

Promises Fulfilled

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During the summertime, we are continuing following Jesus through the Gospel of Mark, and as we do so today, we are going to talk about *Promises Fulfilled*. We have gotten to a point through Mark where Jesus has done so many things and the people are starting to see and starting to believe who He could be. And He is going to show them and continue to show them how He is fulfilling all the promises of God. So, let's go ahead and open up to Mark 6:45-46:

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. ⁴⁶ And after he had taken leave of them, he went up on the mountain to pray.

Sometimes we skip through these verses in the Bible because they are kind of transitional. They get us from one story to the other, but usually there are some pretty important details in these kinds of traveling verses where Jesus is going. Bethsaida is a really important town. And over the last 30 years, there have been archaeological excavations there, trying to get back to the time of Jesus, which they have done. And they found incredible things. One of my professors in college wrote an entire book on Bethsaida because he had been going there every single summer for about 15 years, being a part of the excavation work. And it was absolutely incredible. I was scheduled to join him on a trip right before my senior year in college. I was so excited. But it happened that that trip was scheduled to be in the summer of 2002, and nobody was allowed to travel there after 2001. I missed out on it; however, the things that archaeologists have unearthed have shown us that in that place, Peter, his relatives, friends and the disciples all had a home base there, so the disciples after they are doing all these incredible things such as feeding the 5, 000, going out from town to

town around Nazareth, healing people, casting out demons, they are going home, and they are ready to get some rest. This is a good place to go. They must be excited to finally get back and see some of their families. But it is not going to be easy going.

The other thing that we find out here is that Jesus sent His disciples off, but the crowd was still there. Remember what the crowd does around Jesus? Like He is a rock star. They crowd around him. They all want to touch Him. It is craziness. Yet, Jesus takes them on alone. Pretty impressive. Pretty amazing. It gives us an insight into who Jesus is really. Jesus is not somebody who wanted to spend all of His time with His disciples on their own. He needed to spend time with just the people, people who were trying to figure out who He was, who still had all these questions, who did not have the time or the calling to follow Him around to every single town. But when He came to their place, they wanted to know, and Jesus wanted to spend time with them. Maybe you felt that way at different points in your life where you have been busy doing so many things and then realize, "Where is Jesus?" And I want to remind you that He is always there with you. He was always there with you. He wants to spend time with you. He wants to remain with you.

The other thing we find out about Jesus is that not just does He want to spend time with the people, but He also wants to spend time with His Father. And He retrieves to the mountainside to pray. Everything that He is doing is to build His relationships with those around Him. This is what the Kingdom of God is all about.

So He sends the disciples off. Jesus remains behind. What must the disciples be thinking at this point? Can they trust that Jesus is going to make it to Bethsaida, or it is going to be mobbed by the crowds and not make it there at all? Is He going to leave them behind? What is going to happen? They are wondering. They do not know, and then things happen that make them afraid. In verse 47, it reads,

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—in our reading earlier, we heard that was about three o'clock in the morning—he came to them, walking on the sea.*

Let's pause there. They are out on the sea. It is difficult going. It is slow going. They are getting frustrated because they just want to get home, but they cannot make it anywhere. It is really, really, really hard. What does Jesus do? As He has always done, He wants to go to them. Let's look back down here at the end of verse 48. This is kind of fascinating: *And about the fourth watch of the night he came to them, walking on the sea. He meant to pass by them*—have you ever thought about this? If you have heard this story, this did not make it into Sunday school version of *Jesus Walking on the Water*. “He meant to pass by them.” What that mean? Was He ignoring them? Was He saying, “Come on guys, row harder”? What is this all about? “He meant to pass by them.” But when they saw Him walking on the sea, they thought it was a ghost, and they cried out.

They all saw Him, and they were terrified, but immediately He spoke to them and said, “Take heart. It is I. Do not be afraid.” You see, maybe it was that He did not need to be in that boat with them. They were going to get to where they were going. It was going to be hard and difficult. They were going to get there. But when they saw Him, they were afraid. And if we know anything about Jesus, we know that He shows up for His people when they need Him. His presence is important. And so that is exactly what He does for His disciples. He goes over to the boat. He says, “It is just me, guys. It is just me. Did you think anybody else could be walking on the water right now? The one who has the control over the wind and the waves, could it be anyone but me?” And yet they did. They thought it was a ghost. This happens many times in scripture. “It is I. Take heart. Do not be afraid.”

In this section, we see Jesus continuing this promise. See, after He gets to them, He gets into the boat in verse 51. And what happens? Of course, the wind stops. Then it is easy going because Jesus has command over these physical elements, over this physical world in a way that nobody else does. It is unique. It is different. The disciples have seen it multiple times now, but they were still astounded.

In verse 52, it says this: ⁵² *for they did not understand about the loaves, but their hearts were hardened.* Why are we talking about the loaves here? They are in the middle of a boat. Why are we talking about the loaves and the fishes and *the Feeding of the Five Thousand*? What they did not understand was that Jesus has control over all things, and it was not just the control and the power, but it was that that promise to feed the people with just a couple loaves and fish. Remember that that was the fulfillment of a prophecy from long ago. Elisha had done the same thing. It was prophesied the Messiah would do this too. And here and now, Jesus walking on the water is another fulfillment. It is another reminder that God tends to work through physical means to make His Kingdom known. In our Old Testament readings, there is a reason why Noah and the story of Noah is connected with walking on the water. It is not just about floods. It is about the promise. You see, when the flood ended, God said, “¹⁴ When I send clouds over the earth, the rainbow will appear in the clouds, ¹⁵ and I will remember my covenant with you and with all living creatures. Never again will the floodwaters destroy all life” (Gen. 9:8-17, NLT). God is sending a physical reminder of a spiritual reality, something that is happening in this world, real, tangible, to remind us that not only is He real, but that He is for us. When God’s patience waited in the days of Noah while the ark was being prepared, in which a few, that is eight persons, were brought safely through water, corresponding to this baptism now saves you through the resurrection of Jesus, this is Peter taking the Noah story and reminding us that through the water, God brings us back to Him. It is through this physical means, through these physical things, that God

does incredible things for us. Christianity and believing in Jesus and understanding what this one true God has done in this world means that we take the physical world seriously. Our goal in this life is not to get rid of the physical world. It is not to make ourselves immune to the physical world. It is not to get rid of everything physical in our lives. It is to understand that God makes us *Body and Soul* put together. That is the definition of being human and the creation that He has created. The physical world is important, and it is real, and it is what He has desired to be here for us.

And God continually comes back and uses physical means attached with His promise to show us exactly who He is. This is why Peter goes right to baptism when He says, “Look, in this water is God’s promise given to you that you are His forever. Just like in the days of Noah, God made that promise of this physical thing, this, this rainbow to say, I promise, through the water, He brought them on that boat, on that ark.”

Now here today, Jesus is doing something similar because in that boat with those disciples, in the middle of that fear, Jesus comes walking along that water to enter into that boat with them, to not just calm the waves, but to calm them, to remind them that He is God, to remind them that He is with them and for them, and will show them incredible things, and they will be given incredible things to do in His name as He walks along the water to get to them.

God’s promises, for some reason, the way He decided to talk to us and to be with us and to communicate with us is through this joining of the physical and spiritual reality. In baptism, we have the water and the word. In communion, we have the bread and the wine with Christ’s body and blood, and that gives us forgiveness. In all these things, we trust, and we know that this physical world is important. It is important.

And on that last day and the resurrection of all things, God promises that He is going to remake and make new and renew, not just our spirits, but

He is going to put our souls back together with renewed bodies in a renewed world, in a renewed creation that is perfect and wonderful, not just perfect in the way it is arranged or the way that it looks or the way that the Sun shines all the time. My guess is 75 F and Sunny for the rest of eternity. Some of you maybe are closer to 65 F, and some of you may want 85 F. I understand. But in that perfection, what we will experience is a real body and soul put back together again, connection with God and with the people that are around. That is what we hope for. That is our resurrection that we await. The physical heart of that is not negotiable. God comes to us through the physical world.

And so, this scripture passage ends with God coming to people in their physical need. In verse 53, “When they had crossed over, they came to land at Gennesaret and moored to the shore.” When they got out of the boat, the people immediately recognized Jesus. And they ran about the whole region to bring back all the sick people on their beds or work to wherever Jesus was and wherever He went. In villages, cities, or countryside, they brought all the people who were sick and ill and implored Him that they might touch the fringe on His garment. We talked about this before, when the woman who had that problem of bleeding touched the fringe on, she was saying, “You are the Christ. You are the one in whom God’s promises are being fulfilled right here and right now.” And all the people in the surrounding lands now have heard that and seen that and trusted that promise. They are proclaiming that Jesus is the Christ. They may not know what that is going to mean. They certainly do not understand what is going to happen when we get to Good Friday and Easter, but they know that Jesus is the Promised One, that He is the one that has come to make everything right again. They know that when their loved ones are sick, that He will heal them. They know that He is the one that they can trust. And as many that touched the fringe of His garment were healed.

What Jesus is doing here is bringing the Presence of the Kingdom of God to people who are desperate to be connected with God. His presence brings who Jesus is, what the kingdom is all about into their midst and brings them the fullness of relationship with God. And for some, that means healing. For others, that means promises fulfilled. For others, that means a trust that cannot be shaken. For others, that means just simply answering some questions and opening up a new way to look at the world. For whatever you are coming in with today, with whatever things you have been dealing with this week, with whatever questions and doubts that you may have, know that Jesus is present with you in the middle of those. He will show you who He is, that He is good, that He is for you, that you are greatly and dearly loved. And He will show you what He has put you here for as well. He will bring neighbors around you who need to be cared for and loved and healed, and He will put you in a place to help them, to speak life into them, because God's Kingdom is made known through presence.

Jesus has been present for us, and we are called to be present in this world, in this physical realm, to people around us, to share His love with them. This is the end of Mark chapter 6. We spent about five weeks in Mark chapter 6. It has been a long time. And we are going to move on next week as well. We have a few more weeks of the series as we continue following Jesus along but know that this journey is just starting. It is where we begin. It is where we start learning and seeing and digging into who Jesus is. And I hope a bit that opening up these Bibles has helped you maybe think about doing that at home a little bit more as well, whether you are doing it on your phone or with the Bibles that you have, just take some time, sit with some of these stories. You do not have to read a lot. You can read a little and think about it, pray about it, because this is how God comes to us today, where His promises are made known, where His presence is felt. Continue, continue reading scripture with us.

Let's close with a word of prayer. Heavenly Father, we thank you for being with us today, for leading us and guiding us. As we follow you, Lord, we

ask that you would help us walk in your way always, that we would see people around us who need your presence and know that we are called to be your presence to them.

Let us take our time, our energy, our resources to make that happen, so that all will know that you are for them, that you are good, and that Lord, you have created them to be your masterpieces, made new in Jesus each and every day. In this Lord, we pray that more and more kingdom, more and more people will be a part of your kingdom, not just in this life, but in the life to come. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.