

The Perfect Savior

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Please turn with me in your Bibles to Mark 6 and I would like you to follow with me as I go through this passage. I was going to preach on something else but in light of the events of this week, we decided that it would be better for me to do this. What a great opportunity to speak about the Lord Jesus Christ to you, who at this very moment is interceding for us, who is our advocate, who is praying for us, who loves us, and so I hope that the Lord and I know the Lord will use his word to enlarge Jesus for you as you face various things in your life.

We come to this text and we find this truth, that the Lord Jesus Christ is over every single storm of life. It is important for us to understand that doctrine. It is very important for us to understand that there is no event or person that is not under the control of the Lord Jesus Christ. As we sail through our lives, we are going to get to various reefs and there are going to be many storms on the way. Jesus said in John 6:33 that we will have much trouble and tribulation in this life. We need to settle that in our mind that here we are going to have many trials. In fact, Acts 14:22 the church was strengthened with this theology, the church was encouraged with this theology, that through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God. It's not bad news, it is to encourage us, it is to strengthen us. In 1 Peter 1:6 it says if necessary we have to go through these trials; great hardship, whether it's financial or health, whatever it is, if it's necessary which, again, brings us to the point that it is God who determines whether it is necessary. Just think of that for a moment. We love theology that says come to Jesus and your life is going to turn out great. My trouble started when I came to Jesus. But that's good theology and it is good for us to understand that trouble will come but the Lord Jesus Christ is in the storm. So this is a common to man struggle.

Now, we are going to have various temptations in the midst of our difficulty how to handle these great turmoils. James 1:1-3 tells us to rejoice in the midst and to actually, it's an accounting term, consider it all joy when you face various trials. The word "various" is multicolored. There are multicolored trials that are going to come to us and there are going to be storms, real storms, threatening storms; we are going to experience opposition but Christ is in all of them for his children. So God has given us this great portion here this morning for us to remind ourselves that it is God himself who appoints the storm. God appoints the storm. God designs the storm. God has a purpose with a storm. It's necessary for the storm to come.

And in this text, if you follow with me just in verse 52, it actually indicates why this storm happened in the life of the disciples. Look at verse 52, "for they had not gained any insight from the incident of the loaves, but their heart was hardened." So the Lord Jesus brings storms into our lives. At those times, if it's necessary, it was necessary for this storm to happen for them. What is the storm you are facing at the moment? This week as a church and as friends, you experienced the storm of losing a friend. But perhaps you are going through financial difficulties or stresses and hardships, relations, perhaps your child is not following the Lord; maybe marital disunity; maybe relational friction in the church; perhaps it's health; perhaps you are approaching death and you're thinking through death and the implications of that. But there is a greater storm waiting for each one of us. Though our storms individually may vary, there is a greater storm waiting with the final judgment. We will be standing before the Lord and his fury will be unleashed. He promises that, against all sinners. So each one of us here this morning needs a Savior for the temporary storms of life but also for, can we call it, the eternal storm waiting at the end of time.

None of us are exempt from the storms of life and so here in Mark 6 we come and we see a true Savior. How wonderful to see a Jesus not with gold leaf but to see him in the midst of the storm; to understand that he understands our hardship and he wants to rescue his disciples not from the storm or take them out of the storm, but he wants to rescue them so that in the midst of the storm they may see a clearer picture of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is Jesus, the Son of God. These storms, there is no effort we can make to save us from these storms. No religion or no ritual. No good works. No head knowledge even of the Scriptures. No swimming lessons or rowing lessons are going to take us out of these storms. It is the person and the Savior of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Messiah, who is in the midst of our storm.

How wonderful it is just to wrap up. I'm not done, I'm only starting, okay? Here is God designing the very situation that you find yourself in as a believer. He's the author of it, the architect. He has a purpose and he has a plan. And then there is his Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, who intercedes according to the need. He's interceding for us before the Father. And then there is the Holy Spirit ministering to us. And so we have the Trinity with us in the midst of the storms that we face so it's important for us to remember these things. God who sends the storm sends the Savior, ministering to us in the midst of the storm which, of course, is a great opportunity for growth. It's a great opportunity to trust Christ more because we pray more when we suffer. So there is only one who commands the storm to come into your life.

The storm comes to break the self-reliance. The storm comes to break the love for sin, the hardened heart. It's the storm that makes us run to Christ. It's the storm that creates a greater capacity within us that when we are delivered, to give all glory to Christ. So what a wonderful opportunity it is when we are on the open ocean of our storm and there is no ground, remember that all other ground is sinking sand, it's only Christ, the perfect Savior, whom we must trust. Acts 4:12 says, "And there is salvation," this is a being

saved from, of course, our sin and the anger of God through Christ, but there is no one else equipped to save us from our storms.

I want to remind you of six features in this passage of the Lord Jesus Christ. So we're going to behold Christ, we're going to look at Christ. For a moment while you're in your storm, the curtain is going to open and we are going to see behind-the-scenes what is happening while we ourselves are in great turmoil very often.

Verse 45, the perfect wisdom of the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. Look at the word "immediately." This word "immediately" is mentioned a few times in the book of Mark and it follows the feeding of the 5,000. And there was a performing of miracles: the fish and the bread was multiplying in the hands of the Lord Jesus Christ and it was a perfect church planting opportunity, convince people, "You must come to Christ." And instead of planting the church, look what Jesus does: he makes his disciples step into the boat. He's intentional. He made them step into the boat. He compelled them to get into the boat. He commanded them and constrained them to step into the boat because they wanted something different. Yes, success. They were in Galilee. There are masses of people and the disciples want to stay. The inclination of their heart is not to leave but to stay, plant a church. "Let's have this social worker, our Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, supply the fish and the bread. I mean, this is a great state, this is a great arrangement. Let's keep it."

That was their desire but Jesus makes them step into the boat for two reasons. The first reason: it was the height of his popularity, of his public ministry in Galilee, this was the apex and in John 6:15, we read that they wanted to crown him as king. They wanted to crown him as king and Jesus makes his disciples get into the boat. Now, of course, it has great implications which leads us to the second point: why Jesus got them into the boat is because these 12 disciples knew that if Jesus is king, they are going to be 12 rulers of a very successful ministry. They're going to be popular and this is the shining moment. This is spectacular. This is wonderful. And we might ask, "Isn't this why Christ came, to make himself known as the Messiah, the Creator in whom the fish and the bread multiplies in his hands?" Jesus makes them step into the boat. His ways are different than ours. The Lord's ways are higher than our ways. The Lord's thoughts are much higher than our own insight. He makes them get into the boat to sail to the backwaters of Bethsaida, away from the excitement, away from the crowd, because Jesus knew, he had perfect wisdom, he knew exactly what they needed. They wanted outward success, Jesus wanted inner worship and submission to the Savior.

So he sends them away from the glorious moment just as he enters our life and he sends us away from our glorious moments. Isn't that true very often? Life goes well, life is fine, something happens and it just seems as if we are going in the opposite direction. Jesus is in that business. Jesus has a far greater idea because he is a wise Savior. He knew that his disciples could not handle the prosperity, they could not handle the success. He knew that they would cave in to the pressures of the people and the desires of the people to crown him as king and establish a kingdom. He knew that they would be squeezed into the mold of the world. Even as they looked, it appeared like true success and Jesus sends them to

the other side. Have you ever experienced that? You go to the opposite side. "What are you up to? It's the opposite. I don't want to go in that direction."

But then we read in verse 45 that Jesus sends the multitudes away. From a human perspective, this was a very successful ministry and if we hear about strategies for church planting, this would have been an ideal situation. "We have bread, we have fish, we have 12 rulers, let's start something great." He sends the crowd away because he knew that even the crowd, they worshiped him with their mouths but their hearts were far from him. They too needed to experience the absence of the Messiah.

Look at verse 46: but in farewell to them, he left them and went to pray. Mountains around the lake, an excellent place for the Lord to withdraw from the crowd and he's going to pray. He is going to have communion with his Father. He is going to have fellowship with his Father. He is going to intercede to his Father on behalf of his disciples because he knows their hearts are hardened. He knows that what is coming is going to be necessary for them. He made request on behalf of his disciples in his humility, he was interceding for them, and so we see at this point there is perfect wisdom in the Lord arranging and orchestrating our lives for a greater purpose.

The disciples would have stayed in the place and so would you and I. We want to stay in a comfortable place. We want to stay in that place where we have a job. We want to stay in that place where everything just runs smoothly and life fits into a beautiful little box and everything is perfect, but Jesus conducts his ministry in a different way with different criteria.

I want to remind you at this point that Jesus directs our paths. Whatever you are experiencing at this moment, God is behind it, and as his children, we are not abandoned. He's not going to leave us alone, and this is exactly what he's doing, he has a plan for our lives. We are not our own, we belong to him which brings us to the second point: the perfect knowledge. The perfect knowledge. So our Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, has perfect wisdom. Here we see perfect knowledge. He exercises his perfect wisdom according to his perfect knowledge and because as people we are prone to make decisions based on our limited knowledge, we can thank God for a Savior who knows all things.

So we read part of this perfect knowledge that they were sailing into the evening. Do you see the word "evening"? It's the same day. It's a great event. All the events are happening. People are healed. People are fed. There are miracles. And that evening as they sail, they arrive in the middle of the sea. All of the Gospel writers except Luke record that they were far far away from the shoreline, a considerable distance. There was great depth below them. They were far from the land and this is all part of the perfect wisdom of our Savior, which means that they were very vulnerable, when they were at their most vulnerable.

John tells us that they were four miles away from the shore. Now, we don't have miles in South Africa, we have kilometers so I can't relate to that but you can. I kind of have an idea, more or less, and that's far. At this point, they were far away from human eyes.

They were far away from assistance, out of sight. They were far away from the sea rescue and the shore. But look at verse 48, do you see the word "seeing" there? "Seeing them straining at the oars," the perfect knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ in the midst of our difficulty. Just think of it: there is a storm, four miles, it's night, no human being can see. And so here the Gospel writer is telling us something about the character of Christ, he's telling us that he is God. He is able to see in the middle of the night while the storm is blowing, while it is pitch black, he is there seeing them. This is not only for the disciples, this is for you and me. This is theology we can hold onto. We can be confident of this truth in the midst of our difficulty. Whatever we experience, we know that Christ is seeing the situation. He sees what is going on.

There is something supernatural about the Lord, able to see in the night through the storm on the fourth watch of the night, and he saw them being tortured by the sea. That's the word he used there. They are spending all their energy and their pain. There are heavy waves coming against them, crashing against the boat. They are being battered. They are being pushed off the course and Jesus saw it all. Jesus knows it perfectly. When his children are tortured by circumstances, he sees it perfectly. He sees the potential. He sees the possibility. And it's good for us to remind us that he sees the potential, he sees the possibility, and we align ourselves with him.

How wonderful it is to have a Savior that constantly gazes and knows everything that has happened in the life of his children. There is a great application here for us: there is never a situation, not even the death of a friend in this life, that is beyond the all-seeing eyes of the Lord. He sees clearly. He sees our heart inclinations. He sees our desires. He sees our beliefs. He sees our plans. And at this very moment as he is in glory, he is no longer in his humility, he is mediating a relationship between us and the Father. There might be storms on earth but in heaven we are joined with the Father, and Christ brought the two together and he is the mediator that is able to put his hand on sinful man and grab the hand of a righteous just God and bring the two together.

That's what he's doing. He that knows all things is interceding for us. He is the mediator. He is interceding. He is speaking on our behalf. He is speaking good on our behalf to the Father. And he is also our advocate. 1 John 2:1 speaks about him being an advocate, "My little children that are so prone to fear in the midst of great difficulty." We have to remember these things. We have to understand these things. This is true for you. Take it. Believe it. Hold to it. Jesus, the one who is in the midst of the storm, is speaking on our behalf, he has joined us to the Father. He is our advocate. He is a perfect Savior.

He is a perfect Savior which brings us to another element of our Savior, that he has perfect timing. He has perfect timing. Look at verse 48. It says there, "Seeing them straining at the oars, for the wind was against them, at about the fourth watch of the night He came to them, walking on the sea; and He intended to pass by them." Perfect timing. Perfect timing. So they have struggled for a considerable time which means when we are in difficulty, we struggle for considerable periods of time. This is very important. In the counseling room, very often people come in and they are absolutely exhausted and they

want to hear, "Can you just tell me this is going to end?" We can't tell them that. It might endure for this life, but it also might just be for a short period of time.

He came to them. At their darkest hour he was there and when the storm was severe, at the perfect moment, according to his agenda, he started the storm and he knows when he is going to step in according to his timetable. He intentionally delayed. We want instant and immediate relief from our difficulty but the Lord has his hands on the dial, on the heat, on the fire, on the time of our sufferings. At the darkest when the wind was at its strongest, when the waves highest, the disciples at their weakest moment, Jesus comes to save them. Perhaps you're sitting here and you think you have come to the end. It's just too much to endure. It's just too much to continue. Jesus knows. He has the right timing. There is no one too weak to save. There are some, however, who are too strong to be rescued.

When they were at their weakest, the Lord Jesus Christ came which brings us to our fourth point. A great picture here. Verse 48: walking on the sea. Now in the Jewish mind, the sea, darkness which is the same word used for "East," is a place of turmoil and darkness and death and here Jesus comes walking on the water with triumph, with authority. He did not swim to them, some strokes there toward the boat, saying to them, "Hey, I'm on the same level where you are. We are together in this mess." No. He did not row to them either. "We're in the same boat, you know." No, Jesus came walking, needing no assistance. Jesus came as the only Savior and this is the point. What goes over our head is under his feet and that's a great truth. That's a great truth.

He made progress. He was moving steadily from one wave to another, unhampered, unhindered. The storm was under his feet. It's not under our control, it's under his control, walking toward his disciples. The very waves that are threatening him becomes his steppingstones and that's true for us as well, to reflect upon the difficulty that we find ourselves into thinking that there is no storm that we face that is not under the feet of the Lord Jesus Christ. He draws near to us in the midst of the storm. In the most difficult situation, he comes to us, he is right there, he is present. Did he not promise, "I will never leave or forsake you"? With perfect timing, with no barriers, Jesus is there, coming toward his disciples. Psalm 8:6 makes it very clear, it says of him, "You make him to rule over the works of Your hands; You have put all things under his feet." The waves of the sea of Galilee, the opposition you face, the political climate and threatening legislation, everything is under his feet. Whatever you experience, God has made him ruler over all things.

It's not just angry waves that are under his feet, but every circumstance. What is the context you live in? What are the hardships you face? We face various kinds. We live in a Romans 8 world that is groaning. It places pressure on our hearts. We have medical issues. We have relational issues. We face all kinds of surprising events in our lives and the lives of our children; trials that come, fiery trials. They are under the feet of the Lord Jesus Christ. While we drown, he is standing firm.

What an incredible picture of the Lord Jesus Christ, a perfect Savior with perfect knowledge, with perfect wisdom, with perfect timing, and with perfect power to step on that with authority that goes over our heads, which brings us to the fifth element and character of the Lord Jesus Christ, the one that gives perfect peace. "But when they saw Him walking on the sea, they supposed that it was a ghost, and cried out; for they all saw Him and were terrified. But immediately," there you have the same word again, "He spoke with them and said to them, 'Take courage; it is I, do not be afraid.'" Isn't this a great phrase when difficulty comes, just there you go, "Take courage. Jesus is in the storm. He's there. He's there. I'm not going to be afraid. I'm going to trust Christ." What an opportunity to grow whenever we face these great difficulties.

We read in that passage that he intended to pass them by. Jesus is intending to give the appearance that he is passing by and sometimes that happens to us as well. Why is he delaying? Paul speaks about this in 2 Corinthians 4. The delay of the Lord Jesus Christ creates a bigger desperation. It creates a larger capacity within us to welcome our Savior. Those who suffer much and those who have learned the habit of running to Christ yet the suffering continues and it becomes harder and harder, yet can you imagine them in the presence of Jesus one day? There is a vast capacity to enjoy Christ. That's what God uses our suffering to achieve within us.

So there is an appearance of him passing by to create a last note of panic and then we see verse 49, when they saw him in the midst of an angry storm, he spoke to them because they screamed, they yelled. The storm was so bad, it was so dark, there was no hope and immediately he spoke and he said, "Take courage. Take courage. Be bold in the midst of your turmoil. Be courageous in the midst of your difficulty." He said, "It is I. It is I." I would rather be, I know this sounds cheap but it's not cheap, it's better to be in the midst of a storm with Christ than to be on land without him. "It is I, the Master. I have chosen you. I love you. I'm going to guide you." And then he comes with a command, "Do not be afraid. Don't be fearful. Don't be fearful of the storm."

Now, we know that peace comes. Peace in the midst of our storm does not come from overeating. You know what I'm talking about. Everyone is laughing. You know exactly what you're doing in the midst of the storm. Hey, what is going to bring relief? What's going to bring some pleasure? Some watch porn. Some eat. Some stop eating. It's the Lord Jesus Christ who brings the peace, calling out to him, clinging to him. Did Jesus not say, "Peace I leave with you"? What a wonderful way to experience the Lord Jesus Christ and grow in this kind of experiential knowledge of him, "Do not let your hearts be troubled, do not be fearful, do not be anxious. I am with you. I am with you in the midst of the storm. Don't be anxious." We use words like, "Don't freak out." We're so good at that.

Jesus is with us. His peace is given to us, which brings us to the final aspect. Verse 51, I just love this. It says in verse 51, "Then He got into the boat with them, and the wind stopped; and they were utterly astonished." The Greek says he got up into the boat, so at that stage the boat must have been on top of a wave. Jesus didn't wait for it to be low so that he could kind of jump in. No, when it was up there and threatening to come down

into the dark, that's the moment that Jesus stepped into the boat. The boat was at such an angle threatening the life of his disciples and it's at that moment that Jesus steps up into the trouble and he comes and he brings them to a secure place. That happens to us. That should be our expectation. There is no trouble, no turmoil, that is too high for the Lord Jesus Christ to step up into our difficulty or to step down into our despair.

And it says that the wind stopped by his mere presence. The wind stopped and the storm hushed. The wind obeyed him without him even speaking a word and peace came to their hearts.

Do you have this view of your Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, in the midst of your difficulties and your storms? Ask yourselves: what are the alternatives that I have? What are the things I run to instead of running to Christ? List those things and confess them to the Lord. Ask yourself: what are the things that keep me from going to the Lord Jesus Christ? We become very independent. We think we have authority. We can do all these things and we kind of put our cars in neutral and we just go down the hill further as the difficulties come. But instead, turn to Christ, turn to our Savior. He is a true Savior.

Verse 52, it's so amazing. This happened, "for they had not gained any insight from the incident of the loaves, but their heart was hardened." This storm was designed for them, specifically for them. They were so caught up in the event of the land that Christ no longer featured. But here in the midst of the storm, they were forced to cry out to Christ. They saw him, their Savior.

I think there's a lot of practical application here for us when we face storms and we should list these things and prepare ourselves to when the storms come, to think through these aspects that I have highlighted this morning, that we have to remind ourselves God knows when a storm is necessary for us; God is the one designing the storm; God is the one sending the Savior; God sends the intensity of the storm; God gives deliverance through his Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. They are great truths for us.

Two conclusions and then I'm done. Some of you here find yourself in a temporal storm of life. You find yourself surrounded with difficulty. You are a disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ. You love him but you are in the midst of the sea of darkness, maybe a child, marriage, business, your future. However big or small, there is only one who comes walking on the water, it's the Lord Jesus Christ, and when we face those things, he wants to create a greater capacity within us to enjoy our Savior when the deliverance comes. But there are others here, the second point, who face a greater storm than finances and family. You have never trusted upon the Lord Jesus Christ as your Savior and you are facing judgment. Without Christ being there to intercede on your behalf, you are facing all eternity without a Savior in a place separated from God. Will you come this morning and ask the Savior to save you? Will you ask the Savior to have mercy on you? Will you ask the Savior to convict you of your sin and convince you of Christ and help you to cling to Christ as he works that saving within you? The Lord is near. Call out to him. He is the only Savior.

Let's pray together.

Our gracious Father, we thank you for your Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, who loved us, who gave himself for us, who bought us. We are his. We are his possession. Thank you for the great plans that you have for us. Thank you that you desire for us to have an intimate relationship with you, to love you through all the hardships that we face. We come to you this morning confessing that so often we rely upon our own strength, we rely upon our own knowledge, we rely upon our own thinking through the issues and thinking things will work. My prayer is this morning that we will see a great picture of the Lord Jesus Christ, that we will be encouraged, that we will cling to you. Lord, I also pray for those here who walk around in darkness, who are not followers of Christ, rather they are led by their lust; that they will see the Savior, the merciful one who came to live the life we couldn't live, and who died the death that we should have died, in our place to satisfy the anger of God, to deliver us from his anger, and to present us before the throne without fault and without blemish. Lord, you alone save. We pray that you may do that work in the lives of those that you are ministering to. We pray all these things in Jesus' name. Amen.