

**Message #22****Mark 6:53-56**

We come now to a moment in the life of Jesus Christ when the main emphasis seems to be on healing people. As a result, some believe that the real purpose of this text is to show us that we have a responsibility to do what we can to physically help people. Some have said this passage teaches us that we have the responsibility to pray for the sick; help the sick and do what we can to heal the sick. This is what Jesus did and this is what we should do.

Now we would agree that we have a responsibility to pray for each other and help each other when we are sick. But if that is what you take away from this text, you really miss the whole point. Because what this text proves is that you could experience great healing power of God and still be lost. You could experience a miraculous healing and still be heading to eternal condemnation. You could believe in God; you could pray to God; you could actually experience the healing power of God and not have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ.

If you ever want to see that point, take a look at these verses in Mark 6. We may recall that Mark 6 opened with Jesus going back to His hometown Nazareth and the people rejected Him and, in fact, didn't even seem to want Him so He left. He sent His disciples out to minister in various villages and He Personally fed thousands of people on the other side of the sea. People wanted to make Him king, but did not see the need to believe on Him to be saved from their sins. So Jesus decided to go to the other side of the sea. He decided to go to a different region and when He got there, there was an amazing response. All the people wanted to get near Him and touch Him. But most of these people didn't understand who He was. In fact, His own disciples didn't get it.

Jesus had walked on water out to a boat to His disciples in the middle of the Sea of Galilee. They still did not truly grasp who He was. As **verse 52** says, "they had not gained any insight...their heart was hardened."

So in the aftermath of this episode, Jesus takes them to a spot where He has an incredible healing ministry. Notice, He had an incredible healing ministry, not saving ministry. These disciples were about to get another dose of the power of the One with whom they were traveling.

**JESUS CHRIST PERFORMS SOME AMAZING HEALING MIRACLES TO PROVE HE IS THE GOD/SAVIOR/MESSIAH/KING WHO CAN SAVE ONE FROM SINS, BUT VERY FEW ACTUALLY BELIEVED THAT.**

Now the disciples have just come through some very unique scenes. They had been sent out on their own to try their hand at ministry. They had been involved in a spectacular ministry of feeding thousands of people with five loaves of bread and two fish. They had been out in a storm and Jesus walked on top of the water out to them and got in the boat with them. These were unique apostolic moments. But they still just did not get it. It is one thing to say, isn't this amazing that Jesus walked on water; it is another to say, I need to trust Him as my Savior to save me from my sins.

These disciples still needed their faith stabilized, so Jesus decides to take them to another area to let them see and experience some more amazing things.

There are two key facts brought out in this part of the story concerning the life and ministry of Jesus Christ. Keep in mind that Peter is relaying this to Mark, even though Mark is writing by the direction of the Holy Spirit. This is clearly an inspired story of God that He wanted in His Word.

**FACT #1** – Jesus and His disciples crossed over the sea and came to the land at Gennesaret.  
**6:53**

Now Jesus had originally told His disciples to head toward Bethsaida, but the wind blew them out into the sea so they ended up landing in the land of Gennesaret. They obviously had been blown way off course, but we are of the opinion that God wanted them blown off course because God was sovereignly going to take them somewhere else so they could see more truth about Jesus Christ. That storm was no coincidence and neither was the fact that they land where they do.

Jesus was on a very specific time clock and He knew it was important to travel to this part of the world. It was important because it gave these people the opportunity to see Him and hear Him and it gave His disciples the opportunity to see Him do more spectacular things.

Now Gennesaret was located about five miles S.W. of Capernaum and about 16 miles N.W. of Nazareth. The land of “Gennesaret” was land that was located on the western shore of Galilee. It was a fertile, crescent-shaped plain on the N.W. shore of the Sea of Galilee between Capernaum on the north and Magdala on the south.

Josephus said that this was a beautiful region. In fact, he said the water was very sweet and very good to drink, the beach is sandy and the climate is moderate. He said there were all kinds of species of fish and plenty of fruit trees. According to Josephus, this land was wonderful and beautiful. It had moderate temperatures and fertile soil. In fact, he said you could grow any kind of plant in the soil of this area. He said the area was rich in walnuts, palms, figs, olives and grapes (*The Complete Works of Josephus*, p. 520).

Now Jesus and the disciples came to this rich and plush area of Gennesaret. When they got there they “moored” their boat to the shore. That word “moored” means they anchored their boat to this particular shore (G. Abbott-Smith, *Greek Lexicon*, p. 387). The obvious implication is that they are going to be here a while. Jesus was going to stay in this area for a while. This would be a nice place to minister. It would be a real change from the dusty and dry areas where they had been ministering. This was a really nice, plush place to minister.

When we are obedient to Christ, we will find ourselves in some storms. But if we will remain faithful in the midst of the storms, we will also discover that God will open up new opportunities for ministry and He may allow us to experience some very positive things.

It is not wrong to stay in a nice place. It is not wrong to enjoy some of the plush things and good things in life. These disciples had traveled with Jesus to all kinds of areas and now they are going to minister in a really nice setting.

**FACT #2** – When they got out of their boat, the people recognized Jesus and reacted to Jesus. **6:54-55**

Now the boat episode occurred in the 4<sup>th</sup> watch of the night, which means between 4 AM and 6 AM. It is clear that when they got to the shore and were tying up the boat, it must have been breaking day because people saw them. There was a buzz in the air. Everyone had heard about Jesus. As soon as they got out of the boat there were four responses and reactions to them:

**Reaction #1** - The people recognized Jesus. **6:54**

Jesus is the most famous person alive at this point and wherever He went people recognized Him. But recognizing who Jesus is and having Him as your personal Savior are two different things.

We may recall that when Jesus had met the demons in the country of the Gerasenes, those demons knew exactly who He was. They identified him as Jesus, the Son of the Most High God (Mark 5:7). They knew He was the Sovereign God who had power to judge them and cast them into hell. But just because they recognized truth about Jesus does not mean He was their Savior.

We have just come through the Christmas season and most people know the story of the birth of the baby Jesus. But that does not mean they have asked Him to save them from their sins. That is the way it was here.

**Reaction #2** - The people ran about the whole country. **6:55a**

These people are running around telling everyone that Jesus was in the area. The word for “run” is one that was used for runners in races. So these people are running as fast as they can, in all directions, sprinting to various areas telling people Jesus is here.

What a stark contrast to Nazareth, His hometown. In His hometown, the people were questioning Jesus and here they are running around telling everyone Jesus is in the area. The people were excited to have Him there. But emotional excitement is not the same as real conversion. Being excited about Jesus is not the same as being saved by Jesus. But it was a better emotional response than what He got at Nazareth.

It is a wonderful thing when people are excited about the Word of God. Some are and some aren't.

**Reaction #3** - The people carried sick people on pallets wherever He was rumored to be. **6:55b**

These people were so excited to have Jesus in their area that they loaded up people on pallets and hauled them to wherever He was in the Gennesaret region. If the people got to one location and Jesus was not there, they were not discouraged, they just moved on to another location until they found Him.

Now according to Josephus, the whole region of Gennesaret, including the sea, was 40 furlongs wide and 140 furlongs long (*Ibid.*, p. 520). A furlong was 220 yards. So the region is 8800 yards wide and 30,800 yards long. Now there are 1760 yards in a mile. So this entire region or county is about 5 miles wide and about 17 ½ miles long.

The actual dimensions of this plain where Jesus is, was about 3 miles long and 1 ½ miles wide. So to give us some perspective of this, this area is as long as from here to 131 and as wide as from here to Kalamazoo Valley Community College.

So people are running and getting sick people on pallets and taking them to wherever Jesus was. If they got to let's say Texas Corners and He wasn't there, they ran down to KVCC to see if He was there.

Now these pallets were like a wooden cot with probably a "thin straw-filled" mattress on them. There were people running at Jesus and bringing to Jesus those who were sick with all kinds of sicknesses.

It is interesting that the English words "those who were sick" literally in Greek read "those who were having it bad." So these were very sick people who could not get up and walk to where he was.

**Reaction #4** - The people laid the sick wherever Jesus was. **6:56**

Jesus was obviously traveling in this great area. He went into villages, cities, and he walked in the country. Wherever He went He was swarmed with people.

When He would go into a village or city, they would literally lay the sick people in the market places and the sick people would beg or implore Jesus to walk close to them so they could just touch His garment.

Now the verbs "entering, imploring and being healed" are imperfect tense verbs, which mean the people were continually begging Him to heal them and He was continually doing it.

They did believe that He could heal them. They did believe that if they could just touch the fringe of His garment they would be healed.

The end of **verse 56** says as many as touched it were being cured. They were instantly and immediately healed and cured.

**But here is the tragedy. Not one of these people is asking Him or begging Him to save them from their sins.**

**There are many people who want the Lord to heal them of their physical problems, but do not want to trust Him as Personal Savior from their sins. They would rather trust in themselves of their own works to save them from their sins.**

**There are many people in hospitals today who are religious enough to want God to heal them; but they do not ever ask Jesus Christ to save them from their sins.**

I walked out of a hospital room one time here in Kalamazoo and got out by my car and a man was standing by his car crying. I asked him if I could help him. He said his wife was dying and he even asked if I would pray she would get better. I said I sure would. But then I said look, I would be willing to go back in with you to her room and tell her about how she can know she can go to heaven by believing on Jesus Christ. His whole demeanor changed. He said I am calling a Catholic priest to give last rites, so there is no need. He wanted me to pray for her physical condition, but not share the truth that his wife could be saved from her sins by receiving Jesus Christ.

That is what is happening here. People wanted to be healed by Jesus, but they are not asking Him so save them from their sins.

Think of this Jesus Christ, the God/Man/Savior/Messiah, is letting people touch Him. These people believed He could heal them, but for the most part they did not ask Him to save them from their sins.

These people are flocking to Jesus because He can heal them, not because they actually believe He is the God/Savior/Messiah/King who can save them. What is so sad is that even His own disciples are struggling with the same thing. They still had not really locked in on who Jesus actually was.

But even though these people did not have a solid theological faith, He did heal them. Isaiah predicted that when the God/Savior/Messiah/King would come, He would heal them.

Here is what His disciples learned and here is what we learn:

**(Reality #1) - Jesus Christ was popular.**

Everywhere He went He was mobbed by people.

**(Reality #2)** - Jesus Christ is powerful.

Jesus is the One who can heal the sick.  
Jesus is the One who can calm the storm.  
Jesus is the One who can feed the hungry.  
Jesus is the One who can walk on water.  
Jesus is the One who can control the demons.  
Jesus is the One who can raise the dead.

**(Reality #3)** - Jesus Christ is personal.

He has taken a personal interest in them and others. He has gone to various places and personally ministered to personal individuals.

But what most did not believe and admit was that Jesus is the only One who can save us from our sins. He is My only personal Savior.

Don't you make the same mistake most of these people made. You may be a real religious person who has gone to church for years. You know about Jesus. You have heard the stories. You have sung the hymns. You may have actually experienced positive things from God.

But here is the heart of the issue—Have you personally told Jesus Christ you are trusting only in Him to save you from your sins? Have you personally invited Jesus Christ into your life?

If you have not trusted Jesus Christ as Savior, do it now. Believe on Him and you will be saved.