

Mark - He Watches Over His Own

by J. Glyn Owen

The sermon illustrates how Jesus watches over and cares for his disciples during their trials, emphasizing his divine authority and intercessory role.

Duration: 42:31

Scripture: Matthew 6:33, Mark 4:35-41, Mark 6:45-52, James 4:2

Topics: "Care"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the constant vigilance and watchfulness of Jesus over his followers. He highlights that Jesus, as the Lord of creation and time, never sleeps or slumbers. The preacher uses the incident of Jesus walking on water to rescue his disciples as an example of Jesus' watchfulness. He explains that Jesus saw the disciples struggling in the boat during the first watch of the night and eventually went to them during the fourth watch. The preacher encourages the audience to trust in Jesus' ability to see their struggles and come to their aid, even if they haven't explicitly asked for help.

Transcript

Will you kindly turn to the Gospel recorded by Saint Mark in chapter 6, and the passage that is to occupy us this morning begins with verse 45 and proceeds to verse 52. We have entitled our message, How He Watches or His Own, a phrase that you will now notice that really finds its origin in the hymn we have just sung. Now, I don't think it's necessary for me to read this passage again.

It describes what is commonly referred to as the incident in which Jesus walks on the sea in order to come to the rescue of his disciples. But you'll find it useful, I think, to have the passage open before you. Now, you will probably remember that this is the second storm mentioned in the record in Mark's Gospel in which our Lord's disciples have been involved.

We have the record of one storm, a way back in Mark chapter 4. On that occasion, our Lord Jesus Christ was with his disciples in the little boat as it became involved in a very terrifying storm on the sea of Galilee. On that occasion, they thought that he didn't care because he was asleep in the stern. And they wake him up and they say, Master, don't you care that we perish? They were not perishing at all.

They could not perish whilst they were with him and whilst they were his. But they thought they were. And he brought peace to their souls as well as peace on to the waters of the lake.

Now, here in Mark 6, we have another and a distinct episode, quite different from that. On this occasion, Jesus is not with them in the boat. He had dismissed them in the first place and sent them away, sent them actually to Bethsaida.

Telling them that he was coming after them and arranging a rendezvous with them there. So he sent them across the lake to Bethsaida whilst he dismissed the large crowd that had congregated on the occasion when he fed the multitudes, the 5,000 men beside women and children. And then according to what John tells us, proceeded on the basis of that miracle to teach extensively.

Jesus then, in due course, finds himself on a hillside. He dismissed the crowd eventually. He got alone.

He got a part and he finds himself on a hillside overlooking the lake. And here are the disciples on the lake in the boat and they're caught in this rather terrifying storm. Now, I believe that we have much to learn from this incident.

First of all, of course, we have something to learn about Jesus of Nazareth, about his claims to deity, about the kind of thing that he did historically. The kind of thing that ultimately persuaded those who were with him that he was none other than Jesus Christ, the Son of the Living God. Lord of nature, Lord of destiny, Lord of all.

They became persuaded of that and among the many persuasive strands in his life and teaching, you find an incident such as this. But I want us to come now and look at the incident before us and see perhaps three main webs that we may separate and examine them in due course. Examine them, I trust by the help of the Holy Spirit.

And then we shall see what this has to say to us. Now, the first thing I would like you to notice is in verse 45, Jesus separates the twelve from the crowd. Immediately, Jesus made his disciples get into the boat and go on ahead of him to Bethsaida while he dismissed the crowd.

Now, we notice here as we go on, and especially as we read this narrative in the light of what John says about the same episode, we notice that there was a peril which Jesus perceived. The disciples were oblivious to it, but he saw a peril of which they were unaware. It's good for us to see and to recognize this.

Our Lord Jesus Christ, being the person he is, can see things that you and I can't. He can see dangers where we cannot. And when he bids us do something, he may have reasons of which we are totally unaware, but he has good reasons for what he demands or requires of us.

Now, there was a peril that he perceived. What on earth was that? Well, the peril that he could see is described by John quite clearly. In John chapter 6 too, having fed the multitudes with a few loaves, a few cakes really, and a couple of little fish, the crowd became so obsessed with his mighty power that they concluded that surely, surely this is the king who was going to come into the world.

This is the prophet who was going to come into the world, the prophet like Moses. Now, they didn't fully understand the meaning of messiahship, but they concluded that really Jesus is the prophet that was to come. It was based on a lot of ignorance at that stage, but there it is.

And then they came to this further conclusion, he surely, he surely is unique. And we can, we can do no other at this point in our national history than get people behind us and organize a popular movement and make him our king. Now, mark their reasons.

Insofar as they could see and understand he was the prophet that should come into the world, two, they realized that he had power that no one else had. And if we rightly conclude, then on the basis of what they knew and what they believed, they thought that he was the one who would deliver them from the yoke of Rome and bondage to Rome as a nation. Jesus then hurriedly, and there's a sense of hurry in the passage here, hurriedly, Jesus tells the disciples, you go before me to Bethsaida, I'll dismiss the crowd, I'll meet you there.

Now, why? Well, you see, the point is this. At this period in his life and in his ministry, our Lord Jesus Christ was in process of weaning his followers, his disciples away from a false view of his messiahship and from a cross materialistic view of his kingdom. And here is this very cross materialistic view involved in the fact that the multitudes now want to crown him as king and even take him by force if possible and make him king.

And what our Lord sees is the danger of his disciples becoming embroiled in this when he's trying to wean their minds away from this false concept. And so he says, fellows, you go away quickly across the sea and I'll follow you in due course. At other times, Jesus had them to dismiss the crowd whilst he went ahead first.

You read your Gospels. Here he does exactly the opposite. He acts as it were out of the ordinary way, what was ordinary for him.

He dismisses the crowd and he sends them away because he doesn't want them to linger in that atmosphere any longer. The peril which Jesus perceived and the prayer which Jesus desired. After leaving them, he went up into the hills to pray.

Now what we need to realize is that this popular movement to make Jesus king was a real temptation to him. This was a time of real temptation and if for no other reason, there were other reasons of course, but if for no other reason than that, he wanted to become, he wanted to be alone with his father in prayer and in fellowship. Satan, you see, does not easily give up.

Haven't you found that out, Christian? I hope you have. He does not easily give up. Jesus had met this temptation basically at the very outset of his ministry.

But Satan doesn't give up and he brings it up again in a different setting, in a different atmosphere altogether and you might not recognize it at first, but it's the same thing as he's met and conquered a little earlier on in his ministry. He overcame what was basically the same temptation. You read the record of way back there in Matthew chapter 4 verses 8 and 9 for example.

It's in Luke 2. Let me just read. Now let's try and get this. Let's try and put ourselves back there for a moment.

Let's try and go back across the centuries in imagination and see what's going on here. Jesus has come into this world to make the kingdoms of this world his own, to gather men and women out of every kingdom, every realm, every nation, every tongue, and make them his own people, that eternally they should serve him, serve him day and night in his temple, having first served him day and night, summer and winter, in season and out of season, as Paul says, here upon earth. That's what he's after.

In order to do that, the triune God determined that it was absolutely necessary for the Son of God to become incarnate and to die. There is no turning of the kingdom of Satan upside down. There is no

rescuing the dupes of Satan saved by the death of the cross.

That's the mind of the Godhead. So that Jesus came forth into this world to die in order to liberate the slaves of a bondage far, far greater than ancient Egyptian bondage. Now comes Satan along in Matthew chapter 4 and he says, Jesus, he says, look, come up with me.

Let's have a look at what we can see from this high mountain. And he showed him the kingdoms of the earth. I don't know whether this was in the imagination or whether it was real.

I can't tell you. Whether they climbed a literal mountain, I don't know from what mountain they could have seen all the kingdoms of the world. They may have climbed a hillock.

I just don't know. But at least he showed Jesus all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time. And there he saw them.

And he said to Jesus, now look, he says, you don't need to go to the cross. You just bow down and do reverence, do obeisance to me and I'll give you the whole thing. It's as easy as that, he says.

Why make things difficult for yourself? Why come into this world to die when if you and I come to terms, then your cross will be over. You don't need to die. I'll give you the kingdoms of this world all in a moment of time.

We'll strike a bargain. And you only need to bow down and acknowledge me. That's all.

You remember our Lord's words? Get thee behind me, he had said before. Now he says, thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve. And so the implicit statement to Satan is this.

Look here, I'll have no truck with you. You get away from me because I am determined to worship my Father in heaven and him only and to serve him. And I am going forward to the cross because it is part of the service that he has given me to do.

My meat is to do the will of him that sent me and to finish his work. Well, you remember what happened. But he comes back again, you see.

And he comes back at a most strategic moment. Here's a popular movement that want to make Jesus King. Correspondingly, the cross is that much nearer now, and it's looming much more in the mind of the Lord Jesus.

You go back to John 6. If I did this, then our time would have gone. You go back to John 6 at your leisure, and you will see that Jesus spoke of himself as the one who was the bread that came from heaven, who had to be broken for the life of the world and had to be given. In other words, in John 6, after the feeding of the multitude, Jesus is speaking of himself as coming to die for the life of men.

Jesus knows what he's talking, and Satan knows what he's talking about, even if some of his disciples didn't. He's talking about his death. His death is looming large in his thinking.

Now, says Satan, look, look, here surely is the moment. Why, why, why insist on your death? Why go forward to the cross? You can be made king. It was a moment for prayer because it was a moment of peril.

Why did Jesus refuse? Well, of course, the reason he refused is simple when you read the New Testament. He came to destroy the works of the devil. And to destroy the works of the devil, he has not simply to come into our human nature and live a human life.

He has to go inside death itself. And from within inside the castle of death, he has, like some son of old, to tear the thing to pieces so that he is Lord of life and of death. Jesus knew that even if Satan was a gentleman, you can't strike terms with a person like that.

He's a liar from the beginning. And even if you can strike terms with a person like that, it wouldn't do what he'd come into this world to do. He has to undermine the fabric and the foundation of the whole kingdom and dominion of Satan.

And that means he must die. Oh, that we have the biblical view of the death of our Lord Jesus Christ. It is as he goes to the cross, he says, I see, I see the kingdom of this world.

The kingdom of darkness being torn to smithereens and Satan is being cast out. But that necessitated his dying. So he refuses the common appeal and he goes alone to his father to pray, to talk about the very temptation that has come again in a different guise.

Jesus separating the twelve from the multitude and separating himself from them all to be alone with the father. That's the first scene. That's the first strand.

Now come and look at the second. Jesus watching over his disciples in the storm that has overtaken them. Get the picture.

Having sent the twelve ahead of himself, Jesus then eventually, as we've noted, dismissed the crowd and made for a hillside scene overlooking the lake, where he communed with his father. And from that high vantage point, he also watched and saw what was going on on the lake below. So you see, Jesus is there on the hillside.

He's above the lake and he can see what's going on on the lake. At the same time, he's in touch with a world above the world of his father. He's watching over his own and he's interceding with his father.

Look at verses 47 and 48. When evening was come, the boat was in the middle of the lake and he was alone on land. And I want you to notice these words particularly.

He saw the disciples straining at the oars because the wind was against them. That's the New International Version. Now, two things I want us to notice here.

First of all, the vantage point when Jesus watched over his own and then the vigil he kept for them. One, the vantage point. Please don't miss this picture.

I think it's the most precious one and the most suggestive one. Uh, it's a suggestive one. Let me bring it in here now.

Let us apply it before we come to it. It's a suggestive one in this sense. It's a kind of picture of precisely what our Lord Jesus Christ is doing for his own today.

He has moved away from the immediate scene of our storms and our trials, but he sees us and he watches his people. He watches all his people. And as he does that, he intercedes.

Now let's get this. Perched high on the hillside above the lake with its storm, its winds, and its toiling crew and their tossing little boat, Jesus there from the hillside above is keeping watch over his disciples. He is supervising.

He is scrutinizing. He is watching his people in their storms. It was he who sent them out.

It was he who sent them into that boat and across that lake. And now that they're there and enveloped in the storm, he's not going to turn his back upon them. He's watching them.

He's seeing them. Neither is that the only precious thing to note. Don't let us miss the fact that he's doing two things at one and the same time.

He's watching over his own from that hillock yonder or mountainside. Call it whatever you like. He's watching his own in the light of the Paschal moon because this took place toward the Easter time, towards the... Sorry, I shouldn't say Easter in this context, towards the Passover time.

And that was the time of the full moon so that he could see in the light of the full moon what was going on on the lake below. He did that. He went aside to watch over them, but he's doing something else.

He is watching over them. And at the same time, he is communing with his father. He is talking with his father about his own temptation and about the need of his disciples and about the whole problems that face him as the one who has come into this world to seek and to save that which was lost.

Now, please notice what's happening. Apart from being personally involved in the care of the disciples, as he communes with the father, he involves the heavenly father also in the same affairs. I wonder whether some of us Christians feel that we are buffeted a lot.

And we're very much alone in our battles, very much alone in the storm, and our little bark is getting waterlogged. And we really don't know what to do. Listen, my friend, take hold of this, will you? Are you a man or a woman of faith? Do you believe this morning? If you do, now come with me.

Bring your faith here. I want you to see what's happening. Jesus is looking on and he sees everything.

But not only that, he's talking to the father and he involves the father in the same affair. He cannot commune with the father now without involving his father in the storm in which his disciples have been caught up. Oh, precious, precious thought.

Our Lord Jesus Christ is ascended up upon high on a hill far higher than that, than any hill that overlooked the Sea of Galilee yesterday or today. He has ascended up on high and he is in communion with the father. And this is what the Bible tells us, that he involves the whole Godhead in the needs of his people in their storms and in their trials.

So that you see, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are involved this morning in looking upon you and watching you and listening to your prayers if you're redeemed. That's why I chose that hymn. You won't wonder, will you? I'm almost tempted to ask you to sing it again.

Oh, the deep, deep love of Jesus. Spread his praise from shore to shore. How he'll love this.

Ever loveth, changeth never, never more how he watches over his loved ones. You got it? Have you got the picture? Died to call them all his own. How for them he intercedeth, watches all of them from the

throne and at the same time involves the entire Godhead in the same business.

Because he is in fellowship with the Father and with the Spirit. The vantage point when Jesus watched his own and then the vigilance with which he did so. We read in Mark's gospel that when Jesus is recorded as having first noticed the disciples in trouble, it was in the first watch of the night.

This is how we read, when evening was come, the boat was in the middle of the lake. And he was alone on land. He saw the disciples straining at the oars because the wind was against them.

About now, about the fourth watch of the night, he went out to them walking on the lake. He was about to pass them by. The Jews divided the night into four watches from 6 p.m. 6 in the evening to 6 a.m. In the morning, four watches of three hours.

Jesus' eye was upon them when evening was come, that is between six and nine o'clock in the evening. He was still watching them at the fourth watch. And at the fourth watch, he saw that things were so difficult, he must now go to them.

They've not asked him, mind you. Nobody asked him. There was no flair sent up to say, SOS, we perished.

No one did that. They couldn't do that, of course. There was no way.

There was no way they could come to him to tell him in the ordinary human way that they were in need, that they were in trouble. But he was watching them when they couldn't see him. Hallelujah.

Isn't that precious? I can't see him this morning. He watches or his own when we can't see him. Some of us need to know that today.

And the fourth watch, Jesus said, it's not enough to watch them from a distance. I must, I must, I must break in. They have not asked me to come, but the situation is such they are mine.

I sent them. I'm responsible for them. And I'm going to them.

And so he does. Oh, my friends, before we go any further, there is something here that you and I need to lay hold of with two arms of faith. That is the recognition of the glorious fact that our Lord Jesus Christ knows the moment to intervene in our lives.

And he knows it far better than we know ourselves. And if he waits until the fourth watch of the night before he does so, then be sure of this. He knows what he's doing.

It is good to know that we have a savior who, in the words of our opening praise this morning, neither slumbers nor sleeps. The great I am the Lord of creation and of time and of destiny. And he doesn't sleep.

And he's always on vigil. He's always awake. He's always alert.

There's nothing he doesn't see. He counts the hairs of your head. Some of our troubles become exceedingly acute in the dark hours of the night.

Don't we know that? Even if it's only a little bit of a toothache, it's far worse in the middle of the night than it is in the daytime. My friend, I want you to know that at the fourth hour, the fourth vigil, the fourth fourth watch of the night, he's still awake and he watches all his own. Now, come with me to the last main

thought here, which brings it all to a climax.

In the first place, Jesus dismisses. Jesus separates the twelve from the crowd and separates himself from them all. In the second, Jesus watches all his disciples in the storm.

Now the third, Jesus comes to his own. He does not simply watch over his followers from a distant heaven, but there are times when he comes up right alongside of them. And he comes to intervene on our behalf.

I want to say a word, first of all, about the compassion that brought Jesus alongside these storm-tossed disciples. This passage in Mark leaves us with a distinctive impression that the disciples were too occupied with saving themselves even to think of Jesus. And don't criticize them because we all do the same thing.

The first thing we think about is not, well, problems are becoming so acute, let's have a word with our Lord, let's talk to him about it. The first thing we invariably think about is to try and fight it through ourselves. And oftentimes it's just because we are proud and we are arrogant and we think we can do things ourselves without involving him at all.

And so here, you see, they had made no appeal to him. But nevertheless, he came to them. Now, at the same time, I want you to notice there's a measure, there's a paradox here.

He came to them and yet he didn't come to them. He was walking on the water to come to them, but did you notice what Mark says? He made as though he was going beyond them, as if he were going to pass them by. You have exactly the same kind of thing in Luke 24.

You remember those two people on the road to Emmaus? I don't know why it is. We've been referring a lot to them recently. But the same kind of thing happens there.

You remember they were going to Emmaus and they were so terrified by what had happened in Jerusalem and Jesus is with them. And then when they came to the point where they would turn off for their little cottage or whatever it was, he made as though he would go further. He does exactly the same thing on the lake.

There they are in the boat, they're really like a cork on the ocean and they're being knocked about and buffeted and they're fearful, they're timid, they don't know what to do. And he makes as if he's going to pass them. You see, he's come to them and yet they must qualify it.

Dare I put it like this, Jesus makes himself near enough to be recognized by his own and and to be summoned to their aid. He doesn't actually inflict himself upon them, though he's there to be invited. And he wants to be invited.

He says, I've come all this way, no one else could have come, but I've come and I'm here and the storm is too much for you. Well, here I am, your Lord. Now, surely you've got enough sense to call me in.

You see me, I'm walking on the waves that are causing you all the trouble and all the turmoil and all the fears and the heartaches. Won't you invite me in? Won't you let me take over? Won't you ask me? You see, and our Lord may be doing exactly the same in our pews here in Knox this morning. You know he's near, but he's not going to just burst into your life.

He's going to knock at the door. You know, this is tremendous. The Lord of glory knocks at the door of the heart of his creature and says, please may I come in? I don't understand that.

He's the Lord. He doesn't need to do it. He's got every right to come in and break in and break everything down in order to come in.

But he does it. Oh, the marvels of divine grace. He says, I'm knocking at the door.

That's the principle here. But now I've got to go further. I want you to notice the cry that eventually brought Jesus into the boat.

Well, you say, nothing to notice there. I don't suppose just that they saw their need of him, and they saw that he was there, and they recognized him, and then they asked him in. No, they didn't.

You know, they didn't ask him in as far as the record goes. Well, what then brought him into the boat? Oh, I'll tell you. And if you don't want to dance, I do.

You know what brought him into the boat? Not the cry of faith, but the cry of fear. They had no faith. They didn't recognize him.

They thought it was a ghost. Now, I don't blame them for that. But they didn't invite him in.

They didn't say, Lord, come and take charge. We can't take charge of ourselves. But he heard their cry of fear.

And he went into the boat because he was responsible for them. He had sent them on their journey. And he was Lord of the sea through which they were passing and Lord of the waves.

So, he goes into their boat because he heard them crying from fear when they would not cry from faith. Hallelujah. Oh, my good people, is there music in your soul this morning, you believers? You see, this is part of the glory of our Savior.

Now, he doesn't excuse us from inviting him in. This is the normal way. And the New Testament tells us there are many things we don't have because we do not ask.

James tells us that. Or we ask the wrong and we consume what we get from God upon our own lusts. All right.

But you know, my friends, there are times when our blessed Lord Jesus Christ doesn't wait for us to cry out of faith. But he listens to the cry of fear. And he steps into the boat.

And he calms the tossing billows. That's our Lord. What a wonderful Savior we have.

Immediately, he spoke to them. And he said, take courage in his eye. Don't be afraid.

And he climbed into the boat. The troubles are all over. Now, I'm going to close.

There are many kinds of storms in the New Testament and in the Bible. There are some storms that we enter into because of our disobedience. Jonah got into a terrible storm because he disobeyed.

And you and I may be in a storm this morning just because we've disobeyed. And the thing to do in those storms is this, is to turn right around, right about like Jonah did. Now, I don't know what whale God is going to send after us to swallow us.

His lordship over circumstances remains unabated. And he can do that, too. But the thing for us to do is to turn right around and have a change of mind and go his way.

But you know, there are storms on the way of obedience to his known and his clear, unequivocal commands. I'm concerned for those this morning. He sent you out.

He told you where to go. He named Bethsaida. It wasn't Bethsaida for you.

It was some other place. And he said, I'll meet you there. And when you went into your little boat and you crossed the sea, you made for the place where Jesus said, I'm going to meet you.

But boy, on the way there, things were topsy-turvy. And you thought the end had come. And you may be there this morning, right in the middle of a little sea that's really gone to smithereens under you.

Pardon the metaphors. They're all topsy-turvy, too. So the fact that you're in a storm does not necessarily say that you're a saint or a sinner.

You may be a rebel caught in the storm, but you may be a saint. And the reason for the storm is you're obeying your Lord. And the whole little sea in which you are found is seething and is bitter against you because you're doing the will of your Lord.

And He's permitting it for some strange reason. Now I want you to see that even though He permits the storm, He's Lord over it. And He sees you in it.

And He's prepared. No, He's determined, if you're obeying Him, to come near enough for faith to call Him into the boat. No, more than that.

If faith does not call Him in, then a cry of fear may yet bring Him right by your side. My good friends, if ever there was a time in world history when you and I needed to know this lesson, I'm sure it is today. We are moving into a period in world history when we shall have to suffer much more for our faith than we have ever known.

All the prophets tell us that, not just the morose prophets, not just those who are always prophets of doom, who've never seen anything but thunder clouds. Time is coming when opulent North America will have to be without less than suffer. And if we don't do it of our own volition in order to share what we've got, the hordes of Russia or China or somewhere else will be among us and they'll help us to do it.

But in one way or another, we are going to be humbled. The Assyrian is still the rod of his right hand in the humbling of a people who know not how to share what they have with the needy creatures that God has made. You and I need to know where we're going, who sent us, and if in the pathway of obedience we are found floundering, facing a storm that's too much for us, we need to know that He sees and He can come to us and He can join us.

He can change the whole situation. I ask you to take this word this morning. If perchance as you worship here beneath this roof today, you say, I'm in no storm at all.

All is well with me. The sky is rosy. The sky is lovely.

Let me remind you, my friend, that it can change just like that. Jack Wemhoyer was playing his harmonica here three weeks ago. Another of our members was struck down without that much warning in recent times.

Don't take life for granted. The storm is brewing all the time. But here is a Savior who is able to save His people in the storm and, if it please Him, from the storm and certainly through the storm.

Let us pray. Almighty God, we acknowledge Your bountiful, Your lavish love and grace. We thank You for all the mercies of this day and all the privileges to which we are heir.

We ask You to forgive us that we sometimes talk about the most trivial things as if they were storms, a petty fall in our mode of living, and it's a disaster for us because we do not see things in the light of eternity and of Your eternal will and purpose. Forgive us for that. Give us this morning, we pray, an understanding of the fact that whatever storm comes to us in the way of obedience, You are pledged to keep Your own and we may trust You.

And to any of us that may be walking near the edge of a volcano and who will soon be in greater need than we recognize this morning, in the meantime, may we learn to know You and love You and trust You and serve You that in the moment of desperation we shall not be found wanting. And these things we ask in Jesus' name. Amen.

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