

Jesus Understood

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[0 : 00] We have Mark's Gospel. It's an eyewitness account of Peter and Mark is recorded as what Peter has told him.

And we're going to be following in on some great stories. It's Mark chapter 6 starting at verse 30. It's on page 1009.

Page 1009 Mark 6 verse 30 to 56. The apostles gathered around Jesus and reported to him all that they had done and thought.

Then, because so many people were coming and going, that they did not even have a chance to eat, he said to them, Come with me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest. So they went away by themselves in a boat to a solitary place.

But many who saw them leaving recognized them and ran on foot from all the towns and got there ahead of them. When Jesus landed and saw a large crowd, he had compassion on them because they were like sheep without a shepherd.

[1 : 19] So he began teaching them many things. By this time it was late in the day, so his disciples came to him. This is a remote place, they said, and it's already very late. Send the people away so that they can go to the surrounding countryside and villages and buy themselves something to eat.

But he answered, You give them something to eat. They said to him, That would take eight months of a man's wages. Are we to go and spend that much on bread and give it to them to eat?

How many loaves do you have? he asked. Go and see. When they found out, they said, Five and two fish. Then Jesus directed them to have all the people sit down in groups on the green grass. So they sat down in groups of hundreds and fifties. Taking the five loaves and the two fish and looking up to heaven, he gave thanks and broke the loaves. Then he gave them to his disciples to set before the people.

He also divided the two fish among them all. They all ate and were satisfied. And the disciples picked up twelve basketfuls of broken pieces of bread and fish.

[2 : 26] The number of the men who had eaten was five thousand. Immediately Jesus made his disciples get into the boat and go on ahead of him to Bethsaida, where he dismissed the crowd.

After leaving them, he went up on a mountainside to pray. 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.

About the fourth watch of the night, he went out to them, walking on the lake. He was about to pass by, but when they saw him walking on the lake, they thought he was a ghost. They cried out because they all saw him and were terrified.

Immediately he spoke to them and said, Take courage, it is I. Don't be afraid. Then he climbed into the boat with them and the wind died down. They were completely amazed, for they had not understood about the loaves.

Their hearts were hardened. When they crossed over, they landed at Jenner-sur-at and anchored there. As soon as they got out of the boat, people recognized Jesus.

[3 : 29] They ran throughout the whole region and carried the sick en masse to wherever they heard he was. 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, and all who touched him were healed. Well, last summer, Stephen Frayne, better known as Dynamo, don't know if you've ever heard of him, well, he performed an amazing feat watched by hundreds of people.

Do you know what he did? He walked on water. To launch his new TV show, he walked on top of the River Thames in London, watched by thousands as they gathered along London Bridge.

Of course, it was just an elaborate stunt, a simple illusion. A hidden platform lay beneath the surface, which gave the appearance that he was actually walking on water.

Mark also records for us that Jesus walked on water. But the problem for us and for our modern minds is, we say it just couldn't happen.

[5 : 00] At best, it's an illusion. Some scholars even say that Jesus must have been walking along the shore, or he was walking on a sandbank or a mudflat.

He possibly couldn't be walking on water. After all, science has proven that there is no such thing as a miracle. The laws of nature, density and gravity, all prove that this event recorded here could not have happened.

But there's a problem with that, isn't there? Because science can only prove natural causes. It's a science of nature. It has no way of dealing with supernatural events.

It has no category, no way of testing something that is supernatural. So for somebody to come out and say that miracles can't happen, is to make this huge assumption that God can't exist.

In fact, if you are to be sure that miracles cannot happen, you would have to be sure beyond a doubt that God doesn't exist.

[6 : 15] And that in itself is a huge step of faith. And that's really where Mark is going with this story. That's why it's been recorded.

This is an eyewitness account of the disciples in the boat seeing Jesus walking on water and it's written down for us to show us the true identity of who Jesus is.

That Jesus is God who has come into this world to renew this disordered world and to renew broken lives.

So the invitation for us is to come and read this and to watch this supernatural event so that we are people who will trust Jesus in every circumstance of our life.

Now the context of this whole story has to be put side by side with the feeding of the 5,000. The problem is as Jesus is going about his ministry people are gaining a false understanding of who Jesus is.

[7 : 31] Look at verse 45. Immediately Jesus made his disciples get into the boat and go ahead of him to Bethsaida while he dismissed the crowd.

It seems Jesus is deliberately getting rid of his disciples. He doesn't want them hanging around anymore. Come on, quick, get in the boat off you go.

I'm going to meet you later but get out of here. And so we're asking the question why the hurry? What's the issue? Why doesn't he want his disciples hanging around this crowd?

Well the answer comes for us in verse 52. It tells us there looking back to the feeding of the 5,000 that they had not understood about the loaves.

Their hearts were hardened. Now hard hearts isn't a dietary problem it wasn't that they were all feeding on McDonald's and Kentucky chicken.

[8 : 36] it was an identity problem. It was a failure to act upon the truth of who Jesus really is. You see verse 52 says they had not understood about the loaves.

Like the rest of the crowd the disciples have misunderstood what the feeding of the 5,000 was all about. So here they were in the middle of the country.

What's happened with the disciples? They've been out on mission that's what we looked at last week. They've come back to Jesus and reported everything that's happened. They've gone away to try and get some peace and quiet but wherever they go because of all the miracles that Jesus was doing and everything that the disciples were doing it's gathered attention and crowds of people have followed them.

And Jesus has been teaching them and now it's gotten to late in the evening they've got no food and they haven't got enough money to buy food for all of these people. Eventually they find a bit of food and they come back to Jesus.

Verse 41 Taking the five loaves and the two fish and looking up to heaven he gave thanks and he broke the loaves and he gave them to his disciples to set before the people and he also divided the two fish among them all.

[9 : 59] They all ate and they were satisfied. There was more than enough. There was even stuff left over amply supplied. Now this is really significant because the last time that something like this happened in the history of the people of Israel was way back with Moses.

Moses had rescued the people from slavery in Egypt. He had brought them out from Pharaoh and he had brought them into the wilderness and when they were in the wilderness when they had no food Moses prayed to God and God sent food by way of manna like bread.

Every morning and every evening without fail bread from heaven would fall and the people had enough to eat amply supplied.

Now you can imagine what's going on in the minds of these crowds of people. Here they are again not under the might of Pharaoh but under the political might of the Roman authority.

And this man Jesus comes along and he starts giving them free food bread. He's prayed to God in heaven and he's giving them bread to eat.

[11 : 25] And the crowd and the disciples are getting very excited with what's going on because in their minds they're thinking at last this new Moses this king that God has promised has come who's going to overthrow the Romans and we're going to kick them out and we're going to get our own land and we're going to go places.

And you can imagine them all wondering is Jesus going to lead the revolution? When's it going to start? When are we going to get our arms together so we can go out and fight? In fact when John records the same story in John's gospel it says they tried to take Jesus as king by force because that's what they were about.

Revolution was on their minds. You see they were all getting his identity wrong. They've all got hard hearts and that's why Jesus wants to remove his disciples away from the influence of the crowd to take them away from it because Jesus didn't come to start a revolution by taking people's lives he came into the world to rescue people by giving of his life and the disciples weren't getting it.

So they had a false identity a false understanding so Jesus is concerned that we have a true understanding about who he really is and what he's all about.

Look at verse 46 so having dismissed the crowd and told them listen guys it's not about revolution it's about something else completely after leaving them Jesus goes up onto a mountainside alone to pray.

[13 : 12] Now again that's significant because Mark mentions Jesus praying only three times in Mark's gospel and each time Jesus prays in chapter 1 and the next the last time is in the garden of Gethsemane it's at night and he's always alone and each time that Jesus is praying the disciples have left Jesus failing to understand who he is and what he has come to do.

So there's a sense of agony and frustration in Jesus as he goes to his father to pray because Jesus' mission is primarily one of going to the cross where he's going to die.

And they're always misunderstanding what his mission is. And on this occasion his disciples want him to be a revolutionary a kind of freedom fighter. So when the people aren't understanding he goes away alone to talk to his father in heaven who does understand the people who understands what's going on in his own life.

and he goes and prays for them that they would understand and he goes and prays and as he prays he will go to meet his disciples out on the lake to teach them privately because this only happens in front of the disciples to teach them who he is and what he has come to do.

Now before we join the disciples on the lake look at verse 45 again read it carefully immediately Jesus made his disciples get into the boat and go on ahead of them.

[15 : 01] Jesus is aware of their hearts he knows they're not understanding he knows they've misunderstood and he also knows what awaits them out on the lake but he's still sending them out into the storm.

Now we might think that's harsh why would Jesus send his disciples out into the storm? Well I think it's his gentle patience and loving perseverance with his people.

Jesus is always longing and grasping that we understand who he is. His desire is that we would know him deeper that we would trust him with all of our lives whatever circumstance we are in.

So rather than see it as a form of punishment because they haven't understood and now he's going to punish them by putting them into a storm we look upon it rather as God's loving intervening grace upon their lives.

Drawing them closer to himself showing them more of who he is so that they will love him more that they would appreciate more what he's about to do. And I think there's a big application for each one of us in that.

[16 : 16] That as we look at every circumstance that comes into our life often the hard ones and the difficult ones we often think what have I done wrong? Why is God punishing me?

Rather we should look at it as God's gracious intervention using everything that comes into our life. whatever the storms that come against us the struggles the suffering the heart aches everything that he brings us into so that we could see a bigger and greater and more marvellous picture of who Jesus is and what he is to us in our lives.

So what does Jesus want us to understand about him in our circumstances of life? Well there's two big things that I think that he wants to tell us.

First is that Jesus is our powerful God. Look at verse 47 When evening came the boat was in the middle of the lake and Jesus was alone on land.

picture the disciples at this stage their backs are aching their legs are beginning to cramp up every muscle and sinew strained as they're pulling the oars with all their might.

[17 : 50] They've been rowing all night long taking it in turns as they fight against the howling wind their tiny little wooden boats just about holding strong in the storm and there they are stranded in the middle of this lake at the mercy of the elements and they row on desperate trying to reach land and then we look over to the side and watching it all unfold was Jesus there's perhaps a little humour in that isn't there there they are pulling away straining away and there's Jesus watching it all verse 48 he saw the disciples straining at the oars because the wind was against them about the fourth watch of the night that's about three in the morning so they've been rowing a hard old long time he went out to them walking on the lake you see he knew their hearts he longs that they understand and so

Jesus walks out to these helpless tired weak and frightened disciples the rest of verse 48 he was about to pass by them when they saw him walking on the lake and they thought he was a ghost and they cried out they shrieked with terror you could imagine them falling off their seats and the oars going into the water like a ghost because they all saw him and were terrified terrified because the Jesus that they had come to know well he made sick people well and he gave out food but a Jesus that walked on water well that could never happen it wasn't within their mindset they didn't have any categories to understand Jesus walking on water the Jesus they knew would do things that people wanted like a great healer or a revolutionary they had somehow got Jesus carefully packaged into a neat little box that they could contain and understand but now this Jesus has kind of burst out of their box look back to Job chapter 9 keep your finger in

Mark and go back to Job chapter 9 kind of near them well it's not a little left of the middle Job chapter 9 and here we're reading about a man who is going through if you like his own storm in life a different kind of storm and he reflects on the greatness and the power of God Job chapter 9 verse 4 this is what he says about God his wisdom is profound his power is vast who has resisted him and come out unscathed he moves mountains without their knowing it and overturns them in his anger he shakes the earth from its place and makes its pillars tremble he can speak to the sun and it doesn't shine he seals off the light of the stars he alone stretches out the heavens and treads on the waves of the sea

Jesus can't be contained to our understanding we can't reduce him down into a manageable size that we can somehow control him Jesus won't allow us to constrain him his wisdom is profound his power is vast and he treads on the waves of the sea read on verse 9 of Job chapter 9 he is the maker of the bear and the orion the constellations of the south he performs wonders that cannot be fathomed miracles that cannot be counted when he passes me I cannot see him where he goes by I cannot perceive him and that's the struggle of Job in his storm

God was great he was powerful he was but he was mysterious and he was also invisible look what it says in verse 11 when he passes me I cannot see him when he goes by I cannot perceive him but now we're with the disciples back in the boat in the middle of this storm with the spray splashing on their faces the howling wind around their heads the waves crashing against the boat and God passes by and they can see him God in human form before their very eyes treading on the waves of the sea science can't explain him natural laws can't contain him our minds can't fathom him he's the creator of the universe who spoke the seas into the existence and told us told where the river should go and now he's walking on the water revealing his awesome power his glory his authority and his majesty in his gentle patience and his loving persistence he pursues his disciples and he pursues us so that we would submit to him that we would worship him that we would be able to enjoy him and know him as our powerful

[24 : 39] God who has made God known to us in Jesus but he's not just our powerful God over all creation that Jesus is also our rescuing God again try and sit in the boat with the disciples out in the

storm paralyzed by fear at this stage having seen this figure walking across the water there they are sitting bobbing up and down in the waves the wind howling the waves smashing and their eyes transfixed on this moving figure which is getting closer and closer to them and in their panic they try to get back into their seats again and fix the oars back into the stock and somehow try and row away in vain to try and get away from this thing whatever it is and then

Jesus speaks in the middle of verse 50 immediately he spoke to them and said take courage it is I don't be afraid his voice thundering over the storm and over the wind literally he is saying to them take courage I am take courage I am and again that comes to us with an enormous amount of significance go back in your Bibles to Exodus chapter 3 I know we are jumping back a little bit but we we make these connections from the old to the new and we see how it all ties together Exodus chapter 3 and this is just before the

Israelites are released from slavery and God comes to speak to Moses and he speaks to him through a burning bush Exodus chapter 3 verse 7 and the Lord said to Moses I have indeed seen the misery of my people in Egypt I have heard them crying out because of their slave drivers and I am concerned about their suffering so I have come down to rescue them from the hands of the Egyptians and to bring them up out of that land into a good and spacious land a land flowing with milk and honey verse 10 so now go I am sending you Moses to Pharaoh to bring my people the Israelites out of Egypt but Moses said to God who am I that I should go to Pharaoh and bring the Israelites out of Egypt and God said

I will be with you verse 13 and Moses said to God suppose I go to the Israelites and I say to them the God of your fathers has sent me to you and then they ask me well what's his name then what am I going to tell them and God said to Moses I am who I am this is what you are to say to the Israelites I am has sent me to you this is how God made himself known that was his name I am I have no beginning I have no end I exist I am I am the all powerful God and now this God as we as we're there with the disciples in the boat this God in human form who walks upon the water calls out to his terrified disciples

I am the God who sent Moses to rescue and save the Israelites climbs into the boat verse 51 I mean imagine what's it saying here God climbed into the boat with them and the wind died down and they were completely amazed God who sent Moses to rescue and save the Israelites is now climbing and sitting into the boat with his disciples and his very presence with them just his presence stills the wind and he rescues them from the raging storm we can imagine the disciples as they fall across the deck of the boat a gibbering wreck too frightened to talk they probably even wet themselves

[29 : 57] Jesus is revealing to them that he is God's ultimate mighty rescuer just as Moses come so Jesus has come to rescue the world he has heard the cry of the world and its people he has seen the suffering that there's been in the world he's seen the disorder and the chaos and he has responded to what has gone on he's seen what sin has done he's seen how it's destroyed things and broken its people and so God in his power has come the great I am to release us from the slavery of Satan to free us from the consequences of our sin to break the chains of death that strangle us and hold us he's broken into our world this God man to renew this physical world what he did to the storm he's going to do with the whole universe and restore it and make it new and make it right with no more suffering and no more pain and no more death you see what he's teaching his disciples what he's telling us in his gentle patience and his loving persistence he pursues us to reveal what he has come to do so that we would reach out to him so that we would accept him with our lives that we would trust him

Jesus is our all powerful God but he's our all rescuing God you see we don't have to try and figure it all out for ourselves we don't have to wait for some kind of mysterious revelation or expect some kind of special voices from God personally to us as if we have to understand something he's told us who he is he's shown us what he has come to do through his words and through his actions as he walks on water and as he speaks to them and tells them who he is and it's all recorded for us so that we can know him so that we can experience this great awesome personal God in our own lives the conclusion of this story is really asking us all if we have really truly come to understand who this Jesus is look at verse 53 when they had crossed over they landed at Gernetha and anchored there and as soon as they got out of the boat people recognised Jesus and news spread about him quickly they saw him that Jesus is over there come on quick quick everybody quick come on verse 55 and they ran throughout the whole region and carried the sick on mats to wherever they heard

he was and wherever he went into villages towns or countryside they placed the sick in the marketplaces they begged him to let them even touch the edge of his clothes like the woman had done previously and all who touched him were healed the compassion and the care of Jesus is immense his loving pursuit his generous patience he turns nobody away he reaches out to the broken to the marginalized and to the sick in compassion but the big question is this they recognize him they can identify him who this person is but do they understand him do they really understand him you see in these few verses the absence of any preaching or any teaching is significant he's we've seen over the weeks how central the gospel word is to Jesus mission wherever he goes he's always teaching he's always speaking because it is through the word that we enter the kingdom and it's through the word that the kingdom is going to grow but here nothing is being said there's no teaching there's no speaking all the people are doing is coming running to

Jesus asking for healing and it's all so physical and all so temporal when Jesus has come to offer something much bigger and much greater something spiritual something eternal to one crowd the feeding of the five thousand he was a freedom fighter and to the other crowd he was just a healer and in the middle of it all he speaks to his disciples showing them who he is that he is God come in human form to rescue us there's a sadness and a tragedy to the end of this miracle they may be able to walk again people might be able to see again they might be able to hear but they're missing the ultimate offer of being forgiven of being welcomed into his kingdom of hearing what Jesus has to say their hearts are hardened as we continue on we see this theme of hardened hearts coming up again again and again and it's

Jesus who's going to have to unblock it and so we're called here to to watch again to understand this Jesus walking on water to see him on the waves to listen to him and as he says I am that we would trust him in whatever experience of life that we come up against whatever circumstance that we would be people who live for him and that we would let the world know how great our God is how awesome how powerful he has come to rescue us and put things right never misunderstand who he is and never misunderstand how we should communicate who he is to a world that desperately needs to know him let's pray together our father

[37 : 04] God we we stand back and we look and we watch in amazement as Jesus treads on the water his supreme power over all creation we listen as he speaks those words take courage I am do not be afraid and in response we repent for trying to contain you into a box that we can understand and try to fit you into our way of thinking but help us to go with a greater vision of the awesome power of our God who speaks to us afresh through his words that we would trust him that we would follow him with our lives that we would tell people and show people how great you are we pray this in

Jesus name Amen