

Sermon Title: Take Courage; It Is I  
Scripture Text: Mark 6:45-56

Speaker: Jim Harris  
Date: 11-4-18

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One of the joys of preaching through the Bible systematically, and especially since we live under the New Covenant, majoring on the New Testament, is that there are four whole books that present Christ to us, paragraph after paragraph after paragraph. So we keep seeing Him; we keep getting to know Him better. Today is no exception. Come with me to Mark Chapter 6; we're going to start at verse 45 and we're going to continue—finish this chapter, Lord willing.

Now, to get you thinking where we need to be, let's start with some Bible trivia: What is the only miracle, prior to the resurrection, that is recorded in all four gospels? Well, that is the feeding of the 5,000. Next question: At the feeding of the 5,000, how many people were fed? And that doesn't go under the "stupid answers" category on Jeopardy, because Matthew specifies—we don't really know. All the gospels use 5,000 *men*, and Matthew adds, "And that's not to mention the women and the children. 10,000, 15,000...could it have been 20,000? It may well have been. At the feeding of the 5,000, how much food did Jesus start with, and how much was left over? Well, He started with five little "loaves," they're called, probably little barley cakes, and two fishes—one boy's lunch. They left with 12 baskets full *after* all those people were filled up! It wasn't like communion—they didn't just get a taste, they all ate and were satisfied. Now, that was easy—that was review. Here's a tough question: How many people in the New Testament walked on water that wasn't frozen? The answer is two, and you're going to see that today.

Now, what is the *connection* between those two events? Well, the walking on water happened the very night of the miraculous feeding; it's all tied together. Now, remember, coming up to that day, Jesus had sent the Twelve on their preaching tours—six teams of two. They came back, they were excited but they were also exhausted, and Jesus told them—as we saw last week—"You need a vacation! Let's get away for a little while." Well, they get away, and immediately they're thronged with 10,000 or more people, and what a day they had! And keep in mind, they were exhausted from their trip and then exhausted from an exhausting day, and then everything that happens in our passage today happened to them. So these guys are stretched to limit.

Now, for today, we have another storm on the Sea of Galilee—already seen that once. We have another miraculous rescue by Jesus. And this time, it's going to take the Apostles to a new level of grasping what it means to be committed to Jesus. And I would say, it's not at all a difficult stretch to say, you can learn the same lessons that Jesus taught the Apostles, because you can see this whole incident as an example of growing in faith, and living by faith. Here's how we're going to break it down: Faith obeys—Verses 45 through 47; faith leads you into trouble (Ooh—what does *that* mean?)—Verse 48; then, faith requires courage—Verses 49 and 50; faith changes your heart—Verses 51 and 52; and then, I decided, after I published that outline for you, we also need to look at the last four verses of this chapter, and call it the Epilogue.

First of all: If you belong to Christ, you're saved by faith; faith obeys (see Titus 2:11-12; 3:8; Heb. 11:7-8). We have a very straightforward description of what happened after that huge miracle of feeding the thousands of people. We read last time, from John's gospel, that there was a movement afoot of some people who wanted to take Jesus by force—not to arrest Him,

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but to force Him to be their King; they want to declare Him King and have Him lead a rebellion against Rome. Well, Jesus would have nothing to do with that, so He dispatched His guys to the boat, and He went off to pray. Mark Chapter 6 and Verse 45—"Immediately"—remember, there's Mark's favorite word; he's the *action* gospel—"Immediately Jesus made His disciples get into the boat and go ahead of Him to the other side"—He did not want them there to deal with the people who wanted to make Him King; He was going to disperse that crowd—"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" (NASB, and throughout, unless otherwise noted).

Now, as simple as *that* is—I mean, that's just a declarative sentence, right? There's still a question to be addressed. It's a case of one of those apparent contradictions in the Bible. Now, people will love to bring up apparent contradictions of the Bible; about 98 percent of the time, you can resolve that conversation by saying, "Wow, you must've been studying the Bible carefully. Would you get your Bible and show me what contradicts?" Most of the time, that's just a smokescreen, or they read it on the Internet: "That's the way to impale a Christian, you know, tell them there's a contradiction." No. Most of them are just about this difficult. It's a contradiction that isn't a contradiction—it melts away in the face of a little research.

What's the problem? Well, in Mark's version of this day and this night and this incident, it says that He sent them on the boat to Bethsaida; John 6:17 says, "After getting into a boat, they started to cross the sea to Capernaum." Do you see the *awful* contradiction there? One gospel says He sent them to Bethsaida; the other one says they headed for Capernaum. So, were they heading for Capernaum, or were they heading for Bethsaida? And the answer is a rousing "Yes," because if you were where they were for the feeding of the thousands, and you rowed along, following the shore toward Capernaum, you would go by way of Bethsaida. It's not any more complicated than that! If you leave from *here*, and you go down the street and around the corner and you head toward the interstate, you're going to have a choice before you that is labeled: "Mountain Home, Twin Falls"—well, which one is it? Well, if you're going to take that highway to Twin Falls, you're going to go past Mountain Home. It's not that hard.

But all of this—not the contradiction, but, all of this was to set up the next test of faith that Jesus had designed by sending the men alone in the boat, while He goes to pray. So, Verses 46 and 47—"After bidding them farewell"—and I take the "them" to be the crowd that He said He would disperse—"He left for the mountain to pray." And remember, I said we Idahoans probably read too much into "mountain"; He went to that "little hill" by the Sea of Galilee to pray. "When it was evening, the boat was in the middle of the sea, and He was alone on the land." Amazing detail that is included here, just to paint the picture for us. The faith of the Apostles, at this point—it was developing; they'd gone out, they'd had that preaching tour. They were coming along, and their faith was such that, they did what their Lord commanded them to do. Now, actually, them getting in a boat—probably one of the boats owned by Peter or Andrew or one the other fishermen; James or John or one of the others—to get in a boat under the command of fishermen who were very familiar with that area, had spent their life fishing there...that wasn't a big stretch of miraculous obedience, I'll grant them that. But it was obedience, and I'm sure that they would have preferred to remain with Jesus, but they were happy to do this.

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And notice, Mark adds the detail, "when it was evening." Now, evening—the way the Jews perceived time—evening would've been somewhere between 6 and 9 p.m. And so, he's painting the picture: Jesus is alone on the land, and these guys are rowing away from Him along the northern edge of the Sea of Galilee; and the more time that passed, the greater the distance between Jesus and that boat. Well, they got in the boat because: Faith obeys.

Now, next principle: Faith leads you into trouble. Now, what do I mean by that? Well, do you understand that, in order for you to have trouble in this world, you don't need to do anything wrong? That's one of the blasphemous things that many of the health-and-wealth and "New Apostolic Revival" preachers are preaching, that you're supposed to have everything good and comfortable, and you're supposed to have your health, you're supposed to have your wealth and all that; and if you *don't*, the way they get out of having to face the fact they're preaching a false message, they say, "It's *your* fault! You don't have enough faith! *You're* not doing enough for the Lord!" That's not true. Now, sure: You can choose to do sinful things, and you will reap painful consequences (Gal. 6:7). But you can also do exactly what the Lord asks you to do, and you can get into awful circumstances (see Acts 9:16; 21:11-13; 2 Cor. 11:23-27)—and it happened to those 12 guys that night. Look at Verse 48, Mark 6—"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." I'll get to that last phrase in a minute.

Now, John's gospel implies that Jesus must have told them that He was going to meet them when they reached Bethsaida, on their way to Capernaum, and His disciples had no reason to expect anything other than, they would take a quiet boat-trip during the night across the northern part of the Sea of Galilee; Jesus would eventually walk along the land, and they would connect there. They were very accustomed to a quiet boat-ride across part of the Sea of Galilee; that would've been no problem for them.

Now, there's something wonderful here, tucked away in this verse, in that phrase, "seeing them straining at the oars." Now, remember, we've got this laid out for us: Jesus was on land, up on the mountain—the hill—praying. The more time went by, the farther they rowed away from where He was; the boat was getting farther and farther away from Him. And don't forget, everything in Mark is designed to show you that Jesus is the Son of God; He *is* the God-man, and this one shows it in a very clear way. Jesus was fully aware of their predicament, even before it happened. Not only was He aware of it, He could see them "straining at the oars." He was in control of that whole situation.

Now, He was too far away to see them physically, and they left probably around twilight; now a storm has arisen, it's dark—only God could see them like that. This is a miracle! "The fourth watch of the night"—the other detail that Mark puts in here—was between 3 and 6 a.m. The Jews described night in terms of spans of four watches: 6 to 9 p.m. was the evening; second watch was 9 to midnight; third watch was midnight to about 3 a.m.; and the fourth watch was about 3 a.m. to 6 a.m., or sunup. So, the disciples had left sometime before nine o'clock. They'd been rowing for 6, 7, 8 hours! In calm waters, they would've been there well before then. And here, John 6:19 specifies, they'd really only gone "about three or four miles."

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Now, think about this: All of Jesus's plans for inaugurating the next phase of the kingdom program of God, was all tied—all those plans were tied to the men who were in that boat. He's got a lot at risk here, doesn't He? Except, it's not a risk when you're in control of it. Obviously, this was part of His plan for training them. I don't remember which commentator it was, but one captured it by saying: "Both the Twelve and the tempest were in His hands." My friends, you don't ever need to doubt the omniscience of God when you see something like this demonstrated by the Son of God. This is a statement of His omniscience. What is omniscience? Well, it comes from two Latin roots: "omni" means "all"; "science" means "knowledge."

You won't find the word "omniscience" in your Bible because you're not reading it in Latin, but you'll find the concept there. It means "knowing everything." The omniscience of God is one of His spectacular attributes. Proverbs 15:3—"The eyes of the Lord are in every place"—it doesn't mean, walk carefully or you'll step on an eyeball; it means, He knows everything! He's "watching the evil and the good." Or, Job 31, Verse 4 says it this way: "Does He not see my ways and number all my steps?" He knows where I am, *and*—He's in charge (Ps. 103:19)!

New Testament version—one of them is Hebrews Chapter 4, Verse 13, speaking of Scripture in the verse before, and he says this: "And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are open and laid bare to the eyes of Him with whom we have to do." Now, we might think in terms of a secret sin—and, yes, you can keep a lot of your sins secret from a lot of people—but there's no such thing as a secret sin, before the Lord. It's all open to His scrutiny (Ps. 44:21; Prov. 15:11; Lk. 16:15).

Now, in light of that, what Mark says shouldn't surprise you: Jesus, on the land, in the dark, with a storm at sea, "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." Jesus found the disciples that night by GPS—God's Providential Search system. The omniscient Son of God never abandoned His men to that storm; He knew exactly where they were, and how He was going to deliver them. The tense of the Greek participle that's translated "walking" connotes steady progress, unhindered by the waves. I kind of doubt that Jesus's robe even got splashed as He walked through those unsettled waters. I picture Him completely unaffected by the waves and the winds.

Now, the last part of that there says, "and He intended to pass by them." That sounds strange, and it *is* a little bit strange. There's a difficult translation there but the sense seems to be that, "He desired to come alongside of them." In other words, He didn't just walk right up and grab the boat and make everything right; He came parallel to the boat to see if they were going to recognize Him and His supernatural power, and if they would invite Him aboard. Now, remember, these guys are stretched thin. They are exhausted. And on top of that exhausting preaching tour and the exhausting day and all the feeding of the thousands and picking up the 12 baskets—which I fancy are in the back of boat, covered up for safekeeping. They've been rowing all night, they've got to be exhausted, they aren't at their best—and Jesus comes to them.

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So we see that faith obeys; faith leads you into trouble—you can do exactly what the Lord wants you to do, and you can get into great trouble (see Acts 5:40-42; Phil. 1:29; 1 Pet. 4:19). That leads us to this: Faith requires courage. Those guys knew the Sea of Galilee well. Most of them made their living there as fishermen. It wasn't at all outrageous for Jesus to suggest that they go ahead without Him across a corner of that huge lake. And, understandably, they probably hadn't wanted to leave Him behind, but they didn't mind; faith obeys.

Now, we also know it is a characteristic of that piece of real estate on Earth, that strong blasts of wind often come down on the Sea of Galilee. It's 682 feet *below* sea level, in what's called the Jordan Rift—the deepest part on the surface of the earth. And they were rowing west, essentially getting nowhere, because usually the storms come from the west as it comes off the Mediterranean Sea and makes its way to the Sea of Galilee. So, they were doing what they knew to do, but they were in some nasty winds, rowing for 6, 7, 8, or more hours and getting almost nowhere.

Now, before we look at the details of this incident, I don't think it's at all a stretch to suggest to you, that you can notice an analogy here for the reality of what it means to walk by faith in Jesus Christ. You realize, we were told: Jesus "made [them] get into the boat." Now, it doesn't mean that they were *fighting* Him, and He whipped them to get them there, but, they did what they were told. And now, having done what they were told, by getting in the boat, they were working hard to finish the task that they'd been given: "Row on over there, pick Me up at Bethsaida, and we'll go on to Capernaum." True faith obeys Christ—that's the first point in our outline.

Now, here we are, hours later. They are struggling severely, maybe not even knowing exactly where they were; depends on how awful the storm was, if they could even make out the shoreline. But these men were there by the will of God. Now, they were up against something pretty scary, pretty dangerous. It was something that they would have avoided if they had had any warning that it was coming, but they didn't. They were sent there by the Lord, and by obeying Him. And, my friend, sometimes *your* life is like that. Just because you face hard circumstances, and just because you are suddenly thrown into something that you couldn't possibly have anticipated—and something you didn't want—that does not mean you are out of the will of God! Not at all (Ps. 34:19; Jn. 16:33; Acts 14:22; 1 Thess. 3:3-4; 2 Tim. 2:3, 8-9).

In the past week and a half in my life, I've talked with good Christian friends—love the Lord, walking with Him—and they've had to deal with losing a job unexpectedly, severe illness, the death of parents, the death of friends, going through cancer treatments, dealing with wayward kids. You don't have to do anything *wrong* to face that—we live in a fallen world. And part of the point is that, true faith obeys; true faith *keeps* obeying, even when the going gets tough (Jb. 13:15; Hab. 3:17-18; Rev. 14:12). And sometimes, that truth faith leads you *right into* the trouble! The disciples kept rowing, and I'm pretty sure that there was some praying going on, too. Ah, but Jesus saw them "straining at the oars." He knew what they were facing. He knows what *you* are facing. He knows *exactly* where you are, and He *will* provide for you, in whatever manner He chooses, by whatever means He chooses. And we're told in the New Testament, not only that—He makes intercession for you all the time (Heb. 7:25; cf. Lk. 22:32).

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What was He praying about, up on the mountain? Well, I don't know for sure, but I know that He prayed up a storm that He'd sent His guys into, and He was praying for them! We *know* that He prayed for them; He says that in John 17. We know that He prayed for *us* in John 17, and we know that He continues to make intercession for us. So they kept rowing. We know that once before, Jesus had rescued them from a storm in that same general area, but that time, they had Jesus in the back of the boat. Remember, it got really bad and Jesus was exhausted. He was soundly asleep and they came and woke Him up, and remember how spiritually were there? "Oh, Lord, we beseech Thee in Thy kindness..." No! They said, "*Don't You care that we're perishing?*" That wasn't a shining moment for them, but Jesus rescued them anyway.

Now, as if they weren't frightened enough by the storm, what happens next puts them over the top of anything they had ever felt by way of fear. Whatever else they thought was going to happen, I'm sure this wasn't what they expected. Verses 49 and 50—"But when they saw Him walking on the sea, they supposed that it was a ghost, and cried out"—that's a word that means, they shrieked and they screamed! Grown men, used to that place!—"for they all saw Him and were terrified." Ah, here's the good part: "But immediately He spoke with them and said to them, 'Take courage; it is I, do not be afraid.'" That storm was scary, but they were absolutely *terrified* by seeing a man walking on the water next to them. Now, even though they had spent over three years full-time with Jesus by now, they still had tendencies toward lapses of faith. They had been through a huge day, probably hadn't slept a wink, and now had been rowing all night long, taking turns doing that. So, immediately—not their best theological moment—they succumbed to the myths that were common in that culture about spirits that prowled during the night and caused disaster. So they did what anybody would do—they shrieked; they screamed in fear.

Ah, but what Jesus said to them is another one of those things that you can apply to yourself; it's here in the Scripture for our edification (Rom. 15:4). Whenever you're in circumstances that frighten you, what's the message from your Lord? "Take courage." The Greek word means "to be brave." It's used six times in the New Testament; it's always used on occasions when Jesus is doing something for somebody that has a big problem. Aside from this one, He said it to the man whose sins He forgave; oh, he was headed for trouble when he started talking about Jesus forgiving his sins, because his spiritual leaders said, "Well, that would be blasphemy." He said it to that woman whose bleeding problem He healed: "Take courage." Why? Because she was going to get in *big* trouble with the Pharisees; "What's she *doing*, being ceremonially unclean, going around jostling people in a crowd?" They would have just *harrumphed* over that, and been really angry at her. He said it to a blind man whose sight He restored. He said it to the disciples before He left for the Cross. He said it to the Apostle Paul as he promised him that he would survive to testify in Rome. So the pattern of using this word means, you never need to remain in fear when you belong to the Lord, no matter what's going on around you. "Take courage," He says. You *can* be brave! You say, "I'm not a brave person." Well...*none* of us are, in the right circumstances. Some may be relatively more brave than others. Some of us are just too dumb to realize how much trouble we're in, so we *look* brave. That happens to me sometimes. But you can take courage; you can be brave (see 1 Sam. 30:6; Dan. 11:32b).

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The next thing He says—oh, you can apply this *directly* to you: "It is I," He said. That's extremely significant. "It is I" translates that Greek phrase *ego eimi*, which is the exact translation of the "I am" from the Old Testament name of God (Ex. 3:14), and Jesus used it to assure them—"Yeah, it's Me! Not anybody else! Not a spirit that's going to attack you. It's Me." But at the same time, He also—like He did in all of those times that He preached and used *ego eimi* for Himself, He was declaring His deity (Jn. 8:24, 58); He was declaring His supernatural power.

So, "Take courage; it is I"—and the third part of it is pretty obvious—"do not be afraid." Here's another point of connection that you need to apply: They were obedient to Jesus; that's how they got where they were. But they were also frightened. Sometimes things will happen that will frighten you—that's normal for living in a sin-cursed world; and *especially* if you live as a disciple of *Jesus Christ* in a sin-cursed world, all who hate Christ will hate you (Jn. 15:18-21), so in addition to the bad stuff of the world, you've got the world hating you because you resemble your Savior.

Being afraid like that—being afraid of things that happen because of that—*that* isn't a sin. But, being afraid *becomes* a sin when you act on the basis of your *fear*, rather than on the basis of God's Word, and your trust in Him (see Prov. 28:1; 29:25; 2 Tim. 1:7; Rev. 12:11). For example: If you won't tell the truth because you're afraid of someone, you are jumping into sin! You're saying, "God, I *know* what You said, and I refuse—because I'm scared of them over there more than I fear You." That's when fear become sin. If you won't keep on doing what you know God wants you to do—and you *always* know what He wants you to do, in the sense of what you say and how you say it and how you act toward people—if you won't do that because you're afraid of what might happen to you, that's when you've stopped living by faith and started living by fear. You'll notice, faith and fear are antithetical, many times in the Scripture, and here's one of them.

So, why you think the Bible says so many times, in so many places, "Do not be afraid"? Well, that's because God knows there are scary things in this world. How much did Jesus relish going to the Cross? "Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me" (Matt. 26:39)—and then *immediately*—"Nevertheless, Your will be done." That's taking your fear and replacing it with faith. In the final analysis, you're going to either choose to live by faith, or you'll cave in to your fear. You choose fear, and you forfeit God's provision in your greatest time of need. You choose faith, and you put yourself in the position, you just might see God do something exceeding abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, like Ephesians 3:20 says.

Put a lot of people in a tough situation, and what do they do? They talk about it a lot, they cry a lot, they withdraw, they crawl in a little shell—*exactly* the opposite of faith! Yeah, there's scary stuff out there, and that's the time you need the fellowship of brothers and sisters in Christ more than *ever* (Gal. 6:2). That's the time you need to go to God's Word and say, "I need help," and *search* the Scriptures. That's the time that you need to be on your knees, calling out to your Lord and Savior, and not just in screaming out your fears, but in *humbling* yourself before Him.

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I'm sure there were questions in the minds of the guys on that boat—probably not just in their minds; probably on their lips. Maybe they were thinking, "Why did Jesus send us *away*? Couldn't we have stayed and prayed with them? Will we *make* it to land? Will we *die* out here this time? Does He know where we are? If He does, can He do anything about it? And if He can, *will* He do anything about it?" And all that night, what's Jesus doing? Praying for them; praying up a storm. He knew where they were. He was orchestrating the whole thing. He could have come to them much sooner, could have kept them on the land, could have given them a lecture about faith versus fear. But you're not going to get through to a bunch of sleep-deprived, totally exhausted guys that way. He had something better in mind, so He put them through a horrible night, for a test designed to make them *better* (see Deut. 8:16). And then He came to them "walking on the sea."

Now, understand this: Those are real guys. They're sinners like you and me. You know, you get a bunch of guys together, and guys, you know what it's like; you know, nobody wants to be the one that's the wimp, you know, everybody's the manly-man and... "Oh, *I'll* row more! That's fine—I'll take your shift for you," or whatever. They were *spent*. And things were getting pretty dicey—fatigue, sleep deprivation, immediate fear for your life—that doesn't always bring out the best of your theology. You don't always say the most mature things at times like that. You don't necessarily tend to be at your best at keeping your emotions in check, so they just screamed. And Jesus said, "Take courage; it is I, do not be afraid."

Now, keep your finger in Mark; we need a quick side trip over to Matthew. Matthew Chapter 14. Peter's there on the boat; he sees Him just like everybody does. "And Peter said to Him"—remember, He's just said, "It is I, don't be afraid; take courage"—"Lord, if it is You, command me to come to You on the water." And then an amazing thing: "And He said, 'Come!' And Peter got out of the boat, and walked on the water and came toward Jesus." Now, I don't think Peter was trying to do something rash; I don't think Peter was trying to show off. The fact that Jesus immediately granted his request, and said, "Come!"—that tells you that Jesus knew that Peter's heart was right, in that instant. And Peter, for all of his foibles here, is an example of genuine faith! He wanted to be as close to Jesus as he possibly could, so he's *full* of faith, he's *inflamed* by this craving to be near the Lord, and he's not worried about anything else, so Peter climbs over the edge of the boat and he actually "walked on the water." Now, of course, it was Jesus that enabled Peter to walk on the water, but nevertheless, what a moment that must have been!

Now, the Bible specifies that he *walked* on the water—that's to make sure you know he didn't jump in and swim. As a matter of fact, knowing Peter, I suspect he was *running* across the water to meet Jesus. I don't know that for sure. And then—you know what's coming next: Matthew 14:30 and 31—"But seeing the wind, he became frightened"—"frightened" is the torpedo that sinks your faith—"seeing the wind, he became frightened, and beginning to sink, he cried out, 'Lord, save me!' Immediately Jesus stretched out His hand and took hold of him, and said to him, 'You of little faith, why did you doubt?' " It's clear what happened, and the Greek grammar makes it even clearer than the English can capture, because of using a participle. It said, "Peter was taking his eyes off Jesus, and he started paying attention to the wind"—which didn't matter *a bit* to him, ten seconds ago; didn't care at all, just wanted to be



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near Jesus. That's when you sink—when you start paying attention to the wind and the waves. Now, isn't it interesting that Jesus called Peter "You of little faith"—the *same guy* that, three ticks ago, has enough faith to walk on water! What made him sink? He started looking around at the circumstances, and in the words of Jesus, He says, "Why did you *doubt*?" That little word "doubt" comes from a root for the number two. You "doubt" when you stray from certainty and you start to consider that there is an "Option Number Two," other than keeping your eyes on the Lord (Heb. 12:2; cf. Col. 3:1-2). With his eyes on Jesus and his heart driving him to be with the Lord, he was just fine. But when Peter started looking at the circumstances around him, and he started weighing them as well, he started to sink. You get the principle? It goes right to you: Doubt, when you weigh another option other than obedience—that's the torpedo that is homing in on you, and you *will* sink.

Now, like always, and just as He always does for you, Jesus met Peter at his point of need. At *least* Peter didn't start swimming back to the boat—at least he cried out to the Lord. So, Jesus meets him at his point of need. I get the mental picture of Jesus walking the rest of the way to the boat, and it does say He reached out and grabbed Peter; I picture Him dragging Peter behind Him in the water, maybe even by an ankle. That would be even more awesome to see. Or, maybe He picked him up and carried him—I don't know.

Now, you *know* who Jesus is: He is the one and only Savior (Jn. 14:6; Acts 4:12). He's the Son of God, who demonstrated that He was God in human flesh, and He went on to die for your sins (1 Pet. 3:18). Are you going to choose to stake your life on those facts, or are you going to be one that He calls "One of little faith"? In the New Testament, "One of little faith" is a person who knows a lot, and fails to act on it. To be of great faith, in the words of Jesus, is to not know very much, but act profoundly on the truth that you do know.

Well, faith obeys; faith leads you into trouble; faith requires courage. Fourthly: Faith changes your heart. It's clear from Mark's words that, this was—at least to some degree—that night was some kind of a turning point in the faith of the disciples. Now, remember, it was Peter who likely gave Mark most of the material for this gospel. And I think the humble version of Peter—after he'd betrayed the Lord and then been restored and all that—I think he would've left out that walking-on-water part. That's why it's in Matthew's gospel, not in Mark. But Peter made sure that Mark included this: Look at Verses 51 and 52—"Then He got into the boat with them, and the wind stopped; and they were utterly astonished"—now, listen to this description—"for they had not gained any insight from the incident of the loaves, but their heart was hardened." That's saying, between the lines, that this was a turning point; this *softened* their hearts. "They were utterly astonished"—that's a word that comes from a Greek root that means that they were beside themselves. This shook them up! This broke through the hardness of their hearts.

Now, I think you can find a certain comfort in the fact that, even those men who were with Jesus full-time for three-plus years before this happened, how much they struggled to get to the point of unreserved trust and obedience. But at the same time—you can find comfort in their struggles, but don't forget: *They* didn't have the indwelling Holy Spirit that you have (Rom. 8:9). Your ability to obey is more immediate than theirs (Ezek. 36:27). Let that sink in.

Sermon Title: Take Courage; It Is I  
Scripture Text: Mark 6:45-56

Speaker: Jim Harris  
Date: 11-4-18

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And true to his message all the way through, Mark wants us to know that, you really should be astonished—*astounded, amazed*—at what you see Jesus do! Or, as one person put it: Your "flabber" should be completely "gasted," when you realize who He truly is.

Faith obeys; faith leads you into trouble; faith requires courage; faith changes your heart. And now, look at the Epilogue. We will do well to read to the end of the chapter today. There isn't anything *new* here that Mark hasn't said in some other way before, and I want us to be ready to dive into a marvelous section in Chapter 7 next time. But, follow with me: Mark Chapter 6, starting at Verse 53—"When they had crossed over they came to land at Gennesaret"—that would be near Bethsaida—"and moored to the shore. When they got out of the boat, immediately"—there's Mark's favorite word—"immediately the people recognized Him, 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. 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."

Oh, the compassion of Jesus, to let this keep happening, even though so few of those people were genuine in their faith. News obviously traveled fast, after that incident of the woman in the crowd touching the hem of Jesus's cloak and being healed. So not long afterward here, *many* people—that becomes the *thing to do*: Lay your sick friend in the path where Jesus is coming, and beg Him to just let him touch His garment.

So, what do you do with this? Do you feel like you're in a storm, not of your own doing? Pretty good chance—if you love the Lord. Well, don't make things complicated. Obey the Lord Jesus Christ, act as He wants you to act by speaking truth in love, and showing compassion. Take courage; He will give it to you at all times, in doses *exactly* as needed, if you truly want Him to be glorified in your life. Know that, as He said to then, "It is I, this is Me"—know that He's with you always (Matt. 28:20). He'll never leave you, nor will He ever forsake you (Heb. 13:5). So do not fear; fear is the antidote for faith. So if you're blindsided by a storm, seek to be as close as you can to Jesus (Ps. 73:28; Prov. 3:25-26). You probably won't even have to walk on water to get to Him. When you're in the storm, don't run away. That's the time to redouble your efforts to take in the Word of God, to humble yourself before Him in prayer. That's the time to *not* get all turned inward, but to turn around and reach out; consider everyone else more important than yourself, so you make sure you don't wallow in sadness and anxiety. "Take courage," He says. "It is I."

*Thank You, Father, that when we call out to You, it is to that same One—the great "I am." You, our Heavenly Father. You, our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Thank You for hearing us. Thank You for knowing the different kinds of storms that we are facing. May we walk in obedience, for Your glory, through each one of them. And would You use us as your spokespeople. In Jesus' name. Amen.*