

Mark 6:45-56  
Take Heart; It is I

Main points

Jesus' astounding prayer life  
 Jesus' awareness of his disciples' needs  
 Jesus' action to rescue his disciples  
 Stays with them though their hearts were hard.

There is a person who appeared in human history 2,000 years ago whose identity we must discover. We must get it right. We must find out who he really was. If he was just a normal human, like you and me, maybe his life wasn't so significant. But the Bible reveals that indeed he was a full human, just as human as you and I, but he was more than a human. As we go through this text today, I'd like to ask yourself this question: Who really was Jesus Christ? What marks him out as special, as unique? How significant is this uniqueness?

*[The New Testament says that he was the Son of God, the One who had existed in heaven from all eternity along with the Father and the Spirit, the one who was sent by Father to reveal the invisible God and rescue God's people from their sins by his sacrifice on the cross.]*

You remember in our previous study in Mark chapter 6 we saw Jesus and his disciples out in a wilderness area on the western side of the Lake of Galilee and evening was drawing near and the people were hungry, and Jesus made provision for these 5,000 men, plus women and children, from just a few loaves of bread and a couple of fish. All ate and were satisfied, and they picked up 12 baskets of leftovers.

In our passage today, beginning at Mark 6:45, we see that Jesus hurried off his disciples into the boat and sent them back across the Sea of Galilee, or Lake Galilee, to a place called Bethsaida, which was on the western side of the Sea. Jesus also dismissed the great crowd of people. We learn from John's account (John 6 that some of the people at this point tried to force Jesus to become king because they were so impressed by the miracle of the feeding of the 5,000. Jesus needed to get away from them (John 6 :14-16).

Jesus may have hurried off his disciples so they wouldn't have gotten caught up in this suddenly arisen movement to make Jesus into a king.

Notice what happened next. Jesus, it says in c. 46, 'went up on a mountain to pray.'

The first thing I want us to notice about Jesus Christ today in this passage is ...

**I. His outstanding prayer life**

There never was a man who prayed like this man.

In the beginning of Mark's gospel we read this in Mark 1:35

(C)And rising very early in the morning, while it was still dark, he departed and went out to a desolate place, and (D)there he prayed. <sup>36</sup> And Simon and those who were with him searched for him... <sup>37</sup> and they found him and said to him, (E)“Everyone is looking for you.” <sup>38</sup> And he said to them, “Let us go on to the next towns, that I may preach there also, for (F)that is why I came out.” <sup>39</sup> (G)And (H)he went throughout all Galilee, preaching in their synagogues and casting out demons.

Jesus had arisen very early, maybe 3:00 am or so, and gone off to a desolate place to pray. And his men knew he had gone off and so they went to search for him and when they found him, and then they began another busy day of ministry.

I want you to notice the energy of this man Jesus. He is heavily involved in preaching, but he gets up in the wee hours of the morning to go pray to His Father, to be alone with him, to commune with him, to express his love and devotion to his Father, to ask for his strength and wisdom to continue to carry on his Messianic ministry. We can assume, I believe, that this would be some of the content of his prayers. He may have been praying for strength to resist temptation to sin, but he was praying.

And then the next day and for many days following he was traveling from village to village preaching. Praying and preaching – this is what he was doing. It takes tremendous energy and physical strength to preach to large crowds of people and when you've only had 2 or 3 hours of sleep, it makes the ministry doubly hard.

But Jesus did it because this was his calling, this was his commission. The apostle Paul was also a man of prayer. In his epistles he often mentions his continual prayers for the believers in the churches.

To be a man of prayer is to lead a life of self-sacrifice. We read in Luke 6:

<sup>12</sup> In these days he went out to the mountain to pray, and all night he continued in prayer to God. <sup>13</sup> And when day came, he called his disciples and chose from them twelve, whom he named apostles:[<sup>14</sup> Simon, whom he named Peter, and Andrew his brother, and James and John...

So Jesus had some crucial decisions to make – which of his disciples would he chose to be the twelve apostles? These were the men he would pour his life into for the next 3 years, these were the men who would carry on the Gospel ministry to the world once he had left them. These are the men who would found the Christian church and teach it and guide it. Jesus did not want to make a mistake here, so he prayed all night long. And then the next day, with no sleep, he not only chooses the twelve men, but he begins to ministry to a great crowd of people.

What I want you to see here is the dedication of Jesus Christ to prayer and to ministry. The amount of self-denial and self-sacrifice he endured were beyond normal human abilities. He fasted for 40 days in the wilderness before he began his public ministry. He

prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane with such earnest, excruciating, intense prayer as he faced the cross, that he sweated blood.

Hebrews 2: 10 says, <sup>10</sup> For it was fitting that he, for whom and by whom all things exist, in bringing many sons to glory, should make the founder of their salvation perfect through suffering.

Who is this Jesus Christ? Was his prayer life typical of dedicated man of God? Or was it more than that? Was it a man who was so seized upon by dedication to his heavenly Father that he could do nothing else but answer the call to a life of self-sacrificing prayer? Jesus said of his Father, "I always do the things that are pleasing to him" (John 8:29).

Who is this Jesus Christ? Was there ever a man who prayed like he prayed? In all the history of the world, was there ever a man who prayed like Jesus prayed?

In verses 47-48 we read, <sup>47</sup> And when (E)vening came, the boat was out on the sea, and he was alone on the land. <sup>48</sup> And he saw that they were making headway painfully, for the wind was against them...

Here is Jesus up on a mountain praying and his disciples are out on the Sea of Galilee, trying to get across the Lake. But the wind was against them and they only made a little progress "painfully" – it took all their effort and strength just to keep the boat headed in the right direction and inching forward to their destination.

It is a stormy night and Jesus is on the mountain. His disciples were somewhere out on the Lake fighting with all their might to try to make some headway to their destination. How was this possible? How could Jesus see them and see their struggle when he was perhaps 3-4 miles away. It is night, it is stormy, how could Jesus see what was happening?

It was humanly impossible, but the point here is that...

## **II. Through storm and night and distance Jesus knows what's happening with his disciples.**

They cannot see him, but he can see them. How could he see through the night and storm and distance? How could he know their situation? Could any other human being have been able to see what was going on with his disciples?

You and I would have been on top of the mountain, and it was dark and it was stormy and we know the disciples are out there and we fear they may be in danger, but we don't know, we can't see; we can only surmise, only guess. We would be cut off from the disciples; we could do nothing to help them; all we could do would be to pray. They cannot see him, but he can see them.

But Jesus is different from us. He sees all that's happening out on the sea; he knows exactly what's going on. He's well aware of the danger his men are in. He has carefully and prayerfully chosen these men to carry on work of the Gospel; he does not want to lose them.

Jesus had knowledge, had perception, he could see and know things that you and I could never know because of our limited human abilities. Jesus was fully human but he was not limited by his humanity.

You remember what Philippians chapter 2:6-7 says? “<sup>6</sup> who, [Jesus] though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped,<sup>[b]</sup> <sup>7</sup> but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant...”

The scripture here says that Jesus was in the “form of God” – that means he was actually God – and although he was God he did not cling to all his rights as God, but was willing to set aside some of those privileges and rights for a while, so that he could take upon himself our human nature, and become as human as we are, yet without sin. The point here is that Christ cannot rid himself of all that makes him God, any more than a leopard can rid itself of its spots! He cannot rid himself of his divine power, and knowledge – all he can do is to veil some of these attributes, these characteristics of God, set them aside temporarily during the time of his incarnation, that is, his becoming a man.

The truth and reality of who Jesus is shines forth here – he supernaturally sees the situation of his disciples. As God, Jesus could potentially see around the entire planet earth in a sweep of his eyes. He can see his disciples struggling on the stormy sea. He can see you in the storms that come your way. His eye and his care are on you, Oh child of God. You may not be able to see through the storm, but he does, Christian believer, you are never outside the view of your Savior. No storm of life can hide you from him. No earthly difficulty can separate you from his loving, watchful eye. Storms of life come and go, but Jesus remains as the faithful high priest of his people. Heb. 7:25 says

“... he is able **to save to** the uttermost those who draw near **to** God through him, since he always lives **to make intercession** for them.

Jesus is alive; he resurrected from the dead. He'll never die again. He is alive and well and he's in the business of watching over and sustaining his people in their earthly pilgrimage.

This is a blessing unknown to those who do not know Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior. They are subject to being tossed about by the storms of life. It is them against the elements – against the ups and downs of life. They are like a soldier trying to fight a battle with no weapons and no protection.

Not so the Christian believer. Jesus is in heaven; he is watching over each of his people. We are not alone in the storms of life. There is a Savior who sees and knows each of our situations.

We go on and read in v. 48: **And about <sup>(G)</sup>the fourth watch of the night<sup>(a)</sup> he came to them, walking on the sea. And then in v. 51 it says, <sup>51</sup> And he got into the boat with them, and the wind ceased. And they were utterly astounded,**

What else do we see about this Jesus Christ?

### **III. He takes action, even breaking the laws of nature, in order to help his disciples.**

Seeing his disciples in trouble, Jesus leaves his place of prayer and walks out on the sea. He goes through the night and the storm and approaches them.

Why doesn't he sink, like every other person who steps into the depths of the sea? Was there ever any other person in the history of the world who walked out on a stormy sea and the waters held up his weight so that he did not sink? No, this had never happened before in the history of the world and has never happened since (at least that I know about).

Why could Jesus do this, and no other person was able to do this? The answer lies in who he is. He is the Lord of Glory come from heaven. He who created the worlds did not lose his grip on his creation – it was still subject to his will.

Col. 1:16-17 says of Jesus <sup>16</sup> For by<sup>(I)</sup> him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him. <sup>17</sup> And he is before all things, and *in him all things hold together.*

Heb. 1:3 says that Jesus "...upholds the universe by the word of his power."

When he who created the worlds left heaven and came to live among us, he did not and could not lose his divine power and his sovereignty over his creation. And sometimes this divine power shone out from him.

That's what happened here. Jesus performed two miracles out on the sea of Galilee early that morning, during the 4<sup>th</sup> watch, which was from 3:00am to 6:00 am:

- 1) He walked out on top of the stormy sea – evidently he had walked 3-4 miles – the water held him up; he did not sink. The only other miracle in the Bible that bears a slight resemblance to this is the incident related in 2 kings 6 under Elisha's ministry

<sup>5</sup> But as one was felling a log, his axe head fell into the water, and he cried out, "Alas, my master! It was borrowed." <sup>6</sup> Then the man of God said, "Where did it fall?" When he showed him the place, he cut off a stick and threw it in there and made the iron float. <sup>7</sup> And he said, "Take it up." So he reached out his hand and took it.

What we see here is that the LORD brought about this small, but supernatural event in Elisha's ministry – much greater miracles would later take place under the Messiahs' ministry.

Why did God enable Jesus to walk on the water? The answer I believe is to demonstrate a unique, supernatural miracle that would distinctly reveal his divine nature, that is, his identity as the eternal God, the Lord of Creation, who had become flesh but who still possessed the power and authority of God Almighty himself.

It was not a miracle of great power, such as Yahweh had exercised over Pharaoh and the Egyptian nation when he led his people out, conquered the pagan gods and power of Pharaoh, and drowned Pharaoh's army in the Red Sea.

But this miracle of walking on the sea was distinct and unique – and it showed that the night and the storm could not inhibit the Lord Jesus from coming to the aide of his disciples. Every miracle of God is unique and distinct and has a special purpose.

You may remember that incident in Matt. 8 where a Roman centurions came to Jesus and asked him to heal his sick servant<sup>7</sup> And Jesus said to him, "I will come and heal him."<sup>8</sup> But the centurion replied, "Lord, I am not worthy to have you come under my roof, but only say the word, and my servant will be healed."<sup>9</sup> For I too am a man under authority, with soldiers under me. And I say to one, 'Go,' and he goes, and to another, 'Come,' and he comes, and to my servant,<sup>[a]</sup> 'Do this,' and he does it."

8:13 - And to **the** centurion Jesus said, "Go; let it be done for you as you have believed." And **the servant** was **healed** at that very moment

So in this particular miracle we see that the centurion recognized Jesus' authority to command things to happen, and they happened exactly as Jesus commanded.

My friends, Jesus Christ our Lord has all power in heaven and earth. Whatsoever he wills to come to pass, will come to pass. No other person, no other power has this ability, but God in Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit commands whatsoever he wills, and it happens.

So what we see here is that ...

**Jesus takes action, even breaking the laws of nature, in order to help his disciples.**

**He not only walked on the Sea, but when he got into the boat the wind ceased.** I wonder why Jesus didn't just command the storm to stop from the mountain where he had been praying and observing? If he'd have done that, he wouldn't have had the opportunity to walk on the Sea and reveal his divine nature which was intrinsic to his being, to his personhood. How difficult is it for the Creator of the universe – who flung the galaxies into space – how difficult would it be for him to merely walk on water? It

would actually be a minor thing, compared to his power to speak the universe into existence by his word of command.

6:50ff:

**50 for they all saw him and <sup>(L)</sup>were terrified. But immediately he spoke to them and said, <sup>(J)</sup>“Take heart; it is I. <sup>(K)</sup>Do not be afraid.” 51 And he got into the boat with them, and the wind ceased. And they were utterly astounded,**

Here are the disciples out on the stormy sea in the dark – struggling hard to keep their boat headed in the right direction. All night long they had been toiling; no doubt they were exhausted.

Now all of a sudden they see what looks like a ghost walking on the water toward them. They were not just concerned or disturbed a bit, but they were “terrified.”

But then what they thought was a ghost spoke to them and said, “Take heart; it is I. Do not be afraid.” Oh, how soothing were those words! They recognized that familiar voice. They recognized its strength, its authority, its kindness.

“This is no ghost – it is our Lord himself.”

His words to them were exactly what was needed. They had surely been losing heart. They had been struggling and fighting all night against the winds and waves and currents – perhaps wondering if they were going to survive.

This phrase that Jesus spoke to them, “Take heart” means “to be brave, to be of good cheer, to have confidence and firmness of purpose in the face of danger or testing.” (Rogers & Rogers, p. 81).

But Jesus’ next phrase is “It is I,” is even more significant. These are the same words that Yahweh used when he spoke to Moses at the burning bush and told him his name. In Greek it is “ego eimi” meaning “I am that I am.” In Hebrew it is “Yahweh,” I am that I am.”

So when Jesus says “it is I” he is no doubt saying more than just identifying himself as Jesus of Nazareth, their Rabbi and leader. He is saying “I am that I am” – in Hebrew “Yahweh.” I am the eternally existing God who has always existed and who will always exist.

To catch some of the divine power and authority of Jesus using this expression, “It is I,” listen to a few quotes from the prophet Isaiah who uses the same expression several times:

**Isa. 41:4 - <sup>(A)</sup>Who has performed and done this, calling the generations from the beginning?**

(B)I, the Lord, the first,  
and with the last; **I am he.**

**Isa. 43:10** - (A)“You are my witnesses,” declares the Lord,  
“and (B)my servant whom I have chosen,  
that you may know and believe me  
and understand that **I am he.**

(C)Before me no god was formed,  
nor shall there be any after me

**Isa. 52:6** - <sup>6</sup> Therefore my people shall know my name. (A)Therefore in that day they shall know that it is I who speak; **here I am.**”

The One who had climbed into the boat with them was “The LORD, the first and the last. He is the one “before there is no other God.”

No wonder the storm ceased. The Lord of nature, of heaven and earth had come on the scene to save his men.

Verses 51-52 state that “...**they were utterly astounded,** <sup>52</sup> for (L)**they did not understand about the loaves, but their hearts (M)were hardened.**

What the text seems to be indicating here is that the disciples were not much better off than the general population in their spiritual understanding of the real lesson that Jesus had taught them in conjunction with the feeding of the 5,000. The Lesson is that he is the true Manna, the true Bread from heaven, and those who would have eternal life must eat of him, that is, eat of him spiritually, that is; believe in him, trust in him, confess him as Lord and Savior.

If the disciples had grasped the truth of what Jesus had been teaching after the feeding of the 5,000, they wouldn’t have been so terrified on the sea, but would have trusted Christ to take care of them.

Jesus tells them, “Do not be afraid. “ Because Christ had been watching over them, praying for them, and now had come out to them in the boat, they need not be afraid.

The great I am was with them – the one who appeared to Moses. This Lord Jesus Christ says to his disciples, “Be not afraid; I am with you.”

This expression, “I am He” or “I am that I am” is used at least seven times in the gospel of John – every time it is used, Jesus was applying “I am” expressions of Yahweh in the OT – applying these to himself:

I am the bread of life

I am the light of the world

I am the door of the sheepfold

I am the good shepherd

I am the resurrection and the life

I am the way, the truth, and the life.

I am the true vine.

When Jesus speaks to the disciples in the boat, and says “It is I”, he is saying I am all these things to you, my disciple.. Therefore, take heart, be not afraid.

One last point here and that is, in spite of the disciples hardness of heart and spiritual dullness in not grasping Jesus’ teaching about him being the true bread from heaven who gives life to the world, in spite of their failings and unbelief and hard hearts, Jesus remains committed to them, to their well-being, to their spiritual growth and their serve go him.

This is our savior – the mighty Creator and sustainer of all things, yet he is compassionate and committed to his people – imperfect as they are, he stands by their side and brings them along the road of their Christian pilgrimage on the earth.

#### Conclusion:

Today we have seen Jesus on the mount praying.

We have seen him on the mountain viewing his disciples battling the stormy sea.

We have seen him walking on the water, coming out to rescue his disciple.

We have seen him give the command of “Take heart; it is I. Be not afraid.”

We have seen his commitment to his disciples in spite of the hardness of their hearts.

How is your life situation today? Whatever it is, whether you are going through a tough trial, or things are going smoothly, if you belong to Jesus Christ, it’s all going to turn out well.

#### ***What have we learned about Jesus Christ today?***

***He had an outstanding prayer life and that ministry continues to this very hour as he intercedes as the great High Priest of his people.***

***He had supernatural ability to see the situations of his people even though they may be immersed in the storms of life.***

***We see Jesus walks on top of the sea as he forges out into the stormy night to find his disciples and rescue them. As Creator of the universe he certainly has the power to suspend the laws of nature if he wants to. He did that walking on the sea and then in calming the sea.***

***He came to rescue us from our sins.....greatest thing.***

***He bears with our hardness of heart and sticks with us***