

Bibles???

The Word of God is the Absolute Truth and the Final Authority

This morning, we are going to be taking about tests.

We all hate tests right.

In school – I hated English tests, especially pop quizzes because I would never read the material that was assigned to me.

However, I enjoyed math and physics tests since math was easy for me.

As I have gotten older, I still have to put up with tests from my doctor – I dread taking my A1C test during times when I am not taking care of my diabetes – but I would always look

forward in taking the same test if I had been exercising and skipping the twinkies.

Our Christian walk is also a series of tests.

These are test that are administered by God.

Sometimes we have to take the same test over and over again because we are not learning the lesson that God is trying to teach us.

And there are times when these tests prepare us for bigger tests down the road.

In our lesson this morning, the disciples are given a pop quiz.

Have they been paying attention to the instruction Jesus had given them???

I pray that we may be able to learn from their response to adversity.

Let's pray...

[Mar 6:45-52 NKJV] 45 Immediately He made His disciples get into the boat and go before Him to the other side, to Bethsaida, while He sent the multitude away. 46 And when He had sent them away, He departed to the mountain to pray. 47 Now when evening came, the boat was in the middle of the sea; and He [was] alone on the land. 48 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. 49 And when they saw Him walking on the sea, they supposed it was a ghost, and

cried out; 50 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." 51 Then He went up into the boat to them, and the wind ceased. And they were greatly amazed in themselves beyond measure, and marveled. 52 For they had not understood about the loaves, because their heart was hardened.

A couple of weeks ago, we looked at an event where Jesus and His disciples were caught up a storm on the Sea of Galilee.

That was the event where Jesus was sleeping on the boat while the disciples watched in fear as their boat was battered by the waves.

The disciples finally woke up Jesus – they questioned Jesus' apathy toward their pending destruction. "Do you know care that we are about to die?" is what they had cries out.

Jesus responds by standing up and with two Greek words – calmed the storm, He then proceeded to rebuke the disciples for the little faith that they demonstrated.

So the circumstances in this event are similar – same boat, same sea – there is also a storm, however, Jesus is not going to be in the boat with them this time around.

Now, in verse 45, Mark tells us that immediately He made His disciples...

The Greek word that is utilized here indicates that Jesus compelled them or better yet, forced them to get into the boat.

So of course, the question we ask is why did Jesus force them to get into the boat???

Keep in mind of what had happened prior to this event –as Jesus had just fed the crowd of 10,000 to 15,000 people, if you count women and children.

Turn with me to the gospel of John 6, because John tells us why Jesus forced them onto the boat.

Jhn 6:15 When Jesus therefore perceived that they would come and take him by force, to make him a king, he departed again into a mountain himself alone.

The multitude wanted to make Jesus their King.

They had seen His miracles – now they want more.

With Jesus as king over them, they would be free from the occupation of Rome.

Their lives would be so much easier.

However, even though Jesus is King of Kings and Lord of Lords, His first coming was not to be served but to serve.

We must remember that His first crown was a crown of thorns not a crown of gold.

He arrives into Jerusalem in a lowly donkey but at His second coming, He will be riding a white horse.

Jesus forces them into the boat to protect them – not from the multitude but from themselves.

You see, Jesus knew His purpose.

His purpose was to make the ultimate sacrifice for you and me and die on the cross.

If the multitude would not be able to get a hold of Jesus, they would have gone after one of the 12.

If we can't get Jesus – Peter or John or James or one of the others would be option #2.

If they were allowed to hear the praises of the multitudes, they probably would have given into the demands of the multitudes.

Notice in verse 46 that Jesus doesn't get into the boat with them. He sends them off and then He goes to the mountains to pray.

You see, there were many problems and griefs that Jesus was facing at this time.

- The religious rulers were after Him
- The people are demanding a revolution
- He has been rejected by His own people in Nazareth
- His cousin John the Baptist has just been executed by Herod
- He has been preaching and healing nonstop.

But despite His busy day, He makes time to pray regarding the burdens that were in His heart.

Jesus becomes the example that we must follow in showing us the need for constant intimacy with God the Father.

He is 100% man and 100% God and was and is always in constant communion with God the Father.

God states throughout His Word that He is our strong tower, our refuge, our hiding place – just to name only a few.

He is our security, although most times we tend to find security in our position, our wealth, even our friends and family.

Somehow we think if we become intimate with God, we will lose our security. In fact, just the opposite happens.

We meet God, and He infuses all areas of our lives, enhancing each one with His presence, power, and transformation.

The only way to be intimate with Him is to know Him –

We cannot expect to do anything according to His will – if we do not know His will.

And that intimacy is developed through our communion with Him – through prayer.

He wants to know every detail about our lives – even though He knows all, He still desires that we speak to Him about it.

If you read the psalms, especially the ones that David wrote, he is always showing a different emotion. He is scared in some, angry in others, repentant in others – did God know each of David's emotions – yes. However, He welcomed the communion from David and ultimately, that is what made David a man after His own heart.

As He is in prayer, He looks up and He sees His disciples struggling in the middle of the Sea of Galilee in the midst of a storm.

Remember, Jesus went to the mountains to pray. It is dark now – yet Jesus was able to see them struggling.

The disciples had been rowing for over 9 hours and had only managed to make it about 2/3 of the way across the sea.

John tells us that they had only traveled about 3 miles across the sea.

Not once, did they cry out to the Lord.

They attempted to rely on themselves to get them through the storm.

Not only was He able to see them struggle, He was able to know their thoughts as they struggled.

He was able to see their hearts.

In the same way, Jesus sees us when we struggle through our trials. Anytime, anywhere – He knows it all.

Even though we might think that He has abandoned us. He hasn't – He is simply waiting for us to call on Him.

Always remember that God's timing is always perfect – He is never late.

So, Jesus sees their struggles and He proceeds to walk right past them.

The language that is used indicated that Jesus was not hovering over the water but that His sandals were actually

making contact with the water as if He was walking on pavement.

He is physically walking on water.

He doesn't walk up to them; He simply walks just close enough so that they would be able to see Him.

Jesus wanted to give them an opportunity to ask Him for help.

You see, Jesus has been teaching the disciples about how much they need Him.

He's been teaching them that they need to come to Him with their problems.

We saw last week how He “tested” them with the feeding of the five thousand, testing to see how they would handle the problem.

Here, they are exhausted and when they finally see Jesus, they thought He was a ghost.

Now, Jesus sees them cry out and reassures them by saying, “It is I”, I asked you guys to underline the phrase as we read through our text today.

This is significant because the phrase in Greek reads – I AM.

It is the same Greek Words that are utilized to translate from the Hebrew when God uses to describe Himself to Moses in

Exodus 3:14 – and these are the same Greek Words that

Jesus uses throughout the gospel of John when He refers to

Himself as the different I AM's –

I am the bread of life

I am the great shepherd

I am the door

I am the way

Later on as Jesus is praying in the Garden of Gethsemane and the religious rulers come with the soldiers to arrest Him, they ask for Jesus of Nazareth and Jesus responds with the same phrase – “I AM” and the scriptures tell us that everyone – the soldiers and the religious rulers fell backwards as Jesus spoke those words.

Very powerful words.

This is what Jesus does to give us courage – He reminds us of who He is.

I AM

Now, Mark leaves out a detail from the encounter in the middle of the Sea of Galilee that Matthew records.

Turn with me to the Gospel of Matthew 14.

[Mat 14:27-32 NKJV] 27 But immediately Jesus spoke to them, saying, "Be of good cheer! It is I; do not be afraid." 28 And Peter answered Him and said, "Lord, if it is You, command me to come to You on the water." 29 So He said, "Come." And when Peter had come down out of the boat, he walked on the water to go to Jesus. 30 But when he saw that the wind [was] boisterous, he was afraid; and beginning to sink he cried out, saying, "Lord, save me!" 31 And immediately Jesus stretched out [His] hand and caught him, and said to him, "O you

of little faith, why did you doubt?" 32 And when they got into the boat, the wind ceased.

Many people will pick on Peter for his lack of faith.

However, Peter is the only one of the twelve that got out of the boat – the rest of the disciples stayed in the boat.

Peter took a few steps of faith on water – He is the only one other than Jesus to walk on water.

As Peter kept his eyes on Jesus – he walked on water – he was able to take those steps of faith. As he took his eyes off of Jesus and focused on the waves and the storm – he started to sink.

This is how we walk by faith; we fix our eyes upon Jesus.

No matter what the circumstances around us dictate, we never take our eyes off of Him. The moment we do, we start to sink.

Focusing on the storms is a lack of trust in Him.

And when Peter started to sink – he cried out to Jesus – save me!

This should have been the response from the disciples from the beginning.

The minute that the storm started happening -

The minute that Jesus gets into the boat with the disciples, the test is over. The wind and the storms calms down.

[2Co 1:3-4 NKJV] 3 Blessed [be] the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of

all comfort, 4 who comforts us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort those who are in any trouble, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.

Jesus Christ is our great comfort. But in order for Him to be comforted by Him, we have to allow Him into the boat.

Jesus didn't rebuke them – He didn't say, "You big dummies – I have been watching you for 9 hours – why didn't you call for me?"

No, He simply comforted them as they continued to the other side.

Let's look at verse 52 again,

[Mar 6:52 NKJV] 52 For they had not understood about the loaves, because their heart was hardened.

Here is the lesson that the disciples failed to learn –

Just prior to this incident the disciples saw with their own eyes Jesus feed the multitudes. They saw the Great Shepherd take care of His sheep. They saw His compassion as He met their needs.

Hours later, as they encountered the storm, as they struggled to the point of exhaustion. They had forgotten that Jesus would have met their needs.

Jesus would not have abandoned them in the same way that He did not abandon the multitudes.

This is a warning to us –

Here is a reminder of how close we can be to the unfolding story of who Jesus is; we can come to church every Sunday and listen to the word, we can sing the words that are on our powerpoint, we can highlight our bibles yet we can still have a weak faith because of the conditions of our hearts.

Their hearts were hard – seeing Jesus walking on water should not have been surprising to them after all they had already seen.

[Mar 6:53-56 NKJV] 53 When they had crossed over, they came to the land of Gennesaret and anchored there. 54 And when they came out of the boat, immediately the people recognized Him, 55 ran through that whole surrounding region, and began to carry about on beds those who were sick to wherever they heard He

was. 56 Wherever He entered, into villages, cities, or the country, they laid the sick in the marketplaces, and begged Him that they might just touch the hem of His garment. And as many as touched Him were made well.

The ministry of Jesus continues on the other side of the Sea of Galilee.

Once before, a woman with a twelve-year bleeding problem had tried to sneak-up on Jesus, to touch the hem of His garment.

When she did, she was completely healed, but the Lord knew what she had done.

In this visit to Gennesarat, this method of healing was used.

The Gospels record something like thirty-to-forty individual healings Jesus performed. He also did mass healings, like the ones recorded here.

There is no one method, or mechanism, for His healings. There's no divine formula. Jesus healed in a variety of ways, by touch and from a distance, precisely so we wouldn't be able to identify a pattern and think we could do the same. He alone was and is the source of all healings – does He still heal in this manner today? Yes. Does He always heal? No, We must remember that although the Lord can and does heal, He is glorified most often as people see His strength in our weakness.

Sometimes, His answer to our prayers for healing, for ourselves and others, is the same answer He gave the

apostle Paul, "My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness"

[Mar 7:1-23 NKJV] 1 Then the Pharisees and some of the scribes came together to Him, having come from Jerusalem. 2 Now when they saw some of His disciples eat bread with defiled, that is, with unwashed hands, they found fault. 3 For the Pharisees and all the Jews do not eat unless they wash [their] hands in a special way, holding the tradition of the elders. 4 [When they come] from the marketplace, they do not eat unless they wash. And there are many other things which they have received and hold, [like] the washing of cups, pitchers, copper vessels, and couches. 5 Then the Pharisees and scribes asked Him, "Why do Your disciples not walk

according to the tradition of the elders, but eat bread with unwashed hands?" 6 He answered and said to them, "Well did Isaiah prophesy of you hypocrites, as it is written: 'This people honors Me with [their] lips, But their heart is far from Me. 7 And in vain they worship Me, Teaching [as] doctrines the commandments of men.' 8 "For laying aside the commandment of God, you hold the tradition of men--the washing of pitchers and cups, and many other such things you do." 9 He said to them, "[All too] well you reject the commandment of God, that you may keep your tradition. 10 "For Moses said, 'Honor your father and your mother'; and, 'He who curses father or mother, let him be put to death.' 11 "But you say, 'If a man says to his father or mother, "Whatever profit you

might have received from me [is] Corban"--' (that is, a gift [to God]), 12 "then you no longer let him do anything for his father or his mother, 13 "making the word of God of no effect through your tradition which you have handed down. And many such things you do." 14 When He had called all the multitude to [Himself], He said to them, "Hear Me, everyone, and understand: 15 "There is nothing that enters a man from outside which can defile him; but the things which come out of him, those are the things that defile a man. 16 "If anyone has ears to hear, let him hear!" 17 When He had entered a house away from the crowd, His disciples asked Him concerning the parable. 18 So He said to them, "Are you thus without understanding also? Do you not perceive that whatever

enters a man from outside cannot defile him, 19

**"because it does not enter his heart but his stomach,
and is eliminated, [thus] purifying all foods?" 20 And He**

said, "What comes out of a man, that defiles a man. 21

**"For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil
thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, 22 "thefts,**

covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lewdness, an evil

eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness. 23 "All these evil

things come from within and defile a man."

We have all seen the signs in the restrooms at our favorite restaurant, the urging of employees to wash their hands before they handle food.

It is the same advice our mothers would tell us every time we approached the dinner table.

“Did you wash your hands?”

Our text here in chapter seven is not about the disciples eating with filthy hands.

The Pharisees are accusing the disciples of not going through the ceremonial cleansing of the hands that was partaken of before one would eat.

This cleansing had no bearing on how clean their hands were, the purpose of this cleansing was to show how spiritual they were.

It was all done for show.

In verse 6, Jesus calls them hypocrites because they only took care of the outside yet, on the inside they were filthy.

This is empty religion.

You see, one of the things that the Pharisees did was that they added rules and regulations to the Word of God.

The Old Testament does have instruction for the washing of hands but, those were intended for the priests that were about to partake of the offerings.

These rituals were added by the rabbis – they were added by men to supersede the Word of God.

I grew up in a home where this was practiced – I would go to church where I was told if I followed a list of rules – I would go to heaven.

My spirituality depended on how I adhered to the list of rules instead of my relationship with Jesus Christ.

It wasn't until I accepted Jesus Christ when I realized I had it wrong.

You see, the outside things cannot defile us (they can influence us but not defile us) because we are already defiled because of our sinful nature.

Cleansing has to occur from the inside – it has to occur from the heart.

And Jesus can cleanse us from the inside.

It is David who writes in the Psalms

**[Psa 51:10 NKJV] 10 Create in me a clean heart, O God,
And renew a steadfast spirit within me.**

We make the mistake of treating the symptoms instead of addressing the cause.

As believers, we have the remedy that addresses the cause in our Lord Jesus Christ.

Amen...

Let's pray...

To Receive Christ do the following:

Admit, "I am a sinner."

Confess and be willing to turn from your sin.

Believe, by faith that Jesus Christ died for you on the cross.

Receive, through prayer, Jesus Christ into your heart and receive eternal life.

Dear Lord Jesus,

I know that I am a sinner and need Your forgiveness. I believe that You died on the cross for my sins. Please forgive me for my sins and cleanse me by Your blood. I accept You by faith as my personal Lord and Savior. Give me a thirst for Your Word and Help me to follow You all of my days. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.