

Tusculum Hills Baptist Church
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Sermon title: Jesus Was There All the Time, Mark 6:45-56

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INTRODUCTION: There are three things I want you to take away from this message:

1. Jesus did not immediately rescue the disciples.
2. The disciples did not immediately recognize Jesus.
3. Jesus' reassuring words came at just the right time.

SCRIPTURE: Mark 6:45-56 ⁴⁵ *Immediately Jesus made his disciples get into the boat and go on ahead of him to Bethsaida, while he dismissed the crowd.* ⁴⁶ *After leaving them, he went up on a mountainside to pray.*

⁴⁷ *Later that night, the boat was in the middle of the lake, and he was alone on land.* ⁴⁸ *He saw the disciples straining at the oars, because the wind was against them. Shortly before dawn he went out to them, walking on the lake. He was about to pass by them,* ⁴⁹ *but when they saw him walking on the lake, they thought he was a ghost. They cried out,* ⁵⁰ *because they all saw him and were terrified. Immediately he spoke to them and said, "Take courage! It is I. Don't be afraid."* ⁵¹ *Then he climbed into the boat with them, and the wind died down. They were completely amazed,* ⁵² *for they had not understood about the loaves; their hearts were hardened.*

⁵³ *When they had crossed over, they landed at Gennesaret and anchored there.* ⁵⁴ *As soon as they got out of the boat, people recognized Jesus.* ⁵⁵ *They ran throughout that whole region and carried the sick on mats to wherever they heard he was.* ⁵⁶ *And wherever he went—into villages, towns or countryside—they placed the sick in the marketplaces. They begged him to let them touch even the edge of his cloak, and all who touched it were healed.*

First, JESUS DID NOT IMMEDIATELY RESCUE THE DISCIPLES.

EXPLANATION: Jesus sent his disciples to Bethsaida, but they didn't make it. They were overtaken by the wind and tried to row against it. The Bible says late at night he saw them, but he didn't walk out to them or calm the water until around sun up.

Why did he not immediately rescue them? We could look at it several ways, but I believe the main reason is because he wanted them to get to the point where they completely depended on him.

APPLICATION: It's easy to get into our own mess and to pray for God to fix it immediately. I'm convinced many think of Jesus as a genie in a lamp. They get in trouble and pull out their genie lamp, hoping for Jesus to pop out and grant them three wishes.

But, you know, our Lord doesn't operate like that. In this case, the disciples didn't do anything wrong. They were minding their own business, going to Bethsaida. Sometimes we might find ourselves like the disciples...in a mess we did not cause. I've been hit while driving seven times. Two of those times, my cars were totaled. These were messes I did not cause.

You might be dealing with something you did or did not cause. In either case, we've got to remember Romans 8:28 *"And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose."* It's hard to believe this verse when we are going through something that's not so easy. We've got to ask ourselves, though, do we really love him, and are we called according to his purpose? If we can say yes to both questions, then we can believe the scripture's promise: God will work ALL things for the good.

ILLUSTRATION: Last year, I visited a man in jail. I asked this congregation to pray for him, and you did. He was in jail for six months. He was in a mess. I went to see him several times. I knew his mother who lived in another state. When he was released from jail, she asked if I would give him a ride. I waited in the parking lot, and when he was released, he walked out the door. I called out to him, and he got in the car. I knew immediately, something had happened to him. He was different than when I visited him in jail. In only a couple of minutes, he told me he had been saved and baptized in jail. You see, God took the mess he was in and worked it for the good.

I know another man in jail. He's run from the Lord his whole life. Now that he's in jail, guess who writes him every week?—his grandmother. Now he's gained a new respect for his grandmother and the Christian topics she writes to him about.

Second, THE DISCIPLES DID NOT IMMEDIATELY RECOGNIZE JESUS.

EXPLANATION: As he walked on the water, they were terrified because they thought they saw a ghost. Imagine that, some of them were seasoned fishermen, accustomed to the water. And, all of them had seen Jesus already calm a storm, heal the sick, raise someone from the dead, and feed a crowd of 5,000 men, plus women and children. None of the disciples were wimps.

APPLICATION: I believe this scripture has a good word for us: If the disciples were afraid, as tough as they were, it's highly likely the toughest person here could face fear. It's possible what we are afraid of or what we don't understand is God at work.

ILLUSTRATION: There have been many times in my own life when the Lord has been nearby. I just didn't realize it. Each one of those times, the Lord was at work in ways I did not recognize. Three years ago, when my active duty military job was coming to a close, I was anxious about the future. I just about gave up looking for a church. I was told by one church, I was too old to be their pastor. Ok, whatever. They had picked the age of their pastor before they had picked the pastor. I attended several job fairs. I looked into all kinds of things. I interviewed with a church construction company that needed someone who understood church life to help them with sales. It was a bit of an odd journey. I didn't take the job, but the Lord was at work in a way I didn't see at the time. My cousin needed a job, and when you called me as pastor, I told him about the company. They hired him, and he's worked for them ever since.

APPLICATION: The disciples did not immediately recognize Jesus, and we may not recognize him either.

I asked my friends on Facebook to tell of a time when the Lord was near, and they couldn't realize one enough to think of a time.

ILLUSTRATION: A friend named Jennifer said she didn't want to go to college, but she got an unexpected scholarship requiring her to go the fall semester following high school. She got on a speech team, met new people, and developed confidence. The scholarship went bankrupt after one year, but after a year of college, she decided she liked it. This led to a career, which led to the man she married. The Lord was nearby all the time, even though she didn't recognize him.

Another friend named Naomi was a single mom who returned from an overseas military assignment. Her new assignment was far from her son, and she cried because they would be so far apart. She wondered how the Lord would be in it, and then she met a single dad who had two children. The Lord was nearby all the time even though she didn't recognize him.

Another friend named Kori was on a trip in Amman Jordan, where she made some friends. Fifteen years later, she was right here two summers ago when she heard a refugee family had lost their laptop in the Amman Jordan airport. She contacted the past acquaintance who then helped locate the laptop. The Lord was nearby all the time even though she didn't know the importance of the connections at the time.

A friend of mine named Ray was a school teacher and was let go due to budget cuts by the Christian school where we worked. Then, he decided to see if he could be self employed by starting a freelance writing business. A few months ago, he was diagnosed with an illness which required him to take a medicine which breaks down his immune system. His response was, "Now, I see why God took me out of the classroom, where I would have been exposed to every infectious disease that comes around."

Rebecca told me her grandfather gave her a table top organ when she was four, and her dad eventually sold it at a yard sale. Years later, after she was married, she asked her husband how he learned to play the piano. He said it was because of an organ his aunt bought at a yard sale. She said, "Well, you fill in the rest. God is weaving the tapestry of our lives together from childhood..." She didn't see God at work with the sale of the organ her grandfather gave her, but the Lord was there all the time.

APPLICATION: You may feel like the disciples felt. Maybe this story illustrates your life or a situation you are in right now. You're paddling against the wind and

making no headway in life. You had a destination, but you're not able to get there because of forces beyond your control. Maybe you wonder if Jesus has forgotten you. He's not forgotten you. He's there. Keep paddling because help is on the way.

So we have—

- Jesus did not immediately rescue the disciples.
- The disciples did not immediately recognize Jesus.

Third, JESUS' REASSURING WORDS CAME AT JUST THE RIGHT TIME.

“Take courage! It is I. Don't be afraid.” There are no more comforting words in the universe than these words. The opposite of fear is courage, and Jesus told them to take courage. Proverbs 25:11, *“A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in pictures of silver”* (KJB).

EXPLANATION: Jesus arrived in the middle of the windstorm. He didn't arrive before the storm or after it, but he arrived in the middle of it. And, to prove he totally owned the situation, he walked through the middle of it, on water.

Do you remember earlier in Mark when the disciples found themselves on a boat in the middle of a storm? Where was Jesus during the storm? He was asleep.

Jesus so totally owned the storms that he slept through one and took a stroll through the other. *“Take courage! It is I. Don't be afraid.”* Say it with me.

The words of Jesus provide calm in the middle of the storm. I've been to a lot of funerals, and many of you have too. It's clear to me those who have taken hold of Jesus' words, *“Take courage! It is I. Don't be afraid.”* On Friday, Deborah Bartholomew called to tell me Mrs. Bernie had died. Deborah will miss her, but she was happy her mom is now with Jesus and she is no longer suffering.

In John Chapter 16, verse 33, Jesus told his disciples how their grief would turn to joy. He said, *“I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In his world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.”*

Today there is a lot of fear in the world—fear of war, fear of earthquakes, fear of terrorism, even fear of presidential candidates.

SCRIPTURE: 2 Timothy 1:7 ⁷*God has not given us the spirit of fear, but of power, love, and a sound mind (KJB).*

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I use the NIV translation of scripture because of its conversational nature. Feel free to go to Bible Gateway and copy and paste whichever translation you want to use. This transcript has been edited to an outline format that improves readability and therefore may not exactly follow the video edition.

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Sincerely, Paul Gunn
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