

# Mark 6:45-52

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[ 0 : 0 0 ] I'm going to be changed by God here this morning. Learning about Jesus. And there's an infinite amount we can learn about Jesus. We may have been Christians for 40 years, 50 years, 5 minutes.

Doesn't matter. There's always something new to learn about Jesus. And that's the purpose of Mark's Gospel. Mark's always wanting us to know about Jesus and to know about discipleship.

That's the whole purpose of the Gospel of Mark. He says, I want to introduce you to Jesus. And I want you also to learn how to follow him. And that's an ongoing process in our lives, no matter how long or how short we've been Christians.

Or if you're not a Christian, the challenge is for you to think about Jesus. And to think, well, he's so important that he is worth following. He's worth giving my life to.

And his truth is absolutely significant. And it's quite interesting. Mark's quite a short Gospel and it's quick moving. Mark's always moving on quickly to the next thing.

[ 1 : 0 1 ] A bit like Jesus himself, moving towards Jerusalem, towards what he came to do, which was to die on the cross for our sins. The atoning work of Jesus didn't come just to be born, didn't come just to live, but specifically to die and to defeat the power of death, to be raised on the third day and ascended as the saviour.

And it moves quickly towards that. And so there's a sense, even when it's talking about the stories, that there's a speed in the stories as well.

So the first word that we read there was immediately, because Jesus is moving on. So there's been this amazing miracle of feeding of the 5,000. And they picked up 12 basketfuls full of bread, which was a remarkable miracle.

And we read earlier on that the disciples had been tired and they were kind of knackered and they wanted all the people to go home. But Jesus said, well, we'll feed them.

And then not only did he feed them, but there was 12 basketfuls left over, which meant there was one each for them. One for each of the disciples. So they ended up having plenty of food. And I'm sure they had a fill belly.

[ 2 : 1 4 ] Wow, great, it's been a hard, long day. Let's just go and have a sleep now. But then we saved Jesus. And immediately Jesus made the disciples get in the boat and go ahead of him. And there's that urgency about what's happening here.

Now, walking on the water, it's a well-known miracle. Even people who aren't involved in Christianity or aren't Christians, they know about Jesus walking on the water. Usually they caricature the whole idea.

And they make fun of it in a sense, or they use it in a kind of, in a sense, a derogatory way, is it? That's how ridiculous the gospel is, or the Bible is, Jesus walking on water.

But here it's recorded as cold fact. It's not a myth. It's not a story. It's not just something that is there for us to think about as some kind of spiritual message.

It is recorded as fact. And it's a really significant one in the light of how much God has revealed about himself, especially in the Old Testament. We're going to look at that in a little bit.

[ 3 : 15 ] So there's important theological truth, but also practical truth for us in this story. So just to begin with, just to keep your heart, keep you sharp, and keep you involved, I want you to use your imagination.

And imagine that you're, in a sense, you're joining the disciples. It's been that, you know, that long, really hard day. The disciples were told, verse 30, we didn't read it, that they were tired because of all that they had done.

And then they had this food that they didn't expect. They saw this amazing miracle of the feeding of the 5,000 that they didn't expect. And they were rubbing their fingers, rubbing their hands.

They said, oh, it's great to be a follower of Jesus. It's going to be like this all the time. We're going to see all these great miracles. And then, what's the food we got? When did we need it? Sorry.

You think that's my stomach. It's not my stomach. Whatever it is. But they would have been hungry. Their stomach were rumbling. And maybe they thought, oh, maybe next time we'll get cake.

[ 4 : 17 ] Maybe we'll be really popular as all these miracles happen. There'll be lots of surprises for all Jesus. Now, let's go to bed. Let's settle down and make ahead for the next day.

But Jesus says, no, come on. Now get in the boat. You're going to the other side to Bethsaida. I'll catch you up. I'm going up to pray.

I'm staying behind. I've got to sleep first. And he said, what? Bethsaida? That's on the other side of the lake. That's a nightmare journey to go at night at this time.

The wind direction's not great. And you're not coming with us. What's happening here, Jesus? What are you doing? Why are you doing this? But anyway, they obey and they go into the boat and they go towards the other side.

But it's a complete nightmare. It's an absolute nightmare. They're exhausted already. And they're rowing, but they're not getting in there. And the weather's getting worse. And you can imagine what they're thinking about.

[ 5 : 16 ] You know, what on earth was Jesus thinking about? He doesn't know the way. He doesn't know the sea. What is he doing? Why isn't he here? We're on this boat again.

He'd previously done a miracle with him. And you remember he was sleeping on the boat. And he rescued him. And he says, not again. But this time he's not even with us. He's not on the boat with us. This is beyond a jet.

This is a disaster. 3 a.m. in the morning. In the middle of the night. It's the darkest part. They were being blown off course. And they were in fear for their lives. Don't understand, Jesus.

We hate the sea. We hate it. The waves. The aching limbs. The dark. The unknown. And all of a sudden. Jesus comes towards them.

Walking. On the water. What in the world is going on here? They do. Well, they don't recognize him at first. They're terrified.

[ 6 : 16 ] They think it's a ghost at first. The Jews had a kind of. Hate, hate relationship with the sea. Even though these guys were fishermen. They saw it as being chaotic and dark.

And maybe they wondered. They didn't know what it was. They saw him. They thought it was a ghost. Maybe it was a sea demon. But then Jesus spoke.

And they knew immediately. That it was Jesus. Take courage. It is I. Actually, he says. No, come back to this. Take courage.

I am. I am. Don't be afraid. I'll come back to that. Take courage. Don't be afraid. And immediately. Well, he climbed in the boat.

And the waves calm. He didn't even command them to be quiet this time. He just climbed in the boat. And the wind died down. They were completely amazed.

[ 7 : 15 ] That's. If you know your grammar. Which I don't. It's a double superlative that we have here. That is. That they were exceedingly abundantly amazed. They were completely, totally amazed.

Mark's trying to get across. They were utterly dumbfounded. Amazingly, totally, completely amazed at what they did. Because they hadn't really understood what he'd been doing previously.

And then, of course, they land in a different place. They're safe. They arrive in a different place. And yet the crowds still gather to meet Jesus. I always think that's amazing.

In days long before mobile phones. They seem to know where Jesus was going or where he was going to turn up. He was a phenomenon of his day. We kind of have sometimes a gentle Jesus, weak and mild idea.

That he drifted about as an itinerant creature. He was the star quality of the day. People looked to him and looked for him. And there was huge crowds went to meet him.

[ 8 : 20 ] Everywhere he went, we're told, there was massive crowds. Certainly in the early days of his public ministry. And we're told that amazing thing. That everyone brought their sick to him. And on mats or whatever it was.

From the villages, the towns, the countryside. They begged him to let him touch even the edge of their cloaks. And all who touched him were healed. It's a remarkable reality that these disciples saw that day.

They could see not only in the waves being stilled. But in the miracles that he did. And yet, even... Maybe sometimes we feel, I wish I was like...

I wish I'd been one of the disciples. I wish I'd been there to see these miracles. See Jesus walking in the water. See him healing people. Yet we're told that... And Mark makes clear both here. And then later on, I think in chapter 8 and verse 17.

If I've got the right reference here. Jesus said... And it's the same kind of section. Aware of their discussion, Jesus asked them, Why are you talking about having no bread?

[ 9 : 20 ] Do you still not see and understand? Are your hearts still hardened? They didn't get it. Even though they'd seen all these things, they didn't understand. In the depth of their hearts, they had unbelief.

And they, even at this stage, misunderstood Jesus' mission. And when it came to the bit, they all ran away, didn't they? When it came to that point, when he went to the cross, they all ran away.

Even Peter ran away. And Judas betrayed him. It was such a motley crew. And yet, we are no different in many ways from them. So the disciples didn't really understand.

And although the crowds saw these amazing miracles, they also didn't really understand. Maybe some of them did. There was a superstitious reverence, maybe, for Jesus.

He was a wonder worker. And then, later on, the triumphal entry into Jerusalem, everyone was, Yay! Here's Jesus, the great Redeemer. But they were worshipping a Christ of their own imagination.

[ 10 : 25 ] Because the moment he went before Pilate, the moment he went to the cross, they denied him. They were disappointed. They cried, crucify him. And so they never understood why he came.

And that's a challenge for us as well, about our understanding of Jesus, what it is. Is it biblical? And is it following what Jesus himself reveals himself to be? And we'll think about that just towards the end.

So, Mark is wanting us, and God is wanting us, and the Holy Spirit is wanting us to understand who it is that we worship today, that you've sung to already, that we've gathered in his name, and he wants us to be changed by the truth.

We should never really go out of church or out of, away from God's word, the same. We should never just be untouched by it. We've been in touch with the living God through his word.

And it should always, we should always read the scripture, for example, say, what is God teaching me? How is it speaking to my life and my situation today?

[ 11 : 33 ] Well, can I just say a little bit about, again, thinking about the disciples and also Mark's readership, the Old Testament context is important here in this story of Jesus walking on the water, culturally, and the Old Testament background.

Because I said earlier, the sea represented chaos and separation, and it was kind of unruly. And Jesus was, as before, he was revealing his authority over creation and his lordship by walking on the water and calming the wind.

He's revealing who he is in this story that sometimes we glibly pass, but he's revealing himself, actually, as the Old Testament God.

Now, that might mean a great deal to us. So, he's revealing himself in this action as the God of the Old Testament. Many Psalms describe God's power over the sea and they speak about it.

Psalm 68 says, Who formed the mountains by your power, having armed yourself with strength? Who stilled the roaring of the seas and the roaring of their waves and the turmoil of the nations? There's this picture of God who is able to contain what is uncontainable in the dark old seas.

[ 12 : 55 ] Or Psalm 107, He stilled the storm to a whisper. The waves of the sea were hushed. So, you've got that picture of God who is sovereign over the sea, master over the waves.

Job, you know Job who went through all that darkness. He says, He alone stretches out the heavens and treads on the waves of the sea. That's a great picture, isn't it? Treads on the waves of the sea.

And then Job goes on to speak about God in terms of the heavens. He is the maker of the bear, of Orion, of Pleiades and the constellations of the south. And so Mark is saying, look beyond this Jesus walking on the water and see who is being revealed.

See what Jesus is saying. He's saying, I am God in the flesh. I am that Old Testament God who is sovereign over the waves. And I am very God and very man in Christ.

It's incredible truth that we are sitting here today and it needed God to become human to enable us to be redeemed.

[ 14 : 02 ] Our need was so great. Our sin was so deep. Our separation was so intense that it needed God to come in the flesh. And it's difficult for us sometimes to grasp.

Difficult for me and I wish I grasped it more that our very lives are dependent on what God chose to do in coming down. So he revealed himself as the God who's power over the waves.

But also he revealed himself by taking the name of God the Old Testament redemptive name of God. Remember God revealed himself in the Old Testament to Moses Exodus 3 verse 4.

Moses said God he revealed himself as the great I am when he was telling Moses to go and redeem the people out of Egypt.

Moses said who shall I say send me? and god said tell them i am sent to you and that's yahweh that's what we call yahweh or and that was jehovah it's the old testament name where god reveals himself in a name reveals himself as the savior the redeemer of the old testament and when jesus spoke here uh he says take courage ego am i it is me i am he takes that old testament name of god claiming himself to be the great god of the old testament and even interestingly i think i hope it's not reading too much into it here in verse 48 it says that he was about to pass them by he was so it's like jesus walking the water and it is it is it's as if he's going to pass them by just walking on the water but there's a significance in that because it's the same word i think that's used in the revelations of god in the old testament at least a couple of them and that's mark's intention and that's jesus intention in exodus 33 mooses asked to be to be shown god's glory and the lord said i will cause all my goodness to pass by you to pass in front of you and i will proclaim my name the lord and then also uh in kings when elijah's in the cave and he's depressed and he thinks everyone has uh abandoned god and he's been chased for his life um and he asks for god to reveal himself and we're told that the lord said first kings 19 11 go and stand on the mountain in the presence of the lord the lord is about to pass by same word this is a revelation of this is god who's passing by this is god who you're seeing this is god who says i am this is god who calms the waves and that's what mark wants us to recognize to see and to understand and of course mooses and elijah later on just before jesus goes to new visalum the same two guys are on the mountain of transfiguration with him talking about him coming to die so there's these amazing links so important to know the old testament to understand and see what jesus is telling us and so we have this old testament context reminding us of this new testament reality that god jesus is god in the flesh without sin without failure and he in this story goes we're told uh up a mountainside to pray he goes because he's dependent on fellowship with the father and needing the power of the holy spirit in his life and that imagine that jesus god the son needed to pray all the time he saw as critical more important than actually being in the boat with the disciples at this point for his ministry for his miracles for that trinitarian family time he needed to be in prayer it was the priority he couldn't mean anyone in the in the history of the world that was more significant or important or busy than jesus about what he had to come to do yet it all was a time for prayer all the way to the cross right when right before the cross when he said not my will but yours be done he was praying and dependent on the father and even in his forsakenness he's praying my god my god why have you forsaken me on the cross he's doing that for us prayer was so significant so very briefly and lastly uh we've looked at the story uh we've seen the old testament we've thought about the disciples and

[ 19 : 06 ] their attitude we've taken some links from the old testament that makes it so powerful for us and the reality of who jesus claimed to be what is the holy spirit teaching us today as we take it from our lives well we've talked we've mentioned this the first thing is that jesus is god and jesus had to become one of us in order to redeem us if we are to be disciples of jesus that's something we absolutely will always grow uh to learn more about i think i think the older i get as a christian the less i feel i understand it in a sense and yet the more i think i need to know it tim keller puts it beautifully the gospel says you're more sinful and flawed than you ever dared believe but more accepted and loved than you ever dared hope that's the reality of the gospel there's there's the wrath of god that will be poured out on us unless we come to the savior who took the wrath of god in our place hell is very real as is heaven and the two realities come together in a just and loving savior who needed imagine that god went to hell in our place the chaos the darkness the separation like the sea and he came back from that victorious so that our death and separation from god which is which is what death is brings us to that place like i was speaking to the young ones of safety and we can hear his voice saying you know take courage don't be afraid i've always said this the guys who know knew me from saint columbus will know i say this all the time that the it says do not be afraid or we're fear not 366 times in the bible one for every day and also for a leap year every god knows who we are and he knows the guilt the anxiety the fear and the failure jesus is god and we're invited to him daily as believers and as unbelievers to come to him but we also like the disciples like the disciples have hard hearts they were so slow there and sometimes in our pride and in our 21st century arrogance we think how could they be like that if i'd been a disciple i'd have been right in there with jesus if i'd seen the things that he'd seen we're just like them we're much more unbelieving than we think we are you're much more unbelievable i am much more unbelieving we're battling with unbelief and sin all the time and we sometimes just try and struggle away on our own sometimes we become proud and we turn away from god or we moan about how tough it is doing god's will and we shake our fists towards him but what is he doing why on earth is he putting me through this where is he just why the disciples were asking there's no point why am i doing this i thought life would be easy following jesus christ we expect life to be full of miracles and bread baskets full of bread and provision and everything's great he's our genie in the bottle and we just we want that temporary joy and that temporary happiness that temporary life of ease and we're over overwhelmed with fear and unbelief because of our spiritual condition and even our circumstances and we're called to take our unbelief constantly back to him that's what he wants us to be he just wants us to speak to him he doesn't want us to say i've made it lord i understand i've got it all sussed he wants to see him just to come to him say i need you i'm dependent give me more faith help my own belief and take me through this stuff teach me

what your what your teacher or show me what you're teaching me through this difficult circumstance that i hate this darkness i'm going through this illness i can't shake this diagnosis that is disastrous this relationship that is going pear-shaped turning upside down show me allow me to have belief and don't let me be swallowed by unbelief so we have hard hearts and it's important to learn that every day but also to learn that jesus gets us he understands us he's not at a distance uh looking down on us in our failure he gets us much more than we ever appreciate we've started that um with our core group and we've uh before we kind of move to public worship we're looking at uh uh the verse in the bible that speaks about jesus being gentle and lowly the one place in the bible his heart is revealed for i am gentle and lowly in heart and it speaks about his attitude to those who come to him in need and in struggle and he you there's so many verses in the new testament the old and new testament that speak of that take courage don't be afraid i am patient i'm always there for you i will always come to you will you come to me he's always the one who makes the first move he gets us he understands us he's been like us he's been tempted in every single way that we've been tempted yet without sin recognizing that the temptation therefore was much deeper and much sharper because he never gave into it we always give in ultimately because we're sinners and lastly his presence is everything so jesus is god and he needed to come to redeem us we like the disciples hard times but jesus gets us and his presence is everything you see that's what made the difference to the disciples even though at that point they didn't really understand it it's what gave them amazement and encouragement that jesus was with them and i think knowing god's presence knowing the presence of christ and that's a spiritual thing you might not feel it something it's not a physical feeling but knowing recognizing his presence in our hearts and lives is everything for us and that grows as we are in his company as we pray to him like jesus going to the father that we are in his company there can't be a day when we're not going to him if we if we seek his presence in our life if we seek his spirit to guide us and keep us his conversation through his word his company through the presence of the spirit in our hearts our dependence on him and he is to be our example of jesus the sinless son of god after a long long day of energy being drained from him as the savior doing miracles if he then needed to go to the father and spend the night in prayer and not in sleep then we can learn from that example that he is dependent on the father and we are called to be also dependent he's already come to us he's walked on the water of death and of darkness on our behalf do we recognize him and see him and look to him i think it's important for you as a church plant to be a praying people to be praying together to be dependent to be looking for miracles to be asking for god to be doing the work behind the scenes and for us to be used i'm praying to say we pray the same for ruth you're just a bit further on from us but we'll pray for the day when the churches will be filled with people who've come to know jesus and whose lives have been transformed and they've heard the word of god saying don't be afraid

take courage it is i every single human being in winchborough today needs to hear that truth every single human being throughout the world there's no one exempt from needing to hear that great truth because all will stand before the judgment seat of christ young and old religious or irreligious powerful or or weak it doesn't matter it's strange days we live in isn't it when there's one or two massive personalities that should be driving so much of what's happening in the world whether it's trump or putin or whoever it might be elon musk even yeah they came from the womb naked they will go naked to the grave no different from any of us and we'll stand before the living god and we need to remind ourselves of that and of where the power lies and of that power for us and that grace and that love for us and for this community so let's pray together father just help us to see and understand a bit more about you today to understand who you are to understand the living word of god the gospel and the bible and how it speaks into our our day-to-day living and how it dovetails so many realities from and weaves together this great picture from the old testament and how god reveals himself in jesus through many of the pre-incarnation events of the old testament and lord help us to see you more clearly may you not be a bit player in our lives may you not be our genie in a bottle may you not be our last resort friend but may you be our very life and our very hope and may we be reliant on you as our creator of our father our savior our redeemer our lord our friend our companion our brother um our judge may we know that our the judgment has already been passed on all who put their faith in jesus christ because christ himself took the judgment and the death the punishment due to us on the cross and may we find great hope in that grace and then the counter-intuitive nature of trusting in someone that we don't need to earn our favor from and it's not a quid pro quo relationship but rather it's a gift that we are to receive and live by and that transforms us from the inside out so continue with us we pray in jesus name amen