

Mike Pierce, Homiletical Implementation, Mark 6:45-52
NT811, Exegesis of Mark
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INTRODUCTION

A. The Sunday School Concept of the Passage

ž1 Turn in your Bibles to Mark, chapter 6. Mark chapter 6, beginning at verse 45. [READ VS. 45-52 - *OPTIONAL*]

ž2 Ah, the story of Jesus walking on the water. We all know it well. We've heard it from that Sunday School teacher, we've seen it on the flannelgraph board. Yes, Mr. Borne's class... I remember the images in my 11 year-old mind. The wind howling. The waves crashing against the boat, beating its old wooden hull, spilling in. The disciples shouting above the storm as they scurry back and forth, rowing and bailing, trying to keep the water out of the boat, but failing. All hope is lost.... but all of a sudden Jesus comes to them walking on the water, like some kind of heavenly lifeguard on duty who saves them just in the nick of time. Right?

B. The Problem with the Sunday School Concept of the Passage

ž3 That's the problem with Sunday School stories. We *think* we know them, but is that what they really say? As I re-read Mark 6, I found out that it says something really quite different.

- There are no waves crashing into the boat. In Mark 4, yes, but not in Mark 6. It says that the wind was against them, but that's about it.
- In fact, the disciples weren't even afraid, not before Jesus came.
- When Jesus does come to them, Mark makes a big deal not about the calming of the storm, but about walking on the water. In fact, it doesn't say that Jesus *did* anything to calm the storm; it just stopped.¹
- And if the main focus is Jesus walking on the water, how does that help in a rescue operation? Did you ever think about that? Hmmmmm.

C. Rewinding the Story (Our Approach)

ž4 - ILLUS—I love to watch British television. You know, the BBC broadcasts that air on public television. But if you've ever watched British TV, you know that at times it can be really hard to follow. Especially detective stories. So now I tape them, because inevitably I'll get to the end of the show and still not figure out what's going on. Or I think I know what's going on—who the killer is—only to find out that I've totally missed it. So I rewind the tape, and watch it again, and this time I usually catch what I've missed.

¹Although obviously the cause of the storm's cessation was Jesus, the God-man.

ž5 That's what I'd like to do with our story here in Mark. In my Sunday School days, I totally missed the point of the story of Jesus walking on the water. So let's hit the Rewind button. Let's listen to it again, and see what Mark really wants to tell us.

I. Movement 1 - Separation (Mk. 6:45-48a)

ž6 Basically there are three "movements" to our story, three discernible shifts in focus. If you like, three scenes, or acts. What we'll do is watch one, hit Pause to figure out what we've learned, and then go on. At the end, we'll try to piece together what Mark is trying to say. So let's go to the beginning, right after the previews and the FBI warning at the beginning of the tape. Mark 6, verse 45.

"45 Immediately Jesus made his disciples get into the boat and go on ahead of him to Bethsaida, while he dismissed the crowd. 46 After leaving them, he went up on a mountainside to pray."

A. Story Segment (1st segment)

ž7 That first sentence strikes me as somewhat odd. Jesus has just successfully fed over 5000 people with just five small loaves and two fish. Everybody's sitting on the grass just stuffed... absolutely no room for dessert. All of a sudden Jesus gets up, and "immediately" makes the disciples get into boat and cross the lake to Bethsaida. Mark uses the word "compelled" here; it carries great urgency. What's the big hurry?

ž8 Some have suggested that the answer is in John's account of the feeding of the 5000: *"Jesus, knowing that they intended to come and make him king by force, withdrew himself into a mountain by himself"* (Jn. 6:15). Jesus wanted to get the disciples out of there before either they said something that would get the people all riled up, or before they *themselves* got caught up in the swell-tide of messianic enthusiasm. But we have to be careful here. That *may be* why Jesus commanded his disciples to get into the boat in the *actual event*, but Mark says nothing about it. When we read the Gospels (particularly Matthew, Mark, and Luke — the "Synoptic" Gospels), we must be very careful to let each writer tell his own story. We should not read one author's material into another's, because each one selected certain details to include and some to leave out, arranged his material, and then told his story in such a way as to get *his* theological point across. Even in parallel accounts about the same event, the writers have different agendas. The threat of an early and improper inauguration as Messiah is not Mark's point.

ž9 We have to watch the tape a little bit more to see why Jesus tells his disciples to get in the ship "immediately."

Ž10 “45 *Immediately Jesus made his disciples get into the boat and go on ahead of him to Bethsaida, while he dismissed the crowd. 46 After leaving them, he went up on a mountainside to pray.*” Now we have the disciples gone, the crowds gone, and Jesus gone. After the feeding of the 5000, the stage has been cleared for a new scene.

Ž11 Look at verse 47. “*When evening came, the boat was in the middle of the lake, and he was alone on land.*” Why does Mark say that? We already know that. He wants us to note the physical separation between the disciples and Jesus. “The boat was in the middle of the lake, but he (the “he” is emphasized)... he was alone on the land.” That’s why Jesus makes the disciples — compels them apparently against their wishes — to get in the boat and shove off. They want to stay with him, but he wants them in the middle of the lake. He gets rid of them, gets rid of the crowd, and then goes up into the control tower, waiting for just the right moment, and praying. It is as if Jesus has perfectly choreographed this whole situation to set up for his big appearance.

Ž12 The disciples left right after the feeding of the 5000, which probably took place in the late afternoon or evening. Now it is late—around 3 a.m. we find out later—and still the disciples are in the middle of the lake, only about 3 miles out according to John’s account. Something’s wrong. They should be at their destination by now. Look at verse 48. “*He saw the disciples straining at the oars, because the wind was against them....*” Aha. So they’re out on in the middle of the lake, and the wind (probably from the north or northwest) picks up. They furl the sail, pull out the oars, and begin rowing. But the wind is too strong—it is “against them.” Now remember, some of these guys, like Peter and Andrew and James and John, are experienced fisherman—boatmen. Big strong guys. Yet they’re *stuck*.

Ž13 Now it doesn’t say this was a storm. It doesn’t say that the waves were swamping the boat. It doesn’t say that they were in any danger, or that they were terrified. I imagine that they were tired and annoyed at 3 in the morning, but not in danger. I can hear them talking to each other: “Grumble, grumble, grumble... we could be in a host’s home right now, snug in bed, but we’re out here growing around in circles.” “I’ll bet someone would have taken us home for supper tonight. All we had was *bread* for lunch.” “Jesus told us to come out on the lake tonight... I wonder if he watched the Weather Channel before he decided to send us out here. Where *is* Jesus anyway?!”

Ž14 Mark was a student of Peter’s in Rome, and tradition tells us that he wrote his Gospel from Peter’s sermons. If you change this story to the first person— “immediately Jesus made us get into a boat...”—you can hear Peter’s voice. The way Mark tells the story emphasized the separation from Jesus, perhaps the feelings of abandonment the disciples may have felt. Jesus

told them to go out on the lake, and now they're in a bit of trouble. True, it's not life-and-death, but it's rough going. So where is Jesus? Nowhere to be found.

Ž15 But notice verse 48 again. One important word that changes everything. Look at it. “He saw the disciples straining at the oars, because the wind was against them.” What’s the word? “Saw.” Way up on that mountain, miles away, he could see his disciples. How? Some have noted that it was near Passover, so there would have been a full moon, and he could have seen them from the mountain with natural eyesight. But later, one of the main features of the story is that disciples can’t make out who Jesus is because of the darkness. After all, it’s 3 in the morning. No, Jesus sees them with supernatural eyesight. “His eye is on the sparrow, and I know he watches me.”

B. Sermon Idea (1st part of unfolding complement)

Ž16 Let’s hit the Pause button for a moment. In the first movement, Mark wants to emphasize the separation between Jesus and his disciples. That’s why Jesus sends them away so quickly. He wants them to learn a lesson. He wants to come to them. He wants to reveal to them who he really is. (As we’ll see later, they really missed it on the last miracle, the feeding of the 5000, so this is kind of a review lesson... a re-take test... which they fail.) So they are in the middle of the lake, and Jesus in on the land. And he holds them there, almost like a boat with a string attached to it, with him holding them right there on center stage. And all the time he is watching them. But they feel abandoned, as Mark’s emphasis betrays.

Unfolding Complement: The disciples felt abandoned, even though Jesus was watching over them.

C. Application

Ž17 Whoa. I think I’m starting to see myself in that boat. I can feel my feet getting wet. That’s me. So many times, when God is putting me in a place where he can truly reveal to me who he really is, I feel like he has left me totally alone.

Ž18 - ILLUS—In March, after this very class, I was at the intersection of Venard Rd. and S. Abington Rd.—you know, at the A.G. church. I was tired (I hadn’t slept all night), I wanted to get home, and the traffic was heavy. I made a poor judgment and pulled out and got sideswiped by another car... my fault. OK, not the end of the world, but I could hear the cash register at the body shop. Argh! I don’t need this. God, where are you. Why did this have to happen to me... why right now?! I felt really abandoned. Then someone in my church heard about it—I didn’t

tell them—and gave me \$500 to fix the car. Wow! God comes walking out off the mountain onto the lake and says, “Here I am!”

ž19 God, I’m in trouble. OK, not super-serious trouble, but trouble. Where are you?! And the whole time he is on the mountain, watching over me, waiting for just the right second to show me who he really is and what he can do. This is getting a little too close to home: let’s hit the Play button and get back to our story, OK?

II. Movement 2 - Theophany (Mk. 6:48-49)

A. Story (2nd segment)

ž20 Verse 48. “*He saw the disciples straining at the oars, because the wind was against them. About the fourth watch of the night he went out to them, walking on the lake. He was about to pass by them...*” Here Mark changes the scene... from Jesus on the mountain and the disciples on the lake—kind of a “split scene”—to a scene with both meeting on the water... literally *on* the water. “About the fourth watch of the night”—that’s about 3 a.m.—Jesus “went out to them, walking on the lake.” Why? Why then? The way Mark writes this, their “straining” is a process, which suggests that they had been at it for a while by 3 o’clock. Was Jesus going to rescue them? It doesn’t appear so. Why did he decide to walk on the water? “Hmmm, been meaning to work on my waterskiing... but I don’t have a boat, no skis... hmmm... so I’ll just....” No. Who walks on water? In the Old Testament, it is *God* who walks on water. Listen to these passages from the Old Testament:

- Job 9:8 — “*He alone stretches out the heavens and treads on the waves of the sea.*”
- Job 38:16 — God asks Job, “*Have you journeyed to the springs of the sea or walked in the recesses of the deep?*” with the implication that, “You haven’t; I have; be quiet.”
- Psalm 77:19 — “*Your path led through the sea, your way through the mighty waters, though your footprints were not seen.*”

ž21 Why did Jesus come to them walking on the water? He wanted to show them that he was God.

ž22 The next phrase in verse 48 makes this even more clear: “*He was about to pass by them....*” Literally the verse reads this way: “and he wanted to pass by them.” “And he wanted to pass by them.” That’s a really odd phrase. If the disciples were in trouble, why would Jesus want to go right on by them? There are several suggestions on how to understand this.

- It could mean “and he was about to pass by them,” like the NIV here takes it. But that’s not what the Greek says. It says Jesus “wanted” to pass by them. It’s not the same thing.² Plus, that doesn’t explain why he was about to pass by them... shouldn’t he walk *to* them if they needed help. Doesn’t that seem awfully callous of Jesus?
- Perhaps it reflects the impression of the disciples. “It’s about to pass by us.” But Mark’s focus is on what Jesus is doing here, and on what the disciples thought in the *next* verse.
- There’s another choice that makes better sense, and actually explains this odd phrase as the key to the whole story.³

ž23 With the phrase “pass by,” Mark is using the language of the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Old Testament. The term is a theophanic reference—an allusion to a theophany, or an personal appearance by God. Turn with me to Exodus chapter 33. Exodus 33, verse 18. Here Moses is up on Mt. Sinai pleading for Israel after the Golden Calf incident:

- 18 *Then Moses said, "Now show me your glory."*
19 *And the LORD said, "I will cause all my goodness to pass in front of you, and I will proclaim my name, the LORD, in your presence. I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion."*
20 *But," he said, "you cannot see my face, for no one may see me and live."*
21 *Then the LORD said, "There is a place near me where you may stand on a rock."*
22 *When my glory passes by, I will put you in a cleft in the rock and cover you with my hand until I have passed by.*
23 *Then I will remove my hand and you will see my back; but my face must not be seen."*

ž24 Did you notice that in verse 22? When God showed himself, he “passed by.” Now turn to 1 Kings 19, where Elijah meets God personally—another theophany. 1 Kings 19, verse 8:

- 8 *So he got up and ate and drank. Strengthened by that food, he traveled forty days and forty nights until he reached Horeb, the mountain of God.*
9 *There he went into a cave and spent the night. And the word of the LORD came to him: "What are you doing here, Elijah?"*
10 *He replied, "I have been very zealous for the LORD God Almighty. The Israelites have rejected your covenant, broken down your altars, and put your prophets to death with the sword. I am the only one left, and now they are trying to kill me too."*
11 *The LORD said, "Go out and stand on the mountain in the presence of the LORD, for the LORD is about to pass by." Then a great and powerful wind tore the mountains apart and shattered the rocks before the LORD, but the LORD was not in the wind. After the wind there was an earthquake, but the LORD was not in the earthquake.*

²This understanding (as Cranfield) of *qel w* as synonymous with *mel l w* is without NT parallel (see Guelich, 350; Gundry, 341).

³So Guelich, 350.

ž25 Notice something interesting about both instances: where do they occur? On the mountain (Mt. Sinai or Horeb to be precise). Where is Jesus just coming from? The mountain. Hmmm.

ž26 One more passage. Job chapter 9. Verse 8:

8 He alone stretches out the heavens and treads on the waves of the sea.

9 He is the Maker of the Bear and Orion, the Pleiades and the constellations of the south.

10 He performs wonders that cannot be fathomed, miracles that cannot be counted.

11 When he passes me, I cannot see him; when he goes by, I cannot perceive him.

Notice that Job combines the two themes. God alone “treads on the waves of the sea.” He alone walks on water. But Job has a complaint in verse 11. When he “passes by,” I cannot perceive him. In Mark 6 we have a reversal of Job’s complaint. Jesus wants to pass the disciples by for the very purpose of them seeing him as God.

ž27 Is the story started to make a little more sense now? It’s not a rescue story. It’s a theophany story. Jesus wants to teach the disciples who he really is. Let’s see how they do. Verse 49. “*49 but when they saw him walking on the lake, they thought he was a ghost. They cried out, 50 because they all saw him and were terrified...*”

ž28 They thought it was a ghost. All of them.⁴ There was a popular superstition in that day that at night water spirits would sink ships during a storm. They mistook Jesus for a ghost! A theophany for Casper the Friendly Ghost. This is depressing. Let’s hit the Pause button.

B. Sermon Idea (2nd part of unfolding complement)

Unfolding Complement: **The disciples missed who Jesus really was, even though he showed them his divine power.**

C. Application

ž29 I’m glad I never do that... or do I? I have never mistaken a literal theophany for a ghost, but now that I think about it, sometimes I do mistake God’s actions in my life for something else.

ILLUS—When I got the \$500 to fix my car, I was amazed. I thanked and thanked the people who gave it to me. I told my wife Keri. I was estatic. (*pause*) I’m not sure how long it was

⁴The “ones who saw him” (vs. 49) turns out to be “all” (vs. 50).

before I realized that this was a display of the power of God. Duh! I'm so stupid! He set this up so that he could show me what he could do. I could never have fixed the car by myself: we didn't have the money. But God wanted to "pass by" and show me, "Hey, I'm God. I'm still in control." The disciples missed who Jesus really was, even though he showed them his divine power. So did I.

ž30 God wants to "pass by" in our lives too. He wants to show himself to be God.

III. Movement 3 - "I AM" (Mk. 6:50-51)

ž31 I think we're getting a clearer picture of what Mark wants us to get from his story of Jesus walking on the water, but we're not done yet. Let's hit the Play button again.

A. Story (3rd segment)

ž32 Verse 0. *"Immediately he spoke to them and said, 'Take courage! It is I. Don't be afraid.'* 51 *Then he climbed into the boat with them, and the wind died down. They were completely amazed, 52 for they had not understood about the loaves; their hearts were hardened."*

ž33 I like Jesus' response. If it were me, I would have zapped them with a lightning bolt or something. Mistaking Jesus for a ghost! But Mark records, "Immediately he spoke to them and said..." This verse literally reads, "And immediately he spoke with them, and said to them..." This is the only place in Mark's gospel where he doubles his words for "speaking." Jesus doesn't just speak to them, he speaks *with* them. The "with" adds a certain sense of fellowship and comfort. And notice that he did it "immediately." Just as he had sent them into the rough seas "immediately," now he comforts them "immediately."

ž34 "Take courage! It is I. Don't be afraid." What is it that is supposed to encourage them, and quell their fears? The middle part—"it is I." The "I" there is very emphatic as Mark has written it. "It is **I**!"

ž35 The Greek readers and listeners to Mark's story have an advantage on us, because when they heard "it is I," they would immediately recognize the wordplay involved. "It is I" translates literally "I am." Remember "I AM" from the Old Testament? God told Moses to tell the children of Israel that "I AM" had sent him. "I AM," or Yahweh, was God's personal name in the Old Testament. Jesus' disciples and Mark's readers would have known that. In John 8, Jesus made the statement "before Abraham was, I am!" (8:48), and the Jews picked up stones to stone

him for blasphemy. They understood what he was claiming—to be God! Jesus wanted to “pass by the disciples,” a term for a theophany, a revealing of God. But they didn’t get it. So now he tells them directly. “Don’t be afraid, because I AM.”

ž36 Verse 51. “*Then he climbed into the boat with them, and the wind died down. They were completely amazed...*” Jesus gets into the boat with them, and the wind stops. Why? Because he is God, and the wind obeys him. But that’s not the focus of the story. The point is that Jesus is God, the One who walks on water. Notice the disciples’ reaction—“they were completely amazed.” That translation doesn’t really do Mark’s wording justice. It is hard to translate literally, but it might be something like “they were very much in abundance out of themselves.” I might say it “they were out of their minds [with amazement].” The eyes popped out from their heads like on the cartoon. [Demonstrate a long, long stare of amazement]

B. Sermon Idea (3rd part of the unfolding complement)

ž37 Let’s stop the tape again. Why were they so amazed when Jesus said, “Hey, it’s me. The I AM. The God-man”? It’s because they weren’t expecting him, I think. It didn’t even enter their mind that he could or would do that.

Unfolding Complement: **The disciples missed who Jesus was, even though he told them directly.**

C. Application

ž38 Boy, I’m glad I don’t do that... or do I? I am a third-year seminary student, less than a mile from the seminary, and I have an accident. I have read through the Bible, studied it in depth... and yet I seem to have missed God’s simplest statements. “*My God will meet all your needs according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus*” (Philip. 4:19), and so many other *direct statements* of God’s ability and care for me. And yet I miss them. He has told me, “I AM,” and yet I am surprised when he takes care of me.

(pause)

CONCLUSION (Mk. 6:52)

A. Summary of unfolding complement

ž39 So what was Mark really trying to say with this amazing story? Well, we observed that (1) The disciples felt abandoned, even though Jesus was watching over them the whole time. (2)

The disciples missed who Jesus was, even though he showed them his divine power. And (3) the disciples missed who Jesus was, even though he told them directly “I AM.” It is a story really of the failure to understand who Jesus is.

B. Formation of Sermon Idea

ž40 And that’s the conclusion Mark draws. Look again at verse 51. “*51 Then he climbed into the boat with them, and the wind died down. They were completely amazed, 52 for they had not understood about the loaves; their hearts were hardened.*” Why were they so amazed when the wind stopped, about the whole incident? Because they had not understood about the loaves. The “loaves”? Remember, this story comes right after what? The feeding of the 5000. So Mark uses a catchword from that story—“loaves.” The disciples did not understand that the miracle of the feeding of the 5000 showed Jesus to be God.

ž41 Now how could they not understand? A guy feeds over 1000 people from one little [motioning size] loaf of bread, and they don’t catch on that something’s up with this guy? What, they just weren’t watching? What *does* Mark mean by “had not understood”? Look at verse 52 again. “*For they had not understood about the loaves; their hearts were hardened.*” The expression “hard heart” refers to unbelief. Their heart was hardened in unbelief. This is the main point of Mark’s story. He uses a form of the word “hardened” that stands right off of the page, grabs the reader’s eye.

SERMON IDEA: *The hardness of our heart (our lack of faith) keeps us from truly understanding who Jesus really is.* [repeat]

ž42 Do you think the disciples *understood* that a miracle had occurred at the feeding of the 5000, and that Jesus was more than just an ordinary man? Yeah, I think so.

Do you think the disciples *believed* in their heart that Jesus was God? Well, they were kinda starting to catch on, because in Mark 8 Jesus recognized Jesus as “the Christ,” and Matthew adds “the Son of God.” Do they believe in Jesus? Yes. So what does Mark mean “for they had not understood about the loaves; their hearts were hardened”?

C. Application

ž43 It’s the same problem we have. Do we know that Jesus is God? Yes. Do we believe that? Yes. But so often we are just like the disciples, with hard hearts of unbelief, and we act as if we don’t really know Who we serve. We believe that Jesus is God, but we don’t live like it at

all. We forget. Our hard heart—our unbelief—keeps us from truly comprehending who Jesus really is, and what he can do for us.

- We feel abandoned, even though God is watching over us every minute.
- We miss who Jesus is, even though he has shown us his power so many times.
- We miss who Jesus is, even though he has told us directly in his word.

Mark could just as easily write about us, “They didn’t understand about the fender-bender on S. Abington... or the bad grade on that test... or being passed over for promotion... they didn’t understand about that, but their heart was hardened in unbelief.”

ž44 Well, at least now as we put away our remote control we can rest assured that the disciples finally “have it.” They understand now. Right? Um... did you know that there is another feeding, this time of 4000, in Mark? Go to chapter 8. Verse 14. Just after the feeding of the 4000.

- 14 The disciples had forgotten to bring bread, except for one loaf they had with them in the boat.*
- 15 "Be careful," Jesus warned them. "Watch out for the yeast of the Pharisees and that of Herod."*
- 16 They discussed this with one another and said, "It is because we have no bread."*
- 17 Aware of their discussion, Jesus asked them: "Why are you talking about having no bread? Do you still not see or understand? Are your hearts hardened?"*
- 18 Do you have eyes but fail to see, and ears but fail to hear? And don't you remember?*
- 19 When I broke the five loaves for the five thousand, how many basketfuls of pieces did you pick up?" "Twelve," they replied.*
- 20 "And when I broke the seven loaves for the four thousand, how many basketfuls of pieces did you pick up?" They answered, "Seven."*
- 21 He said to them, "Do you still not understand?"*

ž45 The answer, unfortunately, was “no.” And that’s the way it is with us. But Jesus is so patient. Again and again he shows us who he really is. Let us not forget. Don’t have a hard heart. Remember who he is, what he has done, and what he can do.

Sermon Explanation/Rationale

Introduction

The goal of exegesis is not just a better knowledge of the text, but knowledge that can be put to use in teaching, preaching, and living. Conversely, homiletics should be based upon good exegesis. A sermon developed from the exegesis of Mark 6:45-52 is found in the preceding

pages, and this paper seeks to explain the construction process of that sermon from the exegetical studies presented before (see this website for these papers). It endeavors to detail the movement “from text to sermon.”

General Notes on Sermon Format

A few notes on the format of the sermon may be helpful to the reader. The pages preceding are a full manuscript; every word, “um,” and pause is included. This makes me think through every part of the sermon in detail, and although I do not read verbatim every syllable on my notes, this orderly development of the sermon help me immensely, especially in preparation but also in presentation. The *sans serif* (Arial Bold) font indicates structural notes, and are not read; the *serif* (Times New Roman) indicates what is read. Usually I use an indented single-spaced block format, but this paper is presented in a simple paragraph format for easier reading. Any footnotes are included only for later reference. The ž mark has been included in this manuscript to facilitate discussion in this paper and in class discussion about the construction of the sermon. Finally, the sermon is written to be spoken. Therefore, there are grammatical “errors,” such as incomplete sentences, prepositions at the end of sentences, and run-on sentences. This is done consciously, mimicking the way I speak (my “idiolect”).

Sermon Form

An outline is necessary for well-thought out communication. However, the outline must not impede the message of the text. The most natural form and outline must be found, so that the author/Author may speak for themselves. (I am convinced that much of preaching is getting out of the way of the text.) Mark 6:45-52 is largely narrative with no extended direct discourse didactic passages; therefore, I chose the narrative form of sermon.

Narrative sermons may be preached inductively, with the sermon idea arising from exposition of the story, or deductively, with the sermon idea prefacing the story, which in turn illustrates this idea. As the introduction indicates (pg. 1, ž2-3), this story is not widely understood as it is, an theophany story, but is usually presented as a rescue story. Even while studying this passage in depth, I generally missed this point until very recently. Morna Hooker’s

comments on this passage changed my thinking, however, and suddenly the whole narrative “came together.” “In contrast with the great majority of miracles... is the ‘uselessness’ of this particular miracle: the disciples do not seem to be in danger, and the miracle is really an epiphany (similar to the transfiguration) rather than a rescue operation.”⁵ After this, my own “epiphany,” I began to see comments in Gundry:

Failure, not danger, is in view (contrast 4:35-41).... Though the wind subsides, as in 4:39, Jesus does not rescue the disciples. The narrative carries not even a hint of mortal danger. The wind is only “contrary” to the direction in which the disciples are headed; no waves threaten to engulf them; and Jesus neither does nor says anything to effect a rescue (contrast 4:37-39).⁶

Because of this widescale misrepresentation of the story, I decided to use the inductive sermon form and work my way through the narrative to eventually arrive at the conclusion (sermon idea) that our unbelief keeps us from grasping the reality of who Christ is.

From the several inductive narrative forms available,⁷ I chose a form that “involve[s] an inductive development of the sermon idea within the movements of the sermon.”⁸ The form is as follows:

Introduction - introduce subject or open cold (begin with narrative)

- I. The subject is illuminated by the first movement of the narrative.
 - A. Story (1st segment)
 - B. Sermon Idea (Subject and first part of the unfolding complement)
 - C. Application may be given here or held until the idea is complete.

- II. The subject is illuminated by the second movement of the narrative.
 - A. Story (2nd segment)

⁵Morna D. Hooker, *The Gospel According to Saint Mark*, Black’s New Testament Commentary, ed. Henry Chadwick (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1991), 168.

⁶Robert H. Gundry, *Mark: A Commentary on His Apology for the Cross* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), 334 and 342.

⁷John J. Jelinek, “Preaching Bible Narrative,” unpublished class notes, PT601 Advanced Expository Preaching (Baptist Bible Seminary, spring 1997), 9-12.

⁸Ibid, 11.

- B. Sermon Idea (Subject and second part of the unfolding complement)
 - C. Application may be given here or held until the idea is complete.
- III. The subject is illuminated by the third movement of the narrative.
- A. Story (3rd segment)
 - B. Sermon Idea (Subject and final part of the unfolding complement)
 - C. Application.⁹

In the conclusion, I put together the pieces of the unfolding complement and presented the sermon idea, and then applied it.

Sermon Idea

The discussion of the discourse function of verbal aspect most affected my concept of the sermon idea of Mark 6:45-52. In my study of the aspectual flow of the passage, I agreed with Porter's thesis that the perfect is the most heavily "weighted" form—the foreground of the narrative plane. Mark's emphasis seems to be on ἀλλ' ἡ καρδιά πεπρωμένη (but their heart was hardened) in verse 52. Each evangelist who records this event has a different epilogue, which is most striking in Matthew considering his close verbal connection to (dependence on?) Mark's account. I posit that these epilogues contain the key to the evangelist's individual theological agenda. Mark's is the failure of the disciples to understand either the feeding of the 5000 (the "loaves") or the theophanic walking on water miracle.

Therefore, the sermon subject became *the hardness of our hearts (unbelief)*. The hardness of the disciples' heart in the narrative causes them to be amazed by this miracle; they fail to comprehend (at least on the faith level) who Jesus really is: he is God! The sermon complement then is *keeps us from truly understanding who Jesus is*.

Sermon Outline

Mark develops the sermon idea in three movements, each with a distinct emphasis, but all related to understanding (or failing to understand) who Jesus really is. The movements are indicated by historical presents, which generally change the scene or introduce new characters to

⁹Ibid, 11-12.

a narrative.¹⁰

Movement 1

Movement 1 is introduced by εἰς αὐτοὺς ἀπολύει (historical present) τὸν ὄχλον (while he was dismissed the crowd). This moves the scene from the feeding of the 5000 (while maintaining a connection - vs. 52) to a “split-scene” with Jesus on the mountain and the disciples on the sea (see pg. 3, Ž10). This separation is the emphasis of this movement (see pg. 3, Ž11).

Movement 2

Movement 2 is introduced by ἐρχεται (historical present) πρὸς αὐτοὺς (he came to them). This use of the present changes the “split-scene” to one common scene which Jesus enters “walking on the lake.” Mark aspectually clues us into his emphasis with his use of the foreground imperfect και ἤθελεν παρελθεῖν αὐτοῦ (and he wanted to pass by them), which Guelich rightly calls “the key to the original thrust of the story.”¹¹ This makes the passage an theophany narrative, and solves the “uselessness” of walking on water.¹²

Movement 3

The third movement is introduced by the historical present και λεγει (historical present)¹³ αὐτοῖς (and he said) and moves along with the three present verbs in qarseite, eἰπω εἰμι:mh; fobeisqe (take courage, it is I: do not be afraid). The focus of this movement is found in the phrase eἰπω εἰμι (lit. “I am”), as this is understood to be a divine reference.

Aspectually, verse 52 is most weighted, and may be considered the conclusion to the whole pericope—the “point” of the story. Therefore, to develop the story inductively is following the pattern Mark used. He draws his conclusion at the end of his narrative. This is the sermon idea.

In each movement, the story is told, and then “boiled down” to the developing complement of the sermon idea. Using the useful VCR illustration (pg. 1, Ž4), a scene is viewed

¹⁰ See the student’s paper “Significant Grammar,” 4-5.

¹¹ Robert A. Guelich, *Mark 1—8:6*, Word Biblical Commentary, 34a (Dallas: Word, 1989), 350.

¹² Hooker, 168.

¹³ Yet it must be granted that the verb λεγω is exceptional in its use as a historical present. Porter does mention that the historical present may serve to introduce “dialogue considered specially pertinent to the discussion,” and λεγει αὐτοῖς in 6:50 introduces Jesus’ only recorded words in the passage, which are not only “pertinent,” but the thrust of this movement. Stanley E. Porter, *Verbal Aspect in the Greek of the New Testament, with Reference to Tense and Mood*. Studies in Biblical Greek, vol. 1, 2d. ed. (New York: Peter Lang, 1993), 196.

and then “paused” for consideration. The movement’s emphasis is reflected in the unfolding complement. Then application is made.

Movement 1

Story - emphasis on separation

Unfolding Complement - “The disciples felt abandoned, even though Jesus was watching over them.” This is as a result of their unbelief (sermon idea subject).

Application - by illustration (pg. 4, ž17-19)

Movement 2

Story - emphasis on theophany

Unfolding Complement - “The disciples missed who Jesus really was, even though he showed them his divine power.” This is as a result of their unbelief (sermon idea subject).

Application - by illustration (pg. 8, ž29-30)

Movement 3

Story - emphasis on “I am”

Unfolding Complement - “The disciples missed who Jesus really was, even though he told them directly.” This is as a result of their unbelief (sermon idea subject).

Application - by illustration (pg. 9, ž38)

Conclusion

The three unfolding complements are tied together—because of their unbelief in each case they do not truly understand who Jesus is.

Sermon Idea: *The hardness of our heart (our lack of faith) keeps us from truly understanding who Jesus really is.*

This outline seems to convey Mark’s story in the most natural way possible, and leaves the conclusion to be made at the end, as he did.¹⁴

Omissions

With any sermon, it is necessary to select which details will be included. It is necessary to comment on a few major omissions and the rationale behind them. I have chosen not to comment on the geographical problem inherent in verse 45 — eij" to; peran pro;" Bħqsaidan (unto the other side to Bethsaida).¹⁵ First, I have not come to a firm conclusion *where* the

¹⁴ A note on illustrations: due to the fact that this is a narrative, and hence most of the material is in itself “illustrative,” I have kept illustrations to a bear minimum. Basically, they form the application of the sermon complements.

¹⁵ For a brief digest, see the student’s “Significant Grammar,” 3-4.

disciples were on the lake. Second, I did not see much value sermonically to this point.

Another omission is the issue of the frequent anti-supernatural explanations to *peripatwn epi; th" qal assh* ("walking on the lake" or "walking beside the lake"). The parallel with *epi; th" gh"* (upon the land - vs. 47) strongly suggests that Jesus was walking *on* the water rather than beside the lake. I have chosen not to deal with this subject because of the audience, which I assume accepts the credible witness of Scripture in matters both historical and spiritual.¹⁶

Conclusion

This exercise proves that deep exegetical research along the lines suggested in NT811 are extremely helpful in developing a sermon from the Gospel of Mark. This resulting sermon is both true to the text and practical.

¹⁶The assumed audience is the classroom setting of NT811, but the sermon would work for a church audience with very little adjustment.