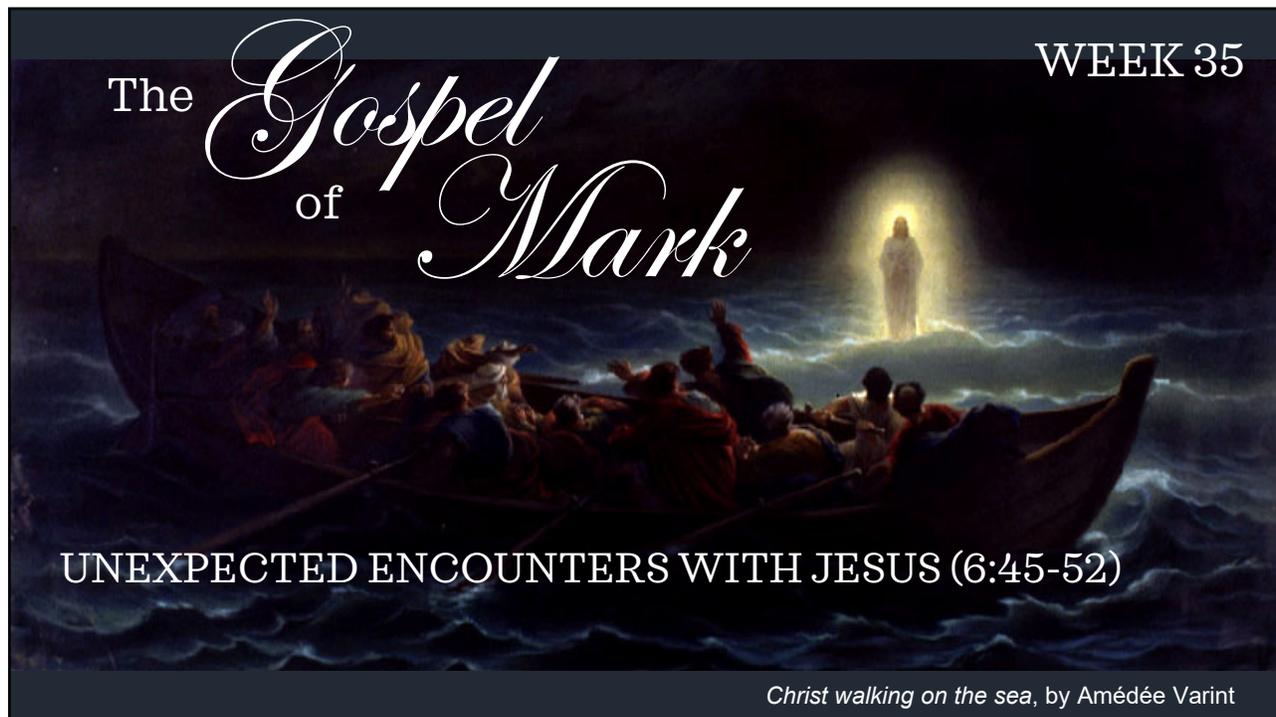


The *Gospel*  
of *Mark*

WEEK 35

UNEXPECTED ENCOUNTERS WITH JESUS (6:45-52)

*Christ walking on the sea, by Amédée Varint*



## The Lord of the Sea II | 6:45-52



1. Second occasion Jesus demonstrates this power (4:35-41).
2. Some urgency prompts Jesus to dismiss his disciples. He retreats again to the wilderness unwilling to be the warrior-Messiah of popular expectations.
3. By the time Jesus finishes praying, the disciples are well out to sea. He meant to “pass their way” to reveal himself to the disciples as a wonderful expression of his presence.
4. Only Mark records their failure to understand about the loaves and that their hearts were hard. The problem of understanding is not intellectual, it is a matter of faith.
5. At this stage of Jesus’ ministry, the disciples were little better than Jesus’ opponents who also exhibited hardness of heart (3:5, 10:5).
6. This episode at an early date was recounted by martyrs as a pledge of Christ’s aid.

## Healing in Gennesaret | 6:53-56

1. As the disciples had rowed towards Bethsaida, the strong headwind drove them severely south to the fertile plain of Gennesaret that was thickly populated.  
*What do I do with unexpected frustrations and failures? Jesus clearly intended to minister in this region. But to the disciples, this location was a failure.*
2. Mark presents a picture of unexpected excitement as people bring the sick to Jesus.  
*How do I consider the ministry of Jesus in my life? As an unexpected opportunity?*
3. “As many as touched him were made whole” recalls 5:24-34 (the woman with the issue of blood), not as a response to superstition, but as a response to the touch of faith.
4. The interruption of public ministry from 6:31 has not been resumed. They only understood that power is channeled through him. But they did not accept him.  
*Do I approach Jesus through superstition? I do what he wants and he gives me what I want? Do I look through the miracle to the Christ? Not through mechanics but through faith alone?*
5. Jesus patiently bears with their lack of understanding and graciously heals those who reach out to him.

## Conflict Between Commandment & Tradition | 7:1-23

- *This narrative has no immediate connection with the flow of Mark and is impossible to determine when the event took place.*
- *But it stands in the middle 6:7-8:26 as prelude to 3 miracles of Jesus extending his grace to gentiles (similar to parables of Christ in 3:7-6:6 and also followed by 3 miracles).*
- *The concept of defilement extends to the inclusion of the gentiles in Jesus’ ministry – “You think I am defiling now; wait till I minister to those you despise!”*
- *Jesus’ teaching differed fundamentally from the Pharisees in the matter of common piety.*

## The common piety of Jesus versus Pharisees

- *Already battled over eating with outcasts (2:15-17), fasting (2:18-22), Sabbaths (2:23-28).*
- *Now the conflict is ritual defilement which extends beyond washings to clean vs unclean.*
- *Reference to Jerusalem scribes recalls their aggressive accusation that Jesus is acting in power of Beelzebub (3:22-30) = far more is involved than just a debate between rabbis. Ritual defilement is just the latest flash point.*
- *Scribes now accuse Jesus of total disregard for the whole structure of oral tradition which sought to examine and relegate virtually every aspect of personal and public life.*
- *Where Law was silent, oral traditions were vocal, extending the written code. The result was vast legal complex, oral in form but definite in formulation, entrusted to scribes to rule everyone else.*

## The common piety of Jesus versus Pharisees

- *The biblical mandate of Exodus 30:19 and 40:13 provided the foundation for the extension of ritual washings.*
- *Hence the common prayer “Blessed be Thou Lord, King of the universe, who sanctified us by thy laws and commanded us to wash the hands.”*
- *Ritual washing was the offense but the larger question comes in verse 5, “Why don’t your disciples live according to the tradition of the elders?” This is a power play, a direct challenge to Jesus’ authority. Note Jesus’ response makes no reference to the disciples.*
- *Two replies of Jesus –*
  1. *Isaiah was right to call you hypocrites! (7:6-8)*
  2. *Real defilement is unaffected by cultural cleansing! (7:14-15)*

## Isaiah was right!

- *Vs 8 in the Jewish text from Isaiah says “This fear of me is a commandment of men which has been taught (to them).”*
- *Here Jesus directly refutes the oral tradition as “A commandment of men which has been taught (to them)” by the scribes and Pharisees.*
- *The Pharisees’ concern to sanctify and purify all of life did not rest on the first great commandment “to love God with the whole heart” (Duet 6:4, Mk 12:28-34). Instead it rested on commandments made and taught by men. Hence the charge of hypocrisy.*

## Isaiah was right!

- *The outward piety of the Pharisees was impeccable because of numerous observed commandments. But it was a lie because they had not surrendered themselves to God.*
- *The oral law was supposed to be a fence which safeguarded people from infringing the written Law. It actually became a fence preventing people from encountering the living Word of God.*
- *The exaggerated reverence for the oral law is unabashed pride. Jesus categorically rejects the authority of the oral law – of the scribes and Pharisees, of me, of you.*

## Jesus on the Offensive | Mark 7:9-13

- *Jesus states that the scribes and Pharisees have abandoned the commandment of God in their zeal for human tradition. They elevated their oral law as “the tradition of the elders” but Jesus rightly calls it “the tradition of men” (Isaiah in verse 7).*
- *Jesus refuses to allow them to invoke an authority capable of violating the Law of God.*
- *Jesus cites Moses for the Pharisees traced their oral traditions backwards through a chain from the elders of the Great Synagogue, to the prophets and Joshua, to Moses himself.*
- *The 5th commandment is stated both positively and negatively. Despite its unequivocal clarity, the scribes had managed to authorize its violation.*

## Jesus on the Offensive | Mark 7:9-13

- *The scribes had reduced the Law to a formula (7:11-12). A Jewish tomb example shows the formula “All that a man may find-to-his-profit in this (tomb is) an offering to God from him who is within it.”*
- *The Pharisees sought to satisfy God’s higher claims through the use of “corban” claiming God has a higher priority than parents.*
- *But Jesus categorically rejects using one biblical commandment to negate another. Their interpretation of Numbers 30 (laws on vows) missed the whole meaning of the Law.*
- *As a result, Jesus claims the scribes and the audience of Isaiah cannot properly honor God.*
- *The fault is not the commandments, but the interpretation. Scripture must be taken as a whole or the parts don’t make sense.*

## Questions

- *On what are my religious practices based? How am I attempting to relate to God?*
- *How am I attempting to have those in my care or sphere of influence relate to God?*
- *Is my religion based on the sum of my religious practices? Or am I in love with my God?*
- *Am I in love with the first great commandment? Or do I prefer all the others as a replacement?*
- *Am I frustrated because I cannot make the formula of religion work for me?*
- *Mark 10:22-25 – Neither the rich man nor the disciples could make their religious formulas work. Jesus pressed the point.*

## Answers

- *“Isaiah was right” it is about our hearts.*
- *It is total surrender of our hearts in embracing the first great commandment.*
- *Hebrews 12:18-22 – The legalistic approach, dry commandments (18-21), the reality of relationship with God (22-24 – note all the relationships = Mount Zion, heavenly Jerusalem, living God, thousands upon thousands of angels, the church, the firstborn (Jesus), with real names, God, spirits of righteous men, to Jesus!).*
- *LOVE has a NAME. The NAME of LOVE is JESUS!*