Trusting Christ in the Darkest Night, part 2

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Preacher: Dr. Michael Staton

[0:00] This is the First Mustang Pulpit Podcast, a podcast of the weekly preaching and teaching at First Mustang.! Thank you for joining us. It is so good to be with you this morning.

We're going to be in Mark chapter 6 in just a moment if you want to find your way there with me. Mark chapter 6. I just want to share a quick note about Kent and his family.
We are very excited for him and for his family, for what the Lord is doing and has been preparing him to do. I'm so thankful for this opportunity.
Anytime that the Lord calls someone to a place of leadership and a place of spiritual influence, we want to pray for that church.
And we want to do the best we can to support him and support First Baptist Church of Clinton. Please do take seriously the call to pray for him, he and his family during this transition.
[1:07] But also be praying for their church. We want great things to happen in their church, great things to happen in the city of Clinton, great things to happen through Kent's ministry there. And I want you to know also that Kent has really handled all of this the very best way possible.

He came to me a little over a year ago or so and just shared with me what he has shared with you as a church a couple of times now. That he just sensed the Lord stirring in his heart for a change of ministry to be the lead pastor of a congregation.
And so Kent and I spent some time together the last year just talking about what that looks like. Talking about pastoring and preaching and leadership and church budgets and weddings and funerals and all the things that go along with that.
The only thing I asked Kent to do, I told him, you know, we'll pray with you, we'll help you, I'll do everything I can to help prepare you for this, do everything I can to help you in this transition. The only thing I asked you to do is to give 100% here while the Lord has you here.
And he has stayed fully invested in our church and our students as a staff member. While he has also been eagerly trusting and waiting on the Lord to open up this door.
[2:22] And so Kent is leaving here to go to Clinton with our complete support, our complete love, our complete backing. And I hope that not only before he leaves that you would encourage him, but even after he's gone and has moved and relocated.

That you would continue to stay in touch with Kent and Kayla and pray for them and encourage them. As he mentioned a moment ago, their church has not had a pastor for a year and a half. But they've also got several other staff positions that have been vacated for about a year. And so he is going to a place with no staff at all. And the Lord will use him to be able to help build and put that back together.
And so we want to be praying for him. As he shared with us in staff meeting last week, he knows that he can call any of us anytime. We all on staff will be quick to support, help him in any way that we can.
And encourage you as a church to do the same thing. We'll have a time to be able to say goodbye to Kent and his family next Sunday night, January 29th. We'll do that in the gym.
[3:26] We've got growth classes this month that go from 5 to 6. So just next week, come to the growth class you're attending at 5 o'clock. And when that class is dismissed, we'll all just make our way down there to the gym and have a chance to be able to say goodbye to Kent and Caitlin, be able to share our appreciation for their ministry.

We're also, as we think about the Lord preparing Kent to go and to pass that church, we also recognize how the Lord has been preparing us. Kent and Joey Snodgrass have led our youth ministry for a number of years now.

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Now, Joey grew up in our church, interned for us for several different summers and a couple of different positions, and has been one of our full-time youth pastors for five years now.
And so, Kent is very well ready to go and to lead First Clinton. Joey is very well ready to lead our student ministry here. We've got things in great shape by the Lord's goodness.
And it really allows us to be able just to celebrate all the way around what the Lord is doing. And I'm just grateful for how the Lord has worked and how the Lord has provided for their church, how the Lord has provided for the Jaggers family, how the Lord has provided for us, Joey and Lacey.
[4:40] And we're excited just to see ministry continue on as it has been in a very great, great way.
Well, in Mark chapter 6, we last week looked at Jesus walking on the water around the theme of trusting Christ in the darkest night.

Let me just read this text again to get in front of our minds today. Mark 6 verse 45 says, 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.
But immediately he spoke to them and said, Take heart, it is I. Do not be afraid. And he got into the boat with them, and the wind ceased.
And they were utterly astounded. That's what we looked at last Sunday. Just as a reminder of some of the details that have taken place, Jesus had just finished feeding the thousands.
[6:22] Mark tells us there were 5,000 men. There'd be 15,000, 20,000 people all together with women and children. And he's just fed all the thousands from just one boy's lunch.

And the crowd was so amazed by what he had done. And they began to think, what could happen if this man was in charge of them?
And you look at what could happen with your economy, what could happen with your leadership, what could happen with food supply, what could happen with a military power. If your king is able to make food out of nothing, and if your king is able to heal wounded people, wounded soldiers, there would be no stopping them.
And so, John tells us that after he fed the thousands there, that the people tried to come and take him by force and make him their king. Jesus perceiving that's what they were doing, and his time had not come.
And besides that, he wasn't going to be a king as they meant it. And so, he gets away from the crowd, dismisses the crowd, tells his disciples to get in the boat.
[7:34] They get in the boat, and he goes up to pray. As we looked at last Sunday, the disciples would have been discouraged by this. They wanted to stay. They wanted to be able to ride this wave of moment, momentum.

You got 20,000 people clamoring to make him king. Why would we not stay here and bask in this? Why would we not stay here and ride this wave of momentum?
So much of their ministry has been a struggle, and here's our chance, at least as they saw it. But Jesus made them get on the boat, the text tells us, while Jesus went away to pray.
If our Lord himself needed to withdraw to pray, how much more is that true for us? And the disciples get in the boat, and a storm comes up.
We've talked about that in the Gospel of Mark. The Sea of Galilee rests 700 feet below sea level, and you get this cool air that runs down, and warm air right above the water, and where that cool air and that warm air collide with the hills around it, it's just this cauldron.
[8:45] It's just this instant storm. And Mark tells us that they were rowing painfully. They were struggling with this. We know because of the geography of the land, and because of the length and width of the Sea of Galilee, that they should have never been more than two miles from shore.

And the other Gospels tell us they were three or four miles from the shore. That just is because their boat has been getting blown back further and further into the Sea of Galilee. It's the fourth watch of the night when the Lord comes and walks on the water.
This is the darkest time. This would be about three or four in the morning. It's at literally the very darkest time of the night that He shows up.
Now, I want to repeat again what we looked at last Sunday, that the reason why the disciples are in this predicament is not because they were disobedient. They actually did what they were told to do. They were told to get into the boat. They did. They may have protested at first, but eventually they got in the boat. They did what they were supposed to do. And the storm came anyway.

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[10:04] Sometimes life goes that way. Sometimes you're honest. Sometimes you do the hard thing. Sometimes you do the right noble thing and the storm comes anyway.

The text tells us in verse 50 that they all saw Him and that they were terrified. It's the only time that Mark uses this exact word in his gospel.
They were terrified. But the Lord spoke and said, Take heart. It is I. Ego e me.
I am. Do not be afraid. And He got into the boat with them and the wind ceased.
And they were utterly astounded. Let's go to verse 52 where we left off last week. For they did not understand about the loaves, but their hearts were hardened.
[11:18] That's a strange verse. The disciples did not understand what was happening with the loaves.

They watched it all. They saw the miracle. They saw the way that Jesus took control of the situation.
They watched as He sovereignly broke the bread, prayed over the bread, multiplied the bread, fed thousands and thousands of people, and there were 12 basketfuls left over.
They watched the whole thing. And though they saw it all, Mark says they somehow missed it.
They did not understand about the loaves. They certainly understood that one boy's lunch fed thousands of people.
[12:28] That much they knew. They saw that. They witnessed that. They experienced that. What they didn't understand is why in the world did Jesus turn the crowds away?

Why did Jesus not go along with their desire to install Him as King? Why did Jesus tell the disciples to leave the scene and why in the world did Jesus go up by Himself to pray, send the disciples alone without Him, tell the crowds to disperse, and it's just as if nothing has happened.
They did not understand about the loaves. They just witnessed this amazing miracle.
The only miracle that Jesus performed that's recorded in all four Gospels is the feeding of the 5,000 men. And they saw it and they watched it and they took it in and yet they did not understand it because their hearts were hardened.
The disciples. And yet, how often is this true in churches today? Every single Sunday where people are there and they sing the lyrics and they hear sermons about redemption and grace and forgiveness and they hear prayers offered up and in one sense people in church services experience it all and yet in another sense so many people miss it.
[14:20] it's very possible to hear songs and sing songs and hear sermons and take notes on sermons and sit in Bible study classes and even participate and listen in Bible study classes and speak in Bible study classes and yet to have missed it all.

But as I mentioned last week a lot of things change after the feeding of the 5,000 men. His popularity reaches its high point.
We're about a year away from the crucifixion and the next 12 months are going to bring increased opposition. After this event you're going to see a shift in his life and ministry.
It's going to be more and more away from the crowds and more and more just training the 12. And the disciples after the storm that night begin to understand.
Matthew 14 recording the same event says at the end of it that they worshiped Jesus when he got in the boat and said truly you are the son of God.
[15:40] you've got back to back these two miracles. The euphoria of the feeding of the thousands and the pain and fear of Jesus walking on the water.

And there are lessons that were best learned in the darkest part of the night that were not learned when the crowds were chanting his name.
there are things the disciples had to learn in the darkness of night because they were not learning them when everything was going their way.
I suspect the same is true for us. Sometimes there's just lessons we have to learn in the storm. Sometimes there's just the dark part of the night we have to endure.
so that we can learn to trust. Well we've encountered this amazing miracle of the feeding of the thousands and this miracle of Jesus walking on the water.
[16:51] There's actually three miracles that Jesus performs by the way. One is he walks in the water. Two is when he gets in the boat he immediately commands and the winds cease.

And three when he gets in the boat immediately the boat is at sea or at shore. It gets immediately off of the sea right to the shore.

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And the reason for that is the storm had fully served its purpose. And that's what I want you to understand is that this storm served the purpose.
And so do the storms in your life. As we think about these two miracles and how the Lord used them to teach his disciples let's draw out some implications from this miracle.
Things I think we need to remember. Number one proximity alone does not guarantee understanding. Proximity alone does not guarantee understanding.
[18:05] The disciples were walking with Jesus day after day after day. They saw him. They talked to him. They had meals with him. They heard his preaching. They witnessed his miracles.

They were right beside him and still they missed it. The crowds heard his teaching and the crowds witnessed his ministry and yet the crowds still wanted to use Jesus to accomplish their own agenda. This is the amazing thing to me. That these crowds hear Jesus say who he is. They hear his message and then they witness his miracles that validate his message and yet still they want to say why don't you change your agenda to fit ours.
That's just how stubborn humanity can be. Jesus says that he's the son of God. He says that he's the Messiah.
Then he does miracle after miracle to back it up. Still most of the crowds have no understanding. That was true for the disciples.
[19:23] That was true for the crowds and that can be true for people even today. It's possible to be in church every single Sunday and to completely miss it.

To be so close in proximity yet so far away relationally because proximity alone does not guarantee understanding.
So ask yourself this morning, do I really know who Jesus is? Do I really believe who he is? Do I really understand why he came and what he was doing?
Number two, I want you to see that God uses our storms to draw near to us. God uses our storms to draw near to us.
And we don't like this so much because storms are hard. You think about James 1, count it pure joy, my brothers, when you face various trials, multicolored trials, when you face trials of all different kinds, trials of different duration, trials of different intensity, trials with different severity, your trials in life are going to be multicolored.
[20:45] They're going to be all different kinds of trials. And yet, God uses our storms to draw near to us. And so, the question that I want you to consider is, are you learning and living the lessons from the storms of life?

Are you learning and are you living out the lessons from the storms of life? I mean, you think about the disciples here in this story.
Jesus, in verse 45, he had to make his disciples get in the book because they didn't want to do it. He had to make them do it. Now, you would think that while you can understand why they wouldn't want to be away from him, you would think that if you've just seen Jesus perform the miracle of feeding the thousands of people, he just witnessed this miracle, that you would argue with him. Why are you arguing with Jesus? I suppose we could ask ourselves the same question. Why do we argue with God's word? word? We who would affirm that we believe it, we who affirm that God's word is inspired and inerrant, yet so often can find ourselves quick to disobey his word.
And we might look at the disciples and say, why is Jesus having to make his disciples get in the boat? Why don't they just do what he says? And yet, why don't we?
[22:14] Well, because the human heart can be stubborn. But as they get in the boat and the storm begins to rage, they're afraid for their life, and then Jesus comes walking, comes passing by, and in verse 49, they thought it was a ghost, that makes them even more frightened.

And in verse 52, because their hearts were hardened, they were not learning the lessons. But something about that dark part of the night is going to help them to learn.
It's after this event that they have the confession, the group joint confession, surely you are the son of God. I think if you would have asked the disciples before the events of the storm, do you need a storm in your life, they just said no, I don't need a storm in my life, and yet the truth is they did. They needed to be reminded that Christ rescues, that Christ alone is the one they can trust in and put their hope in. I mean, look no further than the disciples themselves, that they needed the storm. Sometimes so do we. Then the third thing, don't miss the gospel message in this miracle. Don't miss the gospel message in this miracle.

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[23:54] Job chapter 9 says that only God can walk on the seas, and now Jesus is walking on the water because Jesus is God. Only Jesus can save your sin because only Jesus is a redeemer.

this is why he came. The ultimate reason of why he performed the miracle with the 5,000 men, and the ultimate reason why he performed the miracle of walking on water was to show the crowds and his closest friends that he can be trusted.
To give evidence that he is the Messiah, that he is the redeemer. everything about his miracles is to validate his message.
And the problem is you've got so many people in Jesus' day who love the miracles, but they don't care about the message. So many people in Jesus' day who were all about bringing their sick and the lame to him so that he could heal them, but they didn't want anything to do about the teaching of sin and repentance.
Nothing has changed in our day. Nothing has changed in our day. Our society loves to talk about heaven, but it's so ironic to me that people who will talk about heaven and sing about heaven and hope about heaven and yet don't believe the Bible, and why in the world do you believe in heaven if you don't believe the Bible?
[25:29] why do you think that you want to go to heaven when you die if you don't love Christ today? Heaven is going to be the non-stop praise and worship and bringing glory to the name of Christ.

If you don't enjoy that today, who are these people talking about heaven? Well, it's just the same thing that's happened in Jesus' day. People want the miracles, they just don't care for the message. But you've got to understand that the purpose of the miracles, the purpose was to back up the message. If you've got miracles but no message of salvation, you have no hope.
And they missed it. And you really can't, you can't read this story without thinking about this. During this storm, so Jesus walking on the water and you've got the disciples there in the boat, afraid for their lives.
Jesus is then going to get into the boat and just before he commands the winds to cease, you basically have the entire earthly kingdom of God in one boat.
[26:49] What if the boat had turned over? What if Jesus hadn't silenced the wind and what if the boat would have capsized, they would have died.

If Jesus and the disciples die, the work of the kingdom is over. The whole kingdom is in one boat. They found a fishing boat from Jesus' day.
You can see it in Galilee today. We'll see it when our group goes there next month to Israel. It's about 27 feet long by about 7.5 feet wide.
It's about the size of a normal boat in Jesus' day. 27 by 7. You've got the 12 disciples, you've got Jesus on that boat, and what if that boat turns over and what if every life there is lost?
Well, here's the answer. Here's what you've got to remember. nothing happens outside of the sovereign will of God. Nothing happens outside the sovereign will of God.
[28:04] That boat is not at the mercy of the storm. The storm is at the mercy of God. And the disciples needed to learn that lesson, maybe we do too, that we need to trust the Lord and go where He says to go and do what He says to do, and nothing is going to happen that does not pass through His hands to us.

And so, we need to be trusting. And maybe today, you find yourself in the storm. Maybe today, you say, I feel like I'm in the darkest part of the night.
Maybe you feel like you've been in that place for a week, or maybe you feel like you've been in that place for a year. For some, maybe you feel like you've been in that place for many years, and the darkness just won't lift.
No matter how intense the storm, no matter how long the storm, you just keep trusting Jesus.
when Jesus came to them, he says to them, take heart, it is I, do not be afraid. Now, we have to ask ourselves, why would they have been afraid?
[29:25] Well, they had good reason to be afraid. Because they were not getting to their destination, because the storm was blowing, because they weren't sure they were going to make it. They had good reason to be afraid.

But the message of Jesus is, if I am with you, you do not need to be afraid. That's the lesson we need to learn today.

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If the Lord is with you, you do not need to be afraid. If you belong to Him, you do not need to be afraid. You may have health issues that make your heart anxious.
Be of good courage, the Lord is with you, do not be afraid. You may have relationships that break your heart, but be of good courage, the Lord is with you, do not be afraid.
And one thing I want to show you here as we get to the end of chapter 6, let's just look back and take a quick sweep through all of chapter 6. In verses 1 to 6, look back at it with me again.
[30:40] We saw this purposeful rejection of Jesus. He's at His own hometown, and they wanted nothing to do with Him. And then in verses 7 to 13, we saw this deliberate training where Jesus sends His disciples out because it's not enough just to study and just to watch.

You have to go do the work of ministry yourself. And then we saw the sovereign provision that Jesus gave as He fed the thousands of people. And we saw the sovereign power of Jesus when He walks on the water and when He calms the storm.
And then here at the very end of chapter 6, we see the common grace of the Lord. Verse 53, 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 and 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.
[32:01] It's kind of a chaotic scene here at the end of the chapter. They get back to the shore and everybody recognizes Him.

Jesus is here. He's back in town. And it says that the whole region began to bring their sick. The whole region is taking up people on their beds wherever they heard He was.
Verse 56, wherever He came, villages, cities, or countryside, all the people were laying their sick in the marketplaces.
Everywhere Jesus, it just turned into a makeshift hospital. Jesus walking down the countryside, people would bring their sick and just lay them on the ground.
Jesus would go to the marketplace, they would bring their sick and just lay them on the ground. Wherever Jesus went, people were just bringing their sick everywhere, begging Him, imploring Him to heal them.
[33:03] People trying to grab one of the tassels on the edge of His tunic. No mention here of faith, no mention of whether they believed or did not believe, no mention of what they really thought about Jesus.

you just see the common grace of God. Common grace is everywhere.
Today the sun rose giving us a new day. It's common grace. People were sustained through the night as they slept.
God gave common grace. The rain falls on the just and the unjust. Wouldn't that be something? If the rain only fell over the yards of the faithful?
You could go out to your house on a spring day and you get, I never thought my neighbor, I knew my neighbor wasn't a believer, I could tell. You go to your Sunday school class, is there grass green?
[34:24] Is there grass drying off? Because the rain only falls on the just. No, the rain falls on the just and the unjust. It's the common grace of God. Even people who last night used their breath to curse the things of God, if they lived through the night, they experienced the common grace of God.

And one of the things that we need to understand is that we need to be faithful to respond to His grace. The crowds missed it.
Even the disciples up until their storm missed it. And even people today in church all over the world miss it.
A couple of weeks ago, a lot of you saw this. If you didn't watch it live, certainly most of you have gone back to hear the story of the NFL football player who was severely injured on the field a couple weeks ago.
They did CPR on him on the field. Almost lost him right there on the football field for the Buffalo Bills. And that night they showed the teams on their knees praying and some of you saw even some national sportscasts that had people praying to Jesus in Jesus' name right there on their sportscast.

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[36:08] As people were praying and asking the Lord to heal this man because he was so close to death. And in that moment on that night, in the days, a couple days that followed it, people were all for talking about a God that heals.

They want a God that heals. Everybody wants a God that heals. But what about a God that forgives?
a God that forgives because your greatest problem is not your physical death. Your greatest problem is your spiritual death.
I thought about the, not just the NFL, I thought about just our entire culture as related to DeMar Hamlin and him about dying on the football field when you read verses 53 to 56.
Everybody is interested in bringing their sick to Jesus. If you don't feel well and there's somebody that can make you feel better, let's do that.
[37:19] But you've got to understand the purpose behind the miracles. The purpose behind all the miracles, feeding the 5,000 men, walking on the water, healing the people in the marketplace, the purpose behind all the miracles was to validate the message that he is the son of God.

He is the savior for all who would believe. Now I said a few moments ago that it's possible to be very close in proximity, but to miss it, don't let that be true of you today.
You have sung songs about the gospel. We have read scripture about the gospel. You have heard the Bible taught.
All of you in proximity are so close to the truth, but I'm asking you this morning, do you believe the truth about Jesus?
Do you know him? Do you trust him? Do you love him? Do you worship him?
[38:47] Would you repent of your sin and call upon the name of the Lord Jesus Christ? You may ask yourself, why do we need a savior?

Well, here's why. Because all of us have sinned. All of us. All of us have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.
And our sin earns us judgment. That's the bad news. here's the good news. God sent his only son, Jesus.
And his son, Jesus, lived a perfect life. And in living a perfect life, he became our perfect substitute.
And he went to a cross to take upon himself our sin.
And absorb in his body the wrath of God as a payment for our sin. And he was laid in the tomb on the third day. He was raised back to life.
[39:55] And he's coming again. And if I ask you today, do you know that you're a sinner? I suspect you would all say yes.

Who among us would argue with that? We do things that we shouldn't. We say things that we shouldn't. We're prideful when we shouldn't be.
We've sinned. We know that. We don't need convincing. We know that we're imperfect. The question is, what are you going to do about your sin? You have a holy, perfect, righteous God, and one second after you die, what are you going to do?
Well, people do lots of things. people try to be good citizens and try to be good neighbors and try to be good parents and those are all good things. Those are all great things, but none of those things cover your sin.
Maybe you try to make yourself go to church every once in a while. That's a good thing, but showing up in a church service by itself does not take care of your sin. Some people try to surround themselves and just be close to the things of God.
[41:12] So, they come to church, they listen to Christian music, and maybe they go to a Christian camp or a Christian conference. They just try to kind of physically be around other believers. Those are good things, but just proximity by itself is not going to save you from your sin.

Here's the good news of the gospel. Those who call upon the name of the Lord will be saved. Just as Jesus walked on the water and went out to the people, so Christ comes to you.
So, He's walking on the water of your storm. So, even today, in your hearing of the hope that we have in Jesus, salvation is being offered to you.
Would you even this day confess that you're a sinner? Confess that Jesus is the Son of God, and with faith, ask Him to step into the boat of your life and calm your anxious heart and make the declaration of your life what the disciples finally learned, that indeed, this is the Son of God.

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Our Lord, we thank You today for Your Word. We do pray that You would, through the power of Your Holy Spirit, even this moment, help others to understand the truth of the gospel.
[42:59] Even right now, that You would break through hearts that were hardened and draw people to a place of trust and faith.

I pray the gospel has been shared clearly. I pray that people have been able to hear and understand that You are the one and only Savior.
And we pray that people, even today, would call upon the name of Jesus and in so doing, find their salvation. Lord, I pray for people today that are going through the dark night, that find themselves in the midst of a storm.
Lord, I pray that You would bring them hope. I pray that You would bring them encouragement. I pray, dear Lord, that You would bring them peace.
Lord, I pray that that You would love you. Lord, I pray that you would bring them there. Lord, I pray that you would bring them all for who will bring them with those who will come from you.
[44:12] Lord, I pray that you would bring them all for them. Lord, I pray that you would bring them all for them. Lord, I pray that you would bring them all for them. Lord, I pray that So that that you would call them Pcht. Oh, that He would call them for them.

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