

## **THE STORY BEHIND THE GOSPEL OF MARK: WHO IS THIS MAN?**

Mark 6:45-52

### **Have You Ever Found Yourself Lost In A Story World?**

*“Mark’s Gospel presents us with a “story world,” a world that engages and grips us, a world that we experience whenever we get “lost” in reading a novel or watching a film. Recall the experience of seeing a movie: The images and sounds on the screen draw us into another world, a world with its own imaginative past and future and its own universe of values. After a time, it seems as though we are no longer sitting in a movie theater or in our living room but are immersed in a different time and place, sharing the thoughts and emotions of the characters, undergoing the events they experience. In a sense, a story world has a life of its own...”*

—Dr. David Rhoads, NT Professor at Lutheran School of Theology, Chicago

Like the disciples, we ask: *“Who is this man, that even the wind and the sea obey him?”* Mk 4:41

### **The Day Jesus Sent His Disciples To The Other Side**

*<sup>45</sup>Immediately Jesus made His disciples get into the boat and go ahead of Him to the other side to Bethsaida, while He Himself was sending the crowd away. <sup>46</sup>After bidding them farewell, He left for the mountain to pray. <sup>47</sup>When it was evening, the boat was in the middle of the sea, and He was alone on the land. <sup>48</sup>Seeing them straining at the oars, for the wind was against them, at about the fourth watch of the night He came to them, walking on the sea; and He intended to pass by them. <sup>49</sup>But when they saw Him walking on the sea, they supposed that it was a ghost, and cried out; <sup>50</sup>for they all saw Him and were terrified. But immediately He spoke with them and said to them, “Take courage; it is I, do not be afraid.” <sup>51</sup>Then He got into the boat with them, and the wind stopped; and they were utterly astonished, <sup>52</sup>for they had not gained any insight from the incident of the loaves, but their heart was hardened.” —Mark 6:45-52 (NASB)*

Let’s do the math:

If the Sea of Galilee is about 8 miles wide (at its widest point)...

And the disciples cast off from shore around 8-9pm...

But they’re only halfway across by 3-6am...

Then they’re traveling really, really slow! (less than 0.5 mph)

Average walking speed = 3-4 mph      Average rowing speed 4-5 mph

### **In the Midst of the Headwinds, Jesus Seeks To Make Himself Known**

Job 9:8: *“God alone stretches out the heavens and tramples down the waves of the sea”*

Isaiah 43:15-16: *“I am the LORD, your Holy One, The Creator of Israel, your King... who makes a way through the sea and a path through the mighty waters...”*

Mark 6:48: *"Seeing them straining at the oars, for the wind was against them, at about the fourth watch of the night He came to them, walking on the sea; and He intended to pass by them."*

"To pass by" = Old Testament terminology signifying a theophany. Theophany = *"that unique and rare moment when God chooses to make Himself visibly known to someone."*

Two Old Testament examples of a theophany:

Exodus 33:19-23 *"I will cause all my goodness to pass in front of you, and I will proclaim my name, the Lord, in your presence . . . 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. Then I will remove my hand and you will see my back; but my face must not be seen."*

1 Kings 19:11, *"The Lord said, "Go out and stand on the mountain in the presence of the Lord, for the Lord is about to pass by."*

### What Keeps Us From Recognizing Jesus When He Draws Near? (vv. 49-51)

- 1) *We're often prone to letting our false beliefs overshadow the hope we have in Christ*
- 2) *We're often prone to straining at the oars than creating the space needed to recognize God*
- 3) *We're often prone to forgetting previous times when God had made Himself known to us*

### **SOME QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION AND DEVOTION:**

- When was the last time you read a good story? For you personally, what narrative elements make for a good story (twist/turns, conflict, mystery, irony, humor, etc.)? How does knowing that Mark wrote his gospel in the form of an action drama or a mystery intrigue you, if any?
- Read Mark 6:45-52. When the disciples were sent to the other side of the lake, the strong head wind had them straining at the oars. In what area(s) in your life are you trying to reach the "other side" but feel as if you're "straining at the oars?" (Making little or no progress)
- The disciples, perhaps because of certain ingrained false beliefs, were predisposed to not recognize Jesus when He appeared. What unhealthy thoughts or false beliefs do you need to overcome so you can recognize Jesus instead of fear? What healthy thoughts (i.e. biblical truths) need to replace your unhealthy thoughts?
- What kinds of spiritual practices and habits can you develop to help you overcome your negative thoughts and help you recognize Jesus? Is it possible for you to recognize Jesus even in this moment?