

# Home Study

## Mark's Epiphany



TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 2, 2021

### INTRODUCTION

Talk to any parent of school-age children these days, and you'll likely get an earful about how challenging the 2020-21 school year has been. Online learning brings with it certain unique struggles, as does in-person learning. A return to "normal" school routines, down the road, will be welcome, for kids, parents, and teachers!

In pandemic times, and in "normal" times, for school-age children and for those of us who are older, learning life's lessons can be challenging, for all sorts of reasons. We see, in the Gospel of Mark, the extreme difficulty that the twelve disciples of Jesus faced in learning to accept who Jesus really was. Story after story, in this Gospel, portrays the disciples having a hard time accepting the truth of Christ's divinity, and failing to learn to full reliance on him.

Instead of scoffing at the twelve disciples, let's learn from them! Today's reading is another opportunity to come to grips with who Jesus Christ is in our lives.

### TODAY'S READING

Open up your Bible and read Mark 6:45-52. Make note of anything that catches your attention or puzzles you.

Mark begins the story with Jesus directing traffic. First, he sends the disciples into the boat and across the sea of Galilee. Then, he dismisses the crowd. On the surface these appear to be just narrative events that transition from one story to the next, but there is something more. In sending the disciples away first, we see that Jesus is setting up their encounter on the water. Jesus is in control.

What was a time in your life when God was working through seemingly random or unimportant events? Did you notice God's hand then? Or is it easier to see it now?

While Jesus has gone up on the mountain to pray, the disciples are having a tough time in the boat. The wind is pushing hard against the boat, slowing their progress. Mark tells us that Jesus, in the dead of night, sees the plight of the disciples and walks out to them on the water.

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Read verses 48-50 again. Are you surprised that Jesus planned to pass by them? What do you think his motive was? Do you think he didn't intend for the disciples to spot him?

Most likely, Jesus wasn't trying to sneak past, like a spy trying to pass security guards. Rather, we should think of this more like a parade passing by a group of onlookers.

There are two examples of God doing this in the Old Testament. Read Exodus 33:12-23, about God passing by Moses, allowing him to catch a glimpse of the divine glory (and, also, by the way, inspiring the classic hymn, "Rock of Ages, Cleft For Me"). Read also 1 Kings 19:1-18, where we hear of God passing by the worn-out prophet Elijah.

These accounts from the Old Testament shed light on what it means that Jesus was going to pass by the boat. More than that, these Bible stories give us an appreciation for the glory of God.

It's hard to describe God's glory in human words. One way to think about it is that God's glory is found in who he is, in his goodness, truth, wisdom, beauty, and power. Spend some time thinking about the glory of God. If you were allowed to catch a glimpse of God somehow, do you think his glory would overwhelm you? Why or why not?

Read Romans 3:3-4. God's glory leads us to say with Paul, "Let God be true and every man a liar." In other words, no human action could demonstrate that God is in the wrong. He is the glorious one. He does not do what is right, but what is right is defined by what he does. How might this truth guide us when we are inclined to disagree with God?

In today's reading from Mark, Jesus passes by the boat to reveal his divine power over creation. He walks on water! While the disciples see it, they don't understand it. They're seeing God in flesh, but they imagine they're seeing a ghost. They're still learning about who Jesus really is, aren't they?

Read again Mark 6:49-50. Notice that while the winds were difficult to row against, the disciples were not afraid until Jesus arrives. Why do you suppose this was the case?

Jesus is patient, despite the disciples' consistent inability to learn the truth that he is the Son of God. Seeing their fear, he assures them that it is him and that there is no need to be afraid. Jesus gets in the boat, stops the winds, and leaves the disciples utterly astonished.

This is really good news for disciples like us, who are often scared and confused. We get Jesus wrong in our own lives, too. We misunderstand what he teaches, or we understand and are too scared to follow. What are ways that you see yourself in the scared disciples?

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What are you afraid of today? Sickness? Financial trouble? Family struggles? Political turmoil? Death? How can Jesus' words and deeds in today's Scripture story, and throughout the Bible, give us hope beyond fear? How can the divine presence of Jesus, where you are today, be a strength to you -- even if the cause of fear is not taken away?

### **PRAYER**

Jesus, thank you for your supernatural patience. I/we are so grateful that you have brought me/us into your kingdom; and, yet, at times, my/our faith quivers or my/our actions are sinful and evil. Please forgive me/us once again and give me/us strength to overcome the fear or sin that plagues me/us. In your name I/we pray. Amen.