

95-07-16Mark

We have a wonderful opportunity to assemble and to praise your name publicly. We have the opportunity to carry our Bibles with us, to identify ourselves as Christians without fear of reprisal. We thank you that we live in this country at this time in history. We thank you for the opportunity that you have so obviously given us to make the most of that freedom. We pray now that as we worship you through seeing the life and ministry of Jesus Christ, as is recorded in the Gospel of Mark, that God the Holy Spirit will be with us, that he will in fact lead us into all truth, that we will be transformed and changed by these things, that we will be energized, we will be built up and edified, and that as we go forth these things will be the object of our faith so that our lives, our thinking and our actions will reflect your glory.

We ask all these things in the name of our Savior Jesus Christ. Amen. We will be resuming our study in Mark chapter 6, which is where you might want to turn.

Commitment to the will of God, commitment to the plan of God is not something that we can get by osmosis. It isn't just by attending church and soaking up the atmosphere that we are suddenly going to become committed to the plan of God, that we are going to be committed to personal righteousness, committed to holiness.

The approach of trying to obtain it by osmosis is what has resulted in the problems that we have today. How many fallen leaders, quote-unquote, in the Christian world can we name today? I'm sure that you can think of several, as can I. And why is that? Because we lack commitment. We lack a clear choice in saying this is what I'm going to do.

If we're going to commit to the plan of God, we have to know what it is. We can't be sidetracked.

We can't have a floating understanding, something that changes based on the situation and something that changes with the times. That's why the Word of God is static. God doesn't write a new testament to the Word of God in every new generation, does He? He gave us 66 books and He said this is it. This will suffice. This is the standard. Be ye holy, for I am holy.

Seek ye first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness. All of these other things will take care of themselves. It's clear. It's unambiguous. All it requires from us is what? Commitment. I'll give you another chance.

All it requires from us is what? Are you committed to your answer? All the Word of God requires from us is what? Commitment. We've got to commit. There's no ambiguity. The Word of God is clear. But we've got to decide that it's going to make a difference in our life. God has allotted to us a certain number of days. We've got to figure out what the plan of God is and commit to it. Sacrifice for it. Endure as a part of it. Looking forward to that hope that will come at the appearing of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Now as we finish up Mark chapter 6, this is a lesson that Jesus is trying to get across to the disciples. The remaining question for us is to be sure that we understand what it is we are committing to.

We're going to see some contrasting ideas about that as we finish this chapter. You'll recall we had the feeding of the 5,000. Next week, by the way, we're going to return to our study of the significance of bread.

Bread plays a large role in this section of Mark, just as seed played a role earlier on in chapter 4 and in chapter 5. Now bread is going to come into play. And I will leave you to meditate in advance on the relationship between seed and bread.

Remember the three seed parables? And we saw some applications from those. Now we're getting into a bread area. Jesus breaks bread. It multiplies. It feeds the crowd. We're going to see in chapter 7 some more references to bread. So we'll return to that next week.

But we need to finish because two weeks ago we left the disciples rowing manfully against the wind in the middle of the Sea of Galilee. And we need to go ahead and let the Lord deliver them. Verse 45 of chapter 6, immediately, this is after the crowd has eaten the loaves, He made His disciples get into the boat and go before Him to the other side, to Bethsaida, while He sent the multitude away.

When He had sent them away, He departed to the mountain to pray. Now when evening came, the boat was in the middle of the sea, and He was alone on the land. Then He saw them straining at rowing, for the wind was against them.

Now about the fourth watch of the night, He came to them, walking on the sea, and would have passed them by. And when they saw Him walking on the sea, they supposed it was a ghost and cried out, for they all saw Him and were troubled. But immediately He talked with them and said to them, Be of good cheer, it is I, do not be afraid.

Then He went up into the boat to them, and the wind ceased. And they were greatly amazed in themselves beyond measure and marveled, for they had not understood about the loaves because their heart was hardened." We've seen that the disciples have just returned from a mission where they applied the power of God. Jesus sent them forth and He said, Preach, heal, cast out demons.

They did so. They've come back and they gave a report to Jesus Christ. This is what we did.

Now think about this for a moment. Suppose that instead of whatever you did this past week, you went over to Muscogee, and Locust Grove, Pryor, other towns hereabouts, and for this past week, every day, you had been laying your hand on someone and watching a withered limb become whole. A lame person from birth stand up and walk.

A blind person suddenly is able to see. A demon-possessed person is completely delivered from the power of demons. At your hand, at your request from God, God's power is implemented.

And you return from that, what must have been a very heady experience, a very profound experience. You return and you're now face-to-face with the Lord Jesus Christ who granted you this authority and this power and gave you this commission. What an exciting reunion

that would be to talk to the Lord about all of the things that God had done in your presence as you went about.

So that's what they did. They went to the mountain and discussed these things. And the crowd finally located where they were and came.

Jesus taught them all day and then gave them something to eat. Now Jesus says to the disciples, He's given them another mission. It's a very simple mission.

He doesn't say, Go back out to the towns and villages and heal and preach. He says, Take your boat and go to Bethsaida. The disciples say, Okay.

They get in the boat and they leave Him. They must have been somewhat puzzled as to how He would rejoin them. But they follow His command.

They get in the boat and they begin to cross the sea. This journey, because they are up at the north end of the Sea of Galilee, necessitates them going into the sea and turning west to return to the Capernaum, Gennesaret, Bethsaida area. That's all over on the northwest corner of the sea.

They have been sort of at the northeast corner of the sea, across the Jordan. So they get out into the lake and now they're going to be going west. Anyone who has a familiarity with the Sea of Galilee knows that there is a strong westerly breeze that often crops up on the Sea of Galilee coming off the Mediterranean, coming across the plains and rushing headlong across the sea as it approaches the mountain range that is just to the east of the Sea of Galilee.

It picks up a lot of speed and it is a very persistent, strong wind. So the disciples are now out in the middle of the sea and they encounter this strong wind out of the west. Well, it is so strong that they can't tack to port and tack to starboard and make their way due west.

So they have to break out the oars. They furl the sails, they get out the oars. There are at least 12 of them in the boat and so they begin to row.

Now, let's think about this. You know, most of you have rowed a boat or have been in a boat and someone rowed it for you. Which way do you face when you're rowing a boat? To the bow or the stern? To the stern, right? If you sit in the boat and look over the bow, you're going to be rowing backwards.

So you have to face the rear so they're facing east. The wind is whipping from behind their heads. They're straining at the oars.

If you look at this word here in verse 48, he saw them straining at rowing. That is a very mild translation. This word in Greek is *basanidzo*.

That doesn't mean much to you, but I will give you something that's more meaningful. Do you remember back in Mark 5 and verse 7? It says, this is the demon-possessed man. Jesus comes to the man that's been living in the tombs and so forth, the demon-possessed man with the legion.

He cried out with a loud voice and he said, What have I to do with you, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I implore you by God that you do not torment me. The word there for torment is basanidzo. Torment.

In Revelation 20, verse 10, it says that Satan is cast into the lake of fire with the beast and the false prophet where they are tormented forever and ever. Basanidzo. This is a strong word for suffering.

This is a strong word for torment. This is what Satan, the beast, and the false prophet are going to be doing in the lake of fire. This is what Jesus Christ is going to do to the demons in the eternal future.

This is what the disciples are up against as they manfully try to carry out this command from Jesus Christ to get across the lake and go to Bethsaida. They are tormented at the oars. They've been doing this now.

If they let the sun down, which is likely, then they have been rowing now for about nine hours. Nine or ten hours of rowing. One of my brief activities in sports at the Naval Academy for about two semesters was crew.

You know, the eight-oar shells, the little skinny boats with a little short guy in the front. I'm sorry, in the stern. And you row in a race.

Rowing is a very, I can tell you from experience, a very draining and a very painful sport. And so I have some sympathy for where the disciples are at this point. So here they are straining at the oars.

Now Jesus has gone up in the mountain to pray and it's nighttime. There's not a storm evidently. There may have been moonlight.

There was probably one or more lamps in the boat. Jesus, from His vantage point on the mountain, can see the progress of the disciples. Jesus is on the mountain looking to the south.

He sees the little light on the boat. Perhaps He can catch a faint silhouette of it in the moonlight as it slowly beats its way to the west. And they've only gone a couple of miles when He sees them here at 3 or 4 in the morning.

And He saw them straining at rowing for the wind was against them. And about the fourth watch of the night He came to them walking on the sea and would have passed them by. I don't know about you, but I find this extremely disturbing.

If I were rowing for nine hours for all I was worth, trying to fulfill the Lord's command to go to a certain place, I don't think there would be anything more discouraging than watching someone blindly walk past me on the water and go on to the destination. I would say, Lord, what about us? Why aren't we getting some help here? Do You not care that we are killing ourselves at the oars? Fortunately, I don't have to wrestle with that theological difficulty because that is not what this passage says. The last phrase here when it says He came to them walking on the sea and would have passed them by, this is a legitimate translation.

Passed by, for this word, parerkamai in Greek, is a legitimate translation. For example, remember Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane and He prays to the Father and He says, Father, if it be Thy will, He talks about the cup and in one passage in Matthew He also talks about this hour. Let this hour pass from me or pass me by.

And He uses the word that is used here, parerkamai. But, it has a preposition with it. It is passed from.

The word apa is there in Greek which means passed from. This word can also mean come alongside. Para, which is the first part, this is parerekamai.

Erekamai means to come. Kampara means alongside. So, it can mean to pass someone by coming along their side and then continuing on.

It can also mean to come to someone's side in the sense of aid. Turn with me quickly to Luke chapter 12, verse 37. Luke 12, verse 37.

Jesus is speaking. He says, Blessed are those servants whom the Master, when He comes, will find watching. Assuredly, I say to you, that He will gird Himself and have them sit down to eat and will come and serve them.

That last phrase there, come and serve them, that's also parerekamai. Jesus is not going to pass the table by with the food when we sit down at that great banquet table in the Millennial Kingdom. He will gird Himself and come to us, not pass us by.

Turn a few pages over to Luke chapter 17, verse 7. Luke 17, verse 7. Jesus again is speaking. Which of you having a servant plowing or tending sheep will say to him when he has come in from the field, Come at once and sit down to eat. The word there, come, is parerekamai.

He doesn't mean which of you having a servant will tell him pass by the house and sit down to eat. He's talking about the servants coming in and sitting down, coming to the house. And that's the usage that we have in here.

So, I hope I have demonstrated to you that you can safely pen change your Bible in this verse because it was not Jesus' intention to pass them by. It was Jesus' intention to come to them. That's why it tells us in verse 48, He saw them straining at the oars.

He didn't say, well, I see that they are tormented at the oars. I think I'll walk by the boat and really make them feel bad. His desire was to come to them.

Now, a second question that often occurs as we look at this passage is, why does Jesus walk on the water at this point? Well, sometimes we've heard these stories since we were young and we just sort of take them at face value. Well, Jesus walked on the water. I always ask myself, why here? Why now? They've made many trips across the lake.

Why does Jesus walk on the water at this point? There are a number of things He could have done. He could have prayed to the Father and had the boat arrive at its destination. He could have had the boat return to the shore.

He could have never sent them on a mission that would have caused them to row for three quarters of the night into a headwind. But they're there, and He walks on the water at this point. Why might that be? There are probably several reasons.

One practical reason is found in John 6. We don't have time to turn there this morning. But in John's account, we find out that after they ate this bread and fish, this crowd of 5,000 men and their families wanted to make Jesus king. And there was quite a groundswell of support for this idea, and the crowd did not want to let Jesus leave.

They were going to make Him king by force. Now, 5,000 men is a sizable crowd, and when you add the families in there, that is an incredibly huge mob. Jesus is somewhat noncommittal when this idea comes up.

The first thing He does is He tells the disciples, you get in the boat and head for Bethsaida. After they leave, then He talks to the crowd on this subject of becoming king. We don't know exactly what was said.

We do know that the crowd allowed Jesus to go up into the mountain and pray, but they did not leave. And if you continue reading the account in John, you find out that the next day after this episode of walking on the water and the disciples in the boat, the next day the crowd returned to the spot where they had eaten the bread looking for Jesus, and they couldn't find Him. And it really upset them.

They thought He would still be there the next morning, and that's why they allowed Him to go up in the mountain without forcing Him to be king that night. So it is probable that these people had a perimeter ring around the mountain, and they said, fine, you go pray, but we're still going to make you king in the morning. And so Jesus is there.

The disciples are on the lake. And the most practical way to bypass this crowd and this situation is to go across the water. He can accomplish several things.

He avoids the crowd and their desires. He can minister to His disciples who are tormented at the oars. And He can arrive back at His destination where He has freedom of movement.

It's interesting. At your leisure, read the account in John 6 and on into chapter 7 and see what Jesus tells these people when they catch up with Him back at Capernaum, that Seta area. The first question out of their mouths, why are you here? Why did you leave? How come we couldn't find you? It's obvious that they expected Him to be there.

And that's one of the things about the ministry of Jesus Christ and His miracles. There's always a practical reason. Jesus doesn't just show off.

He doesn't just do miracles for the sake of doing miracles. There is a purpose. There's a way that you can demonstrate that He had method to these things.

So we find Jesus walking on the water and He says, Be of good cheer, it is I. Do not be afraid. He went in the boat to them and the wind ceased and they were greatly amazed in themselves beyond measure and marveled. Now, back to the flow of the Gospel of Mark.

We had the seed parables. What did we learn from the seed parables? The Word of God is given to us to be the object of our faith. The power of God is active in the presence of faith.

Right? How many of us... You don't have to raise your hands. How many of us want the power of God active in our life? How many of us would like to be in the center of God's will? How many of us would like to stand at the judgment seat of Christ and have the Lord Jesus Christ put His hand on our shoulder and say, Well done, thou good and faithful servant. How many of us believe that that is right? That that's the proper thing for a believer? We know that's the right thing, don't we? Now, back to our introduction.

How many of us are willing to commit to that goal? How many of us are willing to sacrifice for that goal? How many of us are willing to suffer and endure for that goal? That's the question. That's what separates those who will receive commendation from Jesus Christ from those who will be saved, yet so as by fire. Who will eke through, but not have gained the blessing that comes from participation in the plan of God in this life? In talking with some of the people that have been at the Naval Academy over the past several years and have seen the recent classes come through and seen their particular cleave training, one of the things that came out is that the academy had swung so far away from a harsh first year that some of the midshipmen virtually didn't have a cleave year as most of us understand it.

It was very gentle. It was a kinder, gentler place. And for myself, if I were in one of those classes that really didn't go through the traditional baptism of fire, I would feel cheated.

I would feel like I didn't really get what I came to the academy to get, which is I wanted someone to instill in me self-discipline, to force me into the mold that I knew I wanted to conform to. I wanted to be put to the test and to come out at the other side reflecting success in that endeavor, reflecting a commitment to integrity and leadership and honor and all of the things that that institution stands for. Those people that didn't get a very good indoctrination, when they look back, when they hear other alumni talking about the harsh conditions that they survived and that molded them and made them into what they are today, they won't have a sense of common experience.

They can't look back and say the same thing. They were cheated through no fault of their own. The institution let them down because the institution was not hard on them.

The institution didn't put the pressure on them that they could look back on and say, I survived. I've got what it takes. I have been tested and have come through.

That's what this life is all about. You remember Paul's words. I think it's in Romans where he talks about the suffering that we endure.

Of course, Paul talks about this in all of his letters. You recall the passage where he says that this momentary light affliction is working for us an eternal weight of glory. Think about that.

Just that phrase. We would love to be commended to the judgment seat of Christ. We would love to reflect eternally the glory of our God.

Paul says, here it is. It's the momentary light affliction of this life. It is affliction that works glory.

And we say, well, does that mean I've got to go as some of our missionaries have been imprisoned and perhaps tortured and killed for the faith? It does not. Each of us, God has not skimmed on our program. God hasn't had some believers in some generations that didn't get the program.

God is faithful and unlike the academy, God has given each of us that trial by fire. Whatever your circumstances in life have been, whatever they may currently be, God is looking to perfect us just as He made the Lord Jesus Christ Himself complete through suffering. The Lord Jesus Christ was made complete through suffering.

We are made complete through suffering. Our momentary light affliction works for us an eternal weight of glory. Here are the disciples fulfilling the Lord's command to go to the other side.

They're tormented at the oars, but they're not doing it alone. Jesus Christ has His eye on them. Jesus Christ walks on the water.

As our Scripture reading said, He makes a path through the seas to come to them. He doesn't pass them by. He comes to them because they are His mission.

He is training them. He is preparing them for life. He is giving them the opportunity to reflect God's glory in this life and in the next.

And that's our opportunity. We don't want to miss it. Wouldn't it be awful if a plebe, every time his first-class midshipman came around and put some pressure on him and yelled in his ear, ran to the superintendent and said, Oh, Admiral, someone was yelling at me and it really upset me.

I just felt awful. It ruined my concentration. I just couldn't think.

I couldn't enjoy my day. I have a big chemistry test tomorrow and I don't think I'm going to pass it now because I'm just rattled. He's wounded my self-esteem.

Is there a group I can talk with? Can I get together and have a group counseling session with someone? I just really feel violated. I feel fractured. I just feel awful as a result of this pressure.

Not at all. That pressure is the tool of your lieutenants and captains and admirals that win wars, that lead troops, that lead sailors, that maintain our freedom, maintain our security, that go on in some cases to become presidents and other people that have a responsibility for leadership. The pressure is necessary.

It's integral. You can't do without it. That's the system that we're in as believers.

So when we find ourselves in affliction, our first reaction is to run to the admiral and say, this pressure is awful. Please take it away. Please give me something warm and comfortable.

Please give me something safe and pleasant. Where is our commitment? If we're committed to the plan of God, Jesus says, in this world ye shall have what? Tribulation. It doesn't mean a little bit of tribulation.

It doesn't mean an occasional fly in the ointment. It means suffering. It means just what it says, affliction.

Ellipsis in Greek is a word that is used when someone gets whipped. It's a word used when someone is a galley slave. It's a word that is used when someone has a physical malady that can't be cured.

It's a suffering. We can look at it in two ways. We can look at it as someone who doesn't have a commitment and sees it as an inconvenience, as unpleasant, as something that gets in the way of the real pleasures and purposes in life.

Or we can see it as that which brings the best out of us. We can see it like that familiar analogy of the metal worker, the goldsmith, who takes the gold and heats it. And as he heats it, the impurities rise to the top.

He scoops them away and he heats it a little hotter. More impurities rise to the top. He scoops them away and he keeps on heating and refining that gold.

And his measure of when the gold is ready to be worked into beautiful jewelry or beautiful ornamentation is when he can look at that pot, that smelting pot of hot gold, and see his reflection in the surface. That's when the impurities have been removed. God is going to heat us.

He's going to afflict us. He's going to allow us to suffer just as these disciples were suffering rolling across the lake. But there's a purpose and He never leaves us.

His eye is on us. His presence is with us because He's for us. He has a purpose in our affliction.

And if we can keep that in our mind, we can look at whatever physical limitations we face, circumstantial limitations, whatever other hills we have to run on up and mountains that we have to climb or headwinds that we have to row against, we can see them as part of God's plan and God's purpose. They are necessary. Our momentary light affliction works an eternal weight of glory.

And we can see these things for what they are. Not obstacles, but opportunities. And in so doing, we can reflect the glory of our Savior, Jesus Christ.

That's what He did. Who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame. But where is He now? He is seated at the right hand of the Father.

Won't it be great? Doesn't it contribute to our hope and our expectation of the return of Jesus Christ to anticipate sitting at His right hand, reflecting His glory for all eternity? Here's the choice. If we're committed to that goal, then we will see our suffering in a new and different way. Men who go to a service academy endure the humiliation and the nonsensical torment that is a part of every first year experience because there's an end in view.

There is a set of gold bars at the end of that trail. There is a commission in the service. There's an opportunity to be a naval officer or a Marine Corps officer at the end of that trail.

And it's worth it. There's nothing they can do to me that will deter me from achieving that goal. I will not be moved.

I will not be shaken. I will not be deflected. I don't care what they do to me.

I will get through because I'm committed to my goal. I know this process is necessary and I'm willing to endure it for the goal. That's why hope is a part of the Christian life.

You who are veterans of our Colossians study remember the great triad of Christian virtues that so many of Paul's books address. Faith, hope, and love. Faith is the means.

We have to have the seed of the word in our soul and make it the object of our faith. If you don't really believe Jesus is coming back, if you don't really believe that He is more interested in what you think than what you do, you're never going to make it. And that's something we have to tell young people who are anticipating an appointment to a service academy.

If you're not committed to the goal, don't even try it because you're not going to make it. The suffering will do you in. You've got to have a clear vision of your purpose.

And that's what we as believers need. It's a glorious calling. It is a high calling to be like Christ, to endure as He endures so that we can reflect God's glory the way that He will for all eternity.

It's a great challenge, but in the last lap around that long marathon track, everything instinctive tells us to quit. When we're down and we're hurting, we've been toiling at the oars for nine or ten hours. Everything in our body says quit.

It's not worth it. And that's where commitment shows. That's why Jesus Christ suffered the death of the cross.

That's why God allows us to suffer persecution. If it's a test of our commitment, we can see it as an opportunity or we can see it as an obstacle. That's our choice.

Thanks be to God, we have been given strength through the Word. We've been given strength through the Holy Spirit. Jesus Christ has His eye on us from the mountaintop.

When we need it most, Jesus Christ will walk across the water to be at our side, to come into our boat and bring us safely to the other side. It's an article of faith. It's something that sustains our commitment as we face whatever we face in life, whether it's the suffering of declining years, whether it is the suffering brought about by circumstances, whatever it may be.

God is sufficient. God's plan has a glory at its end that as yet time cannot conceive. Eye has not seen, ear has not heard the things that God has in store for us at the end of this trail of affliction.

Our commitment is what counts. Let's close in prayer. Father, we thank You for the truth of Your Word.

We thank You for the record of it that has been preserved for all of these centuries so that we, as so many before us, can be challenged with the same opportunity We've been given the same resources. You have placed Yourself at our disposal in Your Word and through Your Spirit. We have been given everything we need to fulfill a commitment to holiness, to fulfill a commitment to godliness, to fulfill a commitment to reflect in Your glory.

We pray that these things will become a part of the resources in our soul, that they will strengthen us, that we will endure, that we will be sustained by that bright hope and promise which You have given to us that will be fulfilled at the coming of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. We ask these things in His name. Amen.