

Title: The Book of Mark: Part 18, I AM. The Disciples. The Storm.

Speaker: Neil Chotai

Passage: Mark 6.45-56

Big idea: Jesus comforts us in 3 ways when we are in the storms of life.



Right after Bible College I was hired on staff at an evangelical church in England. During my time there, there was a church wide missions' trip to a partner church in the Northwest corner of France in a city called Quimper in the region of Brittany. It was November and we took 2 coach buses from East London to the port, went on a ferry and then went to the church that we were helping. This church was evangelical in a very Roman Catholic and materialistic region. We held some services and helped in the outreach ministries of that local church. It was a great experience; we had a range from young children to seniors on the trip. It was November, so the weather was getting cold, and it was time to go back to England. We went back on the ferry and about halfway through the journey, the captain came on the intercom system and said that we were going to hit some rough weather in about an hour. And he was right:

The weather started getting rough,
The tiny ship was tossed,
If not for the courage of the fearless crew
we would all be lost,

As we tossed about, I would look to my right and could see dark sky but at the same moment to my left waves were crashing on the deck. Then seconds later it would flip so that my left was sky, and my right was waves. So, I decided to go into the middle of the ferry where there were some really nice chairs and just close my eyes and make the best of it. For about 30 minutes, it was just bad - I never want to go through that again in my life. It was something I could not control, and I just had to weather the storm.

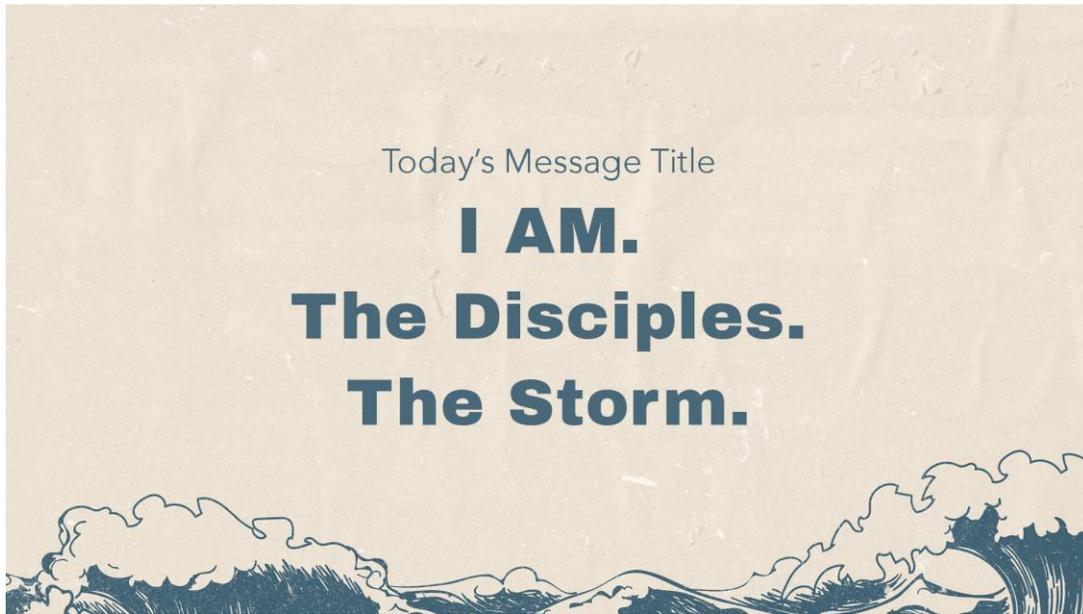
In life, we need to weather some storms that come our way - it is part of life - and for the Christian, it is something that we must live with. The Christian life is not the easiest - it can be a challenge and storms do come our way.

Today we are looking at the story found in Mark 6:45-56.

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.

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 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. 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. 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.

Mark 6:45-56



For all the language and grammar people in this room, I'm sure the title is driving you crazy.

Before we study the text, we need some background information.

We need to look at the context in which this was written. Also, we need to find out what happened prior to these events. Whenever we study scripture, it is important to know what occurred before. Now, it's been a while since we have been in the book of Mark, so let me just go back to the passage before to jog our memory.

Jesus has been teaching, there is a large crowd of at least 5000 people. This refers to 5000 men. The assumption is that there were women and children. There was 5000+ people represented, and they are hungry, spiritually but also physically.

Jesus performs the miracle of the multiplication of the bread and the fish. There is a little boy he has a little bag of lunch that's peanut free and Jesus prays and then he feeds the multitude. Now there are a few things in here that are not written in the book of Mark but are found in the other Gospels. The people like what Jesus has to say. They love the fact that he can perform miracles like feeding them. And there is this frenzy taking place when it comes to Jesus.

John also records what the people were beginning to say:

John 16:14-15, "After the people saw the sign Jesus performed, they began to say, 'Surely this is the Prophet who is to come into the world.' Jesus, knowing that they intended to come and make him king by force, withdrew again to a mountain by himself."

Jesus is realizing that with this mob mentality, his disciples may be getting in on it as well, wanting to make him king! They would need to kick Herod out of office. Then Cesar due to their bondage in the Roman Empire. The crowd wants to make him king.

Before that can happen, Jesus does something very peculiar.

Mark 6:45, "Immediately Jesus made his disciples get into the boat and go on ahead of him to Bethsaida, while he dismissed the crowd."

Verse 45 says that immediately without any hesitation Jesus makes, and I want to underscore this, Jesus makes his disciples get into the boat to go to Bethsaida, on the other side of the lake. Jesus wants to make

sure that the disciples are not affected by the crowd and immediately takes them and puts them into a place where he knows they will be better off for the time being.

So, I envision Jesus' care for the disciples the same way I care for my children. When they were very young, we had an easel with one side as a chalk board and the other side was paint and paper. We wanted our kids to imagine and create, it's good for their minds to do this. But there are times when my son would look at the paint but I'm thinking that he is going to make a mess in this stuff and that I don't have time for that right now. So, I would literally then turn him around, take him to another place in the house, on another floor, where there is no paint, and suggest he play with Lego. He would be safer and cleaner there.

If the disciples stayed where they were, things could get messy. It was not the time for Jesus to be crowned by the people as the king.

Jesus himself remains with the crowd to diminish the thought of making him king. The text does not say how he did it, but that was the intended purpose.

Mark 6:46, "After leaving them, he went up on a mountainside to pray."

And after this moment Jesus decides to go up to the mountain side by himself and pray.

Jesus is a personal prayer; he needs to be in communication with God the father. There are only three occasions when the Bible specifically describes Jesus in prayer. The first time was the night before he called his apostles for ministry. The third time was in the garden before his crucifixion, and this passage that we are looking at today. There is no clear reason as to why he did this, but some theologians believe that it had to do with his growing fame, and its affect on the disciples and the greater opposition that he is about to face with the Pharisees.

Mark 6:47, "Later that night, the boat was in the middle of the lake, and he was alone on land."

This verse seems to highlight the separation between Jesus and the disciples. The disciples are in the boat on a sea and Jesus is on land. Jesus did not pray all night on this occasion because of what was about to happen to the disciples. A storm was brewing. And this brings us to the Big Idea.

BIG IDEA

Jesus comforts us in **3 ways** when we are in the **storms of life.**



Point #1

Jesus watches over us in the storm.

The time of the storm is in the late evening. This lake in Galilee is only about four miles wide. As a result, the boat in the middle of the lake could probably have been seen in the full moon from the shore.

Mark 6:48, “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 to pass by them”

The word straining is best understood as *painful* which suggests a tormenting kind of strain. This word is used in other places of scripture such as: demon possession in Mark 5:7, childbirth in Revelation 12:2, and even Hell in Revelation 14:10. It is a picture of suffering. And it seems that whenever the disciples are away from Jesus and when they are separated from him, things just do not go well. The disciples were experiencing great pain and frustration in their attempt to obey Jesus’ command to go over to the other side.

Sometimes when storms in our life come, we can believe it is a decision that we have made that is the reason we are in a certain circumstance. But there are times when we are led to go into the storm by God for some unknown reason.

As all of this is happening, Jesus is watching over his disciples. He may be distant in proximity to them, but he sees, and he knows what is happening. When we are in storms, God sees what we are going through and he is not just watching us like binge watching shows on Netflix, he is interactive as he is watching.

For example, on Fridays my wife works, so Fridays are my day off and when I look after our four year old son. Now some people call this babysitting, but I am not babysitting, I am watching over my child. I am making sure that my child does not do something stupid. I am making sure my child does what is right. I am there to instruct my child. I am there for my child no matter what happens. But I am watching what he is doing.

Jesus watches us all the time and in that watching he is actually caring for us during that period. He goes out to them walking on the lake. I want to pause for a little bit on the next few words where it says he *passed them by*.

This is exactly what God did in the Old Testament with Moses, it is the same language used hundreds of years before.

Moses was constantly in the of storms as he was leading the people of Israel. In desperation Moses calls out to God and says God I need you in the middle of this storm.

Exodus 33:19, “And the Lord said, ‘I will cause all my goodness to pass in front of you, and I will proclaim my name, the Lord, in your presence. I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion.’”

Look at the phrase here, *to pass in front of you*.

God said to Moses that no one can see the face of God and live. So, he takes Moses and sets him in the cleft of a rock.

Exodus 33:22, “When my glory passes by, I will put you in a cleft in the rock and cover you with my hand until I have passed by.”

This wording “passing by” is the way God spoke about revealing his glory to Moses. Moses quickly bowed his head toward the earth and worshipped God, for he saw God in a way he had never seen him before as the Lord passed before him. This is also the same language used in 1 Kings with Elijah when he was in the storm of life as he was being hunted by the enemy.

Mark 6:48, “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 to pass by them”

What God had done for Moses and for Elijah, Jesus is doing for the disciples in the storms that they are facing. AND Jesus does that for us as well. That we will see the glory of God through the storms. God reveals himself as he watches over us, and we get to see His Glory. This is not just for the Old Testament prophets or for the disciples, but it is to the people of God - the ones who are followers of Jesus Christ.

Mark 6:49-50a, “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.”

However, the disciples do not understand Jesus’ identity. They think he is a ghost and are full of fear. They did not realize that they were seeing the glory of God in their midst. They knew that they were seeing something supernatural. The word ghost can also be translated to demon and fits in with a superstition that the churning of the water resulted in the visitation of a demonic being. And they were accustomed to seeing the demonic realm when Jesus was healing people. Naturally they were troubled by seeing this.

What should have remembered the book of Job and other scriptures in which it says that God is the one who can walk on water.

Job 9:8, “He alone stretches out the heavens and treads on the waves of the sea.”

The disciples should not have let fear come upon them when they would know that Jesus would constantly be watching over them and taking care of them. God had the relationship with them.

For us, we need to know that God watches over us and not let fear in. Just as a parent looks after a child, God looks after us. Jesus watches over us. Jesus watches over us in prayer as well. The book of Romans says that Jesus intercedes on our behalf.

Point #2

Jesus is with us in the storm.

For those of us who are followers of Jesus Christ, God is constantly with us. As we accepted the message of the gospel which is what we celebrated last week during Easter. That Jesus, God in the flesh came and died on a cross for our sins so that we would not have to face the punishment of death (which would be eternal separation). The wrath of God was placed upon him, the one that was without sin took sin for us so we could have a relationship with God through the blood and through the mighty resurrection of Jesus Christ. As a result of accepting God's call to a relationship with him, the Spirit of God lives within us. God is always with us! He chose flesh and blood over a temple. He chose you to be the house in which his Spirit rests and not a building that is made of brick and mortar. God is constantly with us.

I absolutely love the next verse and what it means.

Mark 6:50b, “Immediately he spoke to them and said, ‘Take courage! It is I. Don’t be afraid.’”

As soon as Jesus is in hearing range of the disciples, he says “take courage it is I don't be afraid”. I'm putting the emphasis here on *it is I*.

In the Greek the word “I”, when Jesus said it had rich meaning. In the Greek it is ἐγώ εἰμι

When we translate this into English, we translate ἐγώ εἰμι to make the sentence flow. In actual fact to say it properly it needs to be translated “I, I am”. No Jesus does not have a stutter, but rather he is making an emphasis here that he says “I, I am”.

If you look at the book of John, it contains, the “I am” statements of Jesus. When he says I am the bread of life the Greek is I, I am the bread of life. When he says I am the resurrection it is really I, I am the resurrection. This is important because this ἐγώ εἰμι is a reference to the Old Testament.

We go all the way back to the book of Exodus in the Old Testament. God is calling Moses to lead the people of Israel out of bondage in Egypt and into the promised land. Moses asked God a very important question. He says to God, Pharaoh will ask me which god is saying this. Egypt is a polytheistic society, that was a legitimate question, God what is your name? And this is the beautiful thing that God says:

Exodus 3:14, "God said to Moses, 'I AM WHO I AM.'"

I am who I am - ἐγώ εἰμι - It Is I

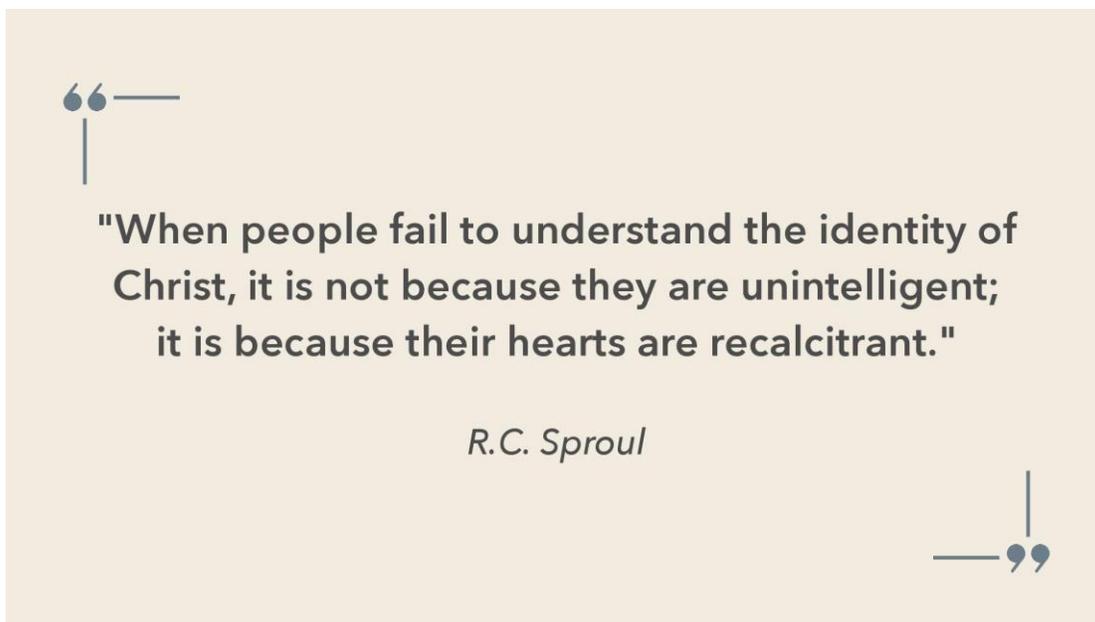
Jesus uses this divine name applying it to himself. The disciples would have been in awe as this had given them a clue as to the true nature of Jesus.

Mark 6:51-52, "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."

Jesus then climbs into the boat and the wind died down. It says the disciples were completely amazed. What they saw was a miracle, but the interesting part of this is what verse 52 states,

"They had not understood about the loaves because their hearts were hardened."

They did not understand about the loaves even though they were with Jesus. Instead of seeing the presence of God with them they saw a military conqueror that would free them from Rome. This was not the intention of God's plan of salvation. The Gospel writer Mark goes and tells us why they did not understand, it was because their hearts were hard.



Its as if their hearts were made out of stone because sin had caused a callus over their own heart. Christ himself could walk in front on water and they still would not believe. They did not get it when they saw the miracle of the past of Jesus feeding the 5,000, they did not get it when he walked on the water, they did not get it when he called himself 'I am' they did not get it when he stepped into the boat and the wind died down because their hearts were hardened.

We need to ensure that our hearts are not hardened when we are in the situation of the storm. There are two types of people in this room: ones that are in the storm or ones that have a storm coming. And at all times, we need to have our hearts open and tender to God, remembering what he has done for us in the past.

For those of you who are followers in this room you know what he has brought you out of. For those who have been followers of Christ even for a short time to those who have known him for decades, we all have seen God work in our lives through the storms. And when another storm comes, always remember that God is with you that Jesus himself is with you, that the Spirit of God is in you, and that when the storm comes, God does not say "I'm out of the picture, go fend for yourself."

The Gospel of Matthew along with John speaks of this account as well, but in book of Matthew, chapter 14:33 the disciples clearly have this moment of revelation and it says, "Then those who were in the boat worshiped him, saying, 'Truly you are the Son of God.'"

We must remember that the son of God, the Divine I Am, our Lord, our Savior, the Christ who we are in relationship with, will always be with us during the storm. There is no storm greater than Jesus.

Point #3

Jesus leads us through the storm.

Mark 6:53, "When they had crossed over, they landed at Gennesaret and anchored there."

The disciples were actually supposed to go to Bethsaida, but they end up in Gennesaret. In John's gospel it says that immediately when Jesus got into the boat they were on the other side. They were in the middle of the lake and now they are on the shore immediately, which is a miracle.

Mark 6:54-55, "As soon as they got out of the boat, people recognized Jesus. They ran throughout that whole region and carried the sick on mats to wherever they heard he was."

Then they get out of the boat (remember they've been extremely tired, seconds ago they were in the boat fighting the wind in a storm for literally hours). Immediately, the people recognize who Jesus is and they run towards him. It says the whole region brought their sick to wherever they heard he was.

Mark 6:56, "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."

And wherever he went, it didn't matter where, people came to Jesus. People came because they were going through a storm and all they wanted was to be healed by him. What we see here from Jesus is great compassion. Because he is the one who is leading people through their storms.

What does this say about us who have come out of a storm. What do we do? What is our role? It is to go to people, to be with them and help them during their storm. As Jesus had led us through the storm, we in turn must encourage people and point them to Jesus, reminding them that He is the one that will lead them out of their storms as well.

It is not something that we can do because we are not God. But we know God and our duty is to tell people, to proclaim what God has done, what Jesus has done in our lives, as we have gone through the horrible storms that come our way. The storm that you have come through is an encouragement for someone who is going through a storm right now. Your job is to testify, to share to those that are around you about what God has done. Christianity is not a faith in which we receive some good news of salvation or receive the good things that God does and then we just say nothing and sit down. As we are disciples of Christ, we share the good news of the Gospel. We share the fact that Jesus is the one who helps us through life and through these storms.

Now what people need to know is that they do not need more strength, they do not need more peace, they do not need more power, they do not need more hope. What they need is the one who gives them strength, who gives them peace, who gives them power, who gives them hope, and that is Jesus Christ. Because the greatest need that they have is Jesus. So, when Jesus leads us through the storm, we don't say that he gave us the strength, he gave us the power, that he gave us the hope, that he gave us the peace. No, we say that Jesus is our strength, is our peace, is our power, is our hope. He is the Great I Am, the one who led me out of the storm to tell you about him even more.

Everything within the scriptures from Genesis to Revelation, to what we looked at in the book of Mark today, points to Jesus. The Gospel of Christ, the Word that became flesh, our Hope, our Peace, our Rest, our Salvation, our Lord, our Savior, it is all Jesus Christ and no one else.

We are not in a relationship with the result of what happens at the storm, we are in a relationship with the one who brings the result of us coming out of the storm.

Everything must be Jesus centric; everything must be Christ centered and it must be based on the Gospel. It is Jesus only and no one else.