

Jesus Walks on Water

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Preacher: Derek Lamont

[0 : 0 0] So, we're going to look back this morning for a little while at Mark's Gospel, chapter 6, from verse 45, the story that's entitled, Jesus Walks on the Water.

And I wonder how many of us this morning, let's be honest, okay, I wonder how many of us this morning actually came to church thinking, the opening of the Bible, praying and praising, and the preached Word would actually change me. It would make any difference. I would go out here different from how I came in. Did I think that? Did you think that as we came? Did we pray that?

Did we pray that God's living Word would transform us today and would change us and mold us and would speak in our circumstances? I don't know how you've come today. I don't know your circumstances, but God knows, and God wants us to know that His Word challenges and comforts and changes and rebukes and brings us towards Himself more and more. And really, that's what Mark's Gospel is about, and that's what Mark's intention is. His intention is to present Jesus to whoever will read this Gospel and to learn about Him and be changed by Him and be molded by His glorious character and His redeeming work on the cross. And it's a great book. Mark is a great Gospel. It's a Gospel in a hurry. Mark's always moving quickly from one thing to another, and he's moving all the time towards the cross.

Most of the time he spends as he speaks, as he gives the story of Jesus, he spends it in the last week of Jesus, the Passion Week, the cross, the crucifixion, and the resurrection. And it's almost like he's moving quickly towards that throughout the Gospel. And so, you know, even in this verse, there's an urgency about what he's saying. Immediately, he says, immediately, Jesus makes His disciples grow. There's this a couple of paragraphs later, he says, immediately. And there's this sense of quickness, you know.

You don't linger around Mark's Gospel. You don't sit with your feet up around Mark's Gospel. You're in a rush. You're rushing towards the cross with Jesus and with what Mark is saying. And he's wanting to show Christ and discipleship, what it means to know Christ and what it means then to follow Christ.

[2 : 3 7] Christ. He shows us that, and he's showing that to the early church and to every church since. That's what he's wanting to do, to show Christ and discipleship. And that's foundational for us all.

And it continues to be and always should be foundational for us. So, we come to this great miracle or this great revelation, as it were, of Jesus Christ walking on the water. Probably, for us, the most caricatured of all his miracles, if you want to call it a miracle.

And it's often been mimicked or caricatured in one way or another, the Savior who walks on water. It's a phrase that we use to speak about, you know, anyone who's kind of an amazing character. Oh, they can walk on water. So, it's a well-known, even if people don't really know the story, they'll know that phrase maybe in some way. But it's recorded here as cold fact. There's nothing mythical about what is recorded here. Cold fact. And indeed, increasingly, as we read it, Mark doesn't make a great deal, really, of the miracle itself of what he's done, but rather what it speaks to us about the character of Jesus. Because I think it's very often misunderstood.

And it's important, both theologically and practically, to understand why Jesus did this, why it was important. And the interaction between Jesus and the disciples here, because he's teaching them about himself and his character. So, let's join the disciples.

We're disciples ourselves, most of us, I hope. Maybe all of you here, I don't know. If you're not, I hope by the end of the day you will be. But we're disciples of Jesus. So, let's join them. It was the end of a tiring day. Verse 30, I think, tells us that, that, yeah, they had been hearing Jesus teaching all day. You're lucky you're only going to get me for an hour.

[4 : 40] But Jesus had been teaching all day, and they were tired and hungry. All the crowd were tired and hungry at the end of the day. And after, or just before the miracle of the feeding of the 5,000, Jesus says, come with me by yourselves to a quiet place, get some rest. We're tired. It was exhausting following and serving Jesus. And yet then they came to the miracle of the feeding of the 5,000.

Amazing! At the end of the day, it was well late. You know, the shops wouldn't have been open, they wouldn't have got food. So, Jesus does this amazing miracle, and they've seen all the leftover food, and they're amazed by what Jesus has done. So, they're tired, but they're probably buzzing.

What a great day! That's been an amazing day! What a feed we got in there! I didn't expect that! I wasn't looking to get that kind of food at the end of the day. I'm thinking, this is going to be great following Jesus. I'm going to love it! All these miracles, lots of food. Maybe we'll get cake next time. And he's so popular, all these people around Jesus. And then we get the kind of, we bask in the glory of being followers of Jesus, and we're popular as well. So many surprises. I love this!

I love being a follower of Jesus. Can you imagine them talking like that, and they're getting ready to, oh, it's been a great day. I'm going to go to sleep now. Get bed down and get to sleep. Jesus says, no, get in the boat late at night. You need to go ahead of me, and you need to go to Bethsaida, and I'll catch you up. I'm not coming with you. I'm going up the mountainside to pray.

Oh, Jesus, can we not get some sleep first? Can we not do that in the morning? No, no, do it now. But Jesus, the wind direction's not that great. I'm not sure if it's a good idea to be going. Just do it. Go into the boat. I'll catch you up later. And after a few hours, it's been a nightmare. It's been a nightmare on this boat. The wind has got up. It's going in the wrong direction.

[6 : 50] The account in John's gospel of this tells us that they've been rowing for hours and hours, and they're not getting anywhere. What was Jesus thinking about? You can imagine speaking among themselves. What was the point of this? Could we not have waited till better weather until the morning? Why isn't he here? Why has he left us on our own? Not again. They're on the water again, and they're struggling again. They're worried about their life again on the water because they'd already seen Jesus do a miracle, calming the waves. But at least he was in the boat with them last time, even though he was asleep.

Does he think we can still the waves now because he's done it once? This is beyond a joke. It's three or four in the morning. It's a nightmare. They've got these waves bashing over the boat, aching limbs. It's dark. It's unknown what's going to happen. And then Jesus walks towards them on the water. Unbelievable. What in the world is happening?

Is it a ghost, they say? Is it a sea monster? Is it death? You know, is it a grim reaper that's come?

They're terrified. They saw him, and they were terrified until he spoke and recognized his voice, and he said, don't be afraid. Take courage. It is I. Fear went. Immediately, there's a great phrase in verse 51. It says, they were completely amazed. It's a double superlative. They were exceedingly, abundantly amazed by what happened. They really couldn't put it into words. They were speechless.

He didn't even command the wind and the waves to be silent this time. He just walked past them and came into the boat, and everything went calm. Astonishing revelation of His power and of His glory to them. And then interestingly, when they do get to land, they land in a different place.

[9 : 17] They didn't land where they had intended to land or where they thought they were going to be. They landed in Gennesaret, and the crowd still gathered. And that was before mobile phones. And yet, they all seemed to know about Jesus. He was a phenomenon, and He was the healer, and He healed, and He let people touch His cloak, and they were healed. Maybe sometimes we think if only we could see these miracles.

But it's interesting, actually, here, and in the feeding of the 5,000, because this is all part of a wider section, which ends at the end of chapter 8. But in chapter 8 and verse 17, after Jesus does another feeding, a feeding of the 4,000, we're told in verse 17 that they didn't understand.

Why are you still talking about having no bread, He said? Do you still not understand? Are your hearts still hardened? And that was true so often of the disciples that they didn't understand Jesus. They misunderstood Him and His mission. And we know when the time came, they all ran away, didn't they?

They didn't understand the gospel mission in all its clarity, even though in the next chapter, Peter does acknowledge that Jesus is the Anointed One. So, you have the reaction of the disciples who saw so much and yet didn't believe. We've got so much ourselves. And also, the crowds, interestingly, at this point, the crowds, they flocked to see Jesus. But we do wonder why. Was it superstitious reverence? Was it because He was a wonder worker? We see it later in the triumphal entry into Jerusalem, where they all gathered around Jesus and they worshiped the Christ of their own imagination. And days later, disappointed by Him, they cry out for Him to be crucified. What's your reaction to Jesus? What do you think of Jesus? How do you respond to Jesus? Because this is all about Jesus and discipleship, and how we respond, and how we act, and how we worship, and how we follow, and how we learn from the living God through the Holy Spirit. So, who is this

Christ that we've come to worship today? We've sung about Him. We've prayed to Him. We've gathered in His presence. We're dependent on His Holy Spirit. Who is this Christ that we worship? Mark wants us to understand. He wants us to understand what the miracles mean, and He wants us to understand what He's telling us about Himself. In John's account—I'm just slipping back slightly into the story of the feeding of the 5,000—in John's account, Jesus explains why He does the feeding of the 5,000, to say that He is the bread of life. He's saying that food is okay, it's fine, we need food, but He says He's the—it's much more than Jesus providing food for a hungry group, and being the one who gives that. He's saying that He is the bread of life. He is the one that we must find our nourishment, our strength from. And just the same way here, it's not just about calming the wind and doing an amazing miracle over creation and healing people. There's something beyond the calming of the storm. There's something beyond walking on water. There's something beyond feeding of the 5,000. It's recognizing and knowing who Jesus is.

[13 : 01] Because these disciples who were fishermen, had been fishermen, many of them, culturally and in their Old Testament background, recognized that the sea very often in the Bible, particularly in the Old Testament, represented chaos and separation. And Jewish people generally didn't like the sea very much, and they were afraid of it. It was unruly, and it spoke about opposition, and it spoke about—symbolically, it highlighted kind of the antagonism and enmity towards God. And He reveals here His authority, over creation, over creation, and His lordship over the sea, even the unruly sea.

In calming the wind, what we have here is Jesus revealing Himself as the Old Testament God. That's what He's doing here. He is reminding them of His power over the waves at the crossing of the Red Sea.

He's pointing them towards the Psalms, which so often speak about God's power over the sea. We've sung some of them. Who formed the mountains by your power, having armed yourself with strength?

Who stilled the rolling of the seas, the roaring of their waves, the turmoil of the nations? Psalm 65. Psalm 107, which we sung, He stilled the storm unto a whisper. The waves of the sea were hushed.

His mastery over the waves. Job 9, 8 and 9. He alone stretches out the heavens and treads the waves of the sea. He makes a maker of the bear, and Orion, and Pleiades, and the constellations of the south.

[14:51] Sea and sky. Sovereign King and Lord. And Mark is saying, look beyond Jesus simply walking on the water, and see who is being revealed. There's God in the flesh. Very God, very man, yet one in Christ.

Incredible truth. When you read about Jesus, you're reading and seeing about God in the flesh. So important for us to grasp that. If you have time, go home and read Westminster Confession of Faith, chapter 8, paragraph 2. Tells us all about God being fully God and fully man.

And as He walks towards them, take courage, He says, it is I. Literally, many of you will know this, He says, take courage, I am. Take courage, I am. He's taking that divine Redeemer's name, name of the Old Testament, the great Yahweh name of the Old Testament, and taking it on Himself. He's claiming to be God. Take courage, I am. His power over creation, and then the healing signs pointing to what He's coming to do. And in that, so there's an Old Testament connection for these disciples, both in His revelation of power and His speech. And by this interesting phrase that Mark uses in verse 48, when he says, He was about to pass them by. Now, that phrase appears a couple of times in the Old

Testament in relation to God. It's the same word that's used for God being revealed on a couple of occasions. In Exodus 33, Moses says to God, now show me your glory. And the Lord said, I will cause all my goodness to pass in front of you, and I will proclaim my name, the Lord, in your presence.

And also, in 1 Kings 19, Elijah is looking for a revelation of God, and the Lord said, go and stand on the mountain in the presence of the Lord, for the Lord is about to pass by. It's the same phrase that's used both times. It's a powerful recognition that the still, small voice of God, the glory of God is revealed in both of these passing events. And it's similar here. I think sometimes we read that, we think, well, Jesus was just kind of walking in the water and was going to pass by the boat and miss them out. We go, wait a minute, stop. But it's not really that. It's not that He was going to pass them by and ignore them. It's this recognition that He was revealing Himself to them in this great moment. And of course, these two great Old Testament heroes, Moses and Elijah, see Jesus again shortly in the Mount of Transfiguration.

[18:06] So, we have a revelation of who Jesus is, which the disciples with their Old Testament knowledge would have grasped at some point, maybe not immediately, but would have grasped and seen.

And Mark certainly does as he reveals it to us. And so, we have this New Testament reality of God coming into our existence, coming into our lives yet without sin, and one who is utterly and completely dependent on the Holy Spirit. It's not insignificant that before this walking on the water that He is alone with His Father in prayer. Have you ever done anything powerful for Jesus Christ?

I guarantee if it did, it didn't come in your own strength. It came when you were relying on God in prayer. That's what happens. You know, is anything happening in your life spiritually? When was the last time you fell on your knees and prayed?

When was it we last depended on God for the impossibilities we faced? You face impossibilities today? What are you trying to do? Are you working out a strategy? Am I? Are we relying on ourselves, our gifts, our natural abilities? Are we looking, if Jesus, the infinite and perfect Son of God, felt this great need to pray fervently to His Father, can we drift into worship prayerless? Can you drift into your working week without calling on the name of God and entering the throne of grace, this great and privileged place that we have? You've got greater privileges than the leaders of Russia or America or UK or anyone else, you and me, ordinary punters, just people that nobody really notices. We have freedom and privilege to enter the throne room of heaven to make our requests.

So what's the Holy Spirit teaching us as we draw things to a conclusion quickly? Remember that Jesus is God and Jesus becoming one of us to redeem us.

[20 : 13] That's what Mark is speaking about in the gospel. That's our greatest need. And in many ways, this event is a picture of our need.

Without Christ, we're in the middle of the sea. We're flapping around, trying to make sense of the world and trying to get somewhere. And we're lost, and we're in the dark without Christ.

And even as Christians, we return to that worthless place when we stop growing and relying on Him. And the constant, I think, reminder of gospel preaching and the Word of God is that the gospel reminds us that we're more sinful and flawed than we ever dared believe, but more accepted and loved than we ever dared hope.

That's the gospel message. It'll take us down into the depths in order to let us hear His voice saying, is I? Do not be afraid. God Himself went into the depths in Christ, into the darkness of hell, because that's where you and I should have been going.

And that's where we deserve to be separated and apart from the living God. And that's where our friends and neighbors are heading who don't know Jesus.

[21 : 36] And He has gone there. And, you know, the whole of Mark is, you know, Jesus says, I must go to the cross. He's not saying, well, I think I'll head along to the cross. It's a decent way to save people.

He says, I must go to the cross. I have to die. Any parents here? Parents, do you know what? You would do anything for your children. Well, that's exactly what God has done that for His children.

He said, this is what I had to do. It wasn't an optional extra. We can't sit here as an optional extra thinking it's a nice thing to do for Jesus to do.

He went because it was what He had to do to set us free so that we can sit here and rejoice and be glad that He has given us salvation.

And He had to come just as Jesus had to walk in the water towards them and He didn't row to the shore to meet Him and meet halfway and compromise and say, I'll do so much you do.

[22 : 39] They were helpless and He walked towards them and Christ is the one who reaches out to us. We're helpless and we must continue having that mentality as Christians.

We're helpless without Him and He brings us wholeness and energy. But like the disciples, I think we can also learn that we too have hard hearts.

I think the older I get as a Christian, the more I recognize that. If you're young and you're a young Christian, it's a great place to be.

But the older you get, the more the darkness of your heart is exposed by the likeness of Jesus' own gaze. And so often we struggle on our own and we moan about how tough it is doing God's will and we wonder, where is He?

And why is He making these demands of us? And why I can't feel that He's beside me here in the struggles? And like the disciples, we love the idea of life being exciting and full of miracles and feeding and nourishment and provision from this great miracle-working God.

[23 : 51] But we get overwhelmed when we're in the dark and we think He's left us and He doesn't care anymore. And if this is a Christian walk, well, I'd rather just YOLO and just, you know, live for the day.

You only live once. And forget about the challenges of discipleship. And yet, much of what Jesus is doing or Mark is doing is revealing to us because the next chapter He goes on to speak about the cost of discipleship.

Taking up our cross and following Him. Walking in the darkness. Rowing and not getting anywhere. Recognizing our constant need in the spiritual battles.

Have any of you had physical heart surgery? Well, that's no walk in the park. Well, spiritual heart surgery is no different. It's much, much deeper.

So, it's important that we don't sit before God and play the victim and rub ourselves in the back and say the poor me's. Because we need to recognize the cost and the love and the commitment that drove Him already to set us free so that we can know life and ultimately healing, of course.

[25 : 11] And maybe healings often in this life too. But the great thing is as well, thirdly, nearly lastly, Jesus gets us.

He understands us. Isn't that good? He understands us so much more than we ever appreciate. We think He's distant. We think He doesn't care. We think He's not necessarily interested in our small insignificant lives.

but He sees our struggles and He knows them. Take courage. It's I. Don't be afraid.

He doesn't chide them. He doesn't give them a row for their moans and their grumbles and their complaints and their struggles. He says, I am. I know. I know.

I know exactly what you're going through. Nobody else might today. But I know. He's gentle, strong, patient. And He loves us.

[26 : 11] He's always there for us. These are great words of assurance. You should be listening for these words today. Maybe you need to hear these words today more than anything else. I know.

I love you. Take courage. I am. Nobody else can say that to us. I am. And I think lastly, His presence is everything for us.

His presence is everything in our lives. As it was for the disciples. Maybe physically in ways they didn't understand. But His presence, the knowledge of His presence is everything.

And His voice. His voice. You know, they were terrified. Until they heard His voice. You know, My sheep know my voice.

They were terrified. You might be terrified of Jesus Christ as a philosophical revelation or whatever.

[27 : 16] but as you know Him, you hear His voice. That changes everything for us. And that, along with His presence, I guess in a sense, maybe this is stretching things theologically, but this speaks of union with Christ.

You know, when Christ comes to them, that's when things change. There's that picture of the importance of union with Christ and being in Christ's presence.

That's what transforms you and changes you and changes your perspective. knowing Him, listening to Him, being in prayer with Him. You know, He is always coming to us, but where are we?

Do we turn our backs from? Do we run away? Oh, too busy today, Lord. I'll do it on an easy, quiet day. I'll do my prayer times once a month when things are easier. And He's coming and He's knocking at the door of our lives all the time.

And we don't value His presence. Oh, we like Netflix, but we don't value His presence. His presence is not that important to us. I'll do church once a week. I'll give Him an hour.

[28 : 28] It's good. It's important. But conversation, company, dependence, we like the Christ who's revealed here, who needs to, wants to be in His Father's presence, in the throne room.

My, as a pastor, too busy. What a paradoxical, ridiculous position to be in. Someone representing and sharing God's Word. No time for Him.

Life too busy. Oh, it's the Lord's work. Big deal. It's the Lord's work and we've no time for the Lord. What good is it? Remarkably important for us to recognize the power and the significance and the relevance of being in His presence and of knowing the presence of God in our lives.

I think presence is very important. I think your presence in the workplace, even without saying anything, your Christ-like presence as a Christian is important.

Someone said that to me not that, maybe a year or two ago when I took on the chaplaincy at Hibbs. They said, your presence there is going to be important. Just your presence.

[29 : 38] Not only your presence, it's not just, you know, that words don't matter. Of course, they do. But our presence is important as those who are filled with the Holy Spirit, whatever we are.

Presence, decision-making, response, your words. And that can only come when His presence is everything to us.

We can't row in the boat of life without Him. Take courage. I am. Don't be afraid. Let's pray.

Father God, help us and hear us and guide us. in the boat.ective, and Joseph and change us and get out of the series.

Inge and Jeff are in the Bible. Even the Bible says, you know, when his voice is bad about him, he was trying to marry us and say, hey, somebody needs çok for his ris