

Other Prayer Suggestions

Weekly Theme: Christ and Culture

In any nation there are many cultures, some deriving from ex-patriot historic or tribal groups. For example, the different tribal groups in Kenya are fighting each other for cultural supremacy right now. Pray for cultural stability in your own country, and for those who live in countries where people are at war because of conflict and cultural grievances.

Meditation

Very small things can change the world;
Size is not related to consequence or power.
The fractional movement of a steering wheel,
Significantly alters where a car will travel;
The tiniest flicker on a loved one's face,
Speaks a thousand words to a husband or wife;
Just one word in a great and masterful speech,
Creates the headlines in tomorrow's newspapers!

Very small things have changed the world
And our God has always used this fact.
For one child born into the human race,
Is God's own Son, who came to save us;
The tiniest faith like a mustard seed,
Will grow and be fruitful in the eyes of God;
And one small deed of love and care,
Can be used by the Lord to build His Kingdom.

Now, if we will but trust in Him,
And hear His word and do His will,
The very small things we do today
Will, in truth, change our world for the better.

Bible Study - Mark 6:47-56

47 When evening came, the boat was far out to sea, and He was alone on the shore. 48 Then He saw them straining to make way against the strong headwind, and at around the fourth watch of the night, He came to them, walking on the sea. He considered passing them by, 49 but when they saw Him walking on the water, they thought they were seeing a ghost! They shouted out 50 because they had seen Him and were terrified. But Jesus spoke to them straight away and said to them, 'Courage, it is I, do not be afraid.' 51 Then He got into the boat with them, and the wind died down. They were utterly astounded, 52 for they did not understand about the loaves and their hearts were hardened.

You cannot read this Gospel without having to come to terms extraordinary and miraculous events in every chapter Mark writes All of it is beyond the normal experience of men and women but what makes Jesus the 'Son of God', the 'Anointed One', baptiser and the one destined to fulfil God's purposes by inspiring faith in the Gospel would not be the claims that Jesus was the Messiah certainly, awesome and unique, and we must either account for them as fantastic. People have tried to explain how Jesus walked on seas and healed through the touch of His cloak, but to no avail. Things and wonder how they were possible, but far more important: once we cease to be worried about the science and history of what If we have followed Mark's Gospel since the beginning, these two things were happening to the disciples. They were chosen (1:16-20, 2:13 sent on mission with Jesus' full authority to preach the Gospel ar they even saw Jesus calm the water of the Sea of Galilee (4:35-41 back from mission (6:30), they had failed to understand the feeding and in our passage today, they panicked whilst on the sea in a situation, merely because they saw Jesus doing something else learned that Jesus was always doing miraculous things? Scripture were hardened' (6:52)! This is a terribly hard comment on the wondering how Jesus' ministry would be able to progress if they the loaves' (6:52 – referring to the previous incident), or handle the By contrast, the ordinary people were continuing to respond to Jesus happening all around Him. For them, He was one who could be present, then the sick would be cured, and they had complete faith touching His cloak (6:55-56). But still, in Mark's record of these stories stood somewhat aloof from this ministry. Yes, He had completely ministered to them (6:34), but Jesus came to earth to do more than on earth; something more powerful than the desire to be healed more from the ones He had chosen to be the new Israel, the twelve Israel' of the church of God, the disciples.

In summary, these miraculous stories increase the sense of destiny and the conclusion of the Gospel. It also makes us feel that the crowds and the disciples to learn about Jesus.

Going Deeper

The story of Jesus' walking on the water contains many things which are careful to ensure that we make sense of them all, if possible. Some of the details are important and which are secondary, so focus on the great power and authority of Jesus which is the theme of the story.

Details of the story

what the disciples were doing was to check which way they were going, and that in response of the day (which is another reason to be more winds, they were heading west to Genessaret instead of east to Bethesda) and general sense of correctness in story telling than he is give The other difficulty with the story is the matter of time-keeping. At the beginning of the story, we are told that 'evening came' (6:47). This is only a rough time estimate how late it was in the streets and market places awaiting Jesus. The story implies that the quantity of the bread, which Jesus used, was not just made for the night but for the day. The story of Jesus' compassion is not offered individually, but in a group. The story implies that anyone could obtain favour or merit from a watch of the night' (6:48). This is a Roman system of time-keeping which indicates around 11 a.m. in the morning (the Jews had only three watches for the night!). We must therefore understand that the disciples were rowing through the night, possibly in shifts, and probably not too far from land, for even in the light of the moon (which we can only assume) fires in settlements near the shore would have been a vital reference point for the disciples. These are only details, but they serve to help us understand that the stories were not just made up' to make points for Mark's Gospel, but were told with the normal features of story telling which we can understand. It also means that we do not have to dismiss the story to the realms of 'fairy tale', as some try to do because they say that the details around the story do not make sense. Because the story as a whole makes sense, the focus of the story is not on a single only part of it which does not, and that is the fact the Jesus walked on the water. The disciples were in a mess, attempting to row the boat one way (as Jesus directed) but Jesus was taking them in a different direction.

Jesus walks on water

As Jesus came out to the boat on the stormy seas (6:48), there is no question of any trick along the edge of the lake, or walking over reefs. Here we are told Jesus was driving the waves. There are plenty of references in the Old Testament to God controlling the sea, and Jesus' command of the situation was a proof of His status as Messiah (John 9:8, Psalm 77:19, Isaiah 43:16). He had already shown this power once before (4:35) and we can assume that the disciples might have recalled this and realised that Jesus was coming out to them for a purpose. Yet they thought they had seen a ghost (6:49), and Jesus had to explain the misunderstandings between Jesus and the disciples had already emerged in the previous incident, when the disciples had not understood what was happening as Jesus fed the 'five thousand' (6:37). Mark gave the hard yet realistic explanation that 'their hearts were hardened' (6:52) because it was true. They were called and commissioned, but they were not yet spiritually re-born and therefore able to comprehend what Jesus was doing. Their faith was certainly shown in following Jesus, but they had not yet been released into the faith of people who were saved and had peace with God.

There is plenty of evidence that the early church saw this story as a parable of their own experience. They were not so haughty (as we might be today) to say that they were better than the disciples, and they saw themselves as like the boat, battling against misunderstanding and persecution, and it seemed as if everyone was against them. For them, Jesus was coming out to the boat and not 'passing by' (6:48) but accompanying them, was deeply reassuring, even though they knew they had many faults. The words, 'Courage, I do not be afraid' were deeply comforting, and we can realise the extent of this, which is not a solitary Greek words for 'it is I' can also be translated 'I am'. 'I am' is the holy name of God Himself.

Application

When we can now claim peace with God the Father through Jesus, we must accept that we are sometimes ignorant of God's will and 'harc us' just like the disciples in this story. None of us are perfect. The early church, we can identify with the disciples rowing hard against the wind, but we must not just made up' to make points for Mark's Gospel, but were told with the normal features of story telling which we can understand. It also means that we do not have to dismiss the story to the realms of 'fairy tale', as some try to do because they say that the details around the story do not make sense. Because the story as a whole makes sense, the focus of the story is not on a single only part of it which does not, and that is the fact the Jesus walked on the water. The disciples were in a mess, attempting to row the boat one way (as Jesus directed) but Jesus was taking them in a different direction.

Questions (for use in groups)

1. Discuss in your group what Mark may have meant by 'their hearts were hardened' (6:52). Do you think that the reason why people were brought to faith was due to the details of previous miraculous healing experiences in their church, for example? Make
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