

He Came to Them Walking on the Sea, Part 2; Mark 6:45-52 0417-0420

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Immediately, he made his disciples to get into the boat and go before him to the other side, to Bethsaida, where he, while he dismissed the crowd. And after he had taken leave of them, he went up on the mountain to pray. And when evening came, the boat was out on the sea, and he was alone on the land. 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, but when they saw him walking on the sea, they thought it was a ghost and cried out, for they all saw him and were terrified. But immediately he spoke to them and said, Take heart, I am, do not be afraid.

And he got into the boat with them, and the wind ceased, and they were utterly astounded, for they did not understand about the loaves. But their hearts were hardened. So, as we began this story last week, we spent all of last Sunday just endeavoring to understand the fundamental, the main point that we're confronted with in the passage.

We saw that the story is far, far more than just a story of Jesus rescuing his poor disciples trapped in another storm yet again and doing this in with such flair and dramatic fashion by walking to them on the water. Instead, this is a story that is far more than just the rescue of the disciples. This is a story, as we said last week, of the first theophany, the first great theophany of Mark's gospel.

This theophany, this declaration, uh, proclamation, a revealing of God, this showing of Jesus of himself, of his deity. Jesus has shown himself from the beginning. From the time of his baptism and the dove comes down, the voice from heaven, all of that is declared who Jesus is. But this is this theophany, this particular moment in time in which Jesus shows himself in a particular fashion to a particular group of people.

And he shows himself as the great I am. As we saw last week, he does this in a number of ways, three ways in particular. As his disciples are out in this storm at Jesus's command, they did not want to leave. They wanted to stay there with Jesus because they had gotten caught up in the euphoria of the crowd.

This crowd that was now clamoring, as we saw from John chapter 6, clamoring for Jesus to now take the political throne. And indeed, they were going to make him king by force. What a crazy thing to think of making someone your ruler against their will. But as we saw last week, this was an insight into our hearts.

Because just as we want rulers to rule over us who have a limited authority, we really are in charge of them. So also the human heart wants a God. That we're really in charge of we have no problem worshiping a God that has power and authority and tells us what to do And we offer to him obedience, but we like for that to go only so far We like to be the one in the end that's calling the shots Making God in our own image saying to God this far and no more and so in the same way they take Jesus to make Him king by force to say we want to make you king, but we're really the

ones who are doing this But then as the crowd is caught up in this and the disciples become caught up in the crazy euphoria of the crowd Jesus commands them get in the boat and go but we don't want to Jesus We want to stay here with you get in the boat and leave now And so Jesus makes them leave he compels them to leave and of course they leave directly into the storm Jesus then spends the night praying and then the fourth watch of the night.

What would equal of our 3 a. m. to 6 a. m During that time frame, Jesus then comes to them walking on the sea. And so as we saw last week, as He walks to them on the sea, He is fulfilling this motif, this prophecy from the Old Testament that shows again and again, it speaks of God treading on water and putting water under His feet.

And so Jesus, in this powerful Old Testament image of the God who puts the waters under His feet, the waters that are throughout Scripture, from Genesis to Revelation, a metaphoric picture of the rule of evil in this world. Jesus puts that under His feet, walks to the disciples, and as He comes to the disciples, we see this enigmatic phrase that He meant to pass them by, or He wished.

to pass them by, or his purpose was to pass them by, and we saw that that indeed connects in a very specific and solid way to this imagery, this phrase that we come across again and again in the Old Testament, when God wishes to reveal himself. to his people, then oftentimes we see this same phrase that he passed them by.

We looked at several of the theophanies in the Old Testament and saw this connection. And so Mark is using this phrase in a very specific way for his readers to connect together very specifically Jesus in this moment and God of the Old Testament who wishes to reveal himself to his people. So Jesus wishing to pass them by or in essence to reveal himself to them as God.

He then comes to the boat. They're afraid. They think he's a ghost. And he says to them, take heart, take courage, but he doesn't say it is I, like our translations often offer to us. He said instead, I am, I am repeating himself. I am, I am taking us back to that great theophany of Exodus 3 and which we read those words that time in the Hebrew.

I am, I am, or I am that I am. So Jesus specifically uses this phrase. To speak to them in essence, if we were to translate it literally and directly, we would say Jesus said to them, stop fearing, stop your fearing, take heart, take courage. I am that I am. The great I am is here. Yahweh is here. And so getting into the boat after this greatest of theophanies and Mark's gospel, he gets into the boat and the disciples, we are told, were afraid and they did not understand these things because they didn't understand the loaves because their hearts were hardened.

They didn't understand the episode, the episode of the loaves where Jesus shows himself as the great shepherd. They didn't understand that because they were caught up in the euphoria of the crowd. They were caught up in this moment of redefining Jesus in their own terms, redefining Him to be something more like themselves, something more like their liking, or to put it another way, something of a political leader who was here to not only deliver them from the oppression of the Herodians and the oppression of the Romans, but also to empower them.

They had likely visions of sitting on his right hand and sitting on his left hand and visions of, of being in court with Jesus and sitting on the throne and having all sorts of power and authority. Being caught up in all of this, they failed to understand the loaves, and in such doing, their hearts were hardened.

As we said last week, that means to us that, misperceiving God, they then react to God wrongly. Understanding Him wrongly, they react wrongly. Just as they react wrongly to Jesus, they are terrified of Him because they have, at least for the time being, now misunderstood Him. They have made Him, remade Him, so to speak, in their own image.

So that was what we spent our time last week, just endeavoring to understand the mechanics of the passage, what the main point of the passage is. The main point of the passage is that Jesus comes to His disciples as the Great I Am, as the One who passes by His people, just like the God, of the Old Testament passed by Moses in Exodus 33, passed by Elijah in 1 Kings 19.

Just as the God who reveals Himself in the Old Testament has said again and again to pass by His people in revelation to them, Jesus also passes by them and says to them, I am that I am is now here. Now, understanding something about The central point of the passage, we now turn to the passage once again, recognizing that the Word of God is rich and the Word of God is like the God who wrote it multi-dimensional, multi-faceted.

The Word of God is not singular in what it says to us by way of its application. It's singular in what it says to us in its meaning. It's meaning does not have multiple facets, but instead it's application often has multiple facets. And so we return this morning, because last week we largely skipped over much of the application that is to be found in the passage.

So we return to that this morning. And our purpose this morning is just to walk back through the passage, and just observe, really, two, or you could call it three, Central applications are really one. You could really ball this into one application. There are many more that we could make because this, this is indeed one of the richest passages in Mark's gospel.

So having the ability to make many applications will limit ourself this morning to really. One, or you could call it three, but one central application that we want to look to this morning. We want to turn our thoughts back this morning to this episode on the water. And in turning our thoughts back to the episode on this water, we just want to begin by recognizing that the disciples, this is almost goes without saying, but we should begin by saying this, that the disciples were experiencing on this night on the water, they were experiencing something that we could call intense affliction.

An intense affliction. We know what affliction means, we know what intense mean, when we put those together, we recognize the fact that we suffer affliction often in our lives, suffering, trials, tribulations, but sometimes those afflictions are slow and long lasting and sometimes they're intense. Sometimes we experience afflictions that might be sharp and pronounced for a period of one or two or three days and then they pass.

Sometimes we might experience afflictions that last for years. The disciples are experiencing what we could call an intense, a focused affliction. And it is indeed an affliction. Because we remind ourselves of the word that Mark uses to describe the waves and their treatment of the disciples, the disciples where Mark specifically says, Tormented or tortured by the wave.

So they are experiencing a very intense affliction, a very intense trial. And so the applications that we want to draw from this passage all are going to have to do with our afflictions, and they will have to do very pronouncedly about our. Intense afflictions, those times in which we experience

afflictions in a sharp manner, in a very focused manner, because this is what the disciples are experiencing on this night.

So as we set forth on this, I just want to draw a parallel for us, and this parallel I think will begin.

And it's the parallel that we find on another, from another story in Scripture that finds a story brought to us of another storm, of a different boat, of a different body of water, of a different time period, but also of a child of God who finds himself in a crisis on the sea, in a storm, for different reasons, but it's a storm, it's on a boat, And that too is a story that comes to us with many parallels.

And I'm, of course, speaking of the story of Jonah. The story of Jonah is the story of a child of God. Not just a child of God, but a specifically selected child of God. A child of God who was raised up and equipped for a specific role, for a specific job. And that's to be prophet. He was a prophet. So he wasn't just a child of God.

He was a child of God anointed as the prophet of God. And we know the story how Jonah is told to go to the Ninevites and in his hatred for the ethnicity of the, of the Ninevites, the enemy of God's people, he instead goes the other way and he goes to Tarshish, gets on this boat, go in the other direction, and then the storm comes.

So many parallels, storm on the sea, the storm is of God's doing, it's a boat, it's a child of God on the boat. There's danger, somebody's going to die, or somebody's in danger of dying. But then there's one important contrast that will help us, I think, to begin refining the applications of this story.

Because as Jonah. Once they woke him up, once he was awake and, and he then comes up onto the deck as Jonah could look out on the waves and see this storm that is battering the boat in which he is now in, he could look out upon those waves and he could say, this storm is here because of my disobedience.

I am in this storm, and not only me, but also the sailors on this boat, we are in this storm because I blatantly disobeyed God. In fact, he admits as much when he comes up onto the deck and he even says to them, throw me in the sea. Chapter one in verse 12, throw me in the sea and the sea will quiet because it is of me.

It is because of me that this great tempest has come upon us all. And then they, of course, throw him in the sea. And just as he said, See, it calms, the storm calms because God has sent the storm as a result of his disobedience. And he knows that he recognizes that. So the contrast that we face is that the disciples cannot look out upon this storm of these waves and the sea spray and the, and the wind and the rain, they cannot look about out upon this storm and say, as Jonah said.

that we are in this storm because we didn't listen to God. Oh, if we had just listened to God, we wouldn't be here. If we had just obeyed, if we just weren't so hard headed, then we wouldn't be here. I wish that I could go back and do this over, and I would listen to God, and I would obey Him, and then I wouldn't be in this mess that I'm in right now.

Probably many of us can relate to episodes in our life in which we could say something very similar to that. I'm in this mess because I failed to obey. Because I knew this was wrong, and I did it anyway, and it has resulted in this crisis of my life, this affliction of my life. Many of us could probably say that the disciples couldn't because they are in this storm specifically because they did

obey Jesus sent them into the storm now They went at least unwillingly at first Jesus had to compel them to go but they went nonetheless Jesus made his point clear.

I want you in the boat and I want you to go to Bethsaida. And so then they obey. And because of their obedience, they find themselves in this storm. So perhaps you have been in a similar place as well. Perhaps you could say, I'm in this difficulty. I am confronting this conflict in my life. This unpleasant thing is happening in my life because of my obedience to God, God has asked this of me, God's word teaches me this thing.

And so I have done this thing or I have refrained from doing this other thing and things would have been easier if I'd done this. Maybe it's not so much a sharp affliction, but maybe it's just an unpleasantness. Maybe things would have been easier. If you could have skipped on that obedience or told that lie or deceived in that way, maybe things could have been at least superficially on the short term a little bit easier.

So perhaps you can relate to being in a type of a storm as a result of your obedience. That's where the disciples are now. Their obedience to Jesus has directly placed them into this storm. Now, as I reflect on the times of affliction and trials in my life, you probably are not. Unlike me, as I think through the trials of my life, I can think of times in which I was in periods of crisis or periods of distress because of disobedience.

I can think of times in which things certainly would have been easier, perhaps things were more difficult because of obedience. But the majority of the times in my life in which I can think of times of afflictions or trials, I either don't know or it's a mixture of both. And maybe you're the same. Maybe you can think back and you can think of particularly sharp trials in your life and you can think, well, I'm not really sure what that was the result of.

Or maybe it could have been a little bit of both or either. But you should also, as a child of God, you should also be able to reflect on your life and know of times of difficulty and strain, even trials that resulted from obedience. Because the scriptures tell us in Acts chapter 14, through great tribulation we will enter the kingdom of God.

Or Paul says to Timothy in first Timothy chapter three, he says, all who desire to live godly lives in Christ Jesus will be persecuted. So as children of God, we should have understandings, recollect recollections in our memories of experiences in our life, in which at the very least life could have been

Well, if we take that and we ratchet it up a few levels, then that's the disciples on the boat in this evening. They are in this storm because they have obeyed the direct command of Jesus. Now, I got to believe by this point in the story, the disciples are beginning to expect some things from Jesus. They have seen him do so many mighty works and so many wonders and they've seen him cast out demons and cleanse lepers They've seen him speak to a storm previously They've seen some incredible things, but they also have perceived by this point Certainly that Jesus just seems to know things You think that they've picked up on that, that Jesus just seems to know things.

He just seems to know what people are thinking. He just seems to know what the Pharisees are thinking. Indeed, He just seems to know what they're thinking. So Jesus just seems to know things that normal people just wouldn't know. So don't you think that by this point, especially after

spending so many hours on the sea, don't you think that the disciples have put two and two together and they have said to themselves as they are agonizing at the oars?

He knew about this storm. Remember when he compelled us, when he was firm with us, he said, get in the boat and go. He knew about the storm. He knew about this. And yet, not only did he send us into the storm, he stayed behind. Don't you think that's going through their minds? He knew about the storm. He sent us into the storm.

So that must be one of the thoughts that has entered into their mind. Why did Jesus send us into a storm that he knew was coming? But as their thoughts are certainly in probably just as much turmoil as the water, as their thoughts are tossed and turned this way and that way, One of the things that their thoughts really are not upon, we don't know what the disciples were thinking.

We weren't in the boat, we weren't in their brains. We don't know very much about what they were thinking, other than just a couple things. We know that, first of all, they were thinking that at first Jesus was a ghost. Or this 'phantasma.' And then secondly, we know that they were terrified of Jesus when he came into the boat.

So we know a couple things there, but we don't know all of their thoughts. But here's what we can rest assured. We, we can, we can be fairly certain of the fact that their thoughts are not going to be difficult to discern, but not being so difficult to discern. I think that we can have a pretty, pretty high level of, of, uh, confidence of what the disciples were not thinking.

And here's what I think that they were not thinking. I don't think that they were thinking anymore about sitting on his right hand and on his left hand. Do you? I think about hour three or four of the storm, they had lost all those thoughts, those, those glossy eyed, starry thoughts. of sitting on Jesus right hand and now Jesus is in this position of power and he's put the Herodians under his feet and now we are his ministers administering his kingdom for him.

I think all those thoughts have now been placed aside. Because one of the first things that I notice about the story is the tremendous grace And mercy of Jesus to send them into the storm. Let me say that again. The tremendous grace that Jesus shows to them by sending them into the storm. Because one of the things that Jesus just did by sending them into the storm, he has prevented their further sin.

He has sent them into the storm among other reasons.

So let's just think back real quickly to what the problem was with the disciples. Why it was that Jesus was so firm with them. Why it was that Jesus told them to leave. We're told plainly by both John and the end of the story in Mark's gospel that the disciples here had been caught up in this euphoric excitement of the crowd.

over this man, Jesus, who has the charisma. He has what it takes. He's got the personality. He's got all this healing stuff going on. He's an incredible teacher. He's got what it takes to be the king that we've been looking for. And the disciples being all caught up in this, this is the reason that Jesus then compelled them to leave and by compelling them to leave, he then forces them into a situation in which their circumstances caused them to stop sinning in that way, to stop thinking along the lines of misunderstanding of redefining Jesus and His mission, so to speak.

Jesus mission was to seek and to save the lost, not to be some political deliverer. And yet, they had begun to reinterpret what His mission was. And to reinterpret it in a way that was favorable to them in an earthly way. That was going to benefit them in an earthly way. And then reinterpreting this mission of Jesus.

Jesus had stopped that sinful line of thinking by sending them into an environment in which their afflictions caused them to be distracted from that in such a way that they ceased sinning in that way. Now, we know a little bit later on in the story. That they're going to go down the same path once again.

They're going to begin to reinterpret Jesus mission in such a way that is more favorable to them in an earthly definition, in an earthly manner. Because remember the occasion where Jesus is going to say to them, We're on our way to Jerusalem, so let me tell you once again, what's going to happen when we get to Jerusalem, they're going to arrest me, they're going to beat me, they're going to kill me, and I'm going to rise from the dead.

And then Peter, as the spokesman, steps forward and says, No, no. No, no, no. That's not what we're doing, Jesus. That's not a good plan. You see how they're reinterpreting Jesus mission in a way that's more beneficial to them. That's the same thing that they had done on the day of feeding, as Jesus is multiplying the bread and fish.

And so Jesus steps in to mercifully stop their sinning by sending them into an affliction. Do you know that that's how God does sometimes, you know, whenever we as believers enter into times of affliction in our life, what do we always, the thing that we most want the answer for is what? Why? What? Why?

What are you doing, God? If I just knew what you were doing, I think I could deal with this a little more or a little better. So we want to know why. Why is this affliction upon me? Now, then we rack our brains. Is this because of a sin that I've committed? Is this because of some disobedience? What's God trying to teach me?

You ever been there? We've all been there. Well, do you know that oftentimes, at least one of the purposes of the affliction could be to prevent you from sinning further or to stop a sinful path that you're on? Because that's how God often works. You want some biblical support for that? Well, glad you asked.

What about Paul? 2 Corinthians 12. When Paul says to us, because of the surpassing revelations, what did God do? He sent into me, He sent to me a messenger of Satan, a thorn in my side. Now we don't know what that affliction was. We're never told. But we know for sure that that affliction was severe. It was highly unpleasant.

It was highly uncomfortable. Why? Because Paul tells us quite plainly that he pleaded with God three times to remove it. And God says, I will not remove it because, Paul, what this affliction is doing is it's preventing a sin, and it's the sin of pride. Because Paul himself says, lest I get swept up in pride because of the surpassing revelation.

You can just put yourself in Paul's place, can't you? As Paul is teaching and he's revealing to this, to these new churches, these new Christians, and God is pouring into Paul's spirit such revelations,

such revelations as we read in Colossians 2 that we read earlier. Romans 10. All these surpassing revelations.

Can't you just hear the people clamoring? Paul, you are amazing. How do you know these things? God has revealed to you such incredible things. And can't you imagine even the most humble person? After hearing that, and hearing that, and hearing that, he hears it in Corinth, he hears it over in Galatia, he hears it over in, uh, in, um, the church in Athens, he hears it in Thessalonica, he hears it in Philippi, and after so many times of hearing it, can't you just see?

Just the birth of pride, the swelling of pride. And Paul says, To prevent me from sinning in that way, God sent affliction to me. And the affliction served to negate the sin or to block the sin or to not allow the sin to begin to take place. Paul says that plainly. An affliction came and the purpose of the affliction was to prevent me from sinning.

God says to Paul, you know, Paul, my power is made perfect in weakness. I can use the weakest person on the, on the globe. I can use the most broken, weak man that you can imagine, but here's what I don't use. I don't use prideful people. And I will not use you if pride begins to consume you. And so to prevent that, Paul, here is the grace of an affliction.

You see it there? What about another example? What about the example of David? David, we see this from first Samuel chapter 27. First Samuel chapter 27, just the context of that story is this, we know the story. Saul is trying to kill David. There's this whole thing about David's the true anointed king and Saul, he has fallen from grace and all this.

And so he's chasing David all through the countryside trying to kill David. At the beginning of First Samuel chapter 27, David becomes discouraged. And what David says, this is all in your notes if you want to follow along. What David says to himself is, you know what? Saul's going to get me sooner or later.

Sooner or later, Saul is going to catch up with me and he's going to kill me, so I might as well do what? Anybody know? I might as well go to the Philistines. Now, just a little reminder, the Philistines were the sworn enemies of God's people from the beginning of their existence to the end of their existence.

And so David says, Saul's going to get me sooner or later. I may as well go to the Philistines. And you want to say, alarm bells, David. They're the enemies of God's people. You're the anointed king of God's people. What are you thinking? But he goes anyway. He goes to the Philistines and we read through chapter 27 there.

Chapter 27 is the detailing of his escapades as he, Fights for the Philippi. For the Philistines. He takes his band of loyal followers, the mighty men of David, and they go to the Philistines and they begin doing all these raids for the Philistines, attacking all these peoples that are the enemies of the Philistines and just doing a bang 'em up job.

Then chapter 28 comes, chapter 28 is the Witch of Indoor. So, skipping over that, we come to chapter 29. And in 1 Samuel chapter 29, an interesting thing happens in your notes here, beginning from verse 4, or verse, uh, 3, really. So Achish, this leader of the Philistines, he says, Is not David the servant of Saul, king of Israel, who has come to been with me now for days and for years?

And since he deserted me, I have found no fault to him even to this day. But actually, actually, let me back up a little bit further from that, from verse 1. Now the Philistines had gathered all their forces at Aphek. And then the next, that next sentence, And the Israelites were encamped by the spring that is in Jezreel.

So if the alarm bells hadn't gone up for David before to say, Wait a minute, why am I fighting for the Philistines? Now they should be absolutely ringing loudly in his ears to say, Now the Philistines are preparing to go to battle against Israel. And then David, with all of his mighty men, he's here saying, Let's go.

I'm ready. I'm ready. Those old Israelites, they've been trying to kill me. They're loyal to Saul. They've been chasing me. Let's go fight them. But then, as the story goes, the Philistines commander, who has all the confidence in the world in David, All of his sub commanders come to him and they say, Wait a minute.

Do you realize we're about to go to battle against his people? We can't do that. We can't trust that guy. And they, and he says, Sure we can. He's never let us down yet. No, no, no. We can't trust that guy. And so then we read, The commanders of the Philistines were angry with them. And the commanders of the Philistines said to him, Send the man back that he may return to the place from which you've assigned him.

That he may go down, not go down with us into the battle. So they send David away from the battle. They won't let him fight because the commanders of the Philistines said, Wait a minute, we just can't trust this guy. So what was David intending to do? Was David intending to pretend like he was going to fight the Israelites, but instead turn around and fight the Philistines?

No, his intention was to fight the Israelites. But do you see how God implanted that affliction in his life? David was a man of war. So whatever impression that you have in your mind, whatever picture, mental picture that you have of David, this little scrawny guy that liked to play the liar and write poetry, you know, that's not David.

Yeah, he wrote poetry and he played the musical instruments and stuff, but David was a successful Vicious man of war David had a lot of blood on his hands and for a man of war To be disallowed from going into the battle was a tremendous insult to him. That was an affliction, and God sent that affliction upon him.

Why? Because he was about to send even more. He had already sinned by fighting for the enemies of God's people. But now he was about to send even further by fighting directly against God's people. And God says, In my mercy, I'll stop this, and I'll stop it with an affliction. So there's another example.

What about another example? Remember the story of Hezekiah? Remember how Hezekiah was this godly king of Judah? And then Hezekiah gets the news that he's sick, and the end of his days are coming close. 2 Kings chapter 20, he becomes sick to the point of death. And then he prays this prayer to God. And he says, God, please remember you.

I've walked before you in faithfulness with my whole heart, and I've done what was good in your sight. And Hezekiah wept bitterly. We're told, and then the word of the Lord came to to them and

they said, turn back. This is speaking to Isaiah. Turn and say to Hezekiah, the leader of the people, thus says the Lord, the God of David, of your father.

I've heard your prayer. I've seen your tears. Behold, I'll heal you. And so we know how God then gives Hezekiah 15 more years. Now flipping over to Isaiah chapter 39. The other part of that story is that during that 15 years, we know what happens. Hezekiah, these Babylonians come from Babylon. And the Babylonians, we know they're going to be the enemies of God's people.

And then what does Hezekiah do? He says, come on in, guys. Let me show you where we keep all our treasures. It's right down here, right through this door. Oh, the combination is such and such. Make sure you write down that combination in case we ever need somebody. So here's where we keep all our stuff.

Here's where we keep all our most important things. Isn't this a lot of treasure, guys? And then we know that, of course, they take that information back and then they come back and they raid and they steal and, oh, now all that was part of God's plan. God's plan was to bring a type of judgment against His people for their disobedience.

But in terms of Hezekiah, do you see how Hezekiah, God was granting him mercy by way of the end of his life. And he pleaded with God and God removed the mercy. And actually allowed Hezekiah or opened the door for Hezekiah to continue further in sin. There's another example there. You may can see examples in your own life.

But if you can't see them, you can know that they're there. One of the things that God often does in affliction is He prevents you from either sinning further or beginning to enter into a sin that you might have entered into without that affliction. So this is what God is doing with the disciples. They, the disciples have started to go down this path of thinking of Jesus in a wrong headed sort of way.

In a hard-hearted sort of way. And Jesus is going to stop that because one of the things the disciples cannot be contemplating on the water is, I wonder what color robes we're going to get. You think we're going to get purple robes or red robes? They're thinking about living through the night. So in His mercy, He sends this affliction upon them.

Now, as this affliction comes to them, this intense period of 6, 8, 9 hours of intense affliction, what we're going to see in this are two of the, probably the most distasteful and disturbing things that also are the most common things. that all Christians seem to manifest in times of affliction, particularly intense affliction.

So just as a sort of a warning, the rest of the time this morning we're going to be talking about things that we see in the disciples, but also you see in yourself. And they're not pretty. They are commonalities that every believer, when we experience times of affliction, these are things that we see in ourself or battle against, and they're not pretty to look at.

And the first thing that we see is that what seems to come to their thoughts, or certainly what comes to our thoughts in periods like this, has to be this. Don't you think they have to be thinking, where's Jesus? Why did he stay behind?

They haven't forgotten the first storm. That was just a period of probably weeks ago. The first storm in which they were, in fact, that storm is presented to us as even more frightening and fearful than this storm. That was a storm that they gave up hope. They came to Jesus and said, We're about to die, Jesus.

They had given up hope. We're not necessarily told that they've given up hope here. But we are told that they are tortured and tormented. Don't you think that they are thinking with every stroke of the oar? Why is Jesus not with us? Why did He send us away without Him? He's never done that before. Is there another instance in which Jesus sent the disciples away like this?

He sent them out in this period of ministry, but He has not sent them away into an affliction without Him. I think for certain, with every stroke of the oar, the disciples are saying, where is my Lord? Why is he not here? He spoke to the storm before. If he was here, he would speak to this storm, but he has left us here.

We are all alone in the boat, and indeed, certainly from their perspective, Jesus seems distant and unconcerned and disconnected. Now, we see the story from both sides because the story is being narrated to us by Mark. So we see both Jesus on the mountain and the disciples on the water. So we see what's happening.

And we know that Jesus has not abandoned them. In fact, we know that Jesus is in prayer. What's Jesus praying for? Certainly He's praying for the disciples on the water. Which, by the way, by the way, this is one of the most beautiful pictures in all of scripture of Jesus as the intercessor. Did you pick up on that picture?

The disciples are in the middle of the storm, they're in the middle of affliction, and what's Jesus doing? He's praying for them. I mean, that's the picture of the intercessor, the one who goes before God on our behalf, the one who intercedes for us. But that's just what we see. If we were in the boat, we wouldn't see that.

If we were in the boat, all we would see are the waves and the sea spray, and we would feel the wind, and we would feel the rain on our face, and we would feel the desperation. We would feel the ache in the back, and we would feel the burn in our arms, and we would feel how we just don't, don't think we can make it one more stroke.

We've been going six hours, I just don't think we can make it through the rest of the night. We would feel all of that. We wouldn't see Jesus on the mountain praying. And so to us, it would just seem like the Lord is just so disconnected from what I'm experiencing. So uncaring, so distant. Have you felt that way?

Now, most believers, when we experience times of affliction, we don't normally experience that. We don't normally, we aren't normally tempted to think in that way at first. Most believers have the strength of faith. To endure afflictions for a time before our faith begins to weaken and falter and we go into that place of thinking God just doesn't care.

But you know what? Jesus didn't come to them in the first watch of the night. He didn't come to them in the second watch of the night. He didn't come to them in the third watch of the night. He waited for the fourth watch of the night. Do you think it's entirely reasonable that as the storm settles in and they have been rowing now one hour?

They're not too worried. Two hours, still not too worried. By the fifth hour, their faith has weakened. And they are no doubt saying, at least within their own hearts, maybe to one another, where is Jesus? And why did he send us out here all alone? Does he not care? They've already asked that question. Do you not care that we drown?

Do you not care that we perish? I think they're asking that question all over again. Because as Jesus is now physically separated from them, one of the things Jesus is doing is he's beginning to teach them something that they're going to really need to rely on once he goes away and the spirit comes and the church is born.

And what they're going to really need to rely on is that even though they can't see Jesus, Jesus is there, but they don't know that yet. Because they've not yet experienced Jesus without Jesus in their physical presence. And so what he's now going to begin showing them is my physical presence is not what you need.

What you need is my spiritual presence and that's always with you. But they don't see that lesson yet. So I find it to be of little doubt that the disciples are no doubt their hearts are in turmoil, probably greater turmoil than the storm that This man, Jesus, whom we thought cared for us. Apparently, maybe He doesn't.

Maybe I was mistaken. Maybe, maybe we misjudged Him. Maybe He got all wrapped up in that crowd. They were clamoring to make Him king. You know what? He sent us away. Maybe He doesn't really want us to be by His side when He takes the throne. Maybe He's made other plans for Himself. Maybe He's surrounded Himself with other disciples from that crowd that was earlier today.

You think those thoughts are entering their minds? Maybe He really doesn't care for us at all. Because what is happening in this boat, you can see it plain as day, can't you? Jesus is, in a sense, hiding from them. He has intentionally separated Himself from them physically because He is seeking to, for a time, hide His face from His disciples.

Because what he's going to show them, he has to show them in the middle of a trial and an affliction in which he's not physically there. So, does God hide his face from believers? You know, there's disagreement among Christians on that. Some believers would take the stance that... God never hides himself from his children.

And to see that, we would look at scriptures such as Hebrews 3, 3 verse 15, I will never leave you, I will never forsake you, and many other places. And what scripture teaches us, God will never forsake his people. And we know that to be true. And so many believers would say, you know, in times like this, in which it appears to us that God is not caring for us, that He's just not paying attention.

It's not that He's really not paying attention. It just feels that way to us. Others would say, well, no. It's true that God never leaves us and never forsakes us, but also, the scriptures seem to show us that there are times in which God will withdraw not His. Presence from us, but withdraw what the Puritans would call his manifest presence, meaning that although God never forsakes his people, there are times in which the manifest presence, the tangible, the presence, the palpable presence of God seems to be hidden or withdrawn from us.

And for that, We would look to some scriptures such as, for example, Isaiah 8 and verse 17, where we read the prophet saying this, I will wait for the Lord who is hiding His face from the house of Jacob, and I will hope in Him. So clearly, Isaiah is a child of God. I will hope in Him, but Isaiah also says, I will wait for the one who's hiding His face right now.

Now, if you want to follow that theme of God hiding His face, Psalm 24, uh, 44 in verse 24. Why do you hide your face? Why do you forget our, forget our affliction and our oppression? Or, uh, Deuteronomy chapter 32, verse 20, or literally, I think maybe about a third of the Psalms, almost, maybe one out of three Psalms touches on the theme of God.

Where are you? So there are Christians who would say, well, God never withdraws his presence from a believer in any way. Although we, it may feel like that to us. Other believers would say, true, God never leaves us, but He does withdraw His palpable, tangible presence. He does, in a sense, hide His manifest presence, as the Puritans would say.

Now, whichever one of those you want to go with, it ultimately doesn't really make a difference, because either way, God is still doing the same thing. Okay, and what God is doing, the scriptures show us that the believer will often go through times in which the presence of God is either hidden from us or seems to be hidden from us.

Either way, God is behind this and he is saying to us in this time, in this period of time, there is a certain communion. There's a certain sweetness of presence that I want to pull away. Not because I'm mean, not because I don't love you. Not because I'm angry with you. But because I love you and to withdraw that manifest presence is the way in which I'm going to actually show you more grace.

The scriptures are full of instances in which children of God would cry out, God, why are you hiding your face from me? God, why can I not tell that you're there? Why can I not sense your pleasure upon me? Am I speaking your language? Does anybody relate? to those times in which it doesn't seem to matter how diligently you try to pray or how earnestly you want to encounter Him in His Word.

It just doesn't seem to matter because He just doesn't seem to be answering you. Now, you know if you are a believer in Jesus Christ, you know that He has not forsaken you. But nevertheless, there is a real life experience that maybe For days, it may be for weeks, it may be for months, in which the communion of God just seems to have been separated from you.

Now, God might do that because of some sin in your life, or to prevent some sin in your life. God might do that because He's displeased with some sort of behavior. We know that if we are in Christ, then God is never displeased with you, right? Because God is always pleased with His Son. And if you are in His Son, His Son's righteousness, Jesus righteousness covers you.

And if you are in Christ, God is permanently and eternally pleased with you because He's eternally pleased with His Son. But if He's pleased with you, that doesn't necessarily mean that He's pleased with all of your behavior. God can be eternally pleased with you because you are in Christ. And at the same time, have displeasure over some sort of pattern in your life, or some sort of event in your life, or some sort of attitude in your life.

Now how do you separate the two? God is, God is God and He can perfectly separate the two. But He does this. I, I think of it like this. I think of like, uh, uh, like a baseball team. Uh, imagine a baseball team. I'm thinking right now of the Kansas City Royals. You know, the Kansas City Royals are one of those historic baseball teams.

They're not an expansion team. They're, they're one of those Midwest teams that have just a rock-solid fan base. If you are a native of Kansas City, if you're a baseball fan, then you are a Royals fan and you have always been your whole life. And that's just the, the way those Midwest fans are, Cardinals are the same way.

They, there are fans of the Kansas City Royals that are lifetime fans. They will never be non-fans. But you know what the Royals are doing this year? They just, they just won a battle with the Padres to take over last place. They're awful. They're horrible this year. So if you're one of those lifelong Kansas City Royals fans, and you look at what they're doing this year, you don't say, I hate the Kansas City Royals.

You say, they stink this year. But they're still my team, and they will always be my team. Now, I know that that's a very weak, watered down illustration, but maybe that's the same idea that you can take over into how God sees you. If you are in Christ, He will never be against you, ever. If you are in Christ, everything, all of His actions are always for you.

Nevertheless, there can still be times in which Your behavior brings him displeasure, your attitudes bring him displeasure, and he may address those in these periods of withdrawing this sweet communion type of presence with you. And so this is what the disciples are experiencing. Is there any doubt that the disciples are saying to themselves, Why couldn't Jesus be on the boat with us of all the nights?

Of all the times, Jesus is not here for this storm, this multiple hour storm. So what's God doing? What's He doing in your life when, when those times just seem to, to hang over you like a fog, like this oppressive kind of a cloud that no matter how you seem to cry out to God, you just can't seem to sense His presence or His love or His favor.

What, what God, what is God doing? Well, we don't know, but the scriptures do lead us to know some things about what God does through those periods of time. And I think that one of the main things that God does in those periods of, of taking his sweet communion and pulling it back, I think one of the things that he's doing is he's teaching our heart to long for that presence.

He's teaching our fallen heart to appreciate that and to yearn for it by withdrawing it from us. Now, why does God have to do that? Isn't that kind of sad? Why can't God just convert us and redeem us and then for the rest of our life, we appreciate and love His presence and never take it for granted? Why can't God do that?

Because we're fallen. And because we're still sinful. And so sadly God must do things like this because of our fallen nature that still resides within us. So he must from time to time take the sweetness of his presence and mute it to cause the true believer to then cry out and say, God, like the Psalm that we read earlier, take not your Holy Spirit from me.

Take not your presence from me. Do you ever pray like that? Do you ever feel that in your prayers? God, just don't withdraw from me. God, just don't leave me. I know that your word says you will

never leave me and never forsake me, but I can't feel you right now. I can't sense you. I don't sense that presence.

Like I want to. God, don't take that from me. If you've ever felt that and if you've ever prayed that, then that's what God wanted to generate within your heart. He wants your heart to yearn for His presence because your heart is still fallen and still prone to falling back into dullness and not appreciating or not loving His presence.

And so sometimes he will do that, as Paul says to the Ephesians in chapter 1, verse 16 through 18. He says that he prays that God would give you the spirit of wisdom and revelation, that you might know the blessings that are ours in Christ. Or as he says to the Philippians, that I may know you in the power of your resurrection.

Psalms 34 and verse 18, the Lord is near to the brokenhearted. The Lord is near to the brokenhearted. And when the child of God is brokenhearted, that the presence, the sweet presence of God just seems out of their reach. The glorious spiritual truth behind that is that that's when God is the closest.

Jesus was on the mountain. The disciples were in the boat. But all the waves on the Sea of Galilee wasn't going to keep Him away from them. So ironically, even though His physical presence was disconnected from them, He was never away from them. So when the child of God is brokenhearted, that the sweetness of God's fellowship seems out of their grasp, that's when he's closest.

The second thing that I think that God does through these times is I think that God wants the believer to retain a sense of what he redeemed us out of. I think that God wants the believer to retain some sort of grasp on the darkness. The bleakness of a lost condition, the bleakness, the hopelessness of a lost condition.

Paul says this in the next chapter, Ephesians chapter 2. He says, "Remember that you were at that time separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel." Remember that. Don't forget that, Ephesians. Don't forget what it was like to be separated from Christ. So many of us, myself included, might have come to know Christ at a time in which, you know, it's hard for me to remember what I was like when I was seven.

I know I was the perfect child, but it's hard to remember back that far. So, even though that we may have known Christ for decades and decades and decades, God still wants us to have a sense of what He's redeemed us out of, of what it's like to not have His fellowship at all because we're separated from Him.

And so God may use that in times in your life to just withdraw, to have His presence in a muted sort of a fashion to cause your heart to cry out, God, don't leave me, because that is not any life. A life without you is no life at all. So I think that that's probably the first disturbing, unsettling, disquieting thing that we see.

You probably see it in your own life when you have experienced affliction and particularly when that affliction lasted. You probably have in your heart also gone to that same place. God, why do you not care? Do you not see? Why have you withdrawn? Why are you hiding yourself from me? Why do you seem so distant?

Why do you seem so disconnected? I think that's what the disciples are experiencing, too. But the second thing that we see that if anything is even more disturbing is this. We see that in this episode that the intense afflictions that come upon the disciples have the effect of bringing to the surface sins that they probably thought were long ago dead.

So think about their reaction to Jesus. Jesus comes to them on the water and we remember what happens. They think, first of all, that He's a ghost and they're terrified. And then they find out He's not a ghost, that He's really Jesus, and they're more terrified. So they're compounding upon itself. There's this first initial reaction that's just simply a reaction of pure superstition.

That somehow there is this ghost, this person come back from the dead, which, by the way, as believers in Jesus Christ, what do we have 1000 percent certainty of? No one ever comes back from the dead. Never. That, as believers in Jesus Christ, upon the authority of God's Word, I can say to you emphatically, nobody ever comes back from the dead.

It doesn't work that way. So this idea that there's this ghost to somehow the spirit being used to be a person and now he's walking on the, that's just superstition or this idea that maybe it's some sort of a demon that's coming to get us. You see, the disciples lived in a superstitious world that, by the way, was no more superstitious than ours.

We somehow think that because we're more sophisticated today and we walk around with smartphones and we've got Google and everything that we're less superstitious. We are still, as a society, just as superstitious as people have ever been. But their superstition was out front. It was visible. It was open.

And their superstition that was somehow down deep within their thoughts, it comes to rise. They're in the middle of a storm. They have been rowing and rowing. Their arms are burning. They're at the end of themselves. They're exhausted. They are having thoughts that Jesus doesn't care for them, that Jesus has forgotten them.

And then out of nowhere comes this crazy superstition. There's a ghost on the water.

Perhaps that was a pagan way of thinking that these disciples had thought was long ago dead in them. That they don't think like this anymore. But somehow this storm in the middle of the night, they're so weary, they're so tired, they're so afraid. All of a sudden now this old way of thinking that they thought sure was dead, now it comes back.

Let me see if I can illustrate this for us. You ever experience the morning after a storm? And I don't mean the kind of storm like we had yesterday. I mean like the morning after a hurricane. You ever experience that? What do you see everywhere on the morning after a hurricane? Trash. Isn't that just the ugly reality?

A storm like that brings trash out of nowhere. Or perhaps a better illustration. Let me go with this one. A better illustration, I can think back to when I was a little kid, and which is only like 12 years ago, but I can think back to when I was a little kid, and one of the things I liked to do when I was a kid, I would get these mason jars in the summer.

I'd get these mason jars, and I'd go find a big mud puddle, or go down to the pond, and I'd find where the tadpoles were, and I'd take that mason jar, and I'd scoop up a bunch of pond water with tadpoles in it. And I take that back and I put it in my room because then I had pet tadpoles as if a tadpole could ever be a pet.

So I'd had these, this Mason jar of pond water with these tadpoles in it. And when I put the jar on my shelf, the jar was, the water in the jar was what brown with tadpoles all swimming around in it. But then as the jar sat there on my dresser for two or three days. I would go and I'd look and the tadpoles would be sitting on the bottom, and what color would the water be?

Clear. And then I'd take the jar, and then maybe the tadpoles would swim around, or I'd shake it a little bit, and then up would come all this sediment. That because the water was calm had settled to the bottom

and fellow believer in Christ, that's your heart when the water is calm, the sediment of your remaining sin settles to the bottom and the water of your heart looks clear and it's not until you take that jar and shake it that you begin to see there's still a lot of sediment left in this water.

You see, the storm created nothing. The storm created nothing in the disciple's heart. It simply shook up what was already in there, but had settled down to the bottom. Because in the calmness of the day that preceded the storm, there was no superstition there. Can you imagine the disciples on the day of feeding?

I mean, there's no unbelief. There's no spiritual dullness. Jesus is feeding the crowd. They're not thinking, Jesus, are you sure you're not a ghost? Are you real? Are you sure you're not a demon? There's no lack of belief. Because everything is wonderful. The people are sitting on the grass. Jesus is feeding us.

He's given us this great teaching. The water of our life is calm. And then along comes a storm. And wait a minute, I didn't even think I believed in ghosts anymore. I didn't even think that I believed in that stuff anymore. I thought I believed in Jesus. I thought I believed that this man was the Messiah.

Now all of a sudden what's coming out of my mouth is that this man's a ghost? Do you see how the storms of your life do the same thing? They will shake up from the bottom of your life that sediment of old sin that you haven't thought about for years. That you thought you were long since over and the storm will come along and it just has a way of shaking things up so that all those old sins are dredged up again.

You want a biblical example of this? Let's take a look at Mary. Not the mother of Jesus, but you remember Mary, the sister of Lazarus. In Luke chapter 10. The water of Mary's life is calm because in Luke chapter 10 we have that quaint little story of Jesus coming to visit And then there's Martha who's so diligent to prepare for the food and everything and she comes to Jesus and says Jesus Will you tell Mary to help me?

And Jesus says Tut, tut, tut. Nope. Nope. She has chosen the better. Because we're told that she would sit at Jesus feet and soak up His teaching. And Jesus said, this will not be taken from her because she has chosen the better. That's Luke 10. When the water of her life is nice and calm. But then if we flip over to John 11.

In John 11 there comes a storm. And the name of that storm is her brother Lazarus. Who just died.

And Jesus now comes to town. By the way. After waiting until he was dead, kind of like Jesus praying on the mountain, waiting until the disciples have reached the end of themselves. Jesus also, Jesus, Lazarus is sick. Let's go to him. Let's wait. Let's wait one day, two days, three days, four days. Now it's time to go.

So then Jesus comes, and I don't know if you've ever caught this part of the story here. In John chapter 11, when Jesus comes now to the house of the now dead Lazarus and his two sisters, Martha and Mary. So when Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went and met him. But did you catch this part of the story?

But Mary remained seated in the house. Let me interpret that for you. Mary was mad. Mary was angry at Jesus. Mary was disappointed in Jesus because Jesus let her brother die. Now, this is the same Mary that sat at His feet and soaked up His teaching. This is the same Mary that we have as this mental picture of the ideal disciple sitting at Jesus feet.

And yet the storm of her brother's death comes along and it stirs up within her feelings toward Jesus that she never would have told you in Luke chapter 10 she had. In Luke 10, she would have disowned or disavowed any feelings of hostility towards Jesus. But then the storm comes, and then out of nowhere, something comes up out of the bottom of her heart that she had even forgotten, didn't even know was there.

And it's an animosity toward a Messiah who didn't come through for her in the specific way that she thought He should have. That's how the storm of her life... Can shake up that sediment of old sin and the same thing is true in all of our lives. Have you ever noticed that to be true? One of the most unpleasant, disquieting aspects of affliction for the believer is this.

When afflictions come, and particularly when afflictions stay, you begin to see things in yourself that you thought were long ago dead. And I think that that is the most distressing part of afflictions for the believer. Yes, afflictions are unpleasant. I mean, that's the very definition of an affliction is it's unpleasant.

It can be painful, physically, emotionally painful. It can be financially painful. Certainly, afflictions are not supposed to be fun. But I think that the most unpleasant part of afflictions for the true believer is afflictions show you the ugliest part of yourself. Because afflictions are stirring up that stuff, that grime off the bottom of your heart that you had convinced yourself, I'm done with that.

And here they come out of nowhere. Attitudes come out of nowhere. Things come out of your mouth that you thought didn't come out of your mouth anymore. Or temptations now are enticing to you that were not enticing before. The temptation, you know, I could just lie. And I could make this easier on myself. I could just take this thing and make it easier on myself.

I could just not report that to the boss and I can make this easier on myself. And then that temptation is real. It's tangible. Maybe you even indulge in it and you say, what am I doing? I thought that that part of me was long ago did. And I think that's the most distressing part of afflictions for the believer is because it shows you how much you still need Christ.

It shows you how desperately you still need him. It shows you how sinful your heart still remains. It shows you what many of us would say in the midst of afflictions, and maybe you've been there too. I'm such a terrible person. I'm such a terrible Christian. I can't believe that I'm still tempted in these ways.

This is the experience, I think, of every Christian, which is why I think that This hiding of the face, this is of God, I think this is why He does it. Because He uses this to stir up those things within your heart to remind you, first of all, how much you still need Him. But secondly, of what He has placed His love upon.

You know, it's easy to begin convincing yourself when that water's nice and calm and all the ugly sediments on the bottom. It's easy to start thinking. When Jesus loved me, He didn't love somebody all that bad. I mean, look how clear my water is. But He sees to the bottom. And when He stirs up that water in your life, and you look at that and you say, this is awful.

I thought that I had made more progress in my spiritual journey than this. Then what the believer must do, is they must remind themselves, Jesus got in the boat.

Yahweh got in the boat, the great I am didn't come up to the boat and say, you foolish disciples, how could you think that I forgot you? I'm going back. He came to them and got in the boat with them. And that is the ultimate assurance for the believer that the scriptures teach us that knowing everything about us, knowing every sediment in our heart, he loved us.

And he died for us. As Paul will say at the end of Romans chapter 8, knowing this about us and then giving himself for us, giving his son for us, would he now forsake us? After doing that for us, would he now forsake us?