

Mark 6:45—52

June 17, 2018

In the Winter of 1883, Ella Wilcox was taking a train to Madison, WI to attend the governor's inaugural ball. Across the aisle, she noticed a woman dressed in black, crying.

A young woman had lost her young husband to death. Wilcox could scarcely enjoy the ball because the image of the weeping widow danced in her head.

Shortly after, she wrote the famous poem, Solitude. You might think you don't know the poem—but you have heard parts of it.

*“Laugh, and the world laughs with you;  
Weep, and you weep alone;  
For the sad old earth must borrow its mirth,  
But has trouble enough of its own.  
Sing, and the hills will answer;  
Sigh, it is lost on the air;  
The echoes bound to a joyful sound,  
But shrink from voicing care.*

*Rejoice, and men will seek you;  
Grieve, and they turn and go;  
They want full measure of all your pleasure,  
But they do not need your woe.  
Be glad, and your friends are many;  
Be sad, and you lose them all,—  
There are none to decline your nectared wine,  
But alone you must drink life's gall.*

*Feast, and your halls are crowded;  
Fast, and the world goes by.  
Succeed and give, and it helps you live,  
But no man can help you die.  
There is room in the halls of pleasure  
For a large and lordly train,  
But one by one we must all file on  
Through the narrow aisles of pain.”*

Isn't it interesting that Ella Wilcox wrote a poem about trouble and called it solitude?

Why do you think that is?

Because it is how you feel. Trouble and sorrow have an isolating effect on a person. When the gales of hardship blow, we are apt to feel alone. When the sparks of trouble fly, we are all apt think that no one can understand.

Trouble creates a sense of solitude.

Today we are going to again join the disciples and find that they are in trouble—alone. But let's watch what Jesus does here.

When trouble comes close, Jesus comes closer.

*“Immediately he made his disciples get into the boat and go before him to the other side, to Bethsaida, while he dismissed the crowd. [46] And after he had taken leave of them, he went up on the mountain to pray. [47] And when evening came, the boat was out*

on the sea, and he was alone on the land. [48] 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, [49] but when they saw him walking on the sea they thought it was a ghost, and cried out, [50] for they all saw him and were terrified. But immediately he spoke to them and said, "Take heart; it is I. Do not be afraid." [51] And he got into the boat with them, and the wind ceased. And they were utterly astounded, [52] for they did not understand about the loaves, but their hearts were hardened." Mark 6:45-52

## PRAY

Last week Jesus provided bounty of food for a multitude of people in the wilderness. He saw them Mark tells us, "as sheep without a shepherd." The people were taken advantage of by unscrupulous leaders. Leaders who only thought of themselves and used the people instead of serving the people.

Jesus is a leader that gives of himself and does not take. And he moves in to help—he feeds the people and in our passage we find that the disciples did not understand about the loaves.

In other words they did not see Jesus as the Shepherd promised by Ezekiel. They should have seen that. They should have known but did not.

"For thus says the Lord GOD: Behold, I, I myself will search for my sheep and will seek them out...[14] I

will feed them with good pasture, and on the mountain heights of Israel shall be their grazing land. There they shall lie down in good grazing land, and on rich pasture they shall feed on the mountains of Israel. [15] I myself will be the shepherd of my sheep, and I myself will make them lie down, declares the Lord GOD.” Ezekiel 34:11–15

Jesus Literally did just that as he fed in excess of 10,000 people and yet the disciples did not understand.

It wasn't just that his disciples did not understand it was that they refused to understand. That is what it means to have a hard heart.

This week—Jesus puts the disciples in another situation where they could see Jesus in action. And if they watched and looked and listened they would understand who Jesus really is.

They aren't going to understand—we can this morning—we can see that when trouble comes, Jesus comes closer.

### *1. Jesus sends—*

Vs. 45:

[45] Immediately he made his disciples get into the boat and go before him to the other side, to Bethsaida, while he dismissed the crowd.

He sends the disciples (followers) out onto the water and he sends the crowd away. He sent them off to the

other side of the Sea of Galilee toward the town of Bethsaida. That modest journey should have taken 6 hours at most but as we will see, things didn't really go as planned.

But Jesus is the one that sent them across to the other side. As his disciples sail off and the crowd spreads off—Jesus goes up to the mountain to pray.

Prayer is no passing fancy for Jesus but a necessity. Prayer to Jesus is as important as breathing. He prayed to his father—OH to know what he prayed!

Jesus sends but also we find that Jesus sees—

## 2. *Jesus sees*—

Vs. 48,

[48] 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....

Jesus sees his followers rowing into the teeth of the wind and not making much progress. His disciples were being assaulted by a menacing wind. These experienced seamen had to pull down the sails and resort to rowing.

And it wasn't doing much good. Their collective manpower was barely enough to cut through the howling wind and pounding waves.

Mark says they were making headway painfully—that word could be rendered—they were in torment making headway.

Jesus sees this and waited.

Not only did Jesus see their predicament, he sent them into the predicament.

Mark tells us that the disciples shoved off before sundown and Jesus doesn't start heading their way until 3 or 4 in the morning. We know this is spring and the average sunset time in Palestine is 7pm. They should have made it to the other side before 1 am.

But at 3, they were barely halfway.

They were in torment with the wind screaming in their faces. And there was no end in sight.

Isn't that the way troubles feel? They feel like they will last forever. 'Time flies when you are having fun'—that is very true but time seems to stop when you are having trouble.

I had this recurring dream when summer before I entered Jr. High. I was scared. The Jr. High was down at the end of my street but in my dream on the first day of school, as I left the house no matter how fast I ran I couldn't get to the school.

I would run and run and the school would remain just ahead but I couldn't get there.

I made no progress.

And that is the way it is with trouble. Are you facing troubles now that put you in torment and have no end in sight?

- Have you been assaulted and assailed by the winds of trials?
- Have you been harassed and harangued by the waves of hardship?

It is at that moment where we are all apt to think that Jesus has abandoned us. But he hasn't.

Jesus saw them straining against the sea, and he sees us straining against our rising tide of troubles. Jesus went to them. Jesus comes to us.

They didn't know it yet, but we are beginning to see when trouble comes, Jesus comes closer.

Somewhere after 3 am Jesus descends the mountain and comes to his followers. He sees them in despair and walks to them.

Not a big deal except he is walking on water.

Vs. 48b–50a

“And about the fourth watch of the night he came to them, walking on the sea. He meant to pass by them, [49] but when they saw him walking on the sea they thought it was a ghost, and cried out, [50] for they all saw him and were terrified.”

This is strange—he came to them but he meant to pass them by.

What?

Why would Jesus walk on water all the way from the shore only to pass by his friends that were in such dire need?

He was showing the disciples who he was. These men were not like us—they knew the OT scriptures well. They were familiar with how those scriptures spoke of God.

When they saw him on the water they should have had alarm bells going off in their minds—

Job speaks of the holy one trampling on the waves of the sea. Here he is repurposing water to hold up his weight.

And as he came close, they thought that they were seeing a ghost.

You might think—well yeah—that is the best explanation—when you see someone walking on the water it must be a ghost. What else would it be at 3am?

But this is evidence of their refusal to trust in him. Jesus had put them in the boat and told them to go to the other side. They should have known that **WHATEVER** Jesus asks us to do he **ALWAYS** gives the way.

Because Jesus can be trusted explicitly and without fail. They should have expected Jesus to get them to the other side of the shore somehow, somehow. They should have been looking for Jesus to come to their aid.

And when he does—they shriek—‘ghost.’

They were more ready to believe that a ghost would haunt them than Jesus would come to help them. They had hard hearts.

Not only did they refuse to believe that Jesus would help them, when Jesus came in a way that they didn’t expect they missed him all-together.

Because they did not expect him to come treading on the Galilean waves—they missed him.

Doesn’t that happen to us?

We are in the middle of a prolonged, excruciating trial with the wind in our faces and Jesus comes to help but because we don’t expect THAT WAY—we miss him.

- Money trouble: Expect a grand inheritance, a raise but you get groceries from a friend.
- Sickness trouble: Expect miraculous healing but you get a few hours without pain.
- Discouragement trouble: Expect a dramatic reversal instead you get a text from a faithful friend.
- Family trouble: Expect to be vindicated but you get an opportunity show love over years.

Not only did they not see him when he came—but they didn't even expect him. Though he promised they would make it to the other side—they didn't yet know to trust in his promises.

Then when they shrieked in fear—Jesus shouts—  
don't you know who I am and HOW I can help?  
Don't you see?

That is what he is saying when after they shrieked in terror he said, "Take heart; it is I!"

Or it could be rendered—take heart—I AM!

Now, if you know your OT that should sound familiar. When Moses was on a mountain and met God in a burning bush and God commissioned him to lead the nation from slavery—Moses asked—who shall I say sent me?

Say "I am" sent me.

And now Jesus is saying—I AM to his followers.

Jesus is saying with his actions—I am is back. Jesus meant to pass by like we see in Exodus 33—

[18] Moses said, "Please show me your glory." [19] And he said, "I will make all my goodness pass before you and will proclaim before you my name 'The LORD.' And I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy. [20] But," he said, "you cannot see my face, for man shall not see me and live." [21] And the LORD

said, “Behold, there is a place by me where you shall stand on the rock, [22] and while my glory passes by I will put you in a cleft of the rock, and I will cover you with my hand until I have passed by. Exodus 33:18–22

Jesus meant to pass by and show his glory to the disciples but they were afraid.

Jesus had meant to pass by as the disciples beheld him in his glory—There is God trampling on the waves!—but instead they thought he was a ghost.

They missed the glory of God in the face of Christ.

Why?

Because their hearts were hard. It wasn't that they could not believe it is that they would not believe. That is what it means to have a hard heart.

They were at this moment impervious to grace from Christ that could be theirs. And when you have a hard heart—when you won't listen to Jesus soon you will find that you can't listen to Jesus.

But notice what Jesus does to these hard-hearted followers. They had a very different experience than Moses had.

God said to Moses—You cannot see my face for no man shall see me and live. But Jesus shows his face to the disciples and to us and we live. Instead of needing to be hidden away in the cleft of a rock, God has come near.

This God who was once unapproachable, unable to be gazed at—came near.

And they didn't understand. They wouldn't understand. That should sober us. You might think that it would be easy to believe if you saw a mighty miracle—not true.

The disciples did and they refused to believe.

It is enough to believe to see Jesus for who he is in the pages of the scriptures and know you can put your trust in the God who comes near.

Look at what he did next,

Vs. 51

“And he got into the boat with them, and the wind ceased. And they were utterly astounded, [52] for they did not understand about the loaves, but their hearts were hardened.”

He got in the boat with them.

Even though his followers refused to believe in that moment—Jesus willingly gets into the boat with them. Jesus came to them in their trouble—he showed himself closer than their trouble. Jesus came to them in their unbelief—he showed himself willing to be in the same boat.

Jesus got in the boat and joined them in their trouble.

Literally.

What have we seen?

Jesus sent them into trouble.  
Jesus saw them in their trouble.  
Jesus joined them in their trouble.

What is true for the disciples is true for every one of us in this room.

Remember what Ella Wilcox said? She is right when she says,

*“Laugh, and the world laughs with you,”*

But for the followers of Jesus it is not true that when we weep, we weep alone. Not true.

Jesus is even now closer than our trouble. What trouble have you carried into the room today? I’ve got trouble I carried into the room, trouble enough to move me to tears a couple of times this week.

How many of us are straining at the oars, face into a foul wind? Probably a few. This passage tells me that as a follower of Jesus I am not alone. I might not see him in the boat with me, but I know he is there. I might not always be able to perceive his presence but I know he is with me.

He does not leave me or you to face the wind and the waves alone. He is the I AM. The God who has come close. The God who has joined us in our trouble.

Let's mark out a few thoughts as we think about how Jesus helps us in our trouble—

1. Jesus often sends his people into trouble—

Did you see that Jesus sent his disciples into the boat across to the other side?

He put them in a boat and sent them to the other side. He did not say, Get in the boat you might end up on the bottom of this body of water.

Go to the other side.

No, whatever he commissions he enables. Jesus often sends his people into trouble but never leaves us alone without promises from him.

Even if the trouble we face is because we are obedient to Jesus. Just as the disciples went into the teeth of trouble because he sent them—we often do too.

The Christian life is not one of ease and leisure.

Sometimes trouble comes just because we are doing our best to follow Jesus and please the Lord and BAM! A storm begins to rage and howl.

Listen, there are many times in our lives that we will face trouble through no fault of our own. It can be tempting to try and guess why we have to go through this raging storm.

Tempting but unhelpful.

You see, undeserved trouble is not a sign of his displeasure but of his love.

If the disciples did not head out on the boat—they never would have seen Jesus in the way that they did. Now, they didn't understand it all until later—but they saw something of Jesus they would not have seen otherwise.

Even though they didn't really understand, they knew that Jesus was greater than any storm.

The same is true for us.

Sometimes troubles give us a view of who he really is—in a way that we would never see otherwise.

Let me give you an example from my life—I have been through storms before and I can look back and see that in past storms I didn't understand what was happening or why—but the Lord got me through it.

So when trouble shakes our souls—it is a sign that he is doing something special. I want to look out and expect him to come and help and give me aid and not think that his help is a ghost.

Even this week—I can look back and say—You've brought me through other storms—I know you will bring me through this one.

His help will seem to be long in coming and it will come in a way that you won't expect.

We have a promise that we will make it to the other side. Jesus has thrust us in the boat and has said you will make it to the other side, and I will be with you.

Jesus often sends his people into trouble.

### 1. Jesus always sees his people in their trouble—

We do not face trouble in solitude. The disciples thought they were all alone on that lake—but from the mountain Jesus saw them in torment. He saw them and he sees us.

To see his people in trouble—he has to look for his people to see how they are doing.

Just as Jesus saw the disciples that night—he sees you this morning. He sees and then he comes.

Today, Jesus is not on a mountain praying to his father—He is enthroned high above all mountains next to his father—praying. And looking. And watching you.

He is praying for you now.

When Jesus was on the mountain that night deep in prayer—he had to pray for himself—his mission was not over.

Not now.

He prays for you without ceasing.

It would be better to lose all than to lose his prayers for you. What is he praying for you?

- Strength despite trouble.
- Hope despite trouble.
- That you would look to him and not yourself.
- Protection from the evil one.
- Deliverance from temptation.
- That we would not have hard hearts.

He prays and does not stop. He sees you in your trouble and does not stop praying.

He often sends his followers into trouble.  
He always sees his followers in their trouble.

## 2. He has joined his followers in their trouble—

Jesus got into the boat with his disciples. The storm was over, but the journey was not. He did not whisk the 12 off to the other side with an out board motor, nor did he say, “Hey guys, lets run on the water to the shore!”

Nope.

They crossed the rest of the way to the shore the normal way—but with him in the boat.

All of us here will go through trouble in the normal way—one day at a time—one hour at a time—sometimes one breathe after weary breath at a time.

It will feel so excruciatingly normal.

You aren't going to see many miracles—you will probably experience more heartache than miracles on the balance.

But we can know that Jesus decisively joins us in our trouble. You see, I said he join<sup>ED</sup> us in our trouble. Past tense.

How?

“He was despised and rejected by men,  
a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief;  
and as one from whom men hide their faces  
he was despised, and we esteemed him not.  
[4] Surely he has borne our griefs  
and carried our sorrows;  
yet we esteemed him stricken,  
smitten by God, and afflicted.  
[5] But he was pierced for our transgressions;  
he was crushed for our iniquities;  
upon him was the chastisement that brought us  
peace, and with his wounds we are healed.” Isaiah  
53:3–5

he bore our griefs  
he carried our sorrows  
he took our trouble

Say what you want about Jesus, but he is the God to come to people in their great trouble.

There are many bits of trouble that come upon us through no fault of our own, but there is one kind of trouble that cannot and will not come to the Christian.

The grief and sorrow of sin. He saved us from the grief and sorrow of sin by bearing the weight and punishment for our sins.

He JOINED us to save us.

- *Jesus was sent by his father into trouble—*

He came into the world to come to sinners and the hard-hearted. He came to rescue. He left glory to put on flesh, to be rejected and die.

Some of the trouble that comes upon us—we don't deserve—ALL the trouble that came to him he did not deserve. Yet he came to give his life to pay a ransom we could not pay.

He willingly came to earth to join us in our trouble.

- *The Father saw Jesus in his trouble—*

And turned away.

Most notably as Jesus died—his father saw him writhing in pain and he looked away. God saw his son and rejected his son so that we might not be alone in our trouble.

You see, Jesus was in the boat alone. He didn't just face an evening squall—he faced the wind and waves of death.

And he faced that alone.

The father looked down and saw him in torment—  
and looked away.

Why?

If Jesus were not rejected by God in his moment of  
trouble—we would not have the hope we have today.  
We can know that BECAUSE the Father looked away  
from the Son—he will always be looking at us.

He joined us in our trouble.  
He sees us in our trouble.

- *Jesus was left alone in his trouble—*

There was no rescue for Jesus when the day turned to  
night. No one came for him. No one moved a muscle.  
His friends ran, and his father looked away.

And Jesus was alone.

Utterly alone.

But we are not. We have the promises of the risen  
savior those that say—we are not alone.

Christians—

What trouble do you have? You are not alone. Jesus is  
with you. The trouble you face is going to show you  
more of Jesus.

He is closer than your troubles.

Not a Christian—

You don't have to be alone and try to fix yourself.

You don't have to weep alone anymore. He can be closer than your troubles too.

PRAY

May you go knowing—

[7] The LORD is (your) strength and (your) shield; in him my heart trusts, and I am helped... Psalm 28:7



