

Recap of 7/30/23 message by Pastor Chris (Mark 6:45-56):

- Jesus places His disciples in difficult situations to test and prepare us for ministry. On the heels of the miracle of the loaves and fish, the disciples are compelled by Jesus to get into the boat and cross the sea without Him. He then resumes his normal rhythm after dismissing the crowd of withdrawing to spend time resting and praying. The wind beats against the boat in the middle of the sea, a familiar experience for these men having already seen Jesus calm a storm on the sea with a word. Jesus uses this moment of struggle to further reveal Himself to His disciples. He goes to “pass by them.” This phrase is meant to remind people of when God revealed Himself to Moses in a moment of crisis (Exodus 33:19-34:7). God shows Moses His glory by “passing by” him as a means of signifying that God’s presence is with him. This is a means of encouragement in a difficult situation for future ministry. God similarly “passes by” Elijah when he is in need of encouragement to fulfill his calling (1 Kings 19: 11-12).
- Jesus reveals Himself by saying to the disciples, “Take Courage, I AM, do not be afraid.” The phrase that is often translated as “It is I,” is “ego eimi” in greek which translated literally is “I am.” This is likely one of Jesus’ “I AM” statements to the disciples revealing His divinity. However, they do not understand, they hadn’t gained any insight from the loaves, their hearts were hardened. Mark links these two events with this statement. The disciples did not recognize Jesus on the sea, and they didn’t recognize Him as the compassionate provider in the loaves. This also gives us the link between not understanding who God is as the one who provides, full of majesty, and compassionate toward those in need, and a hardened heart. A hardened heart is dangerous because not only does it mean not understanding God and spiritual things, but it eventually means a callousness and hostility toward God. The disciples do not recognize Jesus, but the people on the shore immediately recognize Him. Mark uses the people as a literary foil to highlight the disciples slow growth and cause the reader to ask the question, “do I recognize Jesus in my life?” Recognizing Jesus and His power is part of preparing for ministry. The disciples need to grow in their knowledge and understanding so they are more effective in their future ministry.
- We don’t see God “pass by” us today in the same way. We have the fullness of revelation in the Bible. Everything we need for life and godliness is found in God’s word, including encouragement during difficult situations and preparation for ministry. Often times it is after events have passed by that we can look back and we recognize God’s hand in our lives, His provision, His sovereignty, His guidance. I encourage you to think back over your life and see if you recognize how God has moved and been with you in difficult times. Reflect upon how He may have been preparing you for ministry, and how you are ministering to people today.