

Disciples in a Boat Mark 6:45-56

- Write: Acts 17:11 at the top of your notes
- We will present a harmonized version of these verses
- Combining the unique words of Matthew into the Mark text.
- Matthew's text is found in chapter 14:22-36
- You may want to have your finger in Matthew and open to Mark 6:45
- for exposition and clarity purposes I will expand the text

Mark 6:45 Immediately with urgency (after the miraculous feeding of the 5,000 plus) **He made** (because there is resistance to leave) **His disciples get into the boat and go before Him to the other side, to Bethsaida** (House of the Fisher), **while He sent the multitude away.**

Pulpit Commentary-It would seem, that there were two Bethsaidas (or "places of fish"—fish-villages)—one to the north-east of the Sea of Galilee, not far from where the Jordan enters it, called Bethsaida Julias; and the other on the western side of the sea itself, near to Capernaum.
-The western Bethsaida's is where they are directed to go!

46 And when He had sent them away, He departed into the mountain (a plateaued area) **by Himself to pray.**

- 46 times in the Gospels pray, prays, prayer, is used.
- 20 of them regarding Jesus praying
- But the word 'pray' or its derivatives are never in John. Why? John is the Gospel of the Deity of Jesus Christ
- Now you will protest and say John 17 is His prayer,
- But it says He 'spoke these words' to the Father... God does not pray, He speaks!!!!
- A fine point but a difference none the less

Note as we move forward: Whenever the disciples are separated from Jesus in the Gospel of Mark, they seem to fall into distress or trouble.

47 Now when evening came, He was alone there, the boat was in the middle of the sea; tossed by the waves, for the wind was contrary or opposed to them, and He was alone on the land (perhaps on the shore, not in the Mountain praying).

-**SHOW** the bow view, then I'll request the profile view

48 Then He saw them straining (literally in physical torment) **at rowing, for the wind was against contrary or opposed to them, as if it had personality.**

- straining here is torment in Rev. 20:10 where it says that the devil, the false prophet, and the beast are in the lake of fire being 'tormented' day and night!
- So we could say that the rowing disciples were experiencing a form of hell on earth!
- It was only by painful effort that they could make head-way against the driving wind and water blowing upon them from the west, that is, from the Mediterranean Sea.
- From: The Boys in the Boat, by Daniel James Brown, he says this: "Competitive rowing is an undertaking of extraordinary beauty preceded by brutal punishment. Unlike most sports, which draw primarily on particular muscle groups, rowing makes heavy and repeated use of virtually every muscle in the body..... And rowing makes these muscular demands not at odd intervals but in rapid sequence, over a protracted period of time, repeatedly and without respite."
- SHOW** the 1936 Olympic Crew Champions

-Well that grueling protracted period for the 'Disciples in a Boat' was at least 9 hours

48 cont. Now about the fourth watch (*Roman, not Jewish, Jews had three watches*) **of the night** (*between 3-6am*)

-During that time the disciples had rowed about three Roman miles. The Sea of Galilee is not more than six miles broad at its widest part. They were therefore now "in the midst of the sea,"; so that, after rowing for nine hours, they had hardly crossed over more than half of the sea.

-What is commendable here?

-They never quit, did not stop

-There is no record of complaint or bickering or desiring to go back ...

48 still cont. He came to them, walking on the sea, and would have or better He wished to pass them by.

-His Desire was to pass them by

-Seems very competitive to me Give you a nine hour head start and still beat you to the western shore

-But He is not a competitor, but God manifest in the Flesh.

-Why pass them by?

-Speaking practically to lead them and let them know they are on the right course even though they are 8 miles from Bethsaida as He was walking to the shore near Gennesaret

-Also, and more importantly, per **James Edwards**: this ordinary innocuous phrase, 'passed them by' is charged with special meaning and it alerts us to a rare self-revelation of God.

The History of God 'Passing By'

-At Mt. Sinai the transcendent Lord "passed by" Moses (Ex. 33:22; also 33:19 and 34:6) in order to reveal His name and His compassion.

Turn to

Exodus 33:18-34:6

18 And he (Moses) said, "Please, show me Your glory."

19 Then He said, "I will make all My goodness pass before you, and I will proclaim the name of the LORD before you. I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion."

20 But He said, "You cannot see My face (source of His Glory); for no man shall see Me, and live."

Here we need to insert several NT verses that deal with the question of seeing God face to face:

1 Timothy 6:15b-16 He (Jesus) who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings and Lord of lords, 16 who alone has immortality, dwelling in unapproachable light (the unapproachable light of God the Father), whom no man has seen or can see, to whom be honor and everlasting power. Amen.

-How do we know this is speaking of the Father?

-Jesus tells us so in **John 5:37**

37 And the Father Himself, who sent Me, has testified of Me. You have neither heard His (the Father's) voice at any time, nor seen His the Father's form.

-so clearly as we piece together the Scriptures we are talking about not seeing the Father face to face

So how do we see God?...

John 1:18 thru the H.S., John writing 50 plus years after the Ascension of Jesus says this:

18 No one has seen God (in His unmanifested essence) at any time. The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him.

-What part of the Father did He declare, make known? His bosom, His heart!

We continue with **Exodus 33:21**

21 And the LORD said, "Here is a place by Me, and you shall stand on the rock.

22 So it shall be, while My glory passes by, that I will put you in the cleft of the rock, (just as we are put into Christ, the Rock) and will cover you with My hand while I pass by.

23 Then I will take away My hand, and you shall see My back; but My face shall not be seen."

-Jump to **34:6**

34:6 And the LORD passed before him and proclaimed *this revelation*, "The LORD, the LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abounding in goodness and truth,

7 keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, by no means clearing the guilty,

Again, at Mt. Horeb the Lord revealed his presence to Elijah in "passing by" in **1 Kings 19:11-13**

11 Then He said, "Go out, and stand on the mountain before the LORD." And behold, the LORD passed by, and a great and strong wind tore into the mountains and broke the rocks in pieces before the LORD, but the LORD was not in the wind; and after the wind an earthquake, but the LORD was not in the earthquake;

12 and after the earthquake a fire, but the LORD was not in the fire; and after the fire a still small voice.

13 So it was, when Elijah heard it, that he wrapped his face in his mantle and went out and stood in the entrance of the cave. Suddenly a voice came to him, and said, "What are you doing here, Elijah?"

-What of God was revealed to Elijah? His voice. Was it a booming voice? No still small voice

-The Word of the Lord had come to Elijah many times, but now he heard His voice....

-One of the most important pictures of this idea of God passing by in the OT comes in

Job 9:8, 11, turn there

[God] alone stretches out the heavens

and 'treads on the waves of the sea' (in LXX same Greek wording as Mark 'walks on the sea').

when he passes me, I do not see that it is Him (The Disciples thought Him a phantom);

when he goes by, I cannot understand Him (And the Disciples did not understand Him either according to v. 52).

-But when Jesus "passes by" the disciples on the lake He intends (unlike in the OT with Moses and Job) to make the mysterious and enigmatic God of Job and Moses and Elijah physically visible as He had not been and could not have been to former generations.

-The God of Israel, majestic and awesome but unknowable face to face, is now "passing by" believers in Jesus of Nazareth.

-Jesus' walking on the water to his disciples is a revelation of the glory that he shares with the Father and the compassion that He extends to his followers, and those who touch Him

-John has Jesus declaring that he is the Son of God (John 10:36), whereas Mark has him showing us that he is the Son of God.

Back to our Text in Mark 6:49

49 And when they saw Him walking on or upon the top of the sea,

they supposed it was a ghost (phantasma, our word phantom), and what they thought they saw made them cried out;

“It is a ghost (or phantom)!” And they cried out for fear.

50 for they all saw Him and were troubled. But immediately He talked with them and said to them, “Be of good cheer! It is ego eimi, it is I AM (identical with God’s self-disclosure to Moses at the burning bush); do not or better stop being afraid.”

-What did He reveal to them in His passing by them?

-That He was not just a prophet or a man of God, but that He was the I AM, the LORD Jehovah in physical form

A word about the phrase: ‘they saw a ghost’ or better yet a phantom.

-*phantasma*, from which get our word ‘phantom’ is only used here and in Matthew’s version of this event.

-It is a word that Gnosticism has latched onto and probably from the disciples evaluation and reaction to what they were seeing walking on the water.

-At its core Gnostic doctrine was this:

The object of salvation was the return of all the lost “sparks of divinity” back into an original unity that had been shattered. On a personal level, this could be accomplished only by sloughing off the world of physical matter and by being awakened through the true gnosis *or knowledge* to one’s real identity. In the Gnostic system Jesus was the divine revealer who had come to impart this secret truth. His body was merely a phantom, and He neither truly was born nor truly died.

-I would not be surprised if the Gnostic justification for saying that Jesus had a phantom body came from the disciples purely human reaction to seeing Jesus walking on the water.

-The next four verses in our Harmony are from **Matthew 14:28-31**, turn there, as we continue our study

-They will definitely answer the question as to whether this was a Phantom or the human I AM walking on the water

Matt. 14:28-31 28 And Peter answered Him and said, “Lord, if it is You, command me to come to You on the water.”

29 So He said, “Come (in the command form).” And when Peter had come down out of the boat, he walked on the water to go to Jesus.

30 But when he saw that the wind was boisterous, he was afraid (and had a sinking feeling!); and beginning to sink he cried out, saying, “Lord, save me!”

31 And immediately Jesus stretched out His hand and caught him, and said to him, “O you of little faith, why did you doubt?”

Back to Mark 6:51

51 Then He went up into the boat to them, and the wind ceased. And they were greatly amazed in themselves beyond measure, and marveled. Then those who were in the boat came and worshiped Him, saying, “Truly You are the Son of God.”

-The reaction of the disciples in the boat parallels their earlier consternation when Jesus quelled the storm on the lake (Mark 4:41). Once again they misread and misunderstand, shrieking in terror and mistaking him out to be a ghost.

52 For (prior to this) they had not understood about the loaves, because their heart was hardened (blinded in Rom. 11:7, 2Cor. 3:14).

-Because they did not put together the who behind the multiplication of the loaves and fishes and only marveled at what happened, when the water walking incident occurred they were terrified!

-Up to now they thought that God was working thru this man instead of God was in this man working!

-They did not understand that the one multiplying the loaves and fishes was the voice of the burning bush, the I AM, God almighty manifest in the flesh.

-The Disciples before the cross were not very different from Job. Remember 9:8 and 11? I will paraphrase **[God] alone stretches out the heavens**

and 'walks on the sea'

when he passes me, I do not see that it is Him, God

when he passes by, I cannot understand Him (As the Disciples did not understand Him either).

-The antidote to this hardness or blindness is a correct understanding first of all of who He is

-And that is exactly what He gave them as *Passed them by on the waves of the Sea*

-His capabilities are limited by us because we compare Him to us and assign Him our limitations

-So why choose to bring understanding by 'passing by' on the Sea of Galilee, at night, while they were rowing against a very strong wind?

-Why wait to walk out to them after at least 9 hours of intense rowing?

-When it came fishing and boating on the Galilee, they were experts, it was their strong suit!

-And they needed a softened and humbled heart to gain a correct understanding

-But Jesus was watching for the perfect time the perfect place.

53 When they had crossed over,

-What an un-emotional, matter of fact summary of the previous nights events!

they came to the land of Gennesaret (*eight miles south of Bethesda, v.45*) **and anchored there.**

-without rest for over 24 hours they were truly **anchored in Him** and then they beheld His compassion and mercy at work as the people touched the Physical I AM and were healed!

54 And when they came out of the boat, immediately the people recognized Him,

55 ran through that whole surrounding region, and began to carry about on beds those who were sick to wherever they heard He was.

56 Wherever He entered into villages, cities, or in the country, they laid the sick in the marketplaces, and begged Him that they might just touch the hem of His garment. And as many as touched Him were made well.

Let's create our own Mystic Parable with this lake scene in mind and apply it to our lives

From the Text We will Identify the Pieces of our Mystic Parable

-He has sent or scattered the people (Israel) away.

-He is once more alone on the mountain to pray.

-His disciples are alone on the sea in a boat in darkness.

-His instructions are to go to the other side to Bethsaida after a full day of ministry

-They obey without questioning, even though it is very difficult

-The winds are contrary, against them (as if the winds are calling out: 'turn around row in my direction, it is easier!')

-It is night, its hard rowing, but Dawn is coming, for it is the fourth watch, 3-6 AM

-They are exhausted and not making much headway in an area of life that they were very strong and capable of doing on their own? How humbling ...

-Jesus 'Passes by' walking on the water, not going to Bethsaida, 8 miles north, but to Gennesaret

-Peter testing Him said if it is you command me to come out to you!

-He did command him, he did walk out to Jesus, but he looked around and then had that sinking feeling

-As always, when asked, Jesus saves, and He saves Peter.

-When He went up into the boat the contrary winds ceased and they finished crossing over

-Now the Disciples in the boat worshipped Him as the Son of God, per Matthew

-In Gennesaret, we have no names of anyone, we only see the physical I AM (which Moses did not see, nor Elijah, nor Job, nor any man until now!

- The physically revealed I AM is doing in Gennesaret what He revealed Moses to in
Exodus 33:14: "The LORD, the LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abounding in goodness and truth"

The Parabolic Application

- He is gone into the Mountains of Heaven, in the presence of God as our intercessor.
- The Boat is the place of safety within God's will
- Remember Paul in Acts 27:31 told the Centurion 'unless these men (including Paul) stay in the ship you cannot be saved, and they were in a Hurricane and the ship was coming apart.
- The safest place to be in a storm is in His boat with His like-minded rowers

- The stormy sea with the contrary wind is a type of this present, contrary age.
- Disciples rowing against contrary winds are within His sovereign will for their lives
- But the boat was the place of safety-not the sea of this world
- There will be toil, even torment, but it is a safe place.

- What are you going to do when it is tough?
- In storms, adversities, and even defeat, human self-sufficiency is revealed for what it is—human in-sufficiency.
- When the defenses of human pride are breached, people sometimes see God's presence among them—even if it is first preceded by troubling and perhaps terrifying circumstances

- Other voices say: Jump out of the boat because your flesh tells you its safer and easier in the contrary world?
- Trouble and perplexity is the lot of His disciples during His absence
- Yet they continue to row against contrary winds.

- Unlike the Disciples we have the Spirit of Jesus, also known as the Spirit of the Father, also known as the Holy Spirit who is in us and with us
- He is our Coxswain (coxs'en), He guides the boat, directs us,
- and He lives inside each and every rower to give strength to cross over to the other side.
- Daniel James Brown in his book 'The Boys in the Boat' tells us this great lesson:
no other sport demands and rewards the complete abandonment of the self the way that rowing does. Great crews may have men or women of exceptional talent or strength; they may have outstanding coxswains (coxs'en) or stroke oars or bowmen; but they have no stars. The team effort—the perfectly synchronized flow of muscle, oars, boat, and water; the single, whole, unified, and beautiful symphony that a crew in motion becomes—is all that matters. Not the individual, not the self.
- In another place in his book he says that if any of the nine member crew desires to be a star the crew will lose very time for they will be out of sync as one boat, and we would say as one body
- So what happens when one in the boat seeks to stand out to be a star and walk on the unsafe waters?
- He sinks and the Physical I AM answers his cry and saves him and brings him back to the boat.
- the merciful, compassionate, longsuffering physically revealed, I AM!
- Brown tells that what the victors got when they won the race was the prized possession of the losers, the jerseys of the losing crew. In one such race he says this of the University of Washington's victorious 9-man crew:
The Washington freshmen paddled over to the California boat and collected the traditional trophy of victorious crews everywhere—the shirts off the backs of their vanquished rivals.

-When Jesus comes back from the Mountains of Heaven and we come with Him He will collect the prize of this earth from His defeated enemies

-An earth that He won at the cross but will not possess until He comes again!

Finally

-on earth at the end of every hard journey is Gennesaret, and Gennesaret means, according to Smith's Bible Dictionary, Garden of the Prince.

-At the End of very hard rowing is a Garden of great spiritual riches, riches that reflect the revelation of **Exodus 34:6 And the LORD passed before him and proclaimed, "The LORD, the LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abounding in goodness and truth**

-those are your garden of riches!

Amen!

Say: Let us Pray

Tonight we have are having communion!

-The elements represent:

-The broken body of the Physical I AM

AND

-The shed Blood of the one who 'passes us by' to reveal more Himself to us in every storm of our life!