

Missing Jesus

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[0 : 00] Pastor Kevin is out of town today, so pray for him and for Miss Sandra as they're traveling. This morning we look at Mark chapter 6, Jesus demonstrating his divine power and his nature through feeding the 5,000. Then later that night showing his divine glory in an astonishing way where he intends to pass by his disciples while walking on the lake in the midst of a storm.

Jesus, he wants them to see that their deepest need really is for him, for who he is. To understand that, God is wanting us to understand the same thing.

Jesus, the purpose for Jesus passing by them on the lake was to show them his glory. And you recall, in the Old Testament, Moses, God's purpose for passing by Moses, even though Moses had to remain hidden in the cleft of the rock.

Remember, God put his hand on him, told him that he couldn't see his face. Moses could only get a glimpse of God's back. He wasn't able to look into the face of the God-man like the disciples could. And even though they could, even though they did, they saw Jesus, the God-man, they still struggled at times to believe that he was God in the flesh. And rather than read the entire passage, about 23 verses this morning all at once, we'll read as we go along.

[1 : 34] So let's pray and ask help from the Lord for understanding and applying his word to us this morning. Father, we come to you again acknowledging our need for you to help us, Holy Spirit, help us, Lord Jesus, to see more of your incredible love for us that we have sung about, that we worshiped you in song and in the prayers.

We pray that the understanding of your word and your love for us will bring every other thing into proper perspective. Forgive us for all of our sins, especially the preacher this morning whose sins are many.

And be with us now, we pray in Jesus' name. Amen. Okay, you can be seated. I don't know if you've ever had the feeling when leaving home for a trip somewhere that you're forgetting something.

You know, you're missing something. Have you ever arrived at your destination and realized that you'd forgotten something or someone important? When I was a child, my parents were traveling in the United States.

My parents were missionaries. And they were visiting a few of their supporting churches. And in Fort Wayne, Indiana, my dad spoke in a church one Sunday evening. And when they got back to the pastor's home where the family was staying, they realized that the MacKillop family of six was missing one.

[3 : 02] And he said, oh my goodness, we're missing Billy. Where's Billy? The deacons had turned out the lights in the church and Billy was fast asleep, you know, on a comfortable pew in the church.

So he was fine. But my dear mom, she almost died of a heart attack. As you can imagine, if you're a mom, you can relate. A similar thing happened to Mary and Joseph.

If you remember, they got partway on their journey and realized they were missing Jesus. And that's the title of our sermon this morning, Missing Jesus.

How do we ensure that we don't forget about Jesus? You know, how do we stay mindful of his presence with us so we don't get all wrapped up in what we're trying to do?

You know, the busyness of our lives wrapped up in our circumstances, the problems, the conflicts, the trouble in our lives. So much so that we miss Jesus. It's because of our forgetfulness and our unbelief in who Jesus is and what he's done that we can often end up missing him.

[4 : 08] That's why we need to come to worship. That's why we need to be faithful in worship to come every week to hear again the good news of the gospel, to remind us, to remind our hearts of all that Jesus has done and is doing for us.

And just two points this morning as we look at two events recorded in Mark 6. They actually take place over the course of one day. Jesus multiplying the loaves and the fishes and then walking on the water in the storm just a few hours later.

So first of all, point number one, we can miss Jesus when we think our agenda is more important than his. We get so focused on what we're doing, our agenda, that it's more important than his agenda.

And secondly, we can miss Jesus when we think our circumstances are bigger than he is. You know, our issues, our circumstances. Think about your busy life. All of you have a busy life. Even if you're retired, you know, I've talked to retirees and they say my life is more busy. You know, I'm scheduling more things. Even though I'm retired, I thought it would be easy. Think about your busy life and your problems or conflict.

[5 : 22] And let's look at the first event beginning in verse 30 of Mark 6 where Jesus feeds the 5,000 disciples. They thought they were getting away from the crowds and the busyness of caring for the needs of people just to relax with Jesus in a remote place.

But there was a more important agenda. And reading from verse 30, The apostles gathered around Jesus and reported to him all they had done and taught. Then because so many people were coming and going that they did not even have a chance to eat, Jesus said to them, Come with me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest.

So they went away by themselves in a boat to a solitary place. But many who saw them leaving recognized them and ran on foot from all the towns and got there ahead of them. When Jesus landed and saw a large crowd, he had compassion on them because they were like sheep without a shepherd.

So he began teaching them many things. By this time it was late in the day, so his disciples came to him. This is a remote place, they said. And it's already very late.

Send the people away so they can go to the surrounding countryside and villages and buy themselves something to eat. But he answered, You give them something to eat.

[6 : 38] You give them something. They said to him, That would take more than half a year's wages. Are we to go and spend that much on bread and give it to them to eat? How many loaves do you have?

He asked. Go and see. When they found out, they said five and two fish. Then Jesus directed them to have all the people sit down in groups on the green grass.

So they sat down in groups of hundreds and fifties, taking the five loaves and the two fish and looking up to heaven. He gave thanks and broke the loaves. Then he gave them to his disciples to distribute to the people.

He also divided the two fish among them. They all ate and were satisfied. And the disciples picked up twelve basketfuls of broken pieces of bread and fish. And the number of men who had eaten was five thousand.

Amen. That's the word of the Lord for us. You know, Jesus and his disciples, they needed a break. They were hungry and tired.

[7 : 41] And Mark says that so many were coming and going that they didn't even have a chance to eat. Now you can imagine their relief when they thought they were going to a remote place where no one could possibly find them.

And Mark says they went by themselves in a boat to a solitary place, a quiet place. You know, far from towns and villages and needy people. Peace and quiet and renewal and rest was on the disciples' agenda.

But when they arrived at this peaceful and quiet place, they realized that the crowd of people they thought they had left behind, there they were waiting for them. And Jesus' energy, you know, may have been low, but his heart of love and mercy was still overflowing for these dear people.

Who were, Mark says, were like sheep without a shepherd. So instead of, you know, turning the boat around and escaping to another remote place, Jesus began teaching the people many things. And Jesus, he has the freedom to make changes to our agenda, right? To change our plans. I mean, if we're going in one direction and Jesus comes to us and says, you know, I'm going in this direction, follow me.

[8 : 59] What are we going to say? You know, he has the authority to change our plans. He's always looking for opportunities to give his sheep more of himself.

He's always wanting to show them more and more of his compassion and his glory. And Jesus never takes a vacation from showing mercy, from being compassionate. Because that's who he is, right?

That's who God is. And he's always looking for greater faith in us. He's always looking for greater belief in who he is and the good news of grace for people in need.

The greatest need of these sheep without a shepherd was more of Jesus. Their greatest need was more faith to believe that he was there to meet their deepest need. I mean, that's why they came, right?

That's why they ran from all the towns and villages and were waiting for him. Because something about Jesus was meeting a need, many of them, for many of those people.

[9 : 59] They needed to experience more of his love for them. And the disciples needed the same thing. Jesus was teaching the crowd late into the day so that the people were in need of something to eat.

But there was a problem. You know, they were far enough away from a town or a village that this created a dilemma, created a problem. But it wasn't really a problem because Jesus was there. Jesus wanted to use this dilemma as an opportunity to demonstrate what he was teaching them about himself, about who he is.

And the disciples' plan is to send the people away so, you know, they can take care of their own need for food. But Jesus says, you give them something to eat. You know, the believing response of the disciples would have been, Lord, we can't.

But we know you can. We can't give them. We can't provide for all these people. You've been giving them food for their souls. You can give them something for their stomachs. We know you're able.

[11 : 04] But they need more faith as well. They need more faith expressing itself through love. They were missing Jesus. They were really missing who he was that was their teacher.

They were focused on the obstacles that they could see. And even they were a little sarcastic with Jesus. You know, because they say, we can't buy that much food. It costs a fortune.

Half a year's wages. Where would we find that much? And how would we transport it? Have you ever shopped for a large group of people? Maybe, you know, for a picnic, maybe two or three hundred people like the block party that we have.

Imagine five. How would they? They would need tractor trailers, right? Boats upon boats to get all that food. You know, all these logistical problems made Jesus' requests seem impossible.

And maybe Jesus wanted just to hear them articulate out loud the impossibility of this situation. Just to reinforce for them the power that he was about to display.

[12 : 10] Because he wanted them to see who he was. And that was the whole purpose in his performing miracles, right? Was to point to his divine nature of who he was.

He was going to give them a glimpse of his glory. And from a measly two fish and five small loaves of bread, Jesus is going to multiply this little meal. Maybe this meal could have satisfied one or two people.

But he aims to provide for almost an army of people. Five thousand plus. And everyone would be satisfied with plenty left over. You know, in Mark's account, Mark says there were five thousand men plus women and children.

So we know that the five thousand number, the five thousand estimate was on the low end. You know, maybe there was ten thousand people. A lot of people. And Jesus intends to demonstrate his divine nature and his glory to these people and to his disciples.

By multiplying two fish and five little loaves. How am I like the disciples missing Jesus?

[13 : 17] You know, how do I express my forgetfulness and my unbelief in who God is and what he's done for me? Well, I can miss Jesus when I get, you know, I get so focused on me, myself and I and my agenda.

If I don't keep Jesus right in the center of my happy marriage, for example. You know, I can end up focusing on my needs rather than what's best for my dear wife. The same is true with friendships that we have with others.

If we're mainly seeking our own fulfillment rather than seeking the flourishing of the other person in the relationship. We can miss Jesus in that relationship. We can miss Jesus when we believe that our financial blessings are mainly for us to enjoy.

And we forget his agenda is that we share, that we be generous to others who have need of the blessing, who have need of help.

And we can miss Jesus in shaping the hearts of our children when we think it's up to us. It's up to me to accomplish my agenda for my children. It's up to me to give them everything, to protect them from everything, to control every circumstance in their life.

[14:29] Not recognizing that I can give them nothing of lasting benefit apart from the Holy Spirit's work in their hearts that I can't see. That should make us more humble and prayerful parents.

That's a reason to pray, to understand that the power doesn't rest with me as a father or a mother, a parent, but with the Holy Spirit as I depend on him, as I pray for them, as I teach them.

Someone wisely said, you know, raise your kids so you can pamper your grandkids. Don't pamper your kids because you might end up raising your grandkids. So there's some truth to that.

Some of you are just getting that, right? I mean, we should also acknowledge that sometimes parents are a big help in raising their grandkids because God in his mercy has them step in and help in a difficult situation, right?

Just our responsibility doesn't stop just because our kids are grown and out of the house. We're still parents, even though they may get off the payroll. I have two kids graduating in a couple of weeks, one from college and one from seminary.

[15:44] So I don't know what I'm going to do with all that tuition money. You know, I'm thinking maybe I'll lease a BMW or something. No, it'll go to paying bills, paying all the debt.

But, you know, our responsibility doesn't stop just because our kids leave home. We can miss Jesus when we forget that he's with us at all times.

And he's free to even orchestrate conflicts and dilemmas and trouble in our lives and even in our kids' lives that are intended to show us and show them more of himself, more of who he is, to put his divine nature and his glory and his power on display.

He wants to create greater dependence on the Father, as he demonstrated in his life, dependence on the Father, to increase our worship of God, to move us into greater compassion for others.

So what conflicts or problems is he allowing in your life for you to face? You know, what problem has God designed with just you in mind?

[16:52] He has designed this perfect conflict just so you could see more of his compassion for you and others through that difficult situation.

You know, it's not if you have conflict, but it's how you view the conflict that's always present to one degree or another in your life. And it helps to have a proper perspective on our trouble and conflicts when we remember that the greatest conflict is over and done with.

Because of what Christ has done on our behalf. That helps put my little trouble in perspective. We can end up missing Jesus when we think our agenda is more important than his.

And we can end up missing Jesus when we think our circumstances are bigger than he is. Let's read the rest of the passage that continues with some more serious trouble for the disciples.

You know, after everyone is fed, everyone's satisfied, leftover baskets of bread and fish have been collected. Mark says, reading from verse 45, says, Immediately, Jesus made his disciples get into the boat and go on ahead of him to Bethsaida while he dismissed the crowd.

[18:08] After leaving them, he went up on the mountainside to pray. Jesus again demonstrating his dependence on the Father. Later that night, the boat was in the middle of the lake and he was alone on land.

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. But when they saw him walking on the lake, they thought he was a ghost.

And they cried out because they all saw him and were terrified. Immediately, he spoke to them and said, Take courage at his eye. Don't be afraid. Then he climbed into the boat with them and the wind died down.

They were completely amazed. For they had not understood about the loaves. Their hearts were hardened. So something, Mark says, there's something unhealthy about their hearts.

The disciples' hearts, there was a problem that they couldn't even see. It goes without saying that Jesus is free to allow even to orchestrate trouble to come into your life for the purpose of giving you more of himself.

[19 : 22] And while he goes up on the mountain in dependence on his Father, Jesus, he lets his disciples struggle against the wind and the waves. And they experienced fear and anxiety and further exhaustion.

Remember, they were already tired. Before they even came to that desolate place, they were in need of rest. And then, you know, Jesus had compassion on these 5,000 hungry people, 5,000 or more people.

And they'd fed the people. And now they were suffering even more exhaustion and maybe fearing for their very lives on this lake with the wind, pushing them back and the waves.

But just like the trouble that God allows to come into your life and my life, the trouble in their life at that point had a purpose. It was purposeful.

You know, trouble and conflict never come to us by chance. I don't know if you noticed in the newsletter that went out this week that got into your inbox, there's a Heidelberg Catechism question every week.

[20 : 27] And it just so happened, by coincidence, that in yesterday's email, we got to question number 27. You know what question number 27 is, right? The Heidelberg Catechism.

It says, what do you understand about the providence of God? The answer, the almighty and ever-present power of God by which God upholds, as with His hand, heaven and earth and all creatures and rules them in such a way that leaf and blade, so leaves of trees and blades of grass, rain and drought, fruitful and lean years, food and drink, health and sickness, prosperity and poverty, all things, in fact, come to us not by chance, but by His fatherly hand.

God's providence, it's not the easiest truth to wrap our minds around, but the Scripture is clear and the Scripture supports it over and over again. There's no such thing as chance.

Your trouble and mine has purpose. And if it helps us to call on the Lord Jesus, if it helps us to see His compassion and His glory and His grace, or to make us more compassionate, more gracious people, to give us more grace for other people, more mercy as we've been shown mercy, then it accomplishes a great deal.

The trouble accomplishes a lot. It seems that Jesus waits while His disciples, maybe like He waits four days, remember, when His friend Lazarus died?

[22 : 05] He waits while His disciples continue to strain at the oars against the wind, and He waits until just before dawn when He goes out to them on the lake, walking on the water. And it isn't, it's easy for us to just read and pass this by without recognizing the impact it should have on us every time we read it.

You know, it should be like a man walking on water and against fierce winds and rough waves, you know, just walking on water. Have you ever tried that?

You know, have you ever stood on the edge of a boat dock or on the edge of a shore and just kind of stepped out onto the water? Just took a step. You know, who does that?

What man or woman can just as easily walk on water as he can walk on land? Now, think about that. What would be your reaction if you witnessed that, especially if it was in the darkest part of the night and you were exhausted, you're already fearing for your life.

You know, would you simply say, well, look at that. That must be Jesus. Jesus is coming to help us. Maybe not. That wasn't how the disciples responded. You know, they cried out in horror.

[23 : 20] You know, if they didn't believe in ghosts before now, they did now. If they weren't superstitious, now they were superstitious. That must be someone back from the dead. This can't be good.

And just like us, they so easily forgot what they had just witnessed Jesus do in hours before, just a few hours before. They had seen Jesus look up to heaven, say a blessing, break the few loaves of bread into what would feed hundreds, thousands of hungry people.

They'd seen an incredible display of divine power and glory, yet they still didn't get it. You know, they were still missing Jesus. And Mark reveals their lack of faith in saying, they were utterly astounded, for they did not understand about the loaves, but their hearts were hardened.

So he makes the connection between what Jesus had done in feeding the 5,000, breaking the loaves, and what was going on in the hard hearts of the disciples.

Their hearts were calloused by unbelief. In Matthew's account, he includes the part that Mark leaves out in this more concise account, where Peter actually calls out to Jesus to ask, you know, if he could come out of the boat to meet him.

[24 : 35] And Jesus says, okay, Peter, come on. But before Peter takes many steps, his faith fails him, and he begins to sink in the waves, so Jesus has to grab him and bring him to the boat.

And Jesus says to Peter, oh, you of little faith, oh, Peter, why did you doubt? In other words, did you forget who I am?

You know, after this, Matthew says they worshiped Jesus, and they said, truly, you are the Son of God. They were closer at that moment to getting it, to understanding who Jesus is.

And Jesus still says to us today, you know, why do you doubt? My dear, dear friends, why do you doubt? Why are you missing it? Don't be afraid. I'm right here. It's me.

You know, it's his word to his disciples. Take courage. It is I. Don't be afraid. Jesus is really echoing the words of his father to Moses. You remember?

[25 : 37] Moses was at a point of great fear in his life. God was sending him to Pharaoh to demand freedom for his people. And he says, but, you know, I'm afraid.

You know, what should I tell him? Who sent me? And God says to Moses, tell Pharaoh that I am is sending you. Tell him that the glorious, eternal, all-powerful, all-knowing, ever-present, unchangeable, self-existent I am is the one who has sent you.

And Jesus is basically saying the same thing to his disciples to get them to see who he is, to give them another glimpse of his glory. He says, it is I.

It is the same I am passing by you, walking on the lake. And my purpose in passing by you is so that you could see my glory, the same glory that was shown to Moses as God passed by him.

We just sung about it this morning. I am who was, who is, who is to come. That's what Jesus wanted them to understand of who he was, the self-existent God-man.

[26 : 47] Amen. So what's your greatest need? Well, it's to know and love Jesus more and more. That's your greatest need. What's your greatest problem?

Well, our greatest problem is our unbelief in who Jesus is, right, and what he's done for us. The love that he's bestowed on us by the Father through his life and his death. We're continually missing Jesus, and we need continual reminders of his good news.

We're continually battling, all of us, this callousness of unbelief that tends to form over and around our hearts, making them hard. And we need reminders of the good news of the gospel story every day to soften those calluses.

We need ongoing reminders to our hearts of the goodness of creation, the tragedy of the fall and the consequences of the fall, the beauty of our redemption by Christ, shedding his blood to cover our sin and give us his reputation and his righteousness.

And to remind us all that on the mission that we are on with him, together with him, as he is seeking to restore all things to himself. Jesus has given of himself for you, and he wants to continually give you more and more.

[28 : 02] You don't have it all. You don't have all of Jesus. You need more of Jesus. And he wants to give you more of himself. He said, when he stood up at the feast, in a loud voice, he says, if anyone is thirsty, let him come to me.

Come to me and drink. And whoever believes in me, as the scriptures has said, rivers of living water will flow from within them. So I know, I know my heart is calloused and hardened by unbelief many times.

I know because I get wrapped up in my own agenda. And I sometimes believe that my circumstances are bigger than Jesus. And I believe it's true of you as well.

He wants you and he wants me, all of us, to be reminded often of who he is and what he's done for us. Amen? Amen. I'm sure you've heard of Johnny Erickson Tada and the conflict and trouble that she has faced for most of her life.

Over 50 years now, she's been paralyzed from the neck down from a diving accident that happened when she was 16. And this is what Johnny has to say about trouble and suffering that comes into our lives.

[29 : 13] She says, suffering reduces us to nothing. To be reduced to nothing is to be dragged to the foot of the cross. It's a severe mercy. When suffering forces us to our knees at the foot of Calvary, we die to self.

We cannot kneel there for long without releasing our pride and our anger, unclasping our dreams and desires. And in exchange, she says, God imparts power and implants new and lasting hope.

You know, Johnny, in spite of her suffering, she must be one of the most hopeful people on the planet. If you've ever heard her speak or you've read some of the things that she writes, you'll know. She has the joy of Christ, even though she's been in a wheelchair for over 50 years. And we should be the most hopeful people in all the world because of the good news that we have, right?

Of what God has done in Christ, our Savior. I'm so thankful that my sins, though they are many, his mercy is more.

[30 : 18] Though we often miss Jesus due to the callousness of sin and unbelief that try to build up around our hearts, Jesus never leaves us. Jesus is always doing something to give us more of himself.

Even if it's scary or painful or difficult, you know, the problems, the dilemmas, because of his mercy. Even when we miss what he's doing, he never forgets us.

He doesn't miss you. So we have much to rejoice in. Amen? Let's give him praise. Let's pray.

Father, we thank you for your ongoing care for us.

Thank you that you know us, each one. You know us through and through, that you have individual plans for our daily lives.

It's not just about us. We know you have saved us into a family, into the church. And we are together in community. And we will be with you together as the bride of Christ, forever worshipping you.

[31 : 27] And we know it's our hearts, the callousness of unbelief of our hearts. That are prone to create a hard shell around our hearts, to harden them.

So we miss what you have done for us. We miss what you're continuing to do. Forgive us, we pray, Father. And help us with our lack of faith.

Continue to teach us and guide us. And apply these things to our hearts today. In Jesus' name. Amen.