

Mark 6:45-56 | How to Understand Jesus

Tyler Velin | November 20th, 2014

I don't know if I am weird in this or not, but I love college campuses. Every now and then I will see and article online which shows some of America's most beautiful college campuses, and I will always click on it.

I love to see the history, the architecture, the green space, the football stadiums. I love it all. And a couple years ago I got to spend some time at Michigan State University and I walked all over that campus, and it was really neat.

Just last summer, I went with Sarah and was so excited to show her the campus, but because we were tight on time, we were only able to drive by it. And while she was able to see the majority of campus, she didn't get the same experience I had on the campus.

The issue here is an issue of prepositions. As I was taking Greek this summer I realized how bad I was at English. And one of the hardest things for me to grasp in Greek was prepositions. Prepositions communicate your relationship to things: so words like under, over, beside, by, on top of.

And this example of the MSU campus proves how important these words are because we had two totally different experiences of that campus because while Sarah drove by campus, I walked through it.

And this theme is actually really important for our text tonight because what we are going to see in the book of Mark is that we can know Jesus by his actions but we can only understand Jesus through his actions. **Let's pray.**

We are going through the book of Mark, and one thing I have said about Mark is that he intentionally included the smallest amount of Jesus' teaching because rather than telling us who Jesus is, Mark wants to show us who Jesus is.

Jesus actions are very important. In fact, without the action of God we would never know him right?

Think about it. If God existed, but never chose to act towards or among us, we would be completely unaware of him. God had the perfect right to sit in heaven and not act. God existed in perfect triune existence, he was perfectly content. He wasn't lonely, he wasn't desperate for affection like someone who got shafted from the senior prom. He was a self-contained ball of awesomeness for all eternity past. And he could have stayed that way.

But God acted. God created. God orchestrated. He planned. And he wrote. The only way we know God is through his action both in history, and in writing.

God accomplishes his will through his action. So when we look at the "stories" in the gospel of Mark they are not simply little lessons for children, they are important revelations of who God is and an active unfolding of his perfect plan.

And in these stories tonight we are going to see that the current audience of Jesus' action are really bad at picking up on the true meaning behind Jesus' works and words. There are three wrong views of Jesus that we see in this text. These wrong views happen because we can know Jesus by his actions, but sometimes that is not enough.

We see this first in **Mark 6:45**. This is kind of an odd sentence, because it is constructed with this urgency. Literally it reads, immediately, he made his disciples posthaste to get into a boat.

Jesus is rushing his disciples away from all these people. Why? Well last week Jesse shared with us the feeding of the 5,000 and we saw what the people wanted to do with Jesus after that. **John 6:14-15**.

All the people, up to 20,000 of them, saw Jesus and finally realized that this is prophet whom the Old Testament spoke of. For thousands of years these Jews were waiting for this final prophet, the Messiah, which means “anointed one.” They were waiting for him because the Old Testament prophecies talked about how he was going to be King, and how he was going to gather his people to himself, and create a new nation.

This isn’t a random conclusion these people are coming to, this is them interpreting the Old Testament and realizing that Jesus indeed is the messiah. And while they were right in recognizing Jesus, they were wrong in understanding him.

They were trying to take him away, and they were going to use him as the final weapon to overthrow the Roman rule they were under. But that is not why Jesus came.

By his actions they were able to know Jesus, but they were unable to truly understand him. And Jesus knew that his disciples would potentially join this mass because we tend to get excited in groups. So he booted them onto the lake.

The people who wanted Jesus to be their kind of King had a wrong view of Jesus because they thought that Jesus had come to bring them earthly fame and fortune. But that is not reason Jesus is King.

That’s the first wrong view. Jesus is a different sort of King.

The second wrong view comes in this very famous story: **Mark 6:46-52**

So here we have Jesus, it’s late. He has had a long day. And his ride is halfway across the lake. So naturally he just decides to walk across the water. Why? Because Jesus is God. I won’t go into detail here, because we got into this a little bit ago when we looked at Jesus calming the storm. Biblically the only person the Bible gives authority to over water is God.

God walks on the sea, God controls the sea, God calms the sea. Why can Jesus walk on the sea, because he is God.

And there is a great storm happening. Mark went out of his way to discuss the painful headway the disciples are making in the boat because of the waves. They are straining at their oars, trying to get across the lake, but their efforts are pretty futile.

And the disciples look out and they see this “thing” walking on the water and they are terrified, thinking it was a ghost. Now, liberal scholars like to take this text and use it to prove that the reason the gospel writers wrote about all these miracles and religion is because they are part of a very superstitious society. The disciples thought this man walking on the water was a ghost, clearly they are idiots.

Really. So you are telling me, that in the middle of a storm, if I were to look out and see a person, walking on the water, I would naturally assume: “Oh look, there’s a man walking on the water.”

The disciples came to the conclusion that Jesus was a ghost because man doesn't walk on water! Whatever this thing was, even though it was in the form of a human, it could not be human. It is something wholly other than themselves. And they were terrified. Naturally.

Yet Jesus climbs into the boat, speaks peace to them, and calms the sea. And they were utterly astounded.

Yet they still did not understand because their heart was hardened. You see these men saw the actions of Jesus and by their actions assumed that Jesus was something completely different and distant from them.

And while Jesus is something completely different, he is not distant from us. He is not neutral to the cries of his people. And he is not something unknowable. The disciples saw the actions of Jesus and assumed he was something which could not be understood. They saw Jesus as something weird, unknowable, and ultimately irrelevant to their current situation.

Lastly we see the final wrong view of Jesus. **Mark 6:53-56**. So Jesus makes it to the other side of the lake, and people start running all around the country side in order to bring their sick to Jesus. Why? Because Jesus has been healing people.

Word has gotten out about this man. Jesus does the action of healing. And yet the greatest need of these people was not to have their bodies made well, but their hearts made well. They saw Jesus as a healer who had come to make all their problems go away, yet they were blind to their greatest problem.

Now I want us to hold two things together here. On one hand I want us to hold the reality that we as humans can easily look at Jesus and miss the point.

I mean the people in this story have seen Jesus like we have never seen him. The crowds heard him preach, they saw his miracles, they witnessed his healings and yet Jesus marveled at their unbelief.

If the crowds were around today they would be the people who had some sort of "God experience." Paul warns Timothy of these people in **2 Tim 3:5**, they look like they know Jesus because they testify to some sort of power or experience they have had, but they really don't understand the true saving power of Jesus. They just want the flash.

They saw the power of Jesus first hand, yet remained hardened to his true divinity. They missed the point of his actions.

Then there are the disciples. Called by Jesus himself. Given private teaching, special access into his life. Charged with the task of disciple making. Witness to his power and glory like no one else, and yet they missed the point.

This is the second time in the book of Mark we have seen Jesus describe the hearts of the disciples as hardened. And in Greek, the case of which the word hardened is in is a case which implies a past action which carries a present weight.

This hardening is nothing new, the disciples hearts have always been hardened, and here we see that they still are.

Why is this important for us? Because if our hearts could be convinced, the crowds and disciples would have been convinced. If the hardness of our hearts is just a sinful stubbornness, the raw acts and power of Jesus would have changed the hearts of these people.

But it didn't. That's because our hearts aren't convinced by Christ, our hearts are changed by Christ.

That's the second thing I want us to hold in tension. The first is how easy it is to miss the point due to our dead hearts, but the second is how gracious Jesus is to those who have hard hearts.

I mean what would you do if you were Jesus here? You have come to save people who are dying because of their dead hearts, and yet the crowds you are ministering to are not interested in worshipping you, they just want to be healed by you.

If I was Jesus, I would stop healing people. "Don't you see, you are missing the point!" But what did Jesus do: **Mark 6:56**. Jesus moves towards those who are lost, graciously and patiently.

Additionally, Jesus own disciples miss the point. Jesus is going to use these guys to build his church, to carry his cause. He just fed five thousand, he just announced we was the bread of life, he walked on water, he calmed the storm, yet look: **Mark 6:51-52**.

If this was my "A" team, I would have left them. But what did Jesus do: **Mark 6:50-51**. Jesus reaffirmed them of who he was, and he got in their boat. You see even to us who are slow of heart, who miss the point, who are nearest to Jesus and still mess up, Jesus is more than on our side, he's in our boat. Speaking the truth of his existence right into our present moment.

The God who is incredibly separate from his people has drawn near to them in patience through Christ.

Now when I started this message I made a statement that we can know Jesus by his actions but we can only understand Jesus through his actions.

What I mean by that is this: The chief action of Jesus is his death on the cross. And that action is not only proves to us that Jesus is Christ, but it enables us to believe that Jesus is Christ.

We have a heart problem, and like we have just seen, no amount of proof will ever convince our hearts. But through the cross, Jesus kills our sin, he removes our dead heart, and he gives us a heart which is able to see the true Jesus.

Jesus death on the cross is the enabling action which grants us the ability to see Christ rightly.

In 2 Corinthians, Paul is writing to the church and he is discussing why it is that so many Jews, like those at the beginning who saw Jesus as a military King, cannot see Christ as the true messiah.

And he talks about Moses. In the Old Testament, Moses wanted to see God, and so God said that he would show a glimpse of who he is and after Moses saw the back of God his face lit up with the radiance of him. So God told Moses to put a veil over his face so that the people of Israel wouldn't get creeped out seeing the radiant glory of God. God did not yet want the people to see his glory.

Knowing this story, look at what Paul says about people who have a wrong view of Jesus: **2 Cor 3:14**. Christ removes the veil. Why did the disciples struggle so much with belief, because they didn't have the enabling portrait of Christ that we have.

In Colossians, Paul is again speaking of the nature of Christ and look at what he says, **Col 1:19-22**. We cannot understand Jesus simply by looking at his actions as passive observers, we can only understand Jesus when he has brought us through his actions on the cross.

Through the cross we are made right before God. Through the cross we see Christ rightly. Through the cross we can truly take peace because in the face of adversity or trial we can look at Christ and not see and

military King, a ghost, or a magician, but we can look at Christ and say: I know who you are, and know what you have done.

For those of you in here who are non-Christians, I want you to see this story of people who so blatantly miss the point, and I want you to see that God is gracious and winsome to those who are dead in sin.

Those who say: “Man, I can almost see that, I can hear what you are saying, but I can’t fully accept it.” I say, keep coming and trust that Jesus will be gracious to you. Keep fighting for belief and know that no one who comes to Christ will be turned away for he is merciful.

For those of you who are Christian. I want you to realize the miracle of understanding Christ through his actions. The only way you are able to see Christ as savior and not as a random crazy person is because Christ reached out and in his mercy he brought you through the cross and into belief.

And this realization of who Jesus is shapes so much more than your answer on a theology exam. It shapes the way in which you view yourself. You are one who has been bought by Christ and forgiven by his cross. What a wonderful savior. What grounds for worship and evangelism.