Trusting Christ in the Darkest Night, part 1

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[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.!

Let the Lord build the church. But just so you're aware of how important it is, if you can't help us with that, last Sunday morning, we had over 1,100 people here at our church.
That's a lot of people. And so, parking, even though we just added 85 new spaces, parking's a premium. And so, we've got a lot of people that are a part of our church, a lot of people who are coming to our church, new people coming to our church.
And we want to serve them well, particularly those who are new, looking for a church home. And one of the ways to do that is that we come onto this campus already thinking of serving others.
And those who can park further away is a tremendous help. So, thank you for doing that. And as you park far away, be encouraged. It's a good thing to need more parking.
[1:22] And it's a good thing to add parking and have it full. And we're thankful for your spirit of sacrifice and generosity to do that.

But one last thing, we want to be in prayer this morning. Kent and Kayla Jaggers have served on our staff for close to eight years. Kent's one of our student pastors, along with Joey Snodgrass. And as most of you know, we put in our newsletter a couple of weeks ago.
And as Kent was able to share with our students a couple of weeks ago, he is this morning at First Baptist Church of Clinton, Oklahoma, in view of a call to become their senior pastor.
Kent shared with me a little over a year ago the Lord putting in his heart a desire to be a senior lead pastor of a church. And he and I have met together and talked together. And I've tried to spend some extra time preparing him for that.
The Lord has opened that door. And we are really excited for Kent and Kayla this morning. They have been there with First Baptist Clinton on Friday and yesterday. And I've had a chance to visit with them Friday and Saturday, even this morning.
[2:24] He's excited. He'll be preaching in just a few moments there. And so, we want to pray for their family. They will be voting this morning on him. And so, our anticipation is they would extend that call to him here in about two hours, Lord willing.

And we will cheer them on all the way as they look forward to what we anticipate to be a new ministry and a great new opportunity for them.
So, I just want to pause before we get in the Word here and pray for Kent as he prepares to preach. And we also want to pray for First Baptist Church of Clinton. They've been without a pastor for a year and a half and are hungry for a shepherd.
And, you know, one of the things that we talk a lot here that we want to remind ourselves of is it's not about the address. It's about the kingdom. And I would love it if everyone who's ever a member of our church just stayed here.
I would love it if nobody ever moved, if nobody ever moved on to do anything else. We just kind of crowd everybody in here. But it's not about our address. It's about the kingdom. And this is a great opportunity for Kent.
[3:26] It's a great opportunity for First Baptist Clinton. And any church that loves the Lord and preaches the Word is our friend. And so, let's just pause and pray for that sister church of ours and pray for Kent as he prepares to preach this morning.

And we will get into Mark chapter 6. Lord, we do thank you today for the privilege we have of being able to lift up our brother Kent Jaggers to you. We pray that you would give him today great clarity of thought as he teaches and prepares to preach your Word.

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We pray that you would bind his heart together with the dear saints at First Baptist Clinton. We pray that you would have great days ahead for that sweet congregation.
We have people in our own church here that have moved from that town to this town and are part of our church now. And we love them. We love the church they came from.
And we want great things for that congregation and that city. And we pray that you would use Kent even this morning to begin a new and great exciting work for that dear congregation and that city.
[4:29] We ask it in Jesus' name. Amen. We'll open with me, if you would, to Mark. I'm over one. Mark chapter 6. Mark chapter 6.

In my defense, this story is also in Matthew 14, but Mark chapter 6. We looked last Sunday at this miracle where Jesus feeds, we call it the feeding of the 5,000.
They numbered by the men. It's actually more accurately the feeding of probably 15,000 or 20,000, perhaps even more than that. And on that event, Jesus really hits the height of his popularity as far as the people would feel.
People are amazed at his miracles. They are amazed by the authority with which he teaches. Not everybody believes in his message, but everybody is interested in him one way or another.
Some are interested in him because they just want to see what he's going to do. They don't want to miss out. Others are interested in him because even if they're not sure they believe what he says, you just can't turn away when he speaks.
[5:54] Others certainly do believe in him and others are just trying to figure out what are we going to do with him. But when he feeds the 5,000 men plus women and children, his popularity reaches a fever pitch.

I mean, he's done something they've never seen. And the people begin to look around at each other and it doesn't take long to figure out, now wait a minute.
If we can do what we just saw happen, if he can do this, what else could he do? Here is a nation who is small in number but with a proud past and what they want more than anything is complete freedom, complete financial freedom, political freedom, military freedom, complete ability to be fully in charge of themselves and how are they going to do that?
Well, if we have a ruler who can feed thousands of people from a kid's mill, we may have just solved a financial issue.
And if this same man can take someone who can't walk and speak to them and command them to rise and walk, we may have just solved a military issue.
[7:30] Because how would you defeat and battle an army whose leader can instantly cure those who are sick? And what if this same ruler can actually even call one who has died back to life?

How could you ever defeat such a nation? And so while the crowd is in this fever pitch about the feeding of the thousands of people, and while everybody is amazed and astonished at what he's done, he got this massive crowd organized.
He had them sit in groups of 50 and hundreds. He can organize them. He's got his apostles who served them. So he can organize. He can lead. He can feed.
He can heal. And it doesn't take long for people to look at each other and think, I think we just found our man. Mark does not include this detail, but John does in John 6.
It says, When the people saw the sign he had done, speaking of the feeding of the thousands, the crowd said, this is indeed the prophet who is to come into the world.
[8:50] Verse 15, Perceiving then that they were about to come and take him by force to make him king, Jesus withdrew again to the mountain by himself.

It is after the miracle of the feeding of the 5,000 men that the crowd says, We found our king. Let's take him and let's make him our king.
It wasn't that long ago that Jesus' own brothers came to where Jesus was and wanted to take him away, seize him because they said he's out of his mind.
Now the crowd says, Let's take him and let's make him do for us what we've always wanted to do ourselves.
And so there's a pivot. The popularity is at the highest, but there's now a pivot.
[10:07] Because the crowds who were clamoring for him to be their king, if they don't get what they want from him, if Jesus does not contort his will and his agenda and his plan to match theirs, they're going to want nothing to do with him.

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They wanted a warrior king, not a servant king. They wanted someone to lead them to military and financial freedom, not freedom from sin.
But the truth of the matter is that Jesus is king. He's the divine sovereign king, but not by the vote of the people and not by the demand of the crowd.
He is a sovereign king because he is the king of all kings. But it's not a kingdom of which they speak. His primary purpose in coming was not to help in business.
Was not to help a nation build a political superpower. His primary purpose in coming was to come to people who were in bondage of sin, with no way to save themselves, bound for hell, and lay down his life as a payment for their sin.
[11:43] And in so doing, set spiritual captives free. That's why he came. So Jesus, knowing that the crowd was beginning to hum around and beginning to come and try to take him by force and parade him around as their king.

Instead, he slips off by the mountain to pray. They wanted Christ enthroned, but they wanted him enthroned for all the wrong reasons. They wanted to use a spiritual man for worldly purposes.
And that was not why Jesus came. So we pick up here in Mark 6, verse 45. 5. Immediately, he made his disciples get into the boat and go before him to the other side.
Jesus tells the disciples, it's time to get into the boat. You've got to go. You've got to go to the other side of where we are. We're there around the Sea of Galilee.
The disciples don't want to go. They want to stay. I mean, the wave of momentum has never been stronger. There's never been more people at one time so impressed and enamored with Christ and so ready to make him king.
[13:15] The disciples have to be thinking to themselves, let's just stay here. I mean, after all, just keep in mind the context. It wasn't very long ago at all that Jesus sent them out on that short-term mission trip, two by two, and they faced opposition.

It wasn't long ago that they saw Jesus in Nazareth in his own hometown, and his own hometown rejected him. They've seen his own hometown try to kill him, and now there's this wave of emotion and excitement and popularity, and the disciples have to be thinking, what do you mean get in the boat?
Why would we leave here? Look how many people are here. You just fed them. They are full. They are satisfied. They are happy, and most of all, they like you.
The disciples think to themselves, what do you mean let's leave this? Why don't we shut this down? This is our chance.
For the disciples, this is what they've been waiting for. But the text says that Jesus made his disciples get into the boat.
[14:38] It's a word here that means to force, or to insist. Mark doesn't give us a lot of description, but the verb itself is insightful for us.

He's not just having to tell them. He's not just instructing. He's having to insist that they do it. They want to stay. And in one sense, who can blame them?
I mean, they've been traveling around month after month after month after month, and there have been, at times, big crowds, but there's also been people who accused him of being out of his mind. There have been times where they've seen the miraculous, but there's also been times where they've been rejected and kicked out. And it just feels like there's just not the results that they likely expected.
And now, now, it's all different. And Jesus says, get on the boat. And they protest. And so, he insists that they get on the boat.
[15:45] Well, it would be one thing for them to come to terms with leaving, and, and, and you're not going to be king? You're, you're not going to rule over these people like they're asking?

You're not going to do that? And he says, I'm not going to do that. That's not the kind of king I am. Get on the boat. They get on the boat. And I just kind of picture them scooting over, and they're, they're making room for one more.
The disciples are in the boat, but Jesus needs to get in the boat. We've got to scoot over, and Jesus says, you're fine. I'm going to go up to the mountainside and pray. And they, what? Not only are we leaving here, and we're not going to ride this wave of momentum, but you're not even coming with us?

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And Jesus says, you get on the boat, and you go to the side. I'm going to go and pray. Remember back in Matthew 4, when Jesus is tempted in the wilderness by the devil?
One of the things the devil does is he tries to entice Jesus to bow down to him, and he says, I'll give you the kingdoms of this world.
[16:58] No suffering. No cross. No crucifixion. Let's take the easy way out. Let's evade the will of the Father, and I'll give you all the applause, and you'll have all the adulation of this world, and no suffering.

And Jesus didn't do it. He stood strong. What you see in John 6, where the crowd is trying to make Jesus their king, their way, is another desperate attempt by the devil to try to get Jesus to do there what he could not get Jesus to do in the wilderness.
This is another attempt to short-circuit the Father's plan for his life and take on the praise and the applause of the crowd and to be what the world wanted, not what the Father had sent him to do.
And once again, Jesus stands. where the rest of us fall in temptation, Jesus stands. And it says in verse 46 here in Mark 6 that after he had taken leave of them, he went up on the mountain to pray.
You just can't get away from this, that for Jesus, prayer is essential. Jesus' response to the crowd was to pray.
[18:37] Jesus' response to the disappointment of his own disciples is to pray. And this has got to be an extremely hard moment for the disciples, not only because they're not going to get to ride the wave of momentum, but they're now going to get in the boat and they're going to do so without Jesus being physically present with them.

They're going to be put in a very difficult place and soon their faith will be tested and they're going to go through a storm that will be for their good to teach them lessons they will never forget, but it will be the darkest night for them.
Verse 47 helps us to understand what takes place. When evening came, the boat was out on the sea and he was alone on the land.
I mentioned last week that the Jewish people had two evenings, three to six and six to nine. The feeding of the 5,000 takes place during what we would call that first evening.
When they get in the boat to go to the side, we're now on the second evening. It's much later. It's dark now. John tells us they had rowed three to four miles of rowing in their boat, three to four miles.
[20:05] That's interesting because in a straight shot, they would have never been more than two miles from the shore. The only way that they could be rowing three or four miles with the journey they were on is if a storm blew them from where they were going out into the midst of the Sea of Galilee, which is 13 miles by seven miles.

If they would have rowed two miles straight, they would have been where they were going. They've been rowing three or four miles and they're getting no closer. That gives you some insight into what is happening with the winds and the waves.
And we know from our study in the gospel already that these storms were very common on the Sea of Galilee. The Sea of Galilee is 700 feet below sea level. And so what you get is a rush of cool air that goes down the ravines and down through the hills.
And so you've got cool air crushing down 700 feet below sea level and you get warm air right above the water of the Sea of Galilee. So you've got 700 feet below sea level, warm water has warm air rising up from it, cold air rushing down it's all encompassed by the hills and where that cool air hits the warm air, the result of that is an instant storm.
That's why the Sea of Galilee is known for these big instant storms that come out of nowhere. Well to make matters worse this is happening at night.
[21:45] It's dark. The Bible tells us that when the events of Jesus walking out toward them take place it's the fourth watch of the night.

Fourth watch of the night is the darkest part of the night. That would be between 3 and 6 a.m. It's the very darkest part of the evening.
And here are the disciples and they are in the boat and they are in a storm and Christ is not with them. And just a couple of hours ago there were 20,000 people wanting to make Jesus king and now all of a sudden they fear for their lives.
Verse 47 when evening came the boat was out on the sea and he was alone on the land and he saw that they were making headway painfully for the wind was against them and about the fourth

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watch of the night he came to them walking on the sea.
Here they are in the boat in a storm they've been rowing for hours they're getting further away from their destination not closer to they're scared they're frustrated they're disappointed and now they are exhausted and the storm is raging now we have to stop and ask a really important question why are the disciples in this storm you remember from the old testament the prophet Jonah who was called by God to go and to preach to Nineveh and he did not do it he refused he was running away from God and he got on a boat and the storm came up and the reason for the storm was because [24:07] Jonah disobeyed God that is the exact opposite of what's going on in Mark 6 the storm in Mark 6 the disciples face is not because they disobeyed God it's actually because they did he said get on the boat they said we don't want to get on the boat and he said get on the boat and they said but we want to stay with you he said get on the boat and so they did he said go to the side and they said but it's dark go to the side but storms come up at night go to the side and they did they may have been reluctant they may have resisted but in the end they did what they were asked to do they find themselves in the middle of the biggest storm in their darkest night not because they are running and disobeying but precisely because they have obeyed now we need to think carefully about this because there are false teachers out there who will tell you that if you just have enough faith everything is going to go your way if you just believe enough do enough give enough you won't get sick if you just trust enough you'll always get healed but that's not the testimony of history people who love

Jesus get sick and people who are faithful get slammed by the storms of life if you don't know Christ as a believer and you have been told somewhere along the line that if you just tried Christianity it was some kind of an immunity card where everything will go your way you've not been told the truth look no further than Mark 6 sometimes you do the right thing and the storm still comes sometimes you're a faithful employee and you still get let go sometimes you're a faithful spouse and somebody still betrays sometimes you're honest and patient and you still get slandered sometimes you're obedient and you still face the storm and you're thrown into the darkest night and sometimes life changes in a hurry doesn't it
I mean at dinner time the disciples witnessed the most amazing thing to that point they'd ever seen it's just that evening and they fear they may die life can change that fast for some of you it has one trip to the doctor changed your life forever one letter you received in the mail changed your life forever one conversation with your boss with your parents with your child something somebody told you a phone call you received a text that you received and in an instant your life was changed that's where the disciples are what they thought just a couple of hours ago was their ascension to the top now a couple of hours later they wonder will we ever see another sunrise and verse 48 says that he saw they were making headway painfully this was a strain anything that they were doing was hard that night for the wind was against them but my friends I want to show you something here and I want you to remember this the rest of your life the fourth watch of the night verse 48 is the darkest part of the night and even then verse 49 reminds us as Jesus comes walking out to them he does so because verse 48 he saw them darkness does not conceal you from the
Lord he sees that pain you have in your heart that nobody knows about the fear the anxiety that you carry with you every day and you don't even speak to anybody about it the Lord sees he knows that secret burden you carry those hurtful words that somebody said to you that you don't talk about you don't ever mention it but in your mind in your heart those words still ring and still hurt he sees and he knows and you may feel like right now you're going to the darkest season of your life you may be but the darkness of the moment does not hide you from the loving presence of the
Lord he sees even in the darkest places and it says in verse 48 it's the fourth watch of the night he came to them I love that he came to them he draws near my friends let me encourage you with this in the storms of your life the Lord draws near there are moments of trust and worship and dependence that you gain in your relationship with the Lord in the storm that you simply could not get in the sunshine there are days where you cry out in helpless surrender that you would not do if you would have got your way don't hate the storms in your life just look for
[32:04] Jesus in the midst of them he came to them walking on the water that by itself is amazing Job chapter nine uses the metaphor that only God can walk upon the waves and here is Jesus the God man literally physically truly walking on the waves and a bit of a strange statement at the end of verse 48 he meant to pass by them scholars argue a little bit here about what this means Jesus sees them and in the darkest part of the night he gets out he's walking on the water he's walking to

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them right in the midst of the storm and it says he meant to pass by them this could mean that he meant to catch up to them so they would see him and they would invite him in or some take it as this is just what it appeared to the disciples as they saw him walking the disciples thought that whatever this was whoever this was that the goal the intention was just to walk past them maybe this is what the disciples thought was happening or some think this means that he was going to pass by them so he could get in front of them and he was going to walk the path to the shore he was going to lead them to safety others still think that phrase means that he was just coming alongside them that he was wanting to manifest himself to them he intended to go past them to go by them he intended for them to see him

I think the purpose and the goal of what Mark is saying is that while they are in the storm Jesus walks on the water and Jesus intention was to manifest to them who he was so they could see he has not forsaken us and right in the of our darkest night the Lord is right here with us he walks and they do see him but verse 49 when they saw him walking on the sea they thought it was a ghost the word here is phantasma you hear our English word phantom they thought it was a phantom they thought it was a ghost they didn't know what it was they weren't expecting water they seen Jesus do all kinds of things including a few hours ago he just did the miracle with the loaves and the fish but this is something new we've never seen somebody walk on water they thought it was a ghost and they cried out they're tired now think of this
Jesus feeds the crowd between 3 and 6 p.m we're in the fourth watch of the night that's 3 to 6 a.m they've now been in the boat for several hours straining and if you've ever been in the situation where you are physically exhausted but you've got to keep going to save your life that's where they are they're empty they're done they're exhausted they're frightened they're scared it's dark they're panicking and now here comes something or someone walking on the water they've never seen that before so they cry out it's a ghost it's even worse here we are in the darkest night about to die and now ghosts are surrounding us and Jesus speaks at the end of verse 50 take heart it is
I take heart heart it is I ego am I am the phrase take heart means to be firm to be strong and he says that to them because the end of verse 50 says they all saw him and they were terrified it's the only time in the gospel of Mark that Mark uses that exact word terrified it's what we call a hapex lugamina it's a word only used once it's the only time Mark uses that word it's a word that it's as if there's just no other word in his vocabulary that could explain what they felt in that moment and in the midst of their extreme fear Jesus says take heart I am do not be afraid verse 51 he got into the boat with them and the wind ceased!
And they were utterly astounded Mark does not include what Matthew does that one event that took place there is where Jesus called Peter out of the boat to walk on the water and Peter walks on the water and begins to sink and the Lord reached down and lifts him up but verse 51 when he got in the boat another miracle took place the wind ceased just stopped why did the wind cease because the wind the storm had served its purpose there was design even in the storm there was a sovereign lesson for the disciples to learn even in their darkest night and when the storm had served its purpose in an instant it ceased!
[38:33] You may wonder why did they need the lesson of the storm? Mark tells you verse 52 for they did not understand about the loaves for their hearts were hardened learned you catch that?

That's a massively important theological sentence there in the midst of the euphoria and the bliss of the feeding of the thousands in the midst of the people cheering and chanting and demanding he be their king in the midst of the mountaintop the disciples did not learn it took a storm to teach them what the mountaintop did not my friends it may be that today you find yourself in your darkest night the Lord has not abandoned you he sees you even in the darkness and Jesus walks on the water of the storm because he has no rival and
Jesus got into the boat because he enters into our circumstances and the wind ceased!
Because even the winds and the waves still know whose voice rules them and in your darkest night you can trust him there is purpose there is design and you may not understand all the Lord is doing but he is working there are some more things that need to be said about this there are some more lessons we need to draw out from this passage and so we will do that next Sunday but I want you to understand clearly that only God can walk on the water and here's another example of many that Mark is piling up that show us Jesus is God and only
God can forgive! your sin and you can trust him you need to know today that your greatest challenge you face is what will you do with your sinful condition and that in Jesus he offers freedom

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and forgiveness for those who believe in him and those who know Christ as Savior you will go through storms but never alone never our Lord we thank you for your word we pray that you would use it to bring us hope and encourage our hearts we pray Lord today for those even in this sanctuary who are in the midst of their storm in the midst of their darkest night may they be reminded that Christ our Lord and
[42:09] Savior is always with them and for you our father who oversees us and cares for us we trust you even in the storms of life that we don't understand may our faith grow even more today in the name of Christ we pray amen!

before we have a couple announcements actually we have a couple new learning opportunities for you first of all tonight at five o'clock we will have our growth seminars there are four of those going on at the same time the men of the institute will be meeting in the youth center so institute guys be here at five if you are if you like to come to a!
there there are you can find information about those out in the foyer but they will be in various locations here in the church another thing is on February 5th we have a new class that's going to be starting it is a class intended for engaged couples or couples that are maybe in that first year or so of marriage it is a five week long class it will take place it up there basically Jeff will be walking through a few things with newlywed couples or those that are about to be wed and there will be five weeks long after the five weeks is over you can return back to your regular Sunday school class if you would like to change Sunday school classes there might be a time to change Sunday school classes so I hope that you will join us I'll pray this in
Jesus name amen

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