



WHEN ROWING AGAINST THE WIND

Grace Communion International

Minister: Eric Vautour

Date: July 22, 2018 - 16th Sunday of the Year

During today's sermon, we are going to consider how to face the challenges of life by trusting in Jesus

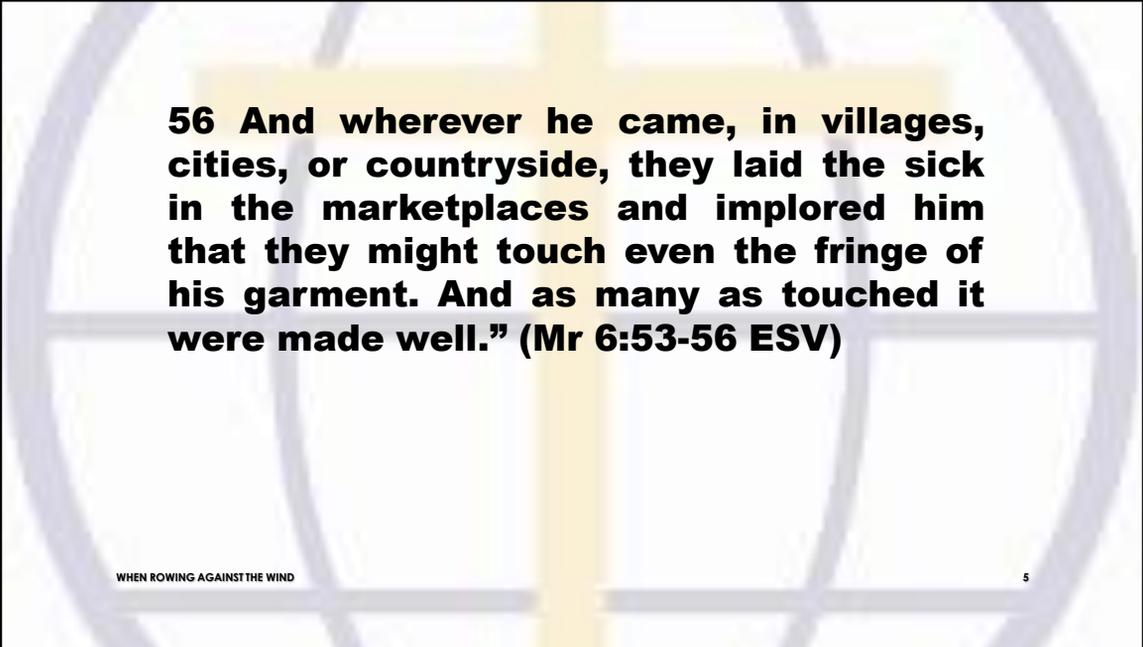
**SCRIPTURE
READING:**

**MARK 6:30-34; 53-
56 (ESV)**

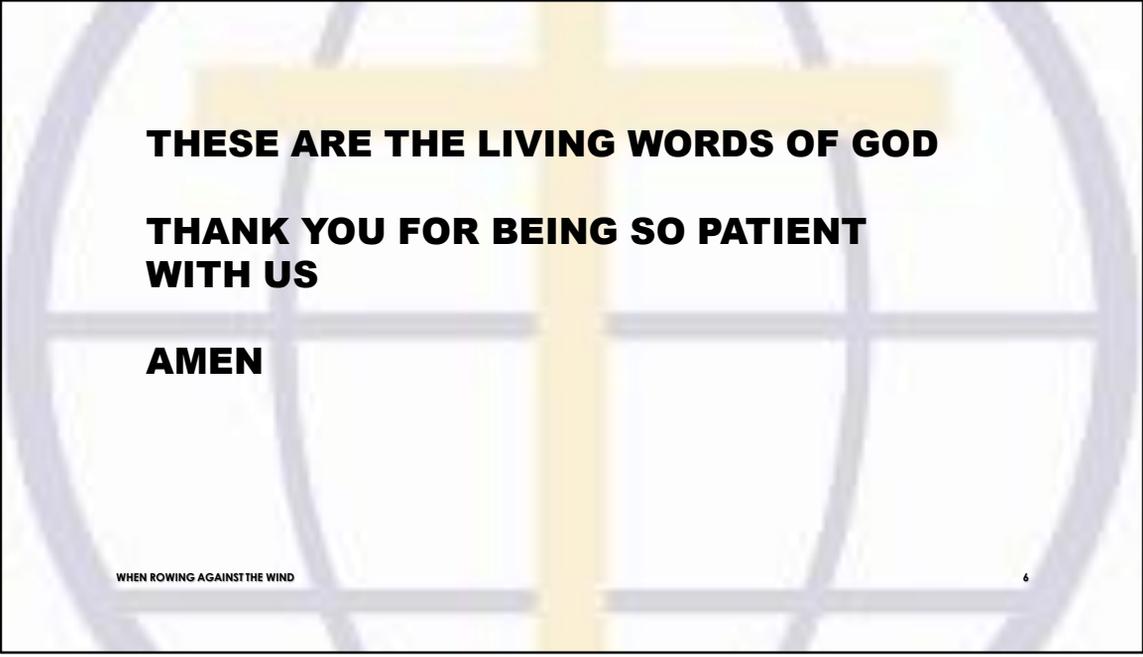
“30 ¶ THE APOSTLES RETURNED TO JESUS AND TOLD HIM ALL THAT THEY HAD DONE AND TAUGHT. 31 AND HE SAID TO THEM, “COME AWAY BY YOURSELVES TO A DESOLATE PLACE AND REST A WHILE.” FOR MANY WERE COMING AND GOING, AND THEY HAD NO LEISURE EVEN TO EAT. 32 AND THEY WENT AWAY IN THE BOAT TO A DESOLATE PLACE BY THEMSELVES.

33 NOW MANY SAW THEM GOING AND RECOGNIZED THEM, AND THEY RAN THERE ON FOOT FROM ALL THE TOWNS AND GOT THERE AHEAD OF THEM. 34 WHEN HE WENT ASHORE HE SAW A GREAT CROWD, AND HE HAD COMPASSION ON THEM, BECAUSE THEY WERE LIKE SHEEP WITHOUT A SHEPHERD. AND HE BEGAN TO TEACH THEM MANY THINGS.” (MR 6:30-34 ESV)

Mark 6:53 When they had crossed over, they came to land at Gennesaret and moored to the shore. 54 And when they got out of the boat, the people immediately recognized him 55 and ran about the whole region and began to bring the sick people on their beds to wherever they heard he was.



56 And wherever he came, in villages, cities, or countryside, they laid the sick in the marketplaces and implored him that they might touch even the fringe of his garment. And as many as touched it were made well.” (Mr 6:53-56 ESV)



THESE ARE THE LIVING WORDS OF GOD

**THANK YOU FOR BEING SO PATIENT
WITH US**

AMEN

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We read in the beginning of this chapter that the apostles had been sent two by two and proclaimed that people should repent. It is interesting that Jesus told them to take nothing for their journey except the staff—no bread, no bag and no money and their belts. They were to wear sandals and they were not to put on two tunics.

The main concern and task of the apostles is to get the message out rather than look after their own accommodation first.

Jesus is obviously training the apostles to put their complete trust and confidence in him.

They were to be devoted to the task rather than to be devoted to themselves. When God calls us, we are redeemed. We do not belong to ourselves anymore. We belong to him. **“Do you not know that if you present yourselves to anyone as obedient slaves, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin, which leads to death, or of obedience, which leads to righteousness?” (Ro 6:16 ESV).** We have been bought with a price—at the cost of the very life of Jesus through his crucifixion on the cross.

As they were sent out, they were to meet the needs of those in need. Again, they told people to repent. Obviously, they were given some authority and some credibility as they cast out many demons and anointing with oil many who were sick were healed.

Jesus was their mentor, their teacher. They reported back to him.

Jesus and the apostles were well known. They tried to go to a place of rest. As they were on their way, they were recognized and many people followed them.

We read that Jesus had compassion on them because they were like sheep without a shepherd. They had no one to guide them. They had no one to help them frame their life and give it meaning. They were like people without a compass and lost.

Although Mark doesn't tell us what Jesus taught, he writes that Jesus taught them "many" things.

Jesus and the apostles could not make it to a place of rest. A huge crowd followed them. Later that day, after Jesus had taught them, the apostles were concerned that the crowd had gone without eating.

Jesus told them something that was very surprising. Where they were was a desolate place. As it was late in the day, the disciples talked to Jesus about sending the crowds to the countryside and villages to buy themselves something to eat.

He answered them, **"You give them something to eat."** For the apostles, this was an impossible request. The crowd was so large that it would have taken, according to the apostle's estimation, 200 denarii worth of bread to feed all of them—**"the equivalent of two hundred days' pay for a day laborer (Matt. 20:2)."** (Garland, David E.. Mark (The NIV Application Commentary Book 2) (p. 253). Zondervan. Kindle Edition.)

Their objection to Jesus' request is a common human reaction. Moses had that reaction when God told him, in Numbers 11, that he would feed me about 600,000 men on foot. God had told Moses that he would give them meat, enough for a whole month. Moses could not believe his ears when he heard the Lord say that. The context is that the Israelites had complained because they had no meat to eat. They were wondering why they ever came out of Egypt.

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“21 But Moses said, “The people among whom I am number six hundred thousand on foot, and you have said, ‘I will give them meat, that they may eat a whole month!’ 22 Shall flocks and herds be slaughtered for them, and be enough for them? Or shall all the fish of the sea be gathered together for them, and be enough for them?” 23 And the LORD said to Moses, “Is the LORD’s hand shortened? Now you shall see whether my word will come true for you or not.”” (Nu 11:21-23 ESV)

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As we read later on in that chapter, **“Then a wind from the LORD sprang up, and it brought quail from the sea and let them fall beside the camp, about a day’s journey on this side and a day’s journey on the other side, around the camp, and about two cubits above the ground.” (Nu 11:31 ESV).**

As Moses, the apostles obviously did not recognize who they were dealing with. The apostles did not know Jesus, the very Son of God had come down to earth in our flesh.

Moses dealt with people who complained. They wanted meat. They were tired of eating only manna. Moses prayed for God's intervention. It is interesting that when they picked up the manna every morning, they could only pick up what they needed. If they would take more, it would become full of maggots.

Here we read that Jesus fed this crowd with only five loaves of bread and two fish. There was food left over. He fed 5000 men that they were completely satisfied.

It is also interesting that the apostles describes where they were at is a desolate place. Yet Jesus commanded them to sit down in groups on the **"green grass"**

The role of a shepherd is primarily to take care of the flock by providing proper food and water. Jesus is the good Shepherd. He took care of people's physical needs. Like the good Shepherd in Psalm 23, he makes them lie down in green pastures (verse 2).

Jesus does not provide them crumbs but he completely satisfies their physical hunger. Before feeding them with the proper food, he provided them with spiritual food.

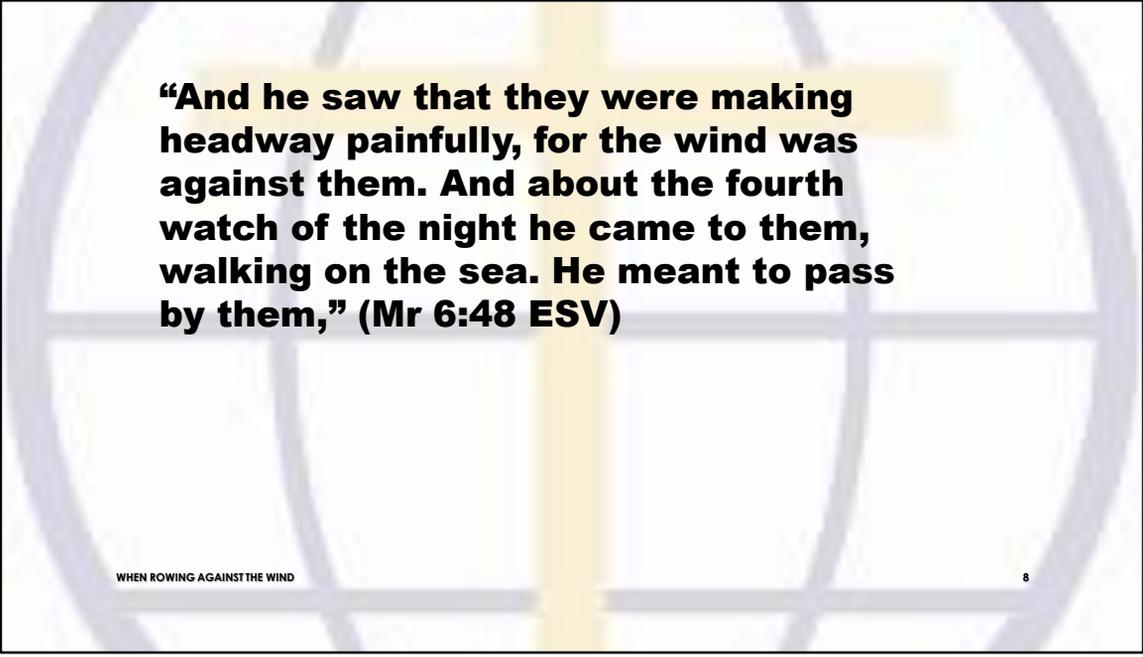
As new covenant Christian, Jesus gives us a meal – communion, the bread and wine – which is the eating of his body and the drinking of his blood through the symbol of the bread and wine. Just as those people being fed physically were abundantly blessed, we who feed on Jesus are also abundantly spiritually blessed in him.

Mark does not write about the reaction of the people who received the bread. He does not say whether or not the crowd perceived it as a miracle.

The apostles who collected the food certainly did not realize who they were dealing with, as we read in the next few verses.

Jesus continues to work with them by doing even greater things!

(Next slide)



“And he saw that they were making headway painfully, for the wind was against them. And about the fourth watch of the night he came to them, walking on the sea. He meant to pass by them,” (Mr 6:48 ESV)

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As we read this passage of Scripture, Jesus sent his disciples into the boat to go before him to the other side, to Bethsaida.

Jesus took leave of them to go pray on the mountain. Jesus was alone on the land while the disciples were out on the lake.

Jesus **SAW** that they were making headway painfully as the wind was against them. Between 3 AM and 6 AM, he came to them walking on the sea.

Of course the disciples did not understand. They thought they were seen a ghost. They were all terrified. Jesus reassured them by saying, **“Take heart; it is I. Do not be afraid.”**

Mark writes that the disciples were utterly astounded because their hearts were hardened. They had not understood about the loaves.

As we read God’s Word, treading the waves is only something God can do. (Job 9:8).

In the Bible, the sea is often a metaphor of evil, of a place where evil exists. For

example, in the book of Daniel and in Revelation, we have the beasts coming out of the sea.

Jesus walking on the water is not primarily about a rescue of the disciples at sea.

They are frustrated but not in peril. Since walking on the sea is something no ordinary mortal can do, Jesus' desire to pass by the disciples is not related to some mundane purpose. The verb **parerchomai** (to pass by) when connected to divinity, refers to an epiphany." An epiphany is a manifestation of a divine or supernatural being.

In common language an epiphany is a moment of sudden [insight](#) or [understanding](#). (Collins English Dictionary)

God cannot be fully seen, but Jesus can be. The one who comes to them on the sea is not simply a successor of Moses, who fills baskets with bread in the desert. Only God can walk on the sea, and Jesus greeting is not simply a cheery hello to assuage the disciples' fears. He greets them with the divine formula of self-revelation, "I am".

The disciples did not understand about the loaves. Their hearts were hardened (6:52)

As the **NIV Application Commentary** indicates, "**Mark offers a surprising explanation for the disciples' terror and amazement: "For they had not understood about the loaves; their hearts were hardened" (6:52). The two incidents are somehow connected. What is it that they do not understand about the loaves? What does it have to do with walking on the water? Minear is on target when he comments that the disciples are "blind to the presence of God and his care for men ... to the full glory of the revelation of God 'in the face of Christ.'"**

The condition of hardened hearts refers to disobedience, dullness, and obstinacy and is the predicament of Jesus' opponents (3:5; see Eph. 4:18). Mark repeats this description in Mark 8:17. The disciples are drawing closer to Jesus' opponents than to Jesus in their life stance. The difference between them and the opponents is significant, however. The disciples may be confused and blind, but they are not hostile to Jesus. Garland, David E.. Mark (The NIV Application Commentary Book 2) (p. 264- 265). Zondervan. Kindle Edition.

We should find a lot of encouragement in this. Jesus does not require us to understand everything immediately. The reality of God is mind-boggling. They could not see the presence of God in Jesus in their midst. They would not understand until Pentecost when they received the Holy Spirit who came to live in them.

Jesus walking on water shows us that he is a divine figure. Jesus revelation of who he

is, is powerful as evidenced in his act of walking on water.

Jesus walks on the water, on the waves and he says to his disciples—here I am—don't be afraid. Jesus wants to give them a glimpse of who he is.

The apostles did not follow a great prophet or a superhero but they are in the presence of the very son of God.

Jesus does what no other human can do. He redeems humanity from the slavery of sin and death.

I know there are jokes about Jesus walking on the water as being impossible. Some pictures show Jesus walking on rocks just below the surface of the sea. That is making light of who Jesus is.

Jesus is presenting himself to his disciples as God incarnate.

We humans are too often like the disciples. Our hearts are hardened. We fail to see Jesus walking by. We fail to recognize his presence in our life.

Often times, we are no different than the disciples walking to Emmaus after Jesus' resurrection. They did not recognize Jesus walking with them. It was only some time later that they recognized him. (Luke 24)

In Jesus walking on the water, we see Jesus' deep care and concern for his disciples during the darkest part of the night. He saw them in trouble. He saw them in trouble while still on the land. He reassured them by his presence and by calming the sea.

When Moses was in the presence of God, he only saw God's back. The disciples saw far more. They met God face to face. They saw the face of God in the face of Jesus.

"He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power. After making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high," (Heb 1:3 ESV)

Jesus is the one who brings deliverance and calm to our life in the face of the most difficult situations.

The disciples learned that they were not forsaken. Jesus was watching over them even if they did not see it.

At times, we may feel like the disciples. We are rowing against the wind. We look to the past and think we should never got into the boat. We should have stayed on

shore.

In our lives, there are times where we think and feel we are rowing against the wind, thinking we are on our own.

We can have different reactions:

- Difficulties in life can lead us to grow tired, discouraged, overwhelmed and then, we begin to withdraw because we do not feel the presence of God.
- Or we may row even harder against the wind, completely focused on the task, forgetting that Jesus is there watching over us. In other words, we rely on ourselves. This is a recipe for burnout.
- Trusting Jesus, they continued their life journey with him through their ups and downs of life. They gave him all they had – which was themselves. They did what the apostle Paul wrote, **“I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.” (Ro 12:1 ESV)**

Jesus did not take the disciples out of the sea but he enabled them to continue on their journey to the other side of the lake. In our life, when we go through rough waters, do we trust Jesus to bring us to the other side.

In the book of Revelation, when Jesus addresses the churches, he says he knows them. He encourages them to be faithful. He does not take away all their problems and challenges but he promises them victory if they stay faithful.

Metaphorically, we do not choose when the wind will come upon us. When the disciples saw Jesus, they thought he was a ghost. It was only after that they realized who Jesus is.

Although their hearts were hardened, although they did not understand everything, they kept trusting in Jesus. Jesus led them in the truth of who he is. They found rest in him. They kept trusting him even if they did not understand

When most of the disciples following Jesus were offended by Jesus’ teaching in John 6 about eating metaphorically eating his bread and drinking his blood, we read the following brief conversation.

“66 After this many of his disciples turned back and no longer walked with him. 67 So Jesus said to the Twelve, “Do you want to go away as well?” 68 Simon Peter answered him, “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life, 69

**and we have believed, and have come to know, that you are the Holy One of God.”
(Joh 6:66–69 ESV)**

Where will we go when we don't understand fully, or when we think and feel God is distant and uninvolved? Will we react like Peter or will we walk away like the others?

Let us remember that Jesus is always aware of our circumstances. He will not let us drown by the challenges, by the ups and downs of life. He is going to see us through to eternal life, to the fullness of his kingdom when he returns and transforms our lowly bodies into glorious ones. (1 Cor 15).

Jesus is the one who can calm to sea and the crisis in our life. He is the only one who can give us peace, the peace that surpasses understanding. Let us remember the words of the apostle Paul. (Next slide)

“4 Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice. 5 Let your reasonableness be known to everyone. The Lord is at hand; 6 do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. 7 And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.” (Php 4:4-7 ESV

Let us pray.