**TAKE COURAGE! IT IS I**

**(Mark 6:45-56)**

***“Immediately he spoke to them and said, ‘Take courage! It is I. Don’t be afraid.’” (v. 50b)***

Intro…might want to get into how many people try to explain this miracle (and the feeding of the 5000 away; say it was symbolic, or icy or that Jesus was a kung fu master)…why do people do this? It has to do with people’s hardness of heart…we intrinsically don’t want to believe that Jesus is who he says he is and thus surrender to him; today we will see his Creator power clearly on display and his care for us……….another way to go would be a sense of problem over our difficult lives (like a strong wind against us)

**I. Jesus prays while his disciples are in a storm (vs. 45-48a)**

* Start with a short recap of what just happened; John’s gospel tells us that the people wanted to make Jesus king (Burger King!) by force; a politically charged environment; extreme hype
* According to v. 45, Jesus handled the situation by getting his disciples out of there right away; his disciples were dizzy with hype (climactic moment of their lives); dreaming of what was coming next; Jesus wanted to protect them from all that
* v. 46; Jesus got himself out of the situation as well; went to a solitary place once again to pray (remember, he had hardly had a moment to himself to be with the Father in quiet devotion); what did he pray for?; I think for himself (overcome temptations and remain focused on God’s mission), for his disciples (to grow in faith) and for the crowds (to have pure motives in seeking him and finding eternal life)
* vs. 47-48a; disciples were feeling good (talking about all that was going to happen next); perhaps they were actually full of pride; but then a strong wind started to slowly pick up more and more; high wore off; started to become more frustrated, on-edge and eventually fearful (very dark); were just following Jesus’ orders, but now he was gone (unlike previous storm experience) and things were getting grim; arms felt like anchors; why was God allowing this to happen?
* Really like how P.A. explained about the refining process for gold; related to 1 Pe 1:7; if our faith is really that precious, isn’t it worth the painful refining process?; also good to think about the dangers of pride as P.A. mentioned
* Then reemphasize v. 48a about how Jesus *saw* them straining at the oars; even in physical absence, even in the darkest part of the night, it was like Jesus was right with them; like a father watching over his children from a far, never letting them out of his sight; sees our struggle and it is *not* in vain (especially the struggle to live by faith in a sinful world); this is a wonderful picture of the church in the world; can use a verse like Mt 28:20b to help us accept it more personally
* Our lives are not always a smooth voyage; also, they are not often like storms of crisis; rather, life is oftentimes a long, slow, agonizing grind to move forward: in our spiritual lives, in our careers and in our relationships with others; at times it seems like everything is against us (I can testify to that); but the reality is that even if all we can see is darkness and all we can feel is heaviness, Jesus never lets us out of his sight for a moment; he understands our situations, intercedes for us; his love never changes (Heb 13:8); this is something that is so comforting to us in the rat race of life; need to die to pride and build up faith as our first priority (eyes of faith)

**II. “Take courage! It is I. Don’t be afraid.” (vs. 48b-56)**

* v. 48b; Jesus waited for a quite a while, until the disciples reached their limitations; then he did something miraculous and unprecedented: walking on the water!; [talk about weakness of human explanations here?]; could maybe also talk about the “passing by” aspect here, related to the way that God “passed” in front of Moses to reveal his glory
* vs. 49-50a; disciples’ response; thought Jesus was a ghost that had come to destroy them; how could they not even recognize their own Lord and Master?; shows us that they were not in the right state of mind, even after participating in Jesus’ great miracle (Jesus was not in their hearts)
* key verse from 50b; what do these words mean?
* *First, “Take courage!...Don’t be afraid”*; once again, we see Jesus contrasting fear and faith; remember back to Jairus’ case in Mk 5:36; Jesus sees fear as something abnormal, not helpful; fear comes from unbelief in God; Jesus came to restore us from our discouraging situations and fill us with God’s hope; “Don’t be afraid; just believe”
* *Second, “It is I”*; what was the reason why the disciples, and we, needn’t fear anything? Because Jesus, the Almighty Son of God is with us; relation of “It is I” to “I AM”; Jesus is the self-existing Creator God and the sovereign Ruler of all things as he haad seen the misery of the Israelites, came to rescue them and revealed himself to the Israelites (Ex 3:7-14); he tread over the waters and cut through the wind as if they were nothing at all! Jesus is saying that it is I, your Master, Savior, Sovereign Lord. I am with you. It is I who came to this stormy sea to look after you.(this is his relationship to our biggest problems and worries); where we see obstacles, he sees an opportunity to approach us and reveal himself to us by using the very obstacles (walking on the waters / waves).
* v. 51a; Jesus got into the boat with them and the wind died down; complete calm; when we receive the Great “I AM” into our hearts and allow him to be the Captain of our boats, everything changes; the disciples had struggled all night in vain getting nowhere, but when we are with Jesus, everything falls into place; what is the secret to peace and rest in this rat race of life? It is to believe in Jesus and share fellowship with him, letting him be in the driver’s seat
* vs. 51b-52; the disciples were amazed at everything they experienced; Jesus is great and worthy of worship, beyond our wildest imaginations; at the same time, Mark notes that the disciples shouldn’t have really been all that amazed based on what they had seen beforehand; had “not understood about the loaves; their hearts were hardened”; the previous event should have already proved to them that Jesus is Almighty God, who is over and above every situation; his grace and power to feed all of the hungry should have softened their hearts to believe in Jesus in any situation; but instead, their hearts grew hardened with selfish desires; they actually turned away from Jesus rather than to greater faith in him; when they were separated from him for only a few hours and faced a difficult situation, they forgot the lesson and lost Jesus from their hearts
* Every lesson from the Bible, and every event that God puts in our lives is for his purpose of bringing us closer to him; his hope is for us to grasp spiritual truths about himself and about ourselves so that we may be driven to him and live by faith instead of for this perishing world; only the Holy Spirit can reveal these things to us; we must open our hearts to him by humbly listening to Jesus’ voice: “Take courage! It is I. Don’t be afraid.”; Jesus is so hurt by our unbelief; are we frustrated by how much we are struggling through tough times? Think about how frustrated Jesus is by our hardness of heart and our slowness to believe!!; God loves us and will train us in faith until we learn our lesson and develop more than a shallow relationship with Christ
* Epilogue from vs. 53-56; actually reached a different destination (Gennesaret) that what was originally intended; blown off course by the winds, but this was Jesus’ sovereign will all along (when he is captaining our life’s journey, there are never any problems); people’s coming to Jesus shows a climactic time in his ministry; doesn’t say anything about Jesus turning anyone away (despite not having any rest time lately) nor about him failing to heal anyone; Jesus’ face was recognizable to most people now and “Just touch” faith had become the most popular slogan of the year; Jesus never disappoints those who come to him in faith

Conc…recap major points about Jesus watching over us and being in control of our lives…call to soften our hearts in repentance and faith

Reflection:

Subject: What is the purpose of our difficult trials, and how should we respond in these times?

Complement: Jesus shows us that he is always watching over us throughout our life’s journey and is sovereign over all our problems. We need not have any fear when our faith in firmly in him.

Exegetical idea: Mark shares the story of Jesus walking on the water to reveal Jesus’ power as the Creator God and his sovereignty over all our situations. He also uses it as a lesson about faith, saying that believers must not harden their hearts in unbelief.

Homiletical idea: As Jesus’ followers, we must know that Jesus is sovereign over our lives. He loves us and is watching over us and looks after us. We should therefore see our struggles in this life from God’s point of view and have courage and faith rather than living in selfish fear.

Purpose: Gain a deeper acknowledgement of Jesus’ sovereign control over our lives. Find renewed strength to push on through current difficulties by faith. Grow in our personal love relationship with Jesus.