

**Daily Bread with Brother Hwa-Chi (Not reviewed by the speaker, for personal use only)**

**Mark 06: 45-56**

Brothers and sisters, peace be with you; this is Hwa-Chi. It's time to read the bible again. Today, we will continue to read Mark Chapter 6, verses 45-56.

Jesus, in the wilderness near Bethsaida, fed 5000 men with five loaves and two fish, and there were twelve baskets full of fragments left. This was the first time the twelve disciples participated in Jesus's miracle. Jesus broke the bread and fish, and they passed it to the crowd, continuously supplying until everyone was satisfied. People consider food essential, and if Jesus provided in this way daily, the crowd would surely follow Him, establishing the kingdom of God. Wouldn't that be good? The disciples might have been immersed in the joy of this success, thinking it was the simplest and most convenient way. Everyone could leave their work, follow Jesus every day, and have bread to eat. Wouldn't that be wonderful? However, Jesus' actions were quite the opposite.

**Verse 45: "Immediately He made His disciples get into the boat and go before Him to the other side, to Bethsaida, while He sent the multitude away."**

Jesus promptly compelled the disciples onto the boat. The Greek word for "made" can be translated into English as "force" or "compel." This implies that the disciples were somewhat unwilling to leave, considering the multitude that had been fed. With so many willing to follow, wasn't this the best time to establish the kingdom of God? However, Jesus compelled the disciples onto the boat, like herding ducks onto a rack, taking them to the other side of Bethsaida. The wilderness of Bethsaida is on the east side of the city, and now they were going to the west side, towards Capernaum, but Capernaum was not the destination. Gennesarete, southwest of Capernaum, was the actual destination. The distance from Bethsaida to Capernaum was only 8 kilometers, yet Jesus chose the water route instead of the land route, aiming to avoid the crowd. Later, Jesus would personally dismiss the crowd.

Jesus instructed the disciples to arrange the crowd in rows and distribute the food to them. Jesus involved the disciples in these tasks. Now, dismissing the crowd should have been an easier task, so why did Jesus personally do it? Mark does not provide the reason. In Mark's narrative, Jesus is always busy with work, and Mark doesn't explain why. This is part of the disciples' training: to be servants of God, simply obeying God's commands without needing to know the reasons. Thankfully, God knows we are people of little faith, stubborn in our ways, always seeking explanations. So, God has provided the Gospel of John, specifically in John 6:15, where John points out the reason – the people wanted to force Jesus to be their king. The disciples probably couldn't resist this temptation, so Jesus sent them away. Jesus knew clearly that the kingdom of God is not established in this way. In Romans 14:17, Paul clearly tells us, "For the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit."

Jesus came the first time to accomplish redemption, crucified to the cross to satisfy God's righteous requirements and justify those who believe, bringing peace between God and men. Through faith, our spirits are reborn, and after rebirth, we can enjoy the joy in the Holy Spirit. This is the way to establish the kingdom of God. Mark does not record these truths, but John, in John 6, reveals the true spiritual meaning after the feeding of the five thousand: Jesus Christ is the true bread of life, and His words to us are spirit and life. Mark emphasizes the disciples' training, especially in the exercise of faith: obeying Jesus' commands, holding onto God's words in various situations, allowing faith to be tested, making it more precious than gold, as mentioned in 1 Peter 1:7.

**Verse 46: "And when He had sent them away, He departed to the mountain to pray."**

Jesus sent away His disciples and went up the mountain alone to pray. During His time on earth, there was only one recorded prayer in Gethsemane, where He took Peter, James, and John with Him. Otherwise, Jesus often prayed alone, a time of intimate communion with the Father. I believe many of these prayers were for these

twelve disciples. Jesus was clear about His purpose on earth – to solve the problem of man's sin on the cross. This mission was not difficult for Jesus, but what was challenging was how these twelve disciples could carry on His ministry after His death, resurrection, and ascension. He had only one year left with them, as John 6:10 indicates the feeding of the five thousand occurred around the Passover, and the next year's Passover would be when He would be crucified. With only one year remaining, how could He best help these twelve disciples?

**Verse 47: "When evening came, the boat was in the middle of the sea, and Jesus was alone on the land."**

Around sunset, after feeding 5000 people with five loaves and two fish, it was probably around 7 p.m. when they boarded the boat. By now, it was evening. They had been on the sea for several hours while Jesus remained on the shore, praying on the mountain. The disciples had Jesus' words to go to the other side of Bethsaida, but without His physical presence, was believing in His words sufficient? Although Jesus was not with the disciples on the boat, He was on the mountain praying. On the one hand, He prayed for the disciples, and on the other hand, He could watch over them from a distance. In fact, Jesus had never truly left His disciples, just as today, He has not really left us.

**Verse 48: "Seeing them straining at rowing because the wind was against them. Around the fourth watch of the night, He came to them, walking on the sea, intending to pass by them."**

From the mountain, Jesus saw the disciples straining at the oars due to the contrary wind. Today, as we obey the Lord's words and sail in the world's vast sea, it's common to face headwinds because this world is continually at odds with the Lord. The disciples rowed for several hours, feeling the toil, perhaps starting to complain. Why not stay on the shore? Why not work there? With so many people and great needs, why sail against the wind now? They struggled with the waves until the

fourth watch of the night. In Roman time, the night was divided into four watches, starting from 6 p.m., with each watch lasting three hours. So, the fourth watch of the night was approximately from 3 a.m. to 6 a.m. In other words, they had been struggling at sea for nearly 10 hours. While Jesus prayed on the mountain, observing their diminishing faith, He began walking on the sea towards the disciples. Jesus originally intended to pass by their boat to guide them, not intending to board the boat.

**Verse 49: "But when they saw Him walking on the sea, they thought it was a ghost and cried out;"**

Jesus walked on the sea was a completely new experience. The disciples never expected Jesus to walk on the sea. It was dark, and they might not have seen clearly. Seeing a person walking on the sea, they thought it was a ghost and cried out. Dear brothers and sisters, is this not a common sight for us as well? Even though the environment is under God's control, when our faith gradually weakens, and God kindly seeks to help us, we might mistake it for something frightening. This reflects our preconceived impressions of God. Anything outside of this framework, we label as frightening. We do not allow God to do new things; we confine God within our own frameworks. The disciples did not escape their preconceived impressions of Jesus, thinking He was a ghost. Yet, this was also part of Jesus' training for the disciples, breaking their frameworks, their established impressions. Jesus approached the boat closer and closer.

**Verse 50: "For they all saw Him and were troubled. But immediately He talked with them and said to them, 'Take courage! It is I; do not be afraid.'"**

At this point, all the disciples saw Him, gazing intently, yet not recognizing Him, causing each of them to be troubled and frightened. Seeing their fearful reaction, Jesus quickly spoke because if He remained silent, they might have used their oars to strike Him. Jesus promptly reassured them, saying, "Take courage! It is I; do not

be afraid." The phrase "Take courage" in the original Greek can be translated as "Be Bold." Jesus encouraged them to be courageous and not to fear. The middle phrase "It is I" in English is translated from the Greek "I AM." In Exodus 3:14, when God called Moses, and Moses asked for God's name, God's response was "I AM THAT I AM." In this context, "I AM" is the eternal and unchanging God. Therefore, when Jesus said, "It is I," He was saying, "I AM," the same God known to their ancestors.

After Jesus said "I AM," the parallel passage in Matthew 14:28-33 adds another segment. Peter challenged Jesus, saying, "Lord, if it is You, command me to come to You on the water." Jesus said, "Come." So, Peter got out of the boat and walked on the water to go to Jesus. But when he saw that the wind was boisterous, he was afraid, and beginning to sink, he cried out, saying, "Lord, save me!" Immediately Jesus stretched out His hand and caught him, and said to him, "O you of little faith, why did you doubt?" It turns out that even after Jesus said "I AM," Peter issued a challenge. Peter wanted to walk on the water himself, and indeed, Peter became the second person in history to walk on water. Though he only took a few steps, it was still an accomplishment, considering others lacked the courage.

Therefore, after Matthew records this event, his ultimate conclusion in Matthew 14:33 is, "Then those who were in the boat came and worshiped Him, saying, 'Truly You are the Son of God.'" It was only at this moment that they truly recognized Jesus as the Son of God. Jesus is the great "I AM." However, when Peter later recounted this story to Mark, he omitted the part where he walked on the water. Why would Peter do that? Perhaps we can find the answer in the following verses, 51-52:

**Verse 51, 52: "Then He went up into the boat to them, and the wind ceased. And they were greatly amazed in themselves beyond measure and marveled. For they had not understood about the loaves, because their heart was hardened."**

After Jesus got into the boat, the wind ceased, and as a result, they were greatly amazed. The translation of "greatly amazed" in the NKJV is somewhat understated. In reality, two adverbs are added before "amazed" to emphasize the magnitude of

their amazement—exceedingly and in abundance. If translated directly into Chinese, it would be their extremely, greatly amazed state. It seems that Mark wants to highlight the reason for their amazement. Verse 52 states, "For they had not understood about the loaves, because their heart was hardened." Their amazement was related to the incident of the loaves, and their hearts were still hardened at that time. "Hardened" is translated from the Greek word that can also mean "calloused" or "obstinate."

Let's explore why they were amazed. It is highly unlikely that it was due to the wind ceasing because in Mark 4:39, they had already experienced Jesus rebuking the wind and calming the sea, so they knew Jesus could control nature. This amazement probably stems from Jesus' walking on the water.

How does walking on water and the incident of the loaves become causally related? There are probably three possibilities: The first possibility is more direct—this is the moment when they truly recognized Jesus as the Son of God. As mentioned in Matthew's account of the feeding of the five thousand, they had not truly recognized Jesus as the Son of God until He walked on water and revealed "I AM" to them.

The second possibility goes further; not only is Jesus the Son of God, but He can also perform new things at any time. This implies that Jesus cannot be restricted by their previous understanding. In the feeding of the five thousand, Jesus did not follow the disciples' method. He did something new, and now, with Jesus' walking on water, another new thing occurred, and they thought it was a ghost. This further reinforces the idea.

The third reason, which I personally prefer, is that their amazement was not at what Jesus did but at their own lack of faith. Despite following Jesus for some time and witnessing many miracles, why couldn't they overcome their shallow understanding and self-assumed perspectives even now? Reading this, I find some comfort; it turns out it's not just us who are often of little faith. Even the twelve disciples of Jesus, who experienced and participated in His miracles, couldn't keep up with Him. Since even the twelve disciples were like this, it's inevitable that we often lack faith.

Thanks be to the Lord; God is always full of mercy and grace. In our times of weakened faith, as long as we are willing to turn to Him, He can increase our faith.

**Verses 53-54: "When they had crossed over, they came to the land of Gennesaret and anchored there. And when they came out of the boat, immediately the people recognized Him."**

Gennesaret is located about 30 kilometers southwest of Capernaum, from where they sailed, and Jesus walked on the water. According to John 6:16-17, they probably first returned to Capernaum, where Jesus revealed Himself as the bread of life to the crowd who had been fed. Perhaps later, they went back on the boat and sailed to the next town, Gennesaret, where the people immediately recognized Jesus upon His arrival.

**Verse 55: "And ran through that whole surrounding region and began to carry about on beds those who were sick to wherever they heard He was."**

By this time, Jesus had gained significant fame in Galilee. Those who recognized Him brought sick people on beds to wherever they heard Jesus was. While Jesus' primary ministry was preaching, driven by His compassion, He seldom turned away those seeking deliverance from demons or healing from illnesses.

**Verse 56: "Wherever He entered, into villages, cities, or the country, they laid the sick in the marketplaces and begged Him that they might just touch the hem of His garment. And as many as touched Him were made well."**

Jesus traveled extensively in and around Gennesaret—cities, villages, and the countryside. With a multitude of sick people, they eventually resorted to asking Jesus only to allow them to touch the hem of His garment. Clearly, the healing of the woman with the issue of blood, who was healed by touching Jesus' garment,

had become widely known. Therefore, the people sought to touch His garment, and everyone who touched Him was healed.

May we be willing to reach out in faith and touch Jesus; our faith can become a channel for His grace, and the power of healing can come from God to us. Dear brothers and sisters, just as Jesus trained His twelve disciples in those days, today He trains everyone willing to follow Him in the same way. May God helps us, so as when we read the Gospel of Mark, we can enter the school of Jesus Christ and, through Mark's messages, receive training as disciples of Jesus.

Let us pray together: Lord, thank You for being with us in the storms of our lives. Sometimes You sleep in our boat, and when we lose faith, You rebuke the wind and calm the sea for us. But there are also times when You're not in the boat but on the mountain praying for us from afar. Help us to see that we are never alone, and when we cannot hold on any longer, You will personally come alongside us, telling us not to be afraid, for it is the Lord! Help us to let our faith be tested, making it more precious than gold. Bless our church, where many saints can join together in the school of Jesus Christ and to receive the grace You provide to the church. Bless our church; we pray in the name of Jesus Christ.