

Mark 6:45–56

From Catena Aurea:

45. And straightway he constrained his disciples to get into the ship, and to go to the other side before unto Bethsaida, while he sent away the people.

46. And when he had sent them away, he departed into a mountain to pray.

47. And when even was come, the ship was in the midst of the sea, and he alone on the land.

48. And he saw them toiling in rowing; for the wind was contrary unto them: and about the fourth watch of the night he cometh unto them, walking upon the sea, and would have passed by them.

49. But when they saw him walking upon the sea, they supposed it had been a spirit, and cried out:

50. For they all saw him, and were troubled. And immediately he talked with them, and saith unto them, Be of good cheer: it is I; be not afraid.

51. And he went up unto them into the ship; and the wind ceased: and they were sore amazed in themselves beyond measure, and wondered.

52. For they considered not the miracle of the loaves: for their heart was hardened.

GLOSS. (non occ.) The Lord indeed by the miracle of the loaves shewed that He is the Creator of the world: but now by walking on the waves He proved that He had a body free from the weight of all sin, and by appeasing the winds and by calming the rage of the waves, He declared Himself to be the Master of the elements. Wherefore it is said, And straightway he constrained his disciples to get into the ship, and to go to the other side before unto Bethsaida, while he sent away the people.

THEOPHYLACT. But when He had dismissed the crowd, He goes up to pray, for prayer requires rest and silence.

THEOPHYLACT. Now the Lord permitted His disciples to be in danger, that they might learn patience; wherefore He did not immediately come to their aid, but allowed them to remain in danger all night, that He might teach them to wait patiently, and not to hope at once for help in tribulations. For there follows, And he saw them toiling in rowing, for the wind was contrary unto them: and about the fourth watch of the night, he cometh unto them walking upon the sea.

AUGUSTINE. (de Con. Evan. 2. 47) But how could they understand this, except from His going a different way, wishing to pass them as strangers; for they were so far from recognising Him, as to take Him for a spirit. For it goes on: But when they saw him walking upon the sea, they supposed it had been a spirit, and cried out.

THEOPHYLACT. See again how Christ, though He was about to put an end to their dangers, puts them in greater fear. But He immediately reassured them by His voice, for it continues, And immediately he talked with them, and said unto them, It is I, be not afraid.

CHRYSOSTOM. (v. Chrys. Hom. in Matt. 50) As soon then as they knew Him by His voice, their fear left them.

AUGUSTINE. (ubi sup.) How then could He wish to pass them, whose fears He so reassures, if it were not that His wish to pass them would wring from them that cry, which called for His help?

THEOPHYLACT. Then by entering into the ship, the Lord restrained the tempest. For it continues, And he went up unto them into the ship, and the wind ceased. Great indeed is the miracle of our Lord's walking on the sea, but the tempest and the contrary wind were there as well, to make the miracle greater. For the Apostles, not understanding from the miracle of the five loaves the power of Christ, now more fully knew it from the miracle of the sea. Wherefore it goes on, And they were sore amazed in themselves. For they understood not concerning the loaves.

6:53–56

53. And when they had passed over, they came into the land of Gennesaret, and drew to the shore.

54. And when they were come out of the ship, straightway they knew him,

55. And ran through that whole region round about, and began to carry about in beds those that were sick, where they heard he was.

56. And whithersoever he entered, into villages, or cities, or country, they laid the sick in the streets, and besought him that they might touch if it were but the border of his garment: and as many as touched him were made whole.

GLOSS. (non occ.) The Evangelist, having shewn the danger which the disciples had sustained in their passage, and their deliverance from it, now shews the place to which they sailed, saying, And when they had passed over, they came into the land of Gennesaret, and drew to the shore.

THEOPHYLACT. The Lord remained at the above-mentioned place for some time. Therefore the Evangelist subjoins, And when they had come out of the ship, straightway they knew him, that is, the inhabitants of the country.

THEOPHYLACT. For they did not call Him to their houses that He might heal them, but rather the sick themselves were brought to Him. Wherefore it also follows, And whithersoever he entered into villages, or cities, or country, &c. For the miracle which had been wrought on the woman with an issue of blood, had reached the ears of many, and caused in them that great faith, by which they were healed. It goes on, And as many as touched him were made whole.

From Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture:

6:45 Immediately He Made the Disciples Get into the Boat

Faith Learned Through Risk.

Origen: The Savior thus compelled the disciples to enter into the boat of testing and to go before him to the other side, so to learn victoriously to pass through difficulties. But when they got in the middle of the sea, and of the waves in the temptation, and of the contrary winds which prevented them from going away to the other side, they were not able, struggling as they were, to overcome the waves and the contrary wind and reach the other side without Jesus. In this way the Word, taking compassion upon those

who had done all that was in their power to reach the other side, came to them walking upon the sea, which for him had no waves or wind. Commentary on Matthew 11.5.

6:48a For the Wind Was Against Them

Training by Exercise.

Origen: But what is the spiritual nuance of the boat into which Jesus constrained the disciples to enter? Is it perhaps the conflict of temptations and difficulties into which any one is constrained by the Word, and goes unwillingly? The Savior wishes to train by exercise the disciples in this boat which is distressed by the waves and the contrary wind. Commentary on Matthew 11.5.

The Anchor's Hook Unloosed.

Prudentius.

Simon, surnamed Peter,

Chief disciple of Christ the Lord,

On a day at the set of sun

When the evening sky grows red,

Unloosed his anchor's hook,

And filled his sails with the swelling winds,

And made ready to cross the sea.

But night roused up a contrary gale

That stirred up the deeper waves

And buffeted the floundering boat.

Shouts of fishermen struck the sky,

With shrieks and despairing groans

Amid the creak of swaying ropes.

Nor did any have hope of escape

From shipwreck and a watery death,

When the oarsmen all wan with fear

Saw Christ himself not far away

Treading surely upon the surge,

Just as though on the barren shore

He walked over the solid ground. Against Symmachus 2.

6:48b He Meant to Pass by Them

Why Pass by Them?

Augustine: When he walked upon the waters, he seems poised to pass by them. For in what way could they have understood this, were it not that he was really proceeding in a different direction from them, as if minded to pass those persons by like strangers, who were so far from recognizing him that they took him to be a ghost? Who, however, is so obtuse as not to perceive that this bears some spiritual significance? At the same time, too, he came to the help of the men in their agitation and outcry, and said to them, "Be of good cheer, it is I; be not afraid." What is the explanation, therefore, of his wish to bypass those persons whom nevertheless he was prepared to encourage when they were in despair? His intent in passing by them was to serve the purpose of eliciting those outcries in response to which he would then come to bring relief. Harmony of the Gospels 2.47.

6:50 Have No Fear

How Easily Can I Be Shipwrecked.

Prudentius.

Thus I by my loquacious tongue

From the heaven of silence am led

Into perils unknown and dark.

Not as Peter, disciple true,

Confident in his virtue and faith,

I am as one whose unnumbered sins

Have shipwrecked on the rolling seas....

How easily can I be shipwrecked,

One untaught in seafaring arts,

Unless you, almighty Christ,

Stretch forth your hand with help divine. Against Symmachus 2.

6:51a Then He Got into the Boat with Them

The Way Beheld upon the Sea.

Augustine: But why was he crucified? Because the wood of his lowliness was necessary for you. For you had swollen with pride and had been cast forth far from your homeland. The way has been washed out by the waves of this world, and there is no way to cross over to the homeland unless you are carried by the wood. Ungrateful man, do you ridicule him who has come to you that you may return? He himself became the way, and this through the sea. For this reason he walked on the sea: that he might show you

that there is a way upon the sea. But you, who cannot in any way yourself walk on the sea, let yourselves be carried by the ship, be carried by the wood! Tractate on John 2.4.3.

6:51b The Wind Ceased, and They Were Utterly Astounded

The One Who Commands Wind and Sea.

Prudentius.

O mighty is the power of God,

The power that all things did create,

That calmed the waters of the sea

When Christ upon its surface walked,

So that in treading on the waves,

He moved dry-shod across the deep,

Nor ever did he wet his soles

As light he skimmed the surging flood. Hymn 5.

6:56 That They Might Touch Even the Fringe of His Garment

His Vulnerability to Suffering Not Through Weakness but Strength.

Ambrose: The Lord of hosts was not signaling weakness as he gave sight to the blind, made the crooked to stand upright, raised the dead to life, anticipated the effects of medicine at our prayers, and cured those who sought after him. Those who merely touched the fringe of his robe were healed. Surely you did not think it was some divine weakness, you speculators, when you saw him wounded. Indeed there were wounds that pierced his body, but they did not demonstrate weakness but strength. For from these wounds flowed life to all, from the One who was the life of all. On the Christian Faith 4.5.54–55.