

Mark 6:45-56
Water Walking and Healing

Today we come to a miracle that has become a sort of cultural shorthand for doing the impossible.

EX: if someone is given a very difficult task he or she might respond, "Hey, it's not like I can walk on water."

EX: in the movie Tombstone, after a gun battle with the outlaws someone asks Doc Holliday, "Where's Wyatt?"

"He's down by the creek, walking on water."

Where does this expression come from? Mark 6

45 Immediately Jesus made His disciples get into the boat and go ahead of *Him* to the other side to Bethsaida, while He Himself was sending the crowd away. 46 After bidding them farewell, He left for the mountain to pray.

47 When it was evening, the boat was in the middle of the sea, and He was alone on the land. 48 Seeing them straining at the oars, for the wind was against them, at about the fourth watch of the night He came to them, walking on the sea; and He intended to pass by them. 49 But when they saw Him walking on the sea, they supposed that it was a ghost, and cried out; 50 for they all saw Him and were terrified. But immediately He spoke with them and said to them, "Take courage; it is I, do not be afraid." 51 Then He got into the boat with them, and the wind stopped; and they were utterly astonished, 52 for they had not gained any insight from the *incident* of the loaves, but their heart was hardened.

Healing at Gennesaret

53 When they had crossed over they came to land at Gennesaret, and moored to the shore. 54 When they got out of the boat, immediately *the people* recognized Him, 55 and ran about that whole country and began to carry here and there on their pallets those who were sick, to the place they heard He was. 56 Wherever He entered villages, or cities, or countryside, they were laying the sick in the market places, and imploring Him that they might just touch the fringe of His cloak; and as many as touched it were being cured.

v. 45-46 Jesus deals with the crowd

John 6 gives some insight into why Jesus sent the disciples away. Messianic excitement was at a fever pitch. The crowd was so thrilled with the free food that they wanted to make him king. Jesus wanted no part of that, and he didn't want his disciples to get caught up in that either.

Jesus knew that before he got the throne in heaven, he would wear the crown of thorns on the cross.

** Nothing new under the sun...people are inclined to support those leaders who offer them free stuff. The Roman emperors knew the power of the "bread and circus" to keep the people distracted. Give them free stuff and keep them entertained has been the operative plan of big government rulers for centuries. **

Jesus sends the disciples away, deals with the crowd, and then goes off to pray. The gospels give some instances in which Jesus prayed publicly and when he went off alone to pray. If Jesus needed to spend time in prayer, then what about us?

Anyone who seeks to cultivate a life of faith like Jesus must also cultivate a life of prayer. Calvin – Prayer is the chief exercise of faith by which we lay hold of the promises of God.

Wouldn't you love to have a transcript of that prayer time?

My guess would be that Jesus oriented His prayer from the Psalms. We don't know what He prayed but we do have his Word to guided us in Prayer – the Psalms, Proverbs, etc or the prayers of the NT.

v. 47-49 The Disciples' Dilemma – A Storm and a Ghost??

ESV - The fourth watch is the time between 3:00 A.M. and 6:00 A.M. The Sea of Galilee is 696 feet (212 m) below sea level, resulting in violent downdrafts and sudden windstorms (cf. [4:37](#)).

Jesus sees their need and walks on water toward them (see [Job 9:8](#); [Ps. 77:20](#); [Isa. 43:16](#)).

The text is clear that Jesus is doing something supernatural – walking on top of the water. Such a miracle is met with skeptical voices such as those who doubted the miracle of the loaves and fishes. In this case the theory is that the disciples were mistaken by the fog and saw an optical illusion. Of course that doesn't explain how Jesus got into the boat. So, they propose that the lake had a sandbar that Jesus used to walk out to join them. What these critics are pointing out is that 'men don't multiply bread and fish or walk on water'

This may surprise you, but I agree with them. MEN don't do that...But the God Man does.

These 19th century critics just couldn't deal with the reality of the God Man breaking through and doing miracles.

EX: C.S. Lewis on Miracles:

Lewis says in Reflections on the Psalms: **The real reason why I can accept as historical a story in which a miracle occurs is that I have never found any philosophical grounds for the universal negative proposition that miracles don't happen.**

V. 48-49 The compassion of Jesus for his disciples

He was going to pass them by, but he saw their situation and got in the boat to encourage them and calm their fears.

The phrase "He meant to pass by them" is odd. It is not as though he were racing them to shore and wanted to show them up. I was not so that they would fail to see him but so that they would see him "pass by" (Gk. *parerchomai*), walking on the water, thus giving visible evidence of his deity (and thus answering the question they asked after he stilled the sea in [Mark 4:41](#): "Who then is this?").

He meant for his appearance to be a manifestation or revelation of His divine glory..

The passage echoes the incident where God "passed" before Moses (the same Gr.verb, occurs in the Septuagint of [Ex. 33:19, 22; 34:6](#)), giving a glimpse of his glory. But it also echoes [Job 9](#), where Job says that it is God who "trampled the waves of the sea" ([Job 9:8](#); the Septuagint has "walking on the sea," using the same words as [Mark 6:48](#), and then also says, "he passes by me" ([Job 9:11](#)) There is an implicit claim to divinity in Jesus' actions.

This story is not so much about the disciples' mistaken superstition as it is an account of the divine self-disclosure of the Son of God.

V. 49-50 A supernatural presence = 'phantasma' = phantom, specter, spirit

They were straining at the oars = TORMENT, pain – But it doesn't say they were afraid or troubled until they saw a figure they did not recognize.

** Jesus showed up at an unexpected time in an unexpected way in a storm. Have you noticed that He does that in your life as well? Jesus becomes more real when we meet him in the stormy times in our lives. **

Ex: Exemplified in Robinson Crusoe - a man shipwrecked for 28 years. After an initial time of settling in he became reflective of his life, picked up a Bible he'd taken from the ship, read it and came to a living faith in Christ. Over the years of hardship and loneliness he would despair at times – VERY UNDERSTANDABLE.

"One morning, being very sad, I opened the Bible upon these words, 'I will never, never leave thee, nor forsake thee'; immediately it occurred that these words were to me; why else should they be directed in such a manner, just at the moment when I was mourning over my condition, as one forsaken of God and man? 'Well, then,' said I, 'if God does not forsake me, of what ill consequence can it be, or what matters it, though the world should all forsake me; seeing on the

other hand, if I had all the world and should lose the favor and blessing of God, there would be no comparison in the loss?

“From this moment I began to conclude in my mind that it was possible for me to be happier in this forsaken, solitary condition than it was probable I should ever have been in any other particular state in the world...” [102-103]

**** It is better to have the storms of life with the presence of Jesus than to have a life free of trials but no relationship with Christ. ****

The disciples didn't know who or what they saw – a ghost or some supernatural presence? Among the people there were superstitious ideas that when the sea was churning and boiling, it was the result of the visitation of the demonic world causing the destructive force.

The words of Jesus bring clarity and hope. “Be of good cheer. It is I. Don't be afraid.

The first phrase is only one word in Greek – ‘courage’

EX: Years ago, before Dan Rather embarrassed himself with his biased journalism, he tried signing off the nightly CBS news by saying, “This is Dan Rather. Courage.”

I for one was not encouraged by hearing Dan Rather sign off by saying, “Courage.”

BUT the disciples heard “courage” followed by ‘ego emmi’ i.e. “IT IS I”. OR I AM.

When we think of the “I am,” statements, we think of John's gospel, but Mark has one as well.

The expression ‘ego eimi’ is a double form of “I am”. In John Jesus has numerous “I Am” statements – I am the Bread of Life; ...the way the truth and the Life...the resurrection and the life...the good shepherd...The vine, etc

These “I Am” statements echo the personal descriptive name of God – I AM

As He passed by, walking on the sea, and His disciples were terrified, He tried to calm their spirits: “Be of good cheer! Don't be afraid. Ego eimi—I Am.”

Those words speak of the power and love of Christ that is more than sufficient to meet any danger. The reality of the presence of Christ with us in our storms is what we need as well so that we might experience God's supernatural peace.

Jesus got in the boat with them, the wind stopped, and they were utterly astonished.

v. 52 is an editorial comment.

Even after the disciples had gone out in the name of Jesus and healed people and cast out demons, they are still in a sort of spiritual pre-school in terms of their insight into who Jesus was. And to top it off, their hearts were hardened.

Their lack of understanding “about the loaves” led to the hardness of heart. They should have seen that they were dealing with God incarnate. Who else could do what he did?

Perhaps they were still seeing Jesus through the grid of some liberator from Rome. They must have missed the divine part of his miracle and just seen the “give the crowd what they want part”. That would have put Jesus on par with the worldly rulers. They did not understand that this was God providing bread just as he did for Moses and the people in the wilderness.

EX: the famous passage of how Pharaoh's heart was hardened after some of the 10 plagues. Having a hard heart is the result of unbelief in the face of a clear manifestation of the presence and power of God. It is not where you want to be. The disciples had seen Jesus calm the sea, heal, cast out demons, and feed the multitude but for some reason they did not understand, but their hearts were hardened.

It sounds like an editorial comment from Mark as he explains the state of their hearts at that time. Mark was NOT among the disciples. He most likely got his info from Peter.

This spiritual editorial comment actually puts the disciples in a bad light. That is ONE REASON WHY I THINK IT IS TRUE.

That is a very serious evaluation of their hearts, and it is a warning for us. The disciples weren't like the pagan Pharaoh of Egypt. They weren't the stubborn people of Israel in the Wilderness or the people at the time of the Judges who did what was right in their own eyes.

These guys were the inner circle of followers of Jesus. They had seen his miracles. They had gone out and done miracles themselves, yet their hearts were hardened.

THAT SHOULD RAISE A RED FLAG FOR US that should not be ignored.

It is possible to be a true believer in Jesus, a disciple in reality not just in profession and still have your heart hardened for a season. If we are not careful, we can be in church and engaged with "Jesus stuff" and become spiritually anesthetized. Our enemy never sleeps. He is always seeking whom he might devour whether you are at church or all alone.

The apostles had the personal exposure to the Word made flesh and yet did not understand and their hearts were hardened. We who still live in the comfort of a post-Christian culture should be on the alert. It may be our very exposure to the truth that leads to a kind of spiritual anesthesia.

Heb 3:

7 Therefore, just as the Holy Spirit says,

"Today if you hear His voice,

8 Do not harden your hearts as when they provoked Me,

As in the day of trial in the wilderness,...

.... 12 Take care, brethren, that there not be in any one of you an evil, unbelieving heart that falls away from the living God. 13 But encourage one another day after day, as long as it is still called "Today," so that none of you will be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. 14 For we have become partakers of Christ, if we hold fast the beginning of our assurance firm until the end...

A few quick thoughts about **the hardening of the heart** - *more dangerous than plaque in the arteries*

It involves a problem with our perception – the disciples did not perceive Jesus for who he is, even as he walked on the water. It happens if we stop seeing and appreciating the daily mercies of God in our lives.

It involves a problem of our understanding – we are worldly minded instead of having our minds renewed by the Word of God. it is too easy to be catechized by the mindset of the world because its message never stops – music, books, education, TV, movies, etc

It involves a problem with our 'hearing' i.e. we go to church or bible study but it is more for social engagement than for listening to God, and in private we ignore the Voice of the Holy Spirit

It involves the deceitfulness of sin – deliberate or presumptuous sins will create a hard shell around our hearts. It doesn't happen overnight. Unconfessed sin will lead to rationalization, and we can easily slip into unforgiveness, immorality, abusive speech or behavior, spiritual apathy, a critical spirit, defensiveness, and even self-righteous legalism.

'hardening' is the Greek word from which we get sclerosis – arteries, liver, bones, etc.

v. 53-56 Jesus is sought by those in need

Jesus is not ashamed to be our help in time of need if we are not ashamed to come to him.

That night on the water we have a dramatic manifestation of the glorious Son of God.

Jesus also gave us the Table as a manifestation of his glory and grace. The elements also tell the good news of the Gospel so that as we come our hearts will be fed by the presence of Christ himself.

Come to the Table in awe and wonder at the majesty and grace of God in Christ.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Has it been easy for you to accept the miracles of Jesus, or others in the Bible?

Have you experienced the comforting courage of God in a 'storm'? What was that like?

AGREE – DISAGREE: WHY OR WHY NOT?

It is better to have the storms of life with the presence of Jesus than to have a life free of trials but no relationship with Christ.

Have you experienced a time of hardening of heart or known someone who has?

What was the cause? How did it end?

How are we to heed the warning given in the example of the disciples whose heart was hardened?

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