

Who is this Water Walker?!

Human Adversity and God's Response

Mark 6:45-56

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Westminster Bible Chapel

Mark Anderson



Where are you experiencing ADVERSITY in this season of life?

Like the disciples in 6:48, **STRAINING at the OARS with the WIND AGAINST**

THEM:

- | | |
|-------------------|----------------------|
| - getting nowhere | - daily difficulties |
| - futility | - frustration |
| - powerlessness | - exasperation |
| - inadequacy | - poverty |
| | - vulnerability |
| | - irritation |

What do Peter and Mark want to tell the persecuted Christians in Rome (and us here in Canada) about Jesus?

Well, so far, we have seen Jesus:

- cast out demons (Ch 1 and 5)
- also have power over leprosy, paralysis, and other diseases (Ch 1 and 5)
- calm a storm ... which raises the big question, **"Who is this?!"** (Ch 4:41)
- resurrect a girl from death (Ch 5) ... there is no enemy too strong for Him!
- tell parables about seeds being planted and growing (Ch 4) ... **What is He looking for?** Openness and receptivity!
- appoint 12 disciples and send them out with authority (Ch 3 and 6) ... looks like 12 new tribes?
- multiply loaves and fish to feed over 5000 people in the wilderness (Ch 6) ... a new Moses with manna and quail?

Mark 6:45-56 (NIV):

Aftermath of Feeding the 5000 ... *Bread in the Wilderness*

⁴⁵ Immediately Jesus made his disciples get into the boat and go on ahead of him to Bethsaida, while he dismissed the crowd. ⁴⁶ After leaving them, he went up on a mountainside to pray.

Walking on the Water ... *Conquering the Seas*

⁴⁷ Later that night, the boat was in the middle of the lake, and he was alone on land. ⁴⁸ He saw the disciples straining at the oars, because the wind was against them. Shortly before dawn he went out to them, walking on the lake. He was about [or wanted] to pass by them, ⁴⁹ but when they saw him walking on the lake, they thought he was a ghost. They cried out, ⁵⁰ because they all saw him and were terrified.



Immediately he spoke to them and said, "Take courage! It is I" [= "I AM", like Moses at the burning bush Ex 3:14].

Don't be afraid." ⁵¹ Then he climbed into the boat with them, and the wind died down. They were completely amazed, ⁵² for they had not understood about the loaves; their hearts were hardened.

The Crowds Believe Jesus Can Heal ... *Healing for the People*

⁵³ When they had crossed over, they landed at Gennesaret and anchored there. ⁵⁴ As soon as they got out of the boat, people recognized Jesus. ⁵⁵ They ran throughout that whole region and carried the sick on mats to wherever they heard he was. ⁵⁶ 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 it were healed.

The passage appears deceptively simple at first. **God alone can tread on the waves of the sea (Job 9:8)**. With echoes of the Red Sea in Exodus, **God makes a road in the depths of the sea so the redeemed may cross over (Is 51:10)**. Mighty God overcomes the chaos of the seas to save His people (Ps 77:19-20). So Jesus is God.

But if we pay closer attention, this passage also raises Some Questions:

1) v.45 Why does Jesus send the disciples away?

- mysterious, but probably because they were in danger from a mob that wanted to make Jesus-the-Bread Maker a king by force (Jn 6:15)
- Jesus deals with the crown alone, then withdraws to pray about this disaster



2) v.48 How does Jesus see the disciples out on the lake at night?

- again mysterious, but they were only a few kms away and maybe had a torch or lantern?
- or maybe we just accept that Jesus sees them supernaturally

3) v.48 Why does Jesus at first intend to simply “pass by” the struggling disciples?

- Is this some kind of test? A playful joke? Jesus enjoys frightening people?
- The key is Mark’s use of this unusual phrase “pass by”. Is there any “passing by” in the OT?
- Yes! God “passes by” Elijah (1 Ki 19) ... the cleft of the rock, the wind, earthquake, fire, and gentle whisper
- and in Ex 34, after the Golden Calf disaster, as Moses begs that God would go with the Israelites, and receives the second Stone Tablets: ⁵Then the LORD came down in the cloud and stood there with [Moses] and proclaimed his name, the LORD. ⁶And he **passed in front** of Moses, proclaiming, **“The LORD, the LORD, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, ⁷maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin ...”**
- In the conversation leading up to this remarkable encounter (**epiphany!!**), it is emphasized that God knows Moses by name and wants Moses to know Him by His Name (Ex 33:17,19). God reveals Himself to Moses in a unique way: more than to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (Ex 6:3). **I AM and Moses meet face-to-face and speak as friends (Ex 33:11)**. God knows Moses! Moses knows God! Moses trusts God!
- In “passing by”, Jesus wants to be recognized as God ... each one of His disciples recognizing His compassion, grace, love and faithfulness for themselves ... knowing Him, trusting Him, and finding reassurance.

4) v.52 When the disciples are amazed / stunned by the wave walking, why does Mark connect this to not understanding about the “loaves”? That the problem is their “hardened hearts”?

- At the end of the story of the feeding of the 5000, the disciples gather up 12 baskets of leftovers (6:43) because Jews believe bread is a gift from God. The fragments were likely collected in small wicker baskets that were worn as personal attire ... sort of a wearable 1st Century Palestinian lunch box! →
- Each disciple was perfectly provided for **yesterday**, but when facing adversity **tonight**, they are not expecting Jesus to come and help!
- Their hearts are hard, their necks are stiff; they doubt and fear and mistrust God ... just like the Israelites in the desert, and just like Jesus’ “hard hearted” opponents (Mark 2:8, 3:5, 7:6, 8:17, 10:5)! ... in contrast to the believing crowds who instantly “recognize Jesus” (v.54) and bring Him their sick for healing.



Q. WHO IS this WAVE WALKER? A. Jesus ... God Ultimate and Intimate.

Q. WHAT DOES HE WANT? A. Followers with soft, trusting, hearts.

As you face adversity **TODAY**, what faithfulness do you need to remember from **YESTERDAY**?

We ask God to get us **OUT** of difficult circumstances ... but He usually wants to go **THROUGH** them with us. He wants us **CLOSE**, not **COMFORTABLE**.

Instead of asking, **“Why me?”** Can we trust enough to ask, **“God, What are You doing?”**