

## “God has a Plan”

Mark 6:45-56

Over the last few weeks, we have seen in the preceding verses from Mark’s Gospel, the disciples had returned from visiting the villages of Galilee. They had been preaching and healing the sick under the authority Christ had given them. And Jesus urged them to come with Him “to a desolate place and rest for a while.” That was the plan. However, as we heard, the crowds followed them because of their spiritual hunger, and Jesus satisfied that and their physical hunger at the same time in the feeding of the 5000.

“Immediately” after this, Jesus made His disciples get into a boat and go to the other side of the Sea of Galilee – to Bethsaida – while He dismissed the crowd. He wanted them to have some time to rest, and He wanted to have some time alone to pray – as was His custom. I believe this speaks volumes in regard to the value of an active prayer and devotional life.

Jesus is True God; there is nothing He does not know; there is nothing He cannot accomplish; yet even He seeks out His Father in heaven and is refreshed with some quiet time with His Father. Quite often when our lives get hectic, the tendency is to cut out time with God. It is determined that “we

just don't have time for that." "I don't have time for church this week." "I don't have time to stop and read."

This merely compounds the problem. After all, it is Christ our Lord who said, "Come to Me all you who are wearied and burdened and I will give you rest." What God brings is refreshing, strengthening, nourishing, and is therefore very different from what the world offers.

The disciples departed our Lord to have some time alone, but they didn't have such a refreshing time out on the water. The wind was against them, so they couldn't use a sail and they were going to have to row the boat – against the wind and waves. To make matters worse, in the wee hours of the morning, in the fourth watch of the night, that is sometime between 3 and 6 in the a.m., they appear to see a ghost walking on the water.

As soon as they demonstrate their terror and their misunderstanding of who it is that is walking on the water, Jesus makes Himself known. Throughout Scripture, God acts in this way. Whether dealing with Abraham, Moses, Isaiah, or numerous others to whom He revealed Himself, never does God present Himself as a questionable Divine Something. Immediately, Jesus says, "Take heart; it is I. Do not be afraid."

Last week, we heard how Christ permitted Himself to be found by the great crowd, even though His "plan" was to have some quiet time with His disciples. He had compassion on the people, and He satisfied their hunger.

This week, we hear how Jesus permitted Himself to be seen by the disciples as He was walking on the water, even though His “plan” was to pass by them and meet them in Bethsaida.

This is also a characteristic of God which He displays throughout Scripture. God seemingly changes His mind when confronted by the desperate plea or obvious need of His people. After the “Golden Calf” incident on Mt. Sinai, God tells Moses that His “plan” is to wipe out the Israelites and start over with Moses and his family – a very tempting offer for Moses.

Moses “reminds” God of His promises to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Then God “changes His mind”, “changes His plan”, relents from His anger, and does not bring disaster upon the people.

Do you really think God had “forgotten” His promises to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob? Or was this a test for Moses? It was an intriguing offer.

Do you really think Jesus, walking on the water, wanted to pass by the disciples without being noticed? Or was this a test for the disciples? I tend to think it was intentional. If Jesus didn’t want to be noticed, He wouldn’t be noticed. Just like what we heard last week with the feeding of the 5000, I think that Jesus had every desire to allow the great crowd to find Him. He

probably preached extra-long on purpose so that they would be there over the dinner hour – so that He could feed them. Preachers can be diabolical that way – so I hear.

He allowed the disciples to see Him passing by so that they could call to Him, and He could come to them. What a vivid object lesson demonstrating that nothing in all creation can separate Christ from His disciples. Even if you are out in the middle of the sea, Christ is there.

No matter where you are, Christ is there. He has exercised His plan with you in mind. Sometimes His plan is to allow you to struggle for a while against the wind and waves and storms of this life. And like with storms, we don't always see them coming, and we don't know how long they will last.

The one thing that we do know is that the God who made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all living creatures has permitted Himself to be found. He has looked down on you with compassion and has revealed Himself and His plan for your eternal salvation in His Divine Word. And He has fed you and satisfied your hunger.

And when your heart is troubled, even when you are terrified and feel alone in the dark in the midst of a storm, nothing can separate His love from you. He has not, nor will He ever forget His promises. Just like with Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses; just like with the disciples in the boat and the crowds of people on the shore, you are part of God's plan. Amen.