

Take Heart

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January 4, 2026 | Mark 6:45-56

Prepared from the spoken message and lightly edited for readability. Scripture quotations and spoken phrasing are preserved as delivered.

There's resurrection power in the name of Jesus. Amen.

Hey, happy New Year. Happy 2026. If you have a copy of God's Word, go ahead and turn with me to Mark chapter 6. We'll pick up in a minute in verse 45.

Have you ever seen somebody have a really bad day? Have you ever been a witness to somebody having potentially the worst day of their life?

I had one of these a few years ago. It was actually on one of the best days of my life, oddly enough. I had the opportunity to go with some friends on an offshore fishing trip. You know, the best kind of friend to have is one who has a boat, right? You don't have to have one, but they do.

We got to go on this offshore fishing trip, and sometimes you have a string of luck where everything that can go wrong does go wrong. Well, this was quite the opposite. Everything that could go right did. We got out on the water, and if you've ever been out on any large body of water, usually there are waves. This was like the backyard pool that you may have. I mean, it was glass on the water. If you threw a rock into it, the ripples would go for days.

We were just out there, and it was as flat as could be. On top of that, I'm not a great fisherman, but even I felt like every cast we made, we would reel in a fish. For some of you, that's a miracle in and of itself, right? We were just having the best day ever.

We were looking around, and apparently word had gotten out because, at this point, there were boats all over the place near where we were. In the midst of all that, I looked, and there was a small johnboat. Now, if you're not from Beaumont or somewhere like that, think of a johnboat like a kayak. It has a little motor on the back. It's not a big boat. Honestly, those guys had no business being out in the middle of the ocean, but they were. It was flat, they were catching fish, and they were having a blast.

About the time I noticed that small boat out there, I looked right behind it and saw one of the biggest thunderstorms I've ever seen in my life rolling in. I mean, there were blue-black clouds out there, and lightning was popping. We quickly came to the conclusion that this was not going to be a good time.

We did what you're supposed to do if you're out in the middle of nowhere on the water: you try to get under an oil rig. The thought is that if lightning strikes, it'll strike the rig instead of us. That's already the kind of situation we're in.

We went over to the oil rig, and everybody was kind of there. I looked and saw these two guys in this little bitty johnboat. They were starting to move with the waves, and the waves were picking up. I could see how wide their eyes were. Can you imagine this right now? They were scared to death.

The waves started picking up, and they took their bait buckets, dumped the bait out, and started scooping water out of the boat. Just as a general rule of thumb, you want to keep the water outside of the boat. The water was going into the boat, and they were no longer having the best time of their lives. They were afraid, worried, and concerned.

What I hadn't noticed in the midst of all this was that there was a huge boat, the biggest fishing boat out there, with a big tower on it. It had started making its way closer to the johnboat. At the top of this tower, you could see the captain. From where he was, he could clearly see what was going on. He, too, could see the fear in the eyes of these fishermen in the small boat.

He slowly made his way closer. As he got closer, he saw them and moved toward them. Then he got on the radio, and the captain of this ginormous boat said to the small boat, "Hey, if your boat goes down, I'm here. I see you. I'm going to keep you safe."

I watched these two guys in the smaller boat go from having fear in their eyes to having smiles come across their faces because they saw and knew that something far greater than what they had was going to save them in their time of desperation.

Let me cut to the chase here. Everything worked out great. Pretty much as soon as the storm came, it went. As the storm passed, let me tell you, that johnboat did not stay the rest of the day and fish. They went straight back to the dock.

What I want to point out as we get started this morning is that we're going to look at a passage where there's a very similar situation going on. The disciples are on a boat, and they're scared for their lives. We're going to study how Jesus comes onto the scene and changes everything.

To give you some context for where we're picking up today in Mark chapter 6, Jesus' ministry is increasing. More and more people are hearing about what He's doing. Opposition toward Jesus is mounting, and He has just fed the 5,000. If you're familiar with that story, He takes a couple of loaves of bread and some fish and multiplies them so that thousands of men, women, and children can eat, to where there is no more need. Jesus has made a way where there was no way.

As we pick up in verse 45, right after He has performed this miracle, the disciples are sent ahead of Jesus in the boat.

Immediately he made his disciples get into the boat and go before him to the other side, to Bethsaida, while he dismissed the crowd.

And after he had taken leave of them, he went up on the mountain to pray.

And when evening came, the boat was out on the sea, and he was alone on the land.

— Mark 6:45-47

This is by no means the main idea of the sermon today or the passage we're going through, but as we're starting, I think it would be healthy for us to note what Jesus does in this situation. He has just been doing ministry all day. He has performed the miraculous. He's probably physically exhausted. What He does is, He doesn't go home and go to sleep. He gets time away from everyone and everything and spends it alone in prayer with His heavenly Father.

Maybe, if you're starting to make some resolutions for 2026, this might be one. Maybe you're in a good habit of waking up in the morning and spending time alone with God. But what would it look like if, before you went to bed at night, you did the same? After the chaos of the day, after the busyness, when you're at your physical exhaustion limit, what if you went to your heavenly Father in prayer and just spent time with Him?

Can't you just see this? Jesus goes up on the mountain to be alone with His Father, and He sends the disciples across the sea. Put it this way: Jesus is praying; the disciples are paddling. That's the situation we're in.

As we go through this passage today, we're going to note some things about what Jesus does. Pay attention to the verbs you see here.

Jesus Sees

If you're taking notes, write this down this morning: Jesus sees.

And he saw that they were making headway painfully, for the wind was against them.

— Mark 6:48

Imagine the disciples in the boat at this point. They were probably not thrilled about being sent out into the night without Jesus, into the wind, after a long day. The wind picks up, and they're paddling against it. They're probably having to fight for every inch of progress they're making. It's likely that the waves were whitecapping, which is what waves do as the storm grows, the winds pick up, and things get worse.

But in the midst of all this, Jesus sees them.

A lot of theologians and scholars say that this isn't a testimony to Jesus having a good angle from the mountaintop and having really good eyesight. It's a testimony to His supernatural ability, to His omnipotence, and to His omniscience. The disciples were likely miles away from where Jesus was at this point, and He sees them.

We have two small kids. My daughter is three. She would probably like for me to clarify that she's three and a half. She is so sweet. She is responsible. She is thoughtful. She is a rule follower. She is awesome.

But our second, our baby boy, is just old enough to be dangerous. You know what I'm talking about? All of you who are in the fog of war of parenting right now probably have one who's like this. I don't know if it's a boy-girl difference or a firstborn-second-born difference, but what I've noticed is that we have to keep our eyes on him all the time.

If there's anything he can climb, he's going to do it: the couch, the fireplace, a wall. He's going to try to get to the top and WWE off something, try to hit his sister, or do something like that. He's trying to do front flips. We have to stay where we can see him all the time.

Unfortunately, if we take our eyes off him for a split second, that's usually when something goes wrong, right? You're like, "Okay, I see him. He's in a safe place. I'm going to go for two seconds, pull the food out of the oven, and come back." Then he's crying, he fell, he has a bruise, or whatever is going on.

We're human as parents, and every time we look away, something bad seems to happen.

But what I want to tell you this morning about our God is that nothing could be further from the truth. He never takes His eyes off us. He can see us. He knows what we're experiencing. He sees us struggling against the wind in the storm, just trying to make it.

Maybe this is your first time back at church in a while. Maybe this is your first time at church ever in your life. Let me tell you this morning that Jesus sees you right where you are. He knows your circumstances. He knows what you're facing. He's not unaware. He isn't asleep or checked out. He has His eyes on us because He loves us.

Jesus sees us, but He doesn't just leave it there.

Jesus Shows Up

Jesus sees us, and then Jesus shows up. Jesus comes onto the scene.

And about the fourth watch of the night he came to them, walking on the sea. He meant to pass by them, but when they saw him walking on the sea they thought it was a ghost, and cried out, for they all saw him and were terrified.

— Mark 6:48-50

Maybe you read through your Bible quickly, but you might need to slow down and underline that. Circle it: "walking on the sea."

Look at what Jesus does, and then after that we'll look at what the disciples do. Pay attention to the differences in what's going on.

It says that Jesus comes during the fourth watch of the night. When is that? That's about 3:00 a.m. to 6:00 a.m. What does that mean? It's more than reasonable to think that Jesus, who sent the disciples away in the evening, spent all night praying to His heavenly Father and spending time with God.

Some of us in this room don't even know that the hours between 3:00 a.m. and 6:00 a.m. exist, and Jesus is up praying and spending time with His Father.

Then it says He came to them. Think about where the disciples are right now. They're probably not having a good time. The wind is picking up. They're paddling harder. They're making less and less headway into the

wind. The disciples needed safety. They needed a refuge, but the refuge comes to them.

Jesus didn't stay on the mountaintop with the Father. He was there with God, spending time with Him, but in the disciples' moment of need, He left that and came to them to do something only He could do.

Does that sound familiar? Isn't that the gospel? Jesus, counting equality with God not a thing to be grasped, left heaven and came to earth in the form of a servant to meet a need that we could never meet on our own. That's the good news this morning: Jesus did something we could never do.

How does He come to them? Walking on the sea. You can't overlook that. He did the impossible to get to them.

You have to understand the time in which this was written, too. At the time, the sea wasn't something for which they had GPS locations or had all mapped out. The sea was the embodiment of chaos. It was scary to people. Many people died there because they got out on the water and couldn't find their way back. Storms kicked up, and they were left helpless.

Jesus walks over that water in the storm, meets them where they are, and delivers them.

Then there's a phrase that might seem like a throwaway phrase to you, but it certainly isn't. It says that He meant to pass by them. The disciples might have thought He was just power walking to beat them to the other side, kind of waving at them as He went by: "All right, see you there."

But many scholars think this could be what's called a theophany. It's alluding to when God passed by Moses in the Old Testament. God's hand covers Moses' eyes so that he wouldn't see God's face and die. God walks by, and Moses sees God's back. Then He does it again in Exodus 34 with the Ten Commandments. God passes by Moses.

But Jesus doesn't just pass by them. He joins them.

Jesus does all of this. He does the impossible just to get to them. He shows up. How do the disciples respond? Not great at all.

When they saw Him, they thought He was a ghost. Think about what just happened before this. Jesus says, "Y'all take the boat. Y'all go ahead. I'm going to meet you over there." There's no second boat. He has told them, "I'm going to get to where you are."

Then they see Him, freak out, and think He's a ghost. It says they cry out. I would imagine it was probably a couple of octaves higher than they would normally speak. They were frightened. They cried out physically because, internally, they were terrified.

They were so wrapped up in their circumstances and what was right in front of them that they didn't recognize Jesus.

You know what I think? I think fear causes forgetfulness.

Think about your life. Think about something you've gone through, or maybe something you're right in the middle of now. Maybe you've gone through financial difficulty. Maybe there are struggles in your family. Maybe

there's something crazy going on at work that has caused you to have some fear because you don't know how to fix it. You can't resolve it on your own.

When you start getting a little bit afraid and start living in fear, the first thing we usually do is forget about our God. We forget about what He has done. We forget about who He is. We forget about His character and His promises to us.

But Jesus shows the disciples who He is. He shows them by walking on water and meeting them where no one else could. He shows them that He is God, that He's not a ghost, and that He's not just a man or a teacher.

Let me tell you this morning that rabbis don't walk on water. Good teachers don't walk on water. Nobody else could get to the disciples, and Jesus does. In a moment when they probably felt like all was lost, Jesus shows up on the scene, and nothing can stop Him from getting to those whom He loves.

But are you ready for it? Are you expectant that God will move? How do you respond when Jesus comes to you? Are you full of faith that it'll happen, or are you surprised, scared, and terrified when you see God show up and do something only He can do?

Jesus Speaks

Jesus sees. He shows up. Then Jesus speaks.

He has just shown them that He's God, but look at the second part of verse 50:

But immediately he spoke to them and said, "Take heart; it is I. Do not be afraid."

— Mark 6:50

Do I need to read that one more time? When Jesus shows up on the scene, He has physically shown them who He is. Then He speaks to them and says, "Take heart. It is I. Do not be afraid."

To take heart is to have courage. He knew they were scared. He probably heard them scream at a pretty high pitch. He saw the look of terror in their eyes. Remember seeing somebody's eyes so wide because they're full of fear and they don't know what to do?

Jesus comes to them and addresses the heart of the matter, and that's the heart of the disciples. He tells them to take heart, to have courage, because it is Him. He doesn't talk to them about their circumstances. He doesn't address what's going on around them. He tells them to focus on Him.

He tells people throughout His ministry to take heart at different points along the way, but He tells each person to take heart in the midst of their struggle, not on the other side of it, but while they are in their struggle.

To the paralyzed man and his friends in Matthew 9:2, it says:

And when Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, "Take heart, my son; your sins are forgiven."

— Matthew 9:2

To the bleeding woman in Matthew 9:22:

Jesus turned, and seeing her he said, “Take heart, daughter; your faith has made you well.”

— Matthew 9:22

He speaks again to His disciples in John chapter 16 and says:

I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace.

In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world.

— John 16:33

How can we take heart? How is it possible for us not to be afraid of what's going on in the middle of the storm?

We can take heart because when Jesus says, “It is I,” He's saying, “I am.”

God said to Moses, “I am who I am.”

And he said, “Say this to the people of Israel: ‘I am has sent me to you.’”

— Exodus 3:14

Jesus is saying this to the disciples. Jesus is the better Moses. Moses couldn't do everything that was needed to free people from circumstances they couldn't get out of, but Jesus can.

Jesus comes to this earth as a better Moses, a better Savior, and He saves them like He can save us. Jesus has shown them that He's God. Now He's telling them that He is God, that He is Yahweh, that He is the Son of God. Because of that, because of who He is, we can have courage.

Jesus isn't worried about the waves at all. The same voice that tells them, “Take heart. Have courage. Don't be afraid,” is the same voice that spoke those waves into existence. Do you think He's worried about that? He's not worried about what He created and can walk over.

I'm not sure this morning what situation you might find yourself in. Maybe everything's going fine, and I hope that it is. I hope this is the best year you've ever had ahead of you. Maybe you're in the best time of your life. But I want you this morning to take heart, not because your circumstances are good and not because you worked hard to get there. You can take heart because Jesus is who He said He is.

Maybe you're in the worst storm of your life. Maybe 2025 was terrible. You just want to throw that in the garbage and move on, and you're glad it's a new year. Regardless of whether it's been great or not so great, we can take heart. Jesus' command to us is the same regardless of our circumstances: we can have courage. We don't have to fear because the great I Am has overcome the world.

The command isn't based on your circumstances. Some of you in this room do a great job of having courage in the Lord when everything's great. But the second something goes sideways, fear invades every part of your life.

I want you to notice something in the text today: the wind doesn't stop blowing until verse 51. The storm is still going on when Jesus looks at the disciples and tells them to take heart.

His command to us isn't based on our circumstances. It's based on who He is. We can have courage. We don't have to be afraid going into a new year with a lot of unknowns because Jesus is still on the throne. Jesus has still made a way. Jesus is still bigger and better than anything you'll face this year, anything you could be worried about.

We can take heart, not in money, not in the culture, not in people-pleasing, and not in our strength or ability. We can take heart in the Jesus who sees, who shows up, who speaks, and who gets in the boat.

Jesus Gets in the Boat

Look at what it says in verse 51:

And he got into the boat with them, and the wind ceased.

— Mark 6:51

Some of you are trying to work for the wind to stop blowing, and you haven't invited Jesus into the boat with you.

He gets in. Jesus wants to be with us. Some of us this morning have been trying to paddle to get to the other side of what we're going through instead of letting Him in.

The wind stops when the presence of Jesus comes onto the scene because the presence of Jesus changes everything.

Our God, Jesus, God in the flesh, is for you, and He desires to be with you. You don't have to work to do this on your own. You can't do this on your own. Jesus is right there saying, "Let Me in."

But will you? Will you take heart in Him instead of your own ability?

What's crazy about this passage is that Jesus does all of this. He sees them, shows up, speaks to them, and gets into the boat, and the disciples still don't get it.

Do you know anybody like that? Don't look in a mirror right now.

The disciples still don't get it. Look at the second part of verse 51 and then verse 52:

And they were utterly astounded,

for they did not understand about the loaves, but their hearts were hardened.

— Mark 6:51-52

The NASB says it this way:

For they had not gained any insight from the incident of the loaves, but their heart was hardened.

- Mark 6:52 NASB

What does that mean? They just saw Jesus feed thousands of people, and in the next moment, they're saying,

"I don't know. This storm is what I'm in. I saw You do that for somebody else, but I'm scared because I don't know if You're going to show up for me. Maybe the eternal God of the universe has changed in who He is in the last few hours."

Do you see yourself in this a little bit?

It says that their hearts were hardened. Why are we surprised when God does what only He can do? Are you hardening your heart when you see God move? When you see people get baptized, people come to faith, and people step into what God has called for their lives, does that move you? Or do you harden your heart and then wonder if God can show up for you the very next day?

You'll either take heart with your faith in Jesus, or you'll harden your heart toward Jesus. You'll miss Him. You'll miss how much He has for you, how good He is, and the blessing of knowing Him even in the middle of what you're going through. He's better than everything else.

Don't harden your heart.

Recognize and Respond

The disciples responded with hard hearts, and they just didn't get it. But thankfully, the story doesn't end here. The story doesn't end with them in the boat in the middle of the sea. They made it across, and the people where they landed encountered Jesus, too. They responded totally differently from the disciples.

Look at verse 53. We'll go through the end of the chapter as we wrap up.

When they had crossed over, they came to land at Gennesaret and moored to the shore.

And when they got out of the boat, the people immediately recognized him

and ran about the whole region and began to bring the sick people on their beds to wherever they heard he was.

And wherever he came, in villages, cities, or countryside, they laid the sick in the marketplaces and implored him that they might touch even the fringe of his garment.

And as many as touched it were made well.

— Mark 6:53-56

Do you see the difference here? Jesus shows up, and instead of reacting with hard hearts and disbelief, they say, "This is who they say He is. This is the Messiah everyone's been talking about. I have faith that He can do what they're saying He can do."

Then they act accordingly.

They start bringing people from anywhere and everywhere they can find to Jesus because they know He can heal them. If they can just touch the hem of His robe, He can heal them. They have faith.

There's the same reality for both groups. The disciples and the people in Gennesaret both needed Jesus. The

difference is their recognition and their response.

The disciples didn't recognize Jesus, and they were afraid. They didn't respond in faith. Their hearts were hard.

The people in Gennesaret immediately recognized that Jesus was the Savior, that He could save them from what they were going through right then and there, and that He could save them from an eternity apart from Him, from sin and separation from God. Jesus was the Messiah they needed.

They responded in faith. They did whatever it took to get people to Him because they believed He could make a way where there was no way.

If you're still taking notes, and I hope you are, this is how we're going to land the plane this morning. The application is the invitation.

First, recognize Jesus for who He truly is. He's not just a good guy or a moral compass to guide your action steps in life. He is the holy Son of God who has overcome the world.

That's where the whole thing goes wrong with the disciples. They didn't recognize who He was in that moment. By the grace of God, we serve a God of many second chances and of grace. They all come around. Eleven of the twelve come around to seeing that Jesus is the Messiah. They follow Him, live for Him, and die for Him, and they're now in eternity with Him. But in this moment, they didn't recognize who He was.

Do you recognize that Jesus is who He says He is?

Secondly and lastly, will you respond accordingly?

As we go into 2026, we're four days in. Some of y'all have already bombed every resolution you made four days ago, so let's start a new one today. Collectively, as a church, let's resolve that we would respond to Jesus according to who He truly is.

Let's live lives of bold faith. Let's bring anybody and everybody we come in contact with to church. Let's share the gospel with anybody and everybody who will listen because we believe that Jesus wasn't just a good man. He is the holy Son of God, and He can save us from sin and separation from Him.

How are you responding today? Do you respond in fear? Are you trying to paddle harder, yell louder, and fight against the wind more? Or are you going to take heart today? Are you going to have courage? Are you going to put that fear to the wayside because your eyes are fixed on Jesus, the Son of God, the great I Am?

Are you taking heart in the One who sees, the One who shows up, the One who speaks, and the One who gets in the boat with us?

Let's pray together this morning.

As you close your eyes and bow your head, and as we go into this time of invitation, I want you to think about this: Maybe Jesus has been doing some pretty big things around your life lately, and you still don't believe.

Maybe you need Jesus to do what only He can do, but you've been having trouble saying, "You know what?

I'm all-in with Him. I'm going to choose today to take courage in Him, to take heart in who God is, not because of what I can do, but because of who He is."

Maybe today, maybe this morning, at the start of 2026, is when you go all-in and take heart in Jesus, not in what you can do.