

Tenth Sunday after Pentecost

OLD TESTAMENT – Genesis 9:8-17

8 Then God said to Noah and to his sons with him, 9 “Behold, I establish my covenant with you and your offspring after you, 10 and with every living creature that is with you, the birds, the livestock, and every beast of the earth with you, as many as came out of the ark; it is for every beast of the earth. 11 I establish my covenant with you, that never again shall all flesh be cut off by the waters of the flood, and never again shall there be a flood to destroy the earth.” 12 And God said, “This is the sign of the covenant that I make between me and you and every living creature that is with you, for all future generations: 13 I have set my bow in the cloud, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and the earth. 14 When I bring clouds over the earth and the bow is seen in the clouds, 15 I will remember my covenant that is between me and you and every living creature of all flesh. And the waters shall never again become a flood to destroy all flesh. 16 When the bow is in the clouds, I will see it and remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is on the earth.” 17 God said to Noah, “This is the sign of the covenant that I have established between me and all flesh that is on the earth.”

9:8 *and to his sons* – God included a word of assurance to future generations. (TLSB)

9:9 *I establish my covenant.* † God sovereignly promised in this covenant to Noah, the new father of the human race, to Noah’s descendants and to all other living things never again to destroy man and the earth until his purposes for his creation are fully realized (“as long as the earth endures,” 8:22). For similar commitments by God see his covenants with Abram (15:18–20), Phinehas (Nu 25:10–13) and David (2Sa 7). See chart on “Major Covenants in the OT”. (CSB)

God’s covenants are unilateral; He obligates Himself to observe the terms of His own contract (here a reassurance of flood’s survivors after their fearsome experience). (TLSB)

God gave them that assurance in the most solemn and binding form of divine promise – by means of a covenant. Think of it! God actually obligated Himself to observe the terms of a solemn contract. (PBC)

But hadn’t God said that to Noah when he first came out of the ark? (8:21) Why should He repeat His promise? Luther points out that Noah and the members of this family must have loved in great trembling. The sense of the awesomeness of the year-long experience that had just gone through hadn’t left them. All around them was evidence of fearful destruction. God saw that these frail creatures of dust needed all the assurance He could give them. (PBC)

9:10 *every living creature* – Animals also benefited from God’s covenant. (TLSB)

9:11 *Never again shall all flesh be cut off by the waters of the flood.* A summary of the provisions of the Lord’s covenant with Noah—an eternal covenant, as seen in such words and phrases as “never again” (vv. 11,15), “for all generations to come” (v. 12) and “everlasting” (v. 16). (CSB)

Regions may be devastated; people and animals may be swept away by floods. But never again will a flood be universal. (TLSB)

9:12 *sign* – A covenant sign was a visible seal and reminder of covenant commitments. Circumcision would become the sign of the covenant with Abraham (see 17:11), and the Sabbath would be the sign of the covenant with Israel at Sinai (see Ex 31:16–17). (CSB)

9:13 *bow in the cloud* – Rain and the rainbow doubtless existed long before the time of Noah’s flood, but after the flood the rainbow took on new meaning as the sign of the Noahic covenant. (CSB)

When the marvelous rainbow appears, believers will recall with joy its God-given significance. Rainbows may not have existed until this time (AE 2:148).

In addition to assuring them with words that He would never send another flood, God gave them a visible sign as a seal of the truthfulness of His promise. (PBC)

9:14 *bring clouds* – Perhaps a new occurrence as a result of atmospheric changes from the flood. (TLSB)

9:15 *remember my covenant* – God will be faithful to the covenant He has made. (TLSB)

Hebrew is *zakar*. It means “to recall” or “keep in mind.” God could not forget His covenant with His people. When He “remembers” them, He actively works to keep His promise to protect and save them. (TLSB p. 843)

9:16 *bow in the clouds* – Natural laws that produce rainbows were already in existence, but now they would work their giant wonders in the sky with particular significance. (TLSB)

everlasting covenant – While this covenant will last only until the end of time, it is also associated with God’s covenant relationship with His chosen people. (TLSB)

9:17 *this is sign* – Sight of a magnificent rainbow may even have accompanied this summary statement. (TLSB)

8:20–9:17 After the fearsome yearlong experience on the ark, God reassures Noah and his family that He will never again send a universal flood. As time would soon tell and continues to tell, no amount of amazing rescues and rainbow sightings can keep humankind, including God’s own people, from falling into sin. But God is faithful to His covenants, even when people are not. The message of every rainbow tells us He is faithful to His promise to provide a Savior. • O God, for Jesus’ sake, grant that every sighting of a rainbow may bring to mind Your promises of grace and mercy. Amen. (TLSB)

EPISTLE – Ephesians 3:14-21

14 For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, 15 from whom every family[c] in heaven and on earth is named, 16 that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being, 17 so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith—that you, being rooted and grounded in love, 18 may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, 19 and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God. 20 Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, 21 to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen.

3:14–21 Paul now expresses a prayer that grows out of his awareness of all that God is doing in believers. God’s key gifts are “power” (vv. 16, 18, 20) and “love” (vv. 17–19). (CSB)

Immediately preceding our text, Paul acknowledges that he has been privy to the mystery that Gentiles are fellow heirs of the Gospel. His call as an ambassador to the Gentiles serves as the backdrop to his

prayer for the Gentiles in our text. After our text, Paul urges the members of God's Church to live in such a way that reflects the unity established by God through Christ. The nature of the blessings prayed for in our text (strength, love, and comprehension) all facilitate such ecclesiastical unity. A growth in strength, love, and knowledge is all possible due to God's gracious promises, ultimately in Christ Jesus. It is the surpassing love of Christ (v 19), the love that reconciled us to God by taking him to the cross, that makes possible God's doing for us "far more abundantly than all that we ask or think" (v 20). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 19, Part 3)

3:14-15 Resumes the thought begun in verse 1. (TLSB)

Paul digressed to explain the mystery that God had revealed to him, that in the Christian Church God is pleased to have Jewish and Gentile believers in Christ stand as equals. (PBC)

3:14 *For this reason.* Resumes the thought of v. 1. (CSB)

Because you Gentiles have now come nigh and become fellow-citizens with all the saints and members of God's household, I pray for you; and since I am the apostles to the Gentiles, it is a part of my office to pray for you, so that you may grow and increase in your new, spiritual, divine existence and life. (Stoeckhardt)

The unity of the Church, established by Christ, causes Paul's prayer for strength among God's people. Division weakens. Unity strengthens. It is appropriate, then, that Paul introduces this independent variable of unity as a precursor and producer of the dependent variable—strength among God's people. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 19, Part 3)

I bow my knees. Expresses deep emotion and reverence, as people in Paul's day usually stood to pray. (CSB)

The normal Jewish and early Christian posture for prayer was standing (Mt. 6:5; Mark 11:25; Luke 18:11). Kneeling for prayer (Dan. 6:10; Luke 22:41; Acts 9:40) suggests submission and worship (Phil. 2:10) (TLSB)

Bow – Synonymous with worship toward God (Ex. 4:31; 34:8; Ps. 95:6; 1 Sam. 1:28) or respect and service for a human being (Gen. 33:3; 43:26-28; 1 Sam. 20:41; 28:14 Esther 3:2). God expressly forbade bowing to false gods (Ex. 20:4-5). People also bow to (1) greet someone (Gen. 18:2; 19:1), (2) signal humility and repentance (Ezra 9:5; 10:1), and (3) express thanks (Gen. 24:52). Bows were done in a variety of ways (1 Chron. 29:20; 1 Kings 18:42; Neh. 8:6) and likely included tilting the head, tilting the upper body, kneeling with one's face to the ground, or lying prostrate. The more elaborate the bow, the greater the expression of devotion or emotion (cf. 33:3). (p. 1276 TLSB)

This is an emphatic way of denoting prayers; but not incidental, occasional prayer, inspired by some passing feeling; the attitude denotes deliberate prayer, making a business of it, approaching God reverence. (PC)

3:15 *family.* The word in Greek is similar to the word for "father," so it can be said that the "family" derives its name (and being) from the "father." God is our Father, and we can commit our prayers to him in confidence. (CSB)

Best renders by "he who is the true Father of all who are children." The family on earth – Christians – in heaven it includes the angels and saints. (Stoeckhardt)

pasa patria, “every family” or “the whole family.” The family here refers to the Church. Not only is God our Father by creation, but he is also our Father by salvation. This soteriological source of family emphasizes again the unity of the Christian Church. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 19, Part 3)

3:16-21 This prayer consists essentially of three petitions followed by a doxology, a statement of praise to God. Paul asks God to grant the Ephesians strength, knowledge, and fullness. (PBC)

These, however, are not three isolated or separate things. They all hang together. We could connect and expand them a bit by putting them together into one sentence such as, Paul prays that God would strengthen (16) the new man in the Ephesians, in order that they would come to know (19) the greatness of Christ’s love and so gain a deeper realization of the fullness (19) that is theirs as members of God’s family. (PBC)

3:16 *riches of his glory* – God’s standard of giving is liberal, bountiful, overflowing. An image of the riches of his glory is seen in the starry heavens, which proclaim at once the vast riches and surpassing glory of God. Or in the beautiful appearance of an autumn sunset, where the whole sky is fleshed with clouds brightened into a sea of glory. (PC)

Christians continually take from this kindness after kindness and all that is good. (Stoeckhardt)

strengthened with power – This means that Christians might find themselves equipped with courage and vitality for all the tasks ahead.

Paul requests that God would give the Ephesians strength – spiritual strength, which comes only through the Holy Spirit. Causing Christ to dwell in believers’ hearts is the real work of the Holy Spirit. (PBC)

In the knowledge of Christ’s love (vv. 18-19). (TLSB)

In the doctrine of *genus majesticum*, we claim that the divine nature is communicated to the human nature in the person of Jesus Christ. In Paul’s prayer, he asks that God share his divine characteristics (as much as our finite existence can hold) as a source of blessing and strength to the Church. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 19, Part 3)

inner being – This is our mind and our heart. It is our conscience, our will, and our commitments. The actions we take, as Jesus said, flow from the inside out (Luke 6:43-45). (LL)

The Spirit’s work affects the “inner being,” that is, the new man created when the Ephesians were brought to faith. This new man grows as the Spirit continues to work in believers through Word and Sacrament, making them ever more sure and confident of their salvation as Faith in Christ grows. (PBC)

The renewed nature in the Christian that battles against the sinful nature (4:24; 2 Cor. 4:16). (TLSB)

3:17 *dwell*. Be completely at home. Christ was already present in the Ephesian believers’ lives (cf. Ro 8:9). (CSB)

Since baptized Christians are in Christ (Gal. 3:27), Christ dwells by the Spirit in them (Rom. 8:10; Gal. 2:20). Paul’s prayer is that He would continue to dwell in them, and that they would trust in Him. (TLSB)

This is the blessed and wonderful mystical union. He is in us and we are in Him: this the inner communion between Christ and the Christians. When become believers, when we grasped Christ in faith,

Christ in and with His Spirit entered into our heart. But the chief concern in the Christian's life is that they become strengthened in faith and that Christ through faith ever wins more and more room in their heart. For this should every Christian himself pray to God from day to day. (Stoekhardt)

It means to make a permanent home. (LL)

If we are to comprehend the full scope of God's purposes, we need both the inward strengthening of the Holy Spirit and the uninterrupted communion with Christ as he dwells within us.

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hearts. The whole inner being. (CSB)

through faith – This aspect of faith uses Martin Luther's favorite word for faith, fiducia. It means a relationship of trust, in which we stake our very lives on Christ. ((LL)

The instrument by which this indwelling is attained. (PC)

rooted and grounded – Both of these verbs are perfect passive, indicating something which has already happened and is continuing as a stable and constant condition.

That of a tree and that of a building, denoting what is both a starting point and the support of the Christian's love. (PC)

in love – This is agape love which is purely unconditional, intentionally sacrificial, expressive in both word and action, and enduring, as in the case of Christ, even to death on the cross. (LL)

It is implied that the Christian life can begin and flourish only in such an atmosphere as warm sunshine needed to start and advance the life of plant, so love is needed to start and carry on the life of the soul. (PC)

3:18 *comprehend* – The highest knowledge of God is not personal achievement. It is given to the community of believers and is available only to the individuals who share in the life of that community. We are not plugged into God on our own private wire.

Breadth...length...height...dept – What building could this be other than the one concerning which is was said in Ephesians 2:19-22 that the readers with all saints belong to it? In width it stretches east and west far over the nations of the earth. In length it extends through all times unto the end things. In height it reaches into the heights of heaven where Christ lives, embracing the hosts of God's angels in heaven, who according to Ephesians 1:10 are united with God's children on earth and who together form the whole family in heaven and on the earth, 3:15. (Stoekhardt)

3:19 *surpasses knowledge*. Not unknowable, but so great that it cannot be completely known. (CSB)

The immeasurability of God's wisdom and Christ's love (Job 11:5-9; Rom. 11:33). Knowledge of Christ is praised in the Letter, but the human mind cannot fully comprehend Him. (TLSB)

The Ephesians experienced that marvelous love in their own lives, but they had only begun to learn about it. Paul now prays that God would enable them to grasp or understand the full extent of Christ's love. Paul suggests that the Ephesians think of how Christ's love stretches out in directions to embrace "all saints," that is, every believer who ever lived. For each believer of all time, in every place, Christ has done exactly the same as He did for the Ephesians, so great is His love for so many people who were so worthless and unworthy of being saved. (PBC)

gnōnai . . . hyperballousan tēs gnōseōs, "to know . . . surpasses knowledge." Existence, as well as its accompanying experience, is not contingent upon knowledge. But knowledge can make the experience of being part of God's Church more profound and profitable. This knowledge can also direct our hearts and minds to the source of this salutatory experience—God our Father. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 19, Part 3)

fullness. God, who is infinite in all his attributes, allows us to draw on his resources—in this case, his love. (CSB)

"The whole world with all diligence has struggled to figure out what God is, what He has in mind and does. Yet the world has never been able to grasp the knowledge and understanding of any of these things. But here we have everything in richest measure" (LC II 63). (TLSB)

God, of course, is total "fullness." He created everything; He owns everything; He controls everything. And yet, He allows us, His dear children, to come boldly to Him. In fact, He invites us to pray confidently, assuring us that He will hear. Paul's prayer is a model of bold prayer. There is nothing bashful about his request. He doesn't ask for just a few crumbs; he asks for the whole loaf. His request is that the Ephesians "may be filled to the measure of all fullness of God." We might say that he is asking that the Ephesians be filled to overflowing with all good things that God dispenses through His Church. (PBC)

3:20-21 The prayer and the first half of the Letter reach their high point in a doxology. (TLSB)

3:20 *more abundantly*. Has specific reference to the matters presented in this section of Ephesians but is not limited to these. (CSB)

"God's giving is not limited by our asking. "He is like an eternal, unfailing fountain. The more it pours forth and overflows, the more it continues to give. God desires nothing more seriously from us than that we ask Him for much and great things (LC III 56). (TLSB)

At work in the church today is a low expectation of God. We expect little from God, it seems, and by our lack of prayer and planning, we end up fulfilling our own low expectations. It's not unlike the man who had a flat tire in the middle of the night. He pulled to the side of the road and saw a farmhouse off in the distance. He decided to walk to the house and ask to borrow the lug wrench he himself did not have. It was late, and he was sure the farmer would not want to help him. So sure was he that all along the way he talked to himself about the farmer. "He'll probably be angry that I have awakened him...No doubt he'll complain about how often people come to him for help...He probably never loans tools to strangers...He'll likely say I should have called for assistance," he thought out loud. By the time he reached the farmhouse he was so worked up that he threw a rock through the window of the farmer and exclaimed, "You can keep your lousy lug wrench. I don't want it anyway! (LL)

tōi de dunamenōi hyper panta poiēsai hyper ekperissou hōn aitoumetha ē nooumen, "now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think." The previous verses strongly point to God's willingness to have already made us his own. This verse reminds us that he is not only willing but also

able. Using the argument from greater to lesser, we can conclude that if God is able to save us despite us, he is certainly able to provide for us more than we'll ever know. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 19, Part 3)

the power at work within us. See 1:19–21. (CSB)

If he can do great things with us, imagine what his real power is capable of.

3:21 *to him be glory.* The ultimate goal of our existence. Paul's attitude is so different from the man with the flat tire. Paul knew the extravagance of grace, the scope of God's love, and the power behind that love. The doxology that ends his prayer glorifies God for the power within the church that can do "immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine." His doxology no doubt raised the expectations of Christians then as it does now. (CSB)

Paul gives glory to God, who is able to do exceeding abundantly, whose power is unlimited. Moreover, God is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think. We Christian are still rather weak, also in our prayers. We still do not really know what we need and what is beneficial to us, and so our prayers do ever fall short of our wants. (Rom. 8:26) But God can give us, can do unto us super-abundantly more than we desire, and this according to the power that works in us. According to His almighty power, which has quickened us from death in sins and wrought faith in us, He can also very well strengthen and sustain faith in us who are weak, infirm vessels; He can work all good unto Him be glory. (Stoekhardt)

hē doxa, "glory." Paul prays that the Church be strengthened so that God is glorified. This in no way increases God's innate glory. It is simply an acknowledgment and recognition on our part. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 19, Part 3)

in the church and in Christ Jesus. A remarkable parallel. God has called the church to an extraordinary position and vocation (cf. v. 10; 4:1). (CSB)

The only NT doxology to include this phrase (cf. Romans 16:25-27; Jude 24-25), indicating the importance of the Church in this Letter. The phrase suggests public worship. (TLSB)

Yes, in the Church dwells the glory of God, resounds the praise of God, not in the outer-Christian world. The Church thanks God with hearts and hands and voices, with its entire existence for the great things which He has done and daily does unto it. (Stoekhardt)

3:14–21 As Paul considers God's wisdom, grace, and love, he breaks out in prayer and praise. Study of God's Word naturally combines with prayer and praise in the Divine Service, where Christ's gifts are given out, and we receive them with thanksgiving. • Lord, let these verses be my prayer for my church today. Amen. (TLSB)

GOSPEL – Mark 6:45-56

45 Immediately he made his disciples get into the boat and go before him to the other side, to Bethsaida, while he dismissed the crowd. **46** And after he had taken leave of them, he went up on the mountain to pray. **47** And when evening came, the boat was out on the sea, and he was alone on the land. **48** And he saw that they were making headway painfully, for the wind was against them. And about the fourth watch of the night he came to them, walking on the sea. He meant to pass by them, **49** but when they saw him walking on the sea they thought it was a ghost, and cried

out, 50 for they all saw him and were terrified. But immediately he spoke to them and said, “Take heart; it is I. Do not be afraid.” 51 And he got into the boat with them, and the wind ceased. And they were utterly astounded, 52 for they did not understand about the loaves, but their hearts were hardened.

6:14-8:30 The new section introduced by Ch 6:14 and extending to Ch 8:30 focuses upon a period during which Jesus was frequently in retirement beyond the borders of Galilee. During the mission of the Twelve, Mark calls attention to the reaction of Herod Antipas, who has heard of the mighty works of Jesus. Herod’s suspicion that Jesus is John returned from the dead (Ch 6:14-16) introduces the parenthetical account of the imprisonment and execution of the Baptist (Ch 6:17-29). At the return of the Twelve Jesus withdraws to a solitary place, pursued by multitude. In compassion He provides bread in the wilderness, and five thousand are fed (Ch 6:35-44). A second feeding of four thousand is reported in the region of the Decapolis (Ch 8:1-10), and the striking recurrence of the word “bread” throughout this section provides the pervading motif (Chs. 6:52; 7:2, 28; 8:14 ff). The importance of the two feeding miracles is emphasized when the disciples’ own misunderstanding of Jesus are traced to their failure to understand the significance of the abundant provision of bread. While a single instance of the public teaching occurs in Ch 7:1-23, the accent falls on the instruction of the disciples, whose hardness of heart, unbelief and failure to understand is a prominent element in the record. A point of transition is provided by Ch 8:22-26 where the restoring of sight to a man who was blind signals the opening of the eyes of the disciples as well. A climax in Mark’s narrative is achieved in Ch 8:27-29 when Jesus and His company approach Caesarea Philippi where Jesus’ dignity as Messiah is acknowledged for the first time. (Lane)

6:45-56 First, it is good to note that parallel accounts of this miracle exist in Matthew (14:22–36) and John (6:16–21). Matthew’s is the longest account, the only one that includes the detail of Peter walking on the water, sinking, and then being rescued. John’s is the briefest and without extra detail. All three have the words of Jesus: “It is I. Do not be afraid.” Matthew and Mark also have Jesus first saying, “Take heart,” *tharseite*. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 3)

Mark seems to emphasize how readily the people accept the result of Jesus’ miracles (just prior, five thousand were glad to be fed; the disciples now embrace the calming of the storm; the crowds bring all their sick to Jesus) but don’t have the faith to realize what this means. Jesus is not just a “bread king” for immediate and temporal needs; he is a victorious and eternal King, and faith in him is more significant than the immediate result of a miracle. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 3)

6:45 *immediately he made his disciples get into the boat* – The tension of messianic excitement was dangerously in the air after the meal in the desert. The hurried dismissal of the disciples prevented them from adding fuel to the fire by revealing to the people the miraculous character of the evening meal. (Lane)

Jesus obliged the disciples to embark for the other shore. This shows that Jesus was responsible for the disciples’ all-night struggle against the wind. Note further that this was the second time in a day that Jesus commanded the disciples to do something difficult or even impossible (cf. v. 37). (TLSB)

euthus is notable in Mark to emphasize that this event takes place “immediately, right away,” following the feeding of the five thousand; it is a reaction, an aftermath. Jesus is splitting up the group into those who have seen the miracle of the fish and loaves (the crowd) and those who are yet to see a greater miracle (his disciples). It is clear that Jesus takes charge to have the crowd dispersed and the disciples sent off so that he is left alone to pray. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 3)

go before him – John indicates that the people were ready to take Jesus by force and make him king (Jn 6:14–15), and Jesus therefore sent his disciples across the lake while he slipped away into the hills to pray. (CSB)

toward Bethsaida. πρὸς Βηθσαϊδάν, “toward Bethsaida” (6:45): Bethsaida was in Gentile country (see the first textual note on 6:45). Why does Jesus give that as their destination? Is he about to begin a new stage of ministry to the Gentiles, which, in fact, commences with the Syro-Phoenician woman in 7:24 and continues through 9:30, with a brief detour back to Israelite land in 8:10–21? Perhaps the plan is thrown off by the current episode, which ends with the boat going to Gennesaret (6:53), which is on the north shore of the Lake/Sea of Galilee, but west of the point where the Jordan River flows into that body of water. (CC)

This suggests that perhaps the disciples themselves had been inclined to join the crowd in its efforts to proclaim Jesus king. (PBC)

6:46-48a Jesus has chosen a place far away geographically (a mountain), but he still sees their peril: “And he saw . . .” (v 48). It seems the disciples (some former fishermen) should have been able to handle the boat but were not able to make progress against the wind. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 3)

6:46 *to pray* – He did so frequently when facing a critical hour. (PBC)

The evangelist speaks of Jesus’ withdrawal to a solitary place for prayer after the excitement of the Sabbath activity in Capernaum (1:35-39), after the miracle of the loaves (6:45 ff), and following the Last Supper (15:26-42). In each case it is night and Jesus finds Himself in a moment of crisis prompted by the enthusiasm of the crowds or the impending passion. (Lane)

6:47 *out on the sea* – They were completely off course because they were facing a strong head wind. It was so contrary that they had taken down the sail and picked up the oars. And even that had brought them nowhere on the stormy lake. They were in real danger. (PBC)

In the late afternoon the disciples had left the eastern shore, and when night came on, they had not yet crossed the lake, for they were obliged to battle with contrary winds. And He alone was on the land. (Kretzmann)

6:48b-50a It seems clear that Jesus had sent them into a difficult situation. Perhaps he was teaching them yet another faith lesson about his presence in their lives or their need for him. Mark alone points out that “He [Jesus] meant to pass by them” (v 48). This peculiar phrase can be understood in Jesus coming close enough for them to see him but waiting for their cry to him for help. Their cry may initially be one of fear—their fear of the storm is compounded by their fear of a ghost—but seems to end up a cry of undeveloped faith. The irony in their seeing something supernatural is that Jesus was supernatural (above nature!) in a more profound way. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 3)

6:48 *making headway painfully* – Jesus though deep in prayer was aware of their situation. He left them struggle for some time in order to show them, as He so often shows us, that He is able to help in the hour of need. (PBC)

He knew their plight; He was with them every inch of the way; but He did nothing to help them. It is often good for the believers to be buffeted by adverse winds of life. It is only by overcoming difficulties and by conquering in the hard places that Christian character is formed. (Kretzmann)

fourth watch. 3:00–6:00 A.M. See 13:35; see also note on Mt 14:25. (CSB)

Until the fourth watch of the night, according to Roman reckoning, between three o'clock in the morning and sunrise, He prayed, although the eye of His omniscience and the reassurance of His omnipresence was with them during all these hours. (Kretzmann)

The disciples had been in the boat for a long time, fighting with the wind for almost the whole night. (TLSB)

walking on the sea. A special display of the majestic presence and power of the transcendent Lord, who rules over the sea (see Ps 89:9; Isa 51:10, 15; Jer 31:35). (CSB)

Jesus comes to reveal Himself as the Lord of all creation. (TLSB)

The wind and the waves did not hinder our Lord as He walked on the water. (PBC)

he meant to pass by them – This was by design – to get the attention of the disciples and to test them. (PBC)

In the OT, God passed by Moses (Ex. 33:22; 34:6) and Elijah (1 Kings 19:11-13). (TLSB)

But now He came walking on the water as man otherwise steps along on dry land, He, the Master of all creation, that can make all things serve His will. He was about to pass by the boat, when the disciples saw Him. (Kretzmann)

6:49 *a ghost.* Popular Jewish superstition held that the appearance of spirits during the night brought disaster. The disciples' terror was prompted by what they may have thought was a water spirit. (CSB)

Greek phantasma. Appears only here and in Matthew 14:26. The disciples are not far from the truth as they assume that one walking on the water is more than a mere mortal, for Jesus' divinity is clearly visible. (TLSB)

They did not pass the test. Superstition overwhelmed them. Undoubtedly we would have reacted in much the same way. (PBC)

And then ensued a time of panic. Superstition, the fear of ghosts and specters, was still living in their hearts. And so the unwonted appearance of a human figure striding along over the waves set them to crying and wondering and fearing. (Kretzmann)

6:50b-51a Again, Mark moves the story along with *euthus*. Their cry for help is addressed with words of comfort. *tharseite* ("Take heart") is a word of being cheerful or confident. As Jesus offers help and the Gospel is received, those who embrace it have confidence and courage and are of good cheer, even in the midst of frightening circumstances. Jesus' identification *egō eimi* ("It is I") is more than just assurance. He identifies himself with the great I AM, God's revealed name of the Old Testament, Yahweh *YHWH*. Jesus shows that he has power over the wind and the waves (he is their Creator) and then speaks his name as an exclamation point. As Jesus gets into the boat, the wind dies down. Where Jesus is, there is calm in the midst of storms. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 3)

6:50 *were terrified.* ἐταράχθησαν, "they became terrified": In Mark's Gospel, fear is generally a sign of divine activity (see the parallel in 4:41 and further discussion there; see also 5:15, 33; 10:32; and 16:8 [also 11:18]). (CC)

Spoke – ἐλάλησεν, “he spoke openly” (6:50): Here we see a public declaration of Jesus’ identity. (CC)

take heart it is I do not be afraid – This command will be echoed at another important moment of revelation – at the empty tomb. (TLSB)

6:51b-52 The disciples’ reaction is complex: there is astonishment (*existanto*) but lack of understanding, which leaves their hearts *pepōrōmenē* (“hardened”). The brief commentary on hard-heartedness in *The Lutheran Study Bible* in the introductory comments on Mark is helpful ([St. Louis, Concordia Publishing House, 2009], 1653). The disciples’ hearts are still hardened in ch 8, after another miracle of bread but lack of understanding (Mk 8:17). It is more the stubbornness of the sinful flesh to reject what it cannot understand than antagonism toward Jesus. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 3)

6:51 *Wind died down*. He then climbed over the side of the boat into their midst, whereupon the wind immediately stopped. The effect of this double miracle on the disciples, wrought up as they had been by their fear, was such as to bring them almost out of their senses for astonishment. (Kretzmann)

ἀνέβη πρὸς αὐτοὺς εἰς τὸ πλοῖον, “he mounted up toward them into the boat”: Note the intimacy of this act. Despite being the Lord of all creation, Jesus comes to his frightened disciples as a shepherd to his frightened sheep (6:34). This is quite unlike the Lord of the OT who passes by his prophets in revelations and does not stoop to human interaction with them. This is another expression of human and humble incarnation. (CC)

were utterly astonished – They were undoubtedly physically drained from their rowing against a strong head-wind and emotionally drained from their experience of terror. They had no categories for understanding Jesus’ presence with them in the boat. They were utterly astonished. (Lane)

6:52 *they had not understood about the loaves*. Had they understood the feeding of the 5,000, they would not have been amazed at Jesus’ walking on the water or his calming the waves. (CSB)

Despite the unmistakable ways Jesus had just displayed His divine nature and power, the disciples somehow remain in the dark. (TLSB)

their hearts were hardened. They were showing themselves to be similar to Jesus’ opponents, who also exhibited hardness of heart (3:5). (CSB)

It is somewhat surprising that Jesus describes the disciples and His opponents in the same way (cf. 10:5; 16:14). The disciples’ lack of comprehension will only worsen in the coming chapters (e.g. 9:32; 10:32). Jesus’ predictions of His death will prove most difficult for them to grasp. (TLSB)

Their hearts were not open to what Jesus was seeking to teach them. Mark is very candid about exposing the spiritual weaknesses of the disciples and very lucid expounding the greatness of Christ. (PBC)

6:45-52 Demonstrating mastery over the winds and waves for a second time, Jesus calms another storm. Even more amazing, however, is the fact that Jesus’ disciples do not recognize his divine nature. Too often, our eyes are also blind and our hearts are just as hard. It is a good thing, therefore, that he who walked on the water that night also died on Calvary’s darkness to save us from our hard-heartedness – Lord, save us when we are overcome by life’s storms and our hearts are darkened by unbelief. Calm the tempest, open our eyes, and create within us the faith to recognize you. Amen

Jesus Heals the Sick in Gennesaret

53 When they had crossed over, they came to land at Gennesaret and moored to the shore. 54 And when they got out of the boat, the people immediately recognized him 55 and ran about the whole region and began to bring the sick people on their beds to wherever they heard he was. 56 And wherever he came, in villages, cities, or countryside, they laid the sick in the marketplaces and implored him that they might touch even the fringe of his garment. And as many as touched it were made well.

6:53-55 “recognized him.” There is irony in that they see who he is—Jesus who had fed the five thousand—but they don’t really know what this means or who he is fully. Here, Jesus also might have thought to “pass by them,” but he had compassion and healed those who came to him. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 3)

6:53 *Gennesaret*. See note on Mt 14:34. (Either the narrow plain, about four miles long and less than two miles wide, on the west side of the Sea of Galilee near the north end (north of Magdala), or a town in the plain. The plain was considered a garden spot of Palestine, fertile and well watered.) (CSB)

Town on the northeastern shore of the Sea of Galilee, between Capernaum and Tiberius. (TLSB)

It is from John’s Gospel that we learn when Jesus and His disciples landed in the area of Gennesaret, they set out for nearby Capernaum, where Jesus on the following day gave His discourse on the bread of life (Jesus Himself). After hearing these words, many of His followers began leaving Him. It seems they were ready to settle for earthly bread, but not the spiritual food Christ offered them when He pointed to Himself as the only way to the Father. (PBC)

6:54 *recognized him* – He was well known from His ministry at Capernaum and reports of His healing power had penetrated the entire region (1:28). The healing of a paralyzed man who had been brought to Him (1:32-34), undoubtedly had been the subject of bazaar conversation in many towns and cities and created the climate of expectation which greeted Jesus in Gennesaret. (Lane)

Note how starkly this picture contrasts with the depiction of the disciples in vv. 50-51. The Twelve’s hardened hearts had just failed to see Jesus’ divine nature, even after He had multiplied the loaves and walked on the water. (TLSB)

But no sooner had Jesus stepped to the shore than He was recognized by some of the people living in that neighborhood, and there was a repetition of former experiences. (Kretzmann)

6:55 *they ran about the whole region* – Those who had recognized Christ as He stepped off the boat at Gennesaret immediately went throughout the region with the news that Jesus was in the area. Crowds welcomed Him in the days that followed as he went through villages, towns and countryside. (PBC)

They ran throughout the region and spread the news of His coming. And now the sick were brought to Him. Also, whether He walked along city streets or country lanes, the relatives of the sick, undiscouraged and unwearied, brought their unfortunate ones. (Kretzmann)

carried the sick – Instead of the usual goods on the market, Jesus found a multitude of desperately ill people, all asking for His touch and healing. The numerous healings here in Gennesaret contrast with the few that were healed in Nazareth (6:5-6). (TLSB)

6:56 *touch even the fringe of his garment* – This confidence echoes that of the woman who touched Jesus’ garment and was healed (5:28-29). (TLSB)

The healing is connected to the faith that touched his garment. This is the same faith shown in the detailed miracle of the woman who had suffered from bleeding (Mk 5:27–29; also in Matthew and Luke). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 3)

were made well – Though Mark does not mention it, Jesus undoubtedly also used these occasions to proclaim the gospel of the kingdom, the spiritual healing His hearers needed even more than the physical healing. (PBC)

6:53–56 Not long after Jesus’ disciples failed to recognize an unmistakable display of His divinity, the people of Gennesaret show great faith by receiving Jesus and clamoring for His healing power. Even today, those new to the faith often exhibit more conviction than those who have known Jesus for a long time. It is good news, then, that Jesus remains devoted to us even when our commitment wavers or fails. His resolve to suffer and die for all is ample proof of that. • Lord, give us the zeal of the Gennesaret believers. May we ever press toward You, resolute in our conviction that You can heal and restore us. Amen. (TLSB)