

Sermon: “Who Is This Guy?”—Jesus Walks on Water & Heals the Sick Series: Book of Mark—“*On The Move With Jesus*”

Text: Mark 6:45-56 Dave Sattler NSAC January 26, 2025

Sub-Texts: Psalm 40:1-3, Proverbs 3:5-8, Mark 10:42b-45, Revelation 21:2-5a

Sources: Bible Gateway, Sports Bible, & NIV Life Application Bible. Commentaries: R. Alan Cole, David Guzik, & N.T. Wright. Books: “*The Practice of the Presence of God*” by Brother Lawrence (17th Century), “*Blessing Your Spirit*” by Arthur Burk & Silvia Gunter (2005), “*The Writings of the New Testament*” by Luke Timothy Johnson (1986), “*Sit, Walk, Stand*” by Watchman Nee (1957). Sermon: Brendan Dick (NSAC, Jan 19/2025). Images: unsplash.com Song: “*Take Courage*” by Bethel Music & Kristene DiMarco (2017).

I. Introduction & Review:

- Good morning, everyone! Thanks for being here.
- A special shout-out to those joining us online today.
- I’m Dave Sattler one of the pastors here at NSAC.
- It’s time now to hear from God’s Word—the Bible—which is one of *the* primary ways God speaks to His people.
- **<Slide>** Today we continue our fascinating journey through the fast-paced Bible Book of Mark: “***On The Move With Jesus.***” Throughout the gospel, Mark *showcases Who* Jesus is by what Jesus *does*.
- Yet, despite the fact Jesus’ actions offer many clues about His identity, the disciples, as Pastor Brendan said last week, “can’t wrap their minds around it.” (5/19/25, NSAC)
- ***There’s a disconnect between what the disciples see Jesus do and what they believe about Who Jesus is.***
- It’s just not *registering* for them. Which provides some relief, if you too are struggling with what to make of the historical 1st Century Jesus of Nazareth.
- **<Slide>** Driven by various impulses: pursuit of wealth, compassion for others, longing for fame, wanting to serve, hunger for power, desire to make a difference, *leaders* come in all sorts of shapes and sizes.
- In business, politics, sports, media, entertainment, church ... our world puts much weight on leaders—though the best ones often don’t seem to garner much attention.
- ***In Jesus, Mark presents a compelling vision of leadership: One Who comes “not to be served (or lord His authority over others), but to serve and give His life as a ransom for many.” (Mark 10:43a-45)***

- **<Slide>** The ***Stark contrast in leadership between Herod the royal tyrant and Jesus the True King*** forms a subplot of Mark Chapter 6:
- Herod is *selfish*. Jesus is *compassionate*.
- Herod *takes life* through murder. Jesus *gives life* as Healer.
- Herod holds to few *moral* principles—particularly when they don't suit his ambitions. Jesus *always* acts *justly*—and, *good*.
- As pawns in his game, Herod *manipulates* people. Jesus humbly *serves*.
- Herod's gunning for power—dying to *be king* over Jewish Galilee—the small territory where Jesus grew up, and, the scene of our story.
- While all the while, quietly and powerfully going about His business, ***Jesus proves again and again He is God over all creation.*** (NIV Life App Bible, p1745) This is our overarching theme today.

II. Scripture Reading: Mark 6:45-56

<Slide> 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, Jesus went up on a mountainside to pray. 47 Later that night, the boat was in the middle of the lake, and Jesus was alone on land. 48 He saw the disciples straining at the oars, because the wind was against them. Shortly before dawn Jesus 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 Jesus spoke to them and said, “Take courage! It is I. Don't be afraid.” 51 Then Jesus 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.

<Slide> 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 Jesus was. 56 And wherever He went—into villages, towns or countryside—they placed the sick in the marketplaces. They begged Jesus to let them touch even the edge of His cloak, and all who touched it were healed.

<Pray> “*Lord, thank You for Your Word. Please move me out of the way. Come speak to us by Your Spirit. We're hungry to hear from you.*”

Jesus, please keep my heart ever soft to You—to recognize Your presence. Help me to always look first to You for help no matter the storm. **2**

III. Bible Teaching: Mark 6:45-56

1. <Slide> **Jesus stays back to deal with the crowd and pray.** (V45-46)

- Having just fed the 5000, “Jesus *made* His disciples get into the boat and go on ahead.” (v45)—there’s some *force* implied here. Worn out by the masses, maybe the disciples started saying things or doing stuff that wasn’t great for PR in the Jesus-movement.
- Graciously Jesus sends them off to their ‘happy place.’
- A third of Jesus’ crew had spent their working lives fishing these familiar waters; others grew up around here, or, likely took family vacations on the Sea of Galilee—a beautiful inland lake in the north of Israel.
- Shouldn’t have been any surprises on this boat ride then, right?!
- After dismissing the *crowd*, Jesus heads “up to the mountainside to *pray*.” (v46b) Probably exhausted from ministering, Jesus withdraws to a mountain. ***Taking time away to pray is vital for our health and faith.*** Even Jesus needed this.

2. <Slide> **Jesus sees the disciples struggling in the storm.** (V47-48a)

- Still, it’s notable, that, while on His ‘prayer retreat,’ Jesus hasn’t checked out, or, lost sight of the real-life pressing needs of humanity. (v48a)
- Though He’s certainly got a lot going on, Jesus never loses sight of His disciples, even when *they* lose sight of Him.
- ***Jesus is never too busy doing God-things to care for people.***
- The disciples had rowed half the night and still found themselves stuck “in the middle of the lake.” Trying hard, “straining at the oars”—even their best efforts are futile. (v48b)
- ILL—One afternoon a few summers ago on Vancouver Island, Joanne and I *put out* in our kayak on beautiful Buttle Lake.
- What began as an enjoyable leisurely paddle, in our sweet little double inflatable, soon turned into something completely different.
- Midway across the lake, the wind whipped up, the waves grew big, and we found ourselves “straining” at our paddles. In effort to keep our little boat steered toward the shore, we dug our shoulders in deep, tried to paddle in sync, and, attempted to stick together emotionally—not *turn* on each other. Easier said than done. Not fun.

3. <Slide> Jesus walks on water but His disciples don't recognize Him. (V48b-50a)

- With compassion in His heart, to meet His panicked disciples caught in the storm, Jesus *walks* out on the lake. We've *all* tried it. Walking on water is *impossible*—I sink every time!
- Only Jesus can walk on water.
- Next scene raises the question: if Jesus made an appearance at *your* workplace or school or house or at church or in the middle of a storm in your life, would *you* even *recognize* Him?
- Failing to recognize it's Jesus, they can only conclude He's a "ghost."
- Remember the disciples' concept of power and leadership has been shaped by Caesar, Herod, and, the Jewish religious leaders.
- Clearly Jesus is a 'different duck'—for one, Jesus can float!
- Almighty, ever-faithful, secure in Himself, loving, patient, Jesus is a different kind of *leader* than any this world has ever seen.
- Did you catch the narrative? Says Jesus "was about to pass them by" and only comes over to the disciples *after* they cry out in terror. (v49b-50)
- Seems Jesus wanted the disciples to *confess their need* for Him.
- Yet, even their fear-cry, not consciously directed at Him, was good enough to prompt Jesus to respond. This is how God works.
- ***God is a 'Gentleman' never forcing Himself on us, but, always there patiently waiting for us to call out to Him.***
- How open are *you* to confessing *your* need—inviting Jesus to work in *your* life?

4. <Slide> Jesus climbs into the boat and the wind dies down. (V50b-51)

- Sensing their terror, immediately Jesus identifies Himself: "Take courage. It's Me, your Rabbi. I'm here. Fear not." One of the 365 reminders in the Bible: "Don't be afraid." (v50b)
- And when *Jesus climbs into the boat, the wind dies down.*
- ***Who is this guy?*** Another miracle.
- This one leaves the disciples "completely amazed."
- Remember it was Jesus Who'd *sent them out* on this boat trip.
- As one scholar puts it: "This was a miracle meant to assure [the disciples] that [Jesus] was in fact in control and that He would always lovingly be there to help them fulfill what He commanded." (Guzik, p88)

- Here's the point: ***When Jesus calls us to do something***, say something, go somewhere, ***we can trust Him to get us there***, give us the courage to speak, equip us to do that very thing He's called us to do.

5. <Slide> Still the disciples' hearts were hardened. (V52)

- V52 is flummoxing: 'the disciples' hearts were hardened.'
- If they'd reflected on what Jesus had *just* done with the loaves and fishes, Jesus walking on water may not have been such a stretch for them.
- Front-row seats to miracles, even seeing God do miracles *through* them on the mission, the disciples remain unconvinced Jesus is God.
- ***The disciples 'not getting it' may be reassuring for skeptics or doubters in the room today.***
- APP—Maybe you've heard the songs, sermons, and testimonies, but deep down, you're struggling still with questions about Jesus and His identity?
- And, you're definitely having a hard time with the prospect of trusting Jesus with your life? It's okay to voice those doubts. Coming to mature faith in Jesus—like any relationship—takes time. It's not easy. Stick with it. Continue asking your probing questions. Keep seeking to understand.
- Rather than shaming, or, booting them off the team for not getting it, Jesus jumps right in with the boys and points their boat in the right direction.

6. <Slide> Jesus heals many in unusual ways. (V53-56)

- Safe on shore, it's ironic the *locals immediately "recognize" Jesus*—when earlier the disciples hadn't.
- Frantic, crowds run carrying their sick—begging Jesus to let them touch even the tassel of His robe. And Chapter 6 concludes: "All who touched ... were healed." (V56) Wow—Incredible!
- ILL—How I long for Jesus to move like this among *us* too.
- Some prerequisites evident in our story? Recognition of the absolute power of Jesus, open expression of needs, belief that only Jesus can meet those needs, and, determination to bring those needs to Jesus. (Cole)
- Even ... *my* lifetime has featured movements like the *Toronto Blessing* (in the 90s) and the *Asbury Revival* (in 2023), when loads of people, hungry for God, were *touched* by Jesus and changed forever!
- I believe Jesus wants to do more of this here with us! Come, Lord Jesus!!

IV. Life Applications

- Time now to ‘shore the boat’ on the sermon with some life applications ...
- A. **<Slide> On... Accepting the *divine* identity of King Jesus...**
 - The big question with which we all must wrestle is: ***What will we do with Jesus?*** And this passage further reveals His true *identity*.
 - By walking on water, calming the storm, and healing the sick, here again Jesus demonstrates His authority over all natural creation.
 - Still the disciples aren’t buying it. Perhaps their response is related to what I said two weeks back: Jesus and His power are unexplainable; they *defy* every human category. Jesus supersedes them all!
 - But, more likely, the smallness of their faith is related to their hardness of heart. And I have to say, ***it takes great faith to believe that Jesus is God. It also takes great faith to dismiss Jesus as merely a wise prophet, or a dynamic teacher, or a good moral leader, but not God Himself.***
- **<Slide> APP**—Maybe today you’re wrestling with the implications: ‘If Jesus were God, how would that impact how I run my life?’ It’s hard to give up *control*, but, beautiful too, because no matter how hard we try, none of us can really control every outcome on planet earth.
- ***What’s hardening your heart from accepting Jesus as God Of The Universe? Perhaps you’re struggling with some past hurt.*** Maybe you used to be Christian before you got burned ... by other Christians, by the church, by some hardline fundamentalist religious teaching. In post-Christian Canada, this is the real story of many people.
- If this is your story (thanks for being here, you’re brave). If this describes you, or a family member, friend, or neighbour of yours, my encouragement is this: Take a long serious look again at the Jesus of the Gospels. Even invite Jesus to show up in your life.
- **<Slide> Our story proves: *Jesus is Lord over the chaos in our workplaces, in our families, in our church, and in our world*—even over the chaos in our hearts. I know this to be true in my own life.**
- N.T. Wright comments: “Somehow the remarkable things Jesus is doing point, in Mark’s mind at least, to the truth that Jesus is the truly human one, Israel’s Lord who is to be the *world’s* Lord, anticipating his rule over

wind and wave, over bread and fish, the sovereignty that Israel believed the Messiah would have over the *whole* world.” (Wright, p61)

- **<Slide>** And, what He does in Mark 6, Jesus will bring to completion one day at His *second* coming.
- John writes about it in his vision in Revelation 21:2-5a: I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Look! God’s dwelling place is now among the people, and He will dwell with them. They will be His people, and God Himself will be with them and be their God. ‘He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death’ or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.” [Jesus] Who was seated on the throne said, “I am making everything new!” Then He said, “Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true.”
- ***King Jesus comes to redeem and restore humanity and all creation***—to put all things right and make all things new again—now, in part, and then in full, at His second coming. This is the Christian hope.

B. <Slide> On... *Practicing the presence of God...*

- Our story offers living examples of a vital Christian practice: Identifying and cultivating God’s presence in our lives.
- It was Watchman Nee, the 20th Century Chinese Christian leader who said: “The Christian’s walk and warfare alike derive their strength from [our] position [sitting with Jesus]. If [we are] not sitting before God [we] cannot hope to stand before the enemy.” (Nee, p56)
- To find respite from the craziness of life below, our Saviour Jesus climbs a mountaintop to pray—to sit and commune with *His* Father.
- Often serene, mountains provide a fresh perspective of God’s grandeur and majesty and a renewed outlook on life and the world around us.
- Being on a mountain can help us feel closer to God—He must have designed it this way.
- APP—One doesn’t have to be a mountain-climber though. Most important is to devote time to sit with Jesus regularly ... in the house, in the car, at the desk—to ‘set the table’ for encountering His presence.
- ***All our strength flows from Jesus.***

- **<Slide>** However, it's my observation that many here in the west, adhere unknowingly to a version of *functional atheism*.
- Like the disciples straining at their oars, our culture hard-wires us to be *self-reliant*: 'manifest—make it happen yourself/follow *your* dreams/be whoever *you* want to be.' We're conditioned to run our own lives.
- Reality is: We rarely think of God, acknowledge our need for Him, or, find ourselves so tapped out we're desperate for His provision, like the sick who begged Jesus to let them touch Him.
- **<Slide>** That is, until the 'big one' hits (something really hard happens to us) and we can't fix it ourselves.
- Why Proverbs 3:5-8 urges: "Trust in the *Lord* with all your heart and *lean not on your own understanding*; in all your ways submit to Him, and He will make your paths straight. Do not be wise in your own eyes; fear the Lord and shun evil. This will bring health to your body and nourishment to your bones."
- 17th century French Catholic Brother Lawrence lived by this life-rule: ***Practicing the presence of God.***
- **<Slide>** Brother Lawrence believed the time he spent in communion with the Lord should be the same, whether he was bustling around in the kitchen or on his knees in prayer.
- One writer says: "The worst trial [Brother Lawrence] could imagine was losing his sense of God's presence, which had been with him for so long a time. However, his confidence in God's goodness made him certain that [God] would never leave him entirely. Should he encounter any great difficulty in his life, he knew the Lord would provide the strength he needed to endure it." (p21)
- APP—People of NSAC, do we have an appetite for God's presence? On the mountain, in the storm, in sickness, do we hunger for His presence?
- ***A prime reason God manifests His presence is to grow our trust in Him.*** Not that we do stupid things and then expect God to bail us out, but that we *rely most* on *His* presence and *His* strength to sustain us. This is the life of faith to which God invites us.

C. **<Slide>** On... ***With God's help, patiently riding the ups and downs of our faith journey...***

- The Bible never paints an only rosy picture of what it means to follow Jesus. No matter how tidy and familiar we try to keep things, storms always come. Life is rarely as straightforward as we'd like it to be.
- The “wind against them,” the disciples felt the searing tension of an insurmountable obstacle right before them with no perceivable way out.
- Tough things always come our way. It's part of living in this broken world. And, a key facet of our faith journey as well.
- APP—So, what is it *you're* waiting for these days? A job? A home? A life partner? Healing? Comfort from a loss? Direction? A breakthrough? For that pain to go away? Longing for fresh hope?
- In the pain of waiting for a rescue that just doesn't seem to be happening how we want it, the song we'll sing in moment offers comfort in the truth: “Take courage, my heart. He's in the waiting. Hold on to your hope as your triumph unfolds. He's never failing.” (Bethel Music)
- I have experienced it in our church community during this difficult season. Jesus has been right there with us ... in the waiting.
- Encountering Jesus even in the tension of waiting is a key spiritual practice, and vital for navigating all the ups and downs of life.
- **<Slide>** Why the Psalmist can say: “*I waited patiently* for the Lord; He turned to me and heard my cry. He lifted me out of the slimy pit, out of the mud and mire; He set my feet on a rock and gave me a firm place to stand. He put a new song in my mouth, a hymn of praise to our God. Many will see and fear the Lord and put their trust in Him.” (Psalm 40:1-3)
- ***Learning to patiently wait on the Lord flows from the belief, that, what we've seen God do in the past, we will see God do again.***
- ILL—Just this past week, I was feeling impatient (as I often do)—caught in the turmoil waiting. Then, in my morning time with Jesus, I read this: “I bless you with feeling the peace of the presence of Christ in you. I bless you with understanding that problems in your life are not evidence that your [Heavenly] Father is not present to you. I bless you with knowing that [God] has not abandoned you to your enemies. I bless you with [God's] peace and calm in spite of terrible inconvenience or devouring earthly loss.” (Burk & Gunter)

- **<Slide>** One of God’s names is “Jehovah-Shalom”—the One Who Brings Peace Despite The Circumstance—the One Who’s With Us, the One Who offers His assistance to ride the ups and downs of life on this planet.
- For those today living in the pain of waiting, I encourage you to offer that thing you’re waiting for up to Jesus, right now. <Time of silence>
- People of NSAC, today I bless you with the strength of Jehovah-Shalom. In *your* waiting, receive the peace and calm of *your* loving Saviour, Jesus. Amen.
- **<Prayer Ministry Slide>** I invite the worship and prayers teams to come. During and after the response songs, prayer is available: Isobel & Tom / Gary & Janice // Lise & Sofia / Charlotte & Lin.
- If there is something on your heart today—a storm you’re having a hard time seeing Jesus in, something you’re waiting for—I encourage you to go see our prayer ministers who can help you take it to Jesus.
- Thanks for listening.
- With hearts open, let’s stand now to respond to Jesus in worship.