray."

You say, "I wonder what He prayed about?" There are only three times in Mark's gospel when we see Jesus withdrawing to pray, and each time involved a crisis—after a healing and consequent confusion in Capernaum (1:35), here, and in Gethsemane after the Lord's Supper (14:32-36). In each of these incidents, Jesus faced something similar, the temptation not to carry out the mission His Father had given Him.

Think again of the problems Jesus is facing at this time. The orthodox Jews are looking for a way to kill Him (3:6). Herod Antipas, the man who killed John the Baptist, is insanely suspicious of Him (6:14). And most recently, those with a zealot mindset are trying to force Him to be king against His will.

Where do you go when you have problems? Jesus went to His Father. There on that mountainside He spent hours seeking His Father's face, and when He leaves the mountain He will choose to obey His Father's will rather than accept any crowd's shortcut offer. That crowd was thinking of a throne, but He is thinking of a cross. John 18:11—"Shall I not drink the cup the Father has given me?"

Right after this encounter Jesus preached to another crowd the message recorded in John 6, proclaiming (John 6:51), "I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever. This bread is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world." The effect was stunning. When the crowd heard Jesus talking about dying, they grumbled and were offended. John 6:66 records, "From this time many of his disciples turned back and no longer followed him."

My friend, Jesus didn't come to give us what we *want*. He came to provide for us what we *need*. Sinners need more than free lunch programs. Sinners need a Savior. That's why He refused to follow the crowd and went to the cross. The question is, will you agree with Jesus' assessment that you need a Savior?

Here's the first thing that makes Jesus special. He—and He alone—has authority over people. He also possesses authority over a second realm.

II. Jesus has authority over nature (47-52).

The story we're about to consider is, like last week's feeding of the 5,000, another familiar one. Having heard it, who can forget the account of Jesus walking on the water? But as is true of everything He did, Jesus' actions teach us about Himself. In this case, His actions illustrate for us four qualities possessed by Jesus that set Him apart from everyone else.

A. He can see what no one else can see (47-48a). Verse 47—"When evening came, the boat was in the middle of the lake, and he was alone on land. He saw the disciples straining at the oars, because the wind was against them."

You may recall the storm back in Mark 4, the one where Jesus was sleeping in the boat while the disciples

were straining to keep the ship afloat. The storm in Mark 4 was a wild tempest. This one is different, not so much a storm as a strong and continuous head wind that makes for back-breaking rowing for the disciples.

Matthew says the boat was "many stadia" away from the land (Matt 14:24), with a stadion being 600 feet. He also says the boat was being "battered" (lit. 'tormented') by the waves.

And what's Jesus doing? I love this. Mark says that although Jesus was up on the mountain and the disciples were out on the boat, Jesus saw the disciples. In fact, He saw them fighting the battle with the wind and waves.

And remember the reason the disciples are in this frustrating moment. Jesus sent them into it. You say, "Why would He do that?" For the same reason He sends us into trying situations, *to teach us and help us mature*.

Coaches understand this methodology. I saw a feature on a basketball coach once who used an innovative tactic. He had his team wear football pads and helmets in *basketball practice!* His objective was to make practice harder, not to hurt his team, but to prepare them to play the game better, especially against aggressive teams.

Here is a great truth, my friend. Even when we can't see Jesus, He sees us. He sees you right now. He knows what you are facing. He can see what no one else can see.

B. He can do what no one else can do (48b). Verse 48b—"About the fourth watch of the night he went out to them, walking on the lake."

The fourth watch begins at 3:00 a.m. and lasts until 6:00 a.m. This means a period of nine to twelve hours has passed since Jesus has been with the disciples. He left them at about 6:00 p.m. (Mark says it was "evening") and now rejoins them in the fourth watch of the night (again, that's between 3 and 6 a.m.). During their time apart He has been praying and they have been fighting the wind.

Jesus had problems, but when He saw His men in trouble He set aside His problems and went to them. He stopped praying and moved into action.

Hear the words again. *He went to them*. And how did He get there? By boat? No. By swimming? No. *He went to them, walking on the lake*. For the first time in the history of civilization a person walked on water—and it wasn't a stunt. But this is no ordinary person.

Verse 48 concludes, "He was about to pass by them..." The KJV says, "and would have passed by them." Why Jesus did this, Mark doesn't tell us. "Maybe it was foggy and He couldn't see them," someone might suggest. No, if you can walk on water you, you don't get lost in fog! My hunch is that He was testing the men, to see if they were ready to admit how much they needed Him.

You see, He can do what no one else can do, but to benefit we must acknowledge we need Him.

Jesus taught His disciples an important lesson that night. In a few months He would be leaving them altogether. He was going to die on the cross, conquer the grave, and return to heaven. They would no longer go through life with Him as their daily companion—at least they wouldn't see Him. They would face temptations and difficulties alone—or so it would seem.

But here's the lesson. You may feel alone, but you're never alone, not if you know Jesus. He always has His eyes on His people. Though you can't see Him, He sees you, and in His time and as He deems necessary He will come to you with special help for the moment.

Oh beloved, ponder this. Our eyes have never seen Him, our hands have never touched Him, but He is with

us always. That was His parting promise, "Lo, I am with you always, to the very end of the age (Matt 28:20)." We are safe in His keeping, always and forever.

C. He can get our attention like no one else can get our attention (49-50a). This past Monday Sherry and I traveled to the NANC conference in Lafayette, Indiana. We arrived at about 12:15 a.m. Indiana time, checked in at the motel desk, got our key and went to our room. As we approached the door we heard the phone ringing on the other side. Then it stopped. I put the key in the lock and pushed the door open. There stood a woman in her nightgown. I don't know who was more surprised, Sherry and I, or the woman! "Whoops! We're sorry. Is this your room? We'll leave. Have a nice night." After a quick trip to the lobby desk we got another room—and then made sure we latched our door!

That was a surprising moment, to say the least. You don't expect to see someone standing in your motel room when you check in. But here's a surprise that defies human explanation. You don't expect to see what the disciples saw that night...

Verse 49—"But when they saw him walking on the lake, they thought he was a ghost." John 6:19 indicates they had rowed about three or four miles by this time. The last person they expected to see was Jesus. "Who or what is *that*?!"

Verse 49 says, "They cried out." Verse 50 tells why, "Because they all saw him and were terrified." Remember, these are men. Real men don't struggle with fear, do they? Everybody has his limit, and here's something that will cause the knees of the bravest to buckle, when the Lord intersects your life in ways that defy the laws of nature.

It's true. The Lord can get our attention like no one else. Thankfully...

D. He can comfort like no one else can comfort (50b-52). Verse 50—"Immediately he spoke to them and said, 'Take courage! It is I. Don't be afraid.'" Our English Bibles miss the connection, but by saying, "It is I," Jesus could have been deliberately using the name of God (Ex 3:14, "I AM").

Verse 51—"Then he climbed into the boat with them, and the wind died down." What a moment that was! As soon as the Master's leg swung over the side and He entered the boat, the wind stopped. What a difference Jesus makes! When He enters, things change in big ways.

Some may be thinking, "I thought Peter walked on the water, too. How come that's not in Mark's account?" Good question. Actually, according to Matthew 14, Peter did walk on water. Right after the disciples saw Jesus, Peter asked Jesus to allow him to get out of the boat and come to Him, which he did, and then started to sink when he started looking at the waves instead of the Lord. You'll find that part of the story in Matthew 14, but not in Mark's account. Why not? Tradition says that Mark wrote this gospel as *Peter's* spokesman. Perhaps in relating the story Peter didn't want to give people the wrong impression, so he left out his personal involvement in the miracle.

Verse 51 concludes, "They were completely amazed." Many today want to be amused rather than amazed by Jesus. And why were the Twelve amazed? Verse 52—"For they had not understood about the loaves; their hearts were hardened." Mark informs us that the disciples struggled that night for two, not-so-obvious reasons. In other words, not only were they battling the waves, but also battling two heart issues. The same two issues get us into trouble.

1. *We're in trouble when we don't apply what we learn.* Mark says, "They had *not understood* about the loaves." He's talking about the five loaves that Jesus multiplied into a meal for 5,000 men the previous day. Not only had they seen that miracle but they participated in it, each of the Twelve getting on this boat with a basketful of leftovers. They saw the miracle, yes, but they didn't *understand* it. In other words, they missed

the point of it.

What is the point? This. If Jesus can feed 5,000 men with five loaves, defying the laws of nature, why would you be amazed if you saw Him walking on water? If you really understood His identity, you would expect the impossible. *If you understood*, that is.

But that was the disciples' problem, as it is ours so often. They didn't apply what they learned. They saw Him feed the 5,000, but they didn't take it to heart. A second issue...

2. *We're in trouble when our hearts are hard.* Mark says the disciples were amazed because "their hearts were hardened." Oh, they saw His works and heard His words, but they didn't get it. They had a heart problem.

Tim Hansel tells this story in his book *Holy Sweat*: One day, while my son Zac and I were out in the country, climbing around in some cliffs, I heard a voice from above me yell, "Hey Dad! Catch me!" I turned around to see Zac joyfully jumping off a rock straight at me. He had jumped and then yelled "Hey Dad!" I became an instant circus act, catching him. We both fell to the ground. For a moment after I caught him I could hardly talk.

When I found my voice again I gasped in exasperation: "Zac! Can you give me one good reason why you did that???"

He responded with remarkable calmness: "Sure...because you're my Dad." His whole assurance was based in the fact that his father was trustworthy. He could live life to the hilt because I could be trusted. Isn't this even more true for a Christian?

Make it personal, dear friend. If Jesus can multiply loaves and walk on water, it proves He's worthy of your trust. But the question remains, *do you trust Him?*

Barclay offers this thought, "It is the simple fact of life, a fact which has been proved by countless thousands of men and women in every generation, that when Christ is there the storm becomes a calm, the tumult becomes a peace, what cannot be done is done, the unbearable becomes bearable, and men pass the breaking point and do not break. To walk with Christ will be for us also the conquest of the storm."

By the way, John indicates a second miracle occurred after Jesus entered the boat, stating (John 6:21), "Immediately the boat reached the shore where they were heading." The wind stopped and the boat was at that moment on the shore of Capernaum.

Yes, Jesus had authority over nature. One more realm...

III. Jesus has authority over disease (53-56).

Two things happened in the final scene...

A. People brought the sick to Him (53-55). Verses 53-55—"When they had crossed over, they landed at Gennesaret and anchored there. As soon as they got out of the boat, people recognized Jesus. They ran throughout that whole region and carried the sick on mats to wherever they heard he was."

There's quite a contrast here with what happened previously at Nazareth. Mark 6:5-6 says that at Nazareth, "He could not do any miracles there, except lay his hands on a few sick people and heal them. And he was amazed at their lack of faith."

But at Gennesaret, they came. It was quite a scene, for they came bringing every sick person they could

find.

B. When the sick touched Him, they were healed (56). Note two things about their healing...

1. *This happened everywhere.* Verse 56—"And wherever he went—into villages, towns or countryside—they placed the sick in the marketplaces. They begged him to let them touch even the edge of his cloak [As a good Jew Jesus wore the fringes and tassels commanded by God in Numbers 15:37-39 and Deuteronomy 22:12]..." As far as the healing goes, it happened everywhere. In addition...

2. *This happened to everyone.* Verse 56 concludes, "And all who touched him were healed." No exceptions. All who touched were healed. Such is Jesus' authority.

By the way, why did the people here come? The short answer is, *to get something from Jesus.* And some came with very self-centered notions, as John's account makes clear.

John says that on the day following the feeding of the five thousand, people from Tiberias got in boats and went looking for Jesus. When they couldn't find Him, they headed for Capernaum, seeking Jesus. Listen to the dialogue in John 6:25-29:

"When they found him on the other side of the lake, they asked him, 'Rabbi, when did you get here?' Jesus answered, 'I tell you the truth, you are looking for me, not because you saw miraculous signs but because you ate the loaves and had your fill. Do not work for food that spoils, but for food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you. On him God the Father has placed his seal of approval.' Then they asked him, 'What must we do to do the works God requires?' Jesus answered, 'The work of God is this: to believe in the one he has sent.'"

The fact is, Jesus can give what no one else can give. He's the source of forgiveness as well as life that is both abundant and eternal. It's good to come to Jesus. But some folks come to Him to get what they want, *and no more.* They basically try to *use* Jesus.

Have you ever eaten in a really nice restaurant, the kind that has the waiter in the black tux? Now there's a treat. The head waiter approaches your table gracefully and says, "Welcome, sir, madam. It's a pleasure to have you. It will be my delight to make your dining experience pleasurable. If you need *anything*, please do not hesitate to tell me. I am here for you."

Sadly, that's how some people view Jesus, as a cosmic head waiter. They may even recognize Jesus is unique, that He possesses all power and authority. But they have the notion that He has all this *for them.* He exists for me. If I have a need, He owes it to me to do what I want. Not so.

He who has authority over people, over nature, and over disease isn't a cosmic waiter. He is the Lord who deserves our allegiance. He is the Judge before whom all will give account.

Take it to heart: If Jesus really walked on water...you can be sure of three things.

1. *You can be sure He sees you today.* Perhaps you feel as if the boat you're in is heading into a stiff wind and you're getting nowhere. Life is hard and seems out of control. Know this. He sees, yes, He sees *you* right now.

2. *You can be sure He can change your life today.* The disciples saw Him and it looked like He was walking right past their boat. But when they cried out, He calmed their fears, entered their boat, and silenced the stubborn winds. His presence changed things instantly.

He will do the same for you today, if you'll call on Him. No, He may not necessarily calm the raging wind, not

yet anyway, but He will surely calm you. He will surely change your life today.

3. *You can be sure you need Him today.* Turn to Him now.