

Mark 6:45-53

Staying During the Storm

TSC, Capital Hill Campus / Summit Online / Apex

MPT: To demonstrate that Jesus is the Messiah, the true Son of God.

MPS: During your 'meantime,' just stay in the boat.¹

INTRODUCTION

Open your Bibles to **Mark 6**...

Ever been on a road trip? . . . Growing up, my family never flew anywhere. Frankly, I didn't even know flying was an option—I thought only super rich ppl flew anywhere. We drove *everywhere* (**Crescent Beach, Four Winds Hotel, Condo 1A**). And, while I'm fairly young, I grew up in an age where we didn't have **iPads** and **Nintendo Switch's** to entertain us in the car. In fact, and I know this is shocking if you're young, we had to find ways to entertain ourselves **without electronics or internet**.

- While a lot of **travel luxuries for kids** have evolved, one thing about road trips that has remained constant throughout the history of mankind is one thing...one single question that always comes up about halfway through a road trip: **"Are we there yet?"**
 - **DAD:** *Do you see anything resembling a beach?*
- Of course I knew we weren't there yet...but what I was saying is, "*Dad, I've done everything I know how to do!*: Game Boy;

¹ I owe the big idea and direction of this sermon to Judah Smith and his sermon *Matters of the Meantime*.

Walkman; I spy; Animal name game; 'I have to go to the bathroom simply cuz I'm bored' game; yell at each other game. I've done everything I know how to do...so if we could just coordinate the arrival time with the time I'll be done with all my fun stuff, that'd be great, cuz this in between time ain't so fun. So, dad, are we there yet??"

Have you ever asked that question to God?: **GOD, ARE WE THERE YET?**

- God, why am I **not where I want to be?** I thought I'd be a bit **happier** by now...thought I'd have some **close friends**...thought I'd be in the **perfect relationship**...thought we'd **have kids** by now...*are we there yet?*
- God, I didn't think I'd still be dealing with this **struggle**...this **feud**...this **addiction**...*are we there yet?*
- God, I thought I'd be further along in my **career**...I thought the **business I started would be doing better**...I thought this **current job was supposed to just be temporary** and I wouldn't be living **paycheck to paycheck** still...*are we there yet?*
- God, I'm trying to **raise these kids** to be decent human beings, and while we're not where we used to be they're still **little terrorists**...*are we there yet?*
- God, honestly, at this point, I'm wondering if you even **care**...if you're even **real**...if you even **listen**...God, **I'm doing everything I know how to do** but I still feel stuck in between **where I used to be** and **where I believe you're taking me**...*God, are we there yet?*

We all like the **starting line** and the **finish line**...the **beginning** and **end** of the race are both awesome. The **marathon in the middle** is where we need help. **What do you do when you're not where you used to be,**

but not where you're supposed to be?: What do you do during this in-between time?...during the **meantime**?

Mark 6:45-53

Jesus has been doing some cool things—healing ppl, telling stories, gathering the disciples . . . and he **just got done feeding the 5k**:

⁴⁵Immediately he made his disciples get into the boat and go before him to the other side, to Bethsaida, while he dismissed the crowd.

⁴⁶And after he had taken leave of them, he went up on the mountain to pray. ⁴⁷And when evening came, the boat was out on the sea, and he was alone on the land. ⁴⁸And he saw that they were making headway painfully, for the wind was against them. And about the fourth watch of the night (b/t 3am-6am) he came to them, walking on the sea. He meant to pass by them, ⁴⁹but when they saw him walking on the sea they thought it was a ghost, and cried out, ⁵⁰for they all saw him and were terrified. But immediately he spoke to them and said, "Take heart; it is I. Do not be afraid."

⁵¹And he got into the boat with them, and the wind ceased. And they were utterly astounded, ⁵²for they did not understand about the loaves, but their hearts were hardened. ⁵³When they had crossed over, they came to land at Gennesaret and anchored there.

PRAY

From this story in Mark 6 I want to give you **FOUR REMINDERS TO SUSTAIN YOU DURING THE MEANTIME:**

1) God Always Has a Plan (v45)

⁴⁵Immediately he made his disciples get into the boat and go before him to the other side...

Scholars tell us that **the reason Jesus sent the disciples away** was because they were still thinking in **political** and **national** terms—see, the people of God had been waiting for their Savior who, they believed, would **overthrow Rome** along with every other kingdom on this planet and God's people would **reign in peace**.

- So when they see Jesus doing all these awesome things they're like, "YES! This is our guy! It's time to crown him king and get this party started!"
- The problem was *how* they thought they would get there. Jesus knew the path to **liberating God's people** both **spiritually** and [one day] **physically** was one that wouldn't lead to an **earthly throne** but rather to a **bloody cross**.

So before the disciples could get too excited about this thought, Jesus makes them get into a boat and head out onto the lake. Which seems harmless enough...*but where do they find themselves?: Right in the middle of a storm with Jesus nowhere in sight.*

Now I don't know about you, but I've always been told, "*The safest place to be is in the will of God.*"

- However, what I read here is that the disciples **obeyed Jesus** and their obedience is what **led them into a storm**.
- Hmm...now that can't be right, can it? *I mean, God loves me and has a wonderful plan for my life that includes nothing but comfort and success and prosperity, right?*
- I mean what do you do when the will of God **sends** you into a **storm**? How do you react when one of Jesus's **demands** comes at your **detriment**?

See, our **American Christianity** doesn't give us a category for this: in fact, if your theology depends on God doing things **the way** you think they should be done, **in the manner** you think, and **on the timeline**

you think then you're gonna be **frustrated** and **disappointed** with God your entire life.

- And *that's* the main problem the disciples are dealing with here—their main problem is NOT the storm—their main problem is that they have **hard hearts** that are **unwilling to embrace Jesus fully as God**. . . which is actually the main point of Mark's Gospel: **to demonstrate that Jesus is the Messiah, the true Son of God.**

This is why it's so important for us to **base our understanding and beliefs about God on the Bible**. Not on our **feelings** about him, or what we believe he **should be doing** in our lives, or on what our **friends** say or some **celebrity** says about him...but on what the **BIBLE** says about God. And **what the Bible says is that:**

- There are some secret things that belong only to the Lord that we'll never know. (**Deut. 29:29**)
- **Prov. 25:2** says it's actually the “glory of God to conceal [some] things.”
- **Isaiah** tells us that God's thoughts are not our thoughts; his ways are not our ways...actually, for as high as the heavens are above the earth, God's ways and thoughts are higher than ours. (**Isaiah 55:8-9**)

There's a level of **intellectual ascent and understanding** that we'll never attain regarding spiritual things no matter **how hard we try** or **how smart we are**.

- At some point you're gonna be stuck on a “**spiritual road trip**” that's taking WAY LONGER and has WAY MORE DETOURS than you ever imagined.
- And what's gonna sustain you during this meantime is not understanding God's plan in its entirety, but understanding

and believing that **God always has a plan** and that **God is always in control.**

- IOW, if you feel like you're in that storm right now, and you think of God's plan, and your only response is, “*What IN THE WORLD could he possibly be up to?*” that's actually an **honest** and **honoring** question. In fact, the disciples were asking the same thing...so you're in good company!
- Faith is not insisting that **we're happy** even when **life is miserable**. Faith is saying, “*I really don't know WHY God has me here ... but I do know THAT God has me here. And I trust him.*”

We can always cling to the truth that **God has a purpose**...but if we insist on always **knowing the purpose**, we'll find ourselves in despair. **Which is why some of you think God is mean**...cuz right now he's allowing you to be in the **meantime**.

Here's the problem with that though: by blaming God for your suffering, you're admitting that **God is powerful enough to stop your suffering**...and if God is **great** and **powerful** enough for you **to be mad at** for not stopping your suffering when he could...then you also have a God who is great and powerful enough **to have reasons that you won't understand to allow your suffering to happen!**²

- We've quoted it before around here but, “*A God small enough to be fully understood is not big enough to be worshiped!*”

Listen, during your meantime, don't trust in your **limited perspective**; trust in **God's perfect plan**, cuz he always has one. This is already the second time in the book of Mark where Jesus calms the storms. He's

² Tim Keller argument for the problem of evil.

the maker of heaven & earth...he's not intimidated by the wind and the waves, and he's not intimidated by your circumstances.

Remembering and believing that God always has a plan will sustain you during seasons of **storms, frustrations, or delays**.

So here the disciples are...they've **obeyed Jesus** and yet they've found themselves in the middle of a storm. Look at verse 48...

⁴⁸And he saw that they were making headway painfully, for the wind was against them. (I get the picture of my **kids learning to ride a bike or rollerblading** here...they're making headway but, man, it's painfully slow) **And about the fourth watch of the night he came to them, walking on the sea. He meant to pass by them,** ⁴⁹but when they saw him walking on the sea they thought it was a ghost, and cried out, ⁵⁰for they all saw him and were terrified.

Second reminder during your meantime is this:

2) God Is Always Near His People (vv48-49)

The disciples are about a mile off shore—not where they used to be, but not where they're supposed to be...they're in the **middle of this mess**—and Jesus decides to meet up with them. This is one of my favorite miracles of Jesus because he tells them to “**go before him to the other side**,” obviously implying that he'll meet them there...yet he doesn't say how he's gonna get there. Now we know that Jesus walked on water, but imagine the conversation in the boat:

- Hanging out. James has 20/20 vision and he looks out on the lake and sees a dude skiing, but there's no boat in sight...so he

says to John, “Ummm...Did Jesus say how he's coming?...cuz he's coming...”

Jesus walking on water is **one of Mark's proof of Jesus' divinity** which were prophesied about in the OT. *How do I know that?* Look at **Job 9:8** where Job says “[God] alone has spread out the heavens and marches on the waves of the sea.” Who walks on the sea? God. God alone walks on the water.

- The OT, which is full of prophecies about a coming Messiah, is always pointing toward **Jesus as the fulfillment** of those prophecies in the NT.
- To an astute reader, **Jesus walking on water** would've made them think, “Wait, God is the only one who can walk on water...” And Mark is shouting, “EXACTLY!”

So Jesus comes to them **Patrick Swayze Ghost style** and, as they should be, they are **terrified**. And if this isn't **wild enough**, go back to v48 and make sure you caught what it said: **And about the fourth watch of the night he came to them, walking on the sea. He meant to pass by them...**

- What?!? He MEANT to pass by them? They **obey** Jesus...now they're in a storm...and he MEANT TO PASS BY THEM W/O HELPING? Did Jesus mean to leave them struggling by themselves?

Remember, a basic bible-reading principle is to always interpret harder/unclear passages in light of easier/clearer ones. We've gotta dive deep into this, okay—y'all ready? (~~I heard Apex was the smartest campus so I'm gonna try to come join the adult's table for a few minutes...I hope that's alright.~~)

Ths idea of **God passing by** is all throughout Scripture...and **never once** does it convey a lack of care on his behalf:

- **Exodus 33:18-23** – God passes by Moses: ¹⁸Moses said, “Please show me your glory.” ¹⁹And he said, “I will make all my goodness **pass before you** and will proclaim my name ‘The Lord’... ²⁰But you cannot see my face, for man shall not see me and live.” ²¹And the Lord said, “Behold, there is a place by me where you shall stand on the rock, ²²and while my glory **passes by** I will put you in a cleft of the rock, and I will cover you with my hand until I have **passed by**. ²³Then I will take away my hand, and you shall see my back, but my face shall not be seen.”
- **1 Kings 19:9, 11** - God passes by Elijah: ⁹There Elijah came to a cave and lodged in it. And behold, the word of the Lord came to him...¹¹And he said, “Go out and stand on the mount before the Lord.” And behold, the Lord **passed by**, and a great and strong wind tore the mountains and broke in pieces the rocks before the Lord...

See, Jesus meaning to ‘pass by’ isn’t a bad thing; it’s one more way he’s showing them that he’s God in the flesh. Again, to the early Jewish reader, all of the things that Jesus is doing in Mark 6 would be reminding them of times **God appeared in the OT**...it’s Mark’s not-so-subtle way of showing them that Jesus is God.

But as **Jesus** is looking to “pass by” the disciples, **the most radical part of this entire story takes place** (it’s not that he walked on water; it’s not that he calmed the seas): instead of passing by, Jesus changes his mind and he gets in the boat.

Church, you’ve gotta get this: **the miracle isn’t just that Jesus walked on water...the miracle is that the God of the universe got into the boat with sinners.**

- See, by **walking on the water** he’s showing them “I AM GOD.”
- But by **getting into the boat** he’s declaring “**I AM GOD WHO IS WITH YOU.** I’m not **distant** and **far off**. I’m not **uncaring**. I’m **here with you**. I’ll **never leave you**. I’ll never **forsake you**. And from this point forward, **the only thing God will be ‘passing over’ is your SIN** because I’m going to take it on the cross in your place!”

Jesus was never going to leave them in a mess...he was always leading them into the arms of the Messiah!

- *Feel like God has passed you by?* ...Look to Jesus. He’s in the boat with you, and he’ll never leave you!
- *Feel like life is one battle after another?* ...Look to Jesus. He’s in the boat with you, and remember that his grace is sufficient for you...in your weakness, he is made strong.
- *Feel like you’re all alone in your physical suffering?* ...Look to Jesus. He’s in the boat with you, and he knows what it’s like to suffer and be acquainted with grief...surely he has borne your griefs and carries your sorrows.
- *Feel stuck in that sin and fear God is going to pass you by?* ...Look to Jesus. He’s in the boat with you...he knows **everything** about you and yet he loves you more than you’ll ever know!

We may never know why God allows pain...but if we’re assured of his presence in the midst of it, we can keep walking with him in faith, hope, and even joy.

- **ELISABETH ELLIOT:** *“The secret [to enduring] is Christ in me, not me in a different set of circumstances.”*

- It may not be our preference—we'd prefer to know God's purposes for everything he allows in our lives—but what's more comforting than knowing his purpose is the assurance of his presence. So when you're in the **meantime**, stop looking at your **mess**...and start looking to the **Messiah!** He has NOT passed you by! He's in the boat with you...grab hold of him and cry out to him.

And when you cry out to him, know that he always hears his people.

3) God Always Hears Your Prayers (vv49-50)

Here's how I know:

"He meant to pass by them,⁴⁹but when they saw him walking on the sea they thought it was a ghost, and cried out,⁵⁰for they all saw him and were terrified. But immediately he spoke to them and said, "Take heart; it is I. Do not be afraid."

Here is Jesus, meaning to pass by them in the middle of their storm...and something **stops** him. Something **redirects** him. *What was it?* It's right there at the end of v49—the disciples cried out.

- Summit, God always hears his people. If you're crying out to God, don't confuse his silence with his absence. We've already seen how he'll never leave you...now cling to the truth that **he always hears you. Isaiah 59:1, "His ear is not too deaf to hear and his hand is not too short to save!"**

Notice this wasn't some eloquent, reverent, faith-filled prayer. No, they were **terrified** and so they **cried out**—not in faith, but in fear! They didn't say, "*Oh, Holy One of Israel, the Christ who commands the*

wind and waves, O bid thee come and calm the waves and the storm." No, they simply cried out...that's it.

SPURGEON: "Often when a believer **groans** in prayer...he has offered his best prayer."³ This is the prayer that says:

- *God I have NO IDEA what you're doing...but I trust that you do!*
- *God, I don't know where you are, but I believe you hear me and I'm asking you to intervene here!*"
- *God, HELP! HEAL! RESTORE! REDEEM! SAVE!*
- **This was basically my prayer when I asked God to save me...** Crying out Matt 11:28 "Take it..."

Yes, God is FULLY **sovereign** and **in control**. But don't EVER underestimate the **power of human prayer and initiative** in the Christian life. In fact, based on this text, Jesus would've kept right on going if they had not **cried out**.

We can get so caught up in everything that's **going wrong** that we forget to even talk to the **one who can make it right!** Some of you are **so busy assessing** your situation when what you need to do is begin **accessing** your Savior through prayer.

And I know this is hard...some of you have been praying about something for YEARS and it still hasn't come to pass. You still haven't seen God move in that area of your life. One of the hardest parts about following God is that **he doesn't work on our timetable.**

- **Proverbs 13:12, "Hope deferred makes the heart sick, but when the desire comes, it is a tree of life."**⁴
 - When is when?!?
- **Galatians 6:9, "And let us not grow weary of doing good, for in**

³ Spurgeon's Sermons, 55:3128, 1909

⁴ NKJV

due season we will reap, if we do not give up."

- When is "due season?!"?
- IOW, what both of these are saying is, "Stay in the boat."

What do you do when you're not where you used to be, but you're not where you're supposed to be? **YOU STAY IN THE BOAT AND PRAY.**

- Do the disciples exhibit great faith? No.
- Are they blind to what Jesus is trying to show them about himself? Yes.
- But wanna know the one thing they did right? They stayed in the boat. They didn't jump ship.

God always has a plan, so **stay in the boat.**

God never removes his presence, so **stay in the boat.**

God always hears his people, so **stay in the boat.**

And as you stand on these reminders, here's the last one to cling to during your meantime:

(VAMP)

4) God Always Fulfills His Purpose (vv50-53)

We pick up again in **verse 50:**

"But immediately he spoke to them and said, "Take heart; it is I. ("Be of good cheer!") Do not be afraid." ⁵¹And he got into the boat with them, and the wind ceased. And they were utterly astounded, ⁵²for they did not understand about the loaves, but their hearts were hardened. ⁵³When they had crossed over, they came to land at Gennesaret and anchored there."

One word from Jesus and the wind dies down. He says, "**Take heart; it is I**"

*Take heart? Really, Jesus? WHY, in the middle of this storm (situation, illness, loss, sin, shame, betrayal)...why should I take heart?!? Well, see, "**Take heart; it is I**" would actually be better translated: **Take heart; I AM.** Here's why that declaration is so important:*

- In Hebrew, that phrase literally means "to be." It's the same phrase God used in **Exodus 3:13-14**, Moses said to God, **"Suppose I go to the Israelites and say to them, 'The God of your fathers has sent me to you,' and they ask me, 'What is his name?' Then what shall I tell them?"**

God said to Moses, "I am who I am. This is what you are to say to the Israelites: 'I am has sent me to you.'

If you've ever had someone tell you, "Jesus never claimed to be God." This is one of the places to take them in Scripture. Because **Jesus is declaring: "I AM GOD – I've got this under control! My purpose never fails! Whatever you need, I AM it!"**

- To those who feel in **darkness**, he says, "I am the light."
- To those who **thirst**, "I am the living water."
- To those who **feel lost**, "I am the way."
- To those **confused**, "I am the truth."
- To those under the **curse of death**, "I am the life."
- To those who **need a fresh start**, "I am the door."
- To those who **feel weak**, he says, "But I am so strong."
- "Whatever you're **not...** Whatever you **need...** Whatever you did not get from your **parents** or your **friends** or from a **relationship**...whatever you have been unable to get from someone or something else, **I AM, I'm here, I'm in the boat with you, and I'm not going anywhere!!"**

CONCLUSION

The power to **persevere in this life** comes from knowing **his presence is with you always**. It's not "try harder" or "have more faith" ... it's "look to Jesus, who is the Son of God, sent for you." That's what Mark wants us to take away from this story...

You know it's interesting: Mark is the only gospel account that makes no mention of Peter walking on water... **TELL STORY**

- "Jesus, if that's you then bid me come."
- What do we like to preach? "Peter took his eyes off Jesus and sank!"

This is interesting because **Mark wrote his gospel account off of the eyewitness of Peter – IOW, Peter is telling Mark what to write.**

Peter always gets a bad rap for "**taking his eyes off of Jesus**" and sinking. So **if you're Peter, this is your opportunity to tell about your great faith** – YOU were the only one who stepped out of the boat to Jesus in faith! If I'm Peter, I'm telling my side of the story here!

But Peter completely skips over this. **WHY?**

- Because Peter understood that the story you needed to hear to change your life was **not the one about the greatness of his faith; but about the greatness of Jesus, the Son of God!**

It was never about Peter...it was never about the disciples...the point of this story is not to talk to you about "**life boating skills**" or to tell you to "**row harder in your faith.**"

- It was never about **your obedience or your faithfulness to God, or your talents or gifts or abilities or righteousness or good works.**
- It has never been about the amount of **our faith**; it's always been about the amount of **his faithfulness...**
 - ...and if God was faithful in the cross, he will be faithful with your future.

God, are we there yet?... He has a plan.

God, are we there yet?... His presence is with you.

God, are we there yet?... He hears your prayers.

God, are we there yet?... In this life or the next, he always fulfills his purposes.

BOW HEADS

Three categories of people:

- 1) **Those who have stayed in the boat**
 - Continue pressing on toward the prize in Christ Jesus...
- 2) **Those who have jumped ship and need to climb back in**
 - Your mouth says one thing, but your life says another.
 - 1 John 1:9, "*If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*"
 - God's grace > our sin
- 3) **Those who are dead in the water**
 - All have sinned...free gift of God is eternal life in Jesus*
 - Jesus drowned so you wouldn't have to
 - Trade your sin for his righteousness
 - Repentance + Faith

PRAY