

Sermon July 18, 2010

Who Is This?

Mark 6:45-52

Summary: Jesus' disciples asked the question, "Who is this?" To learn the answer they had to go back to the place where they first asked the question. When they did, they met Him as they had never known Him before. And so can you.

I. Questions for the Neutral Zone

A. Questions!

- 1. On the night that Jesus calmed the storm, His disciples asked two questions.**
- 2. The first one focused on whether or not He really cared about them.**
 - a) Mark 4:38 NIV Jesus was in the stern, sleeping on a cushion. The disciples woke him and said to him, "Teacher, don't you care if we drown?"**
 - b) The very way the question was worded suggested that they weren't sure whether Jesus cared or not!**
 - c) In other words, they weren't sure WHO Jesus really was.**

3. The second question came after He calmed the storm with a simple command:

a) Mark 4:41 NIV They were terrified and asked each other, “Who is this? Even the wind and the waves obey him!”

4. So, what did they learn on that adventure?

B. Questions or Answers?

1. Answers are easy: they make us feel smart.

2. A powerful question is something else: it forces us to dig deeper, to face what we haven't figured out, and to keep looking.

3. At the end of their boat ride the disciples found that they had more questions than answers when it came to knowing just who Jesus was.

C. The Neutral Zone

1. In his book *Managing Transition*, William Bridges divides the process of negotiating major change into 3 stages:

a) Endings – letting go of the past

b) Neutral Zone – a time of great uncertainty where we are in between the old and the new

c) New Beginnings – the new transformation that we experience when the journey is complete.

2. Can you relate to the Neutral Zone?

a) It seems like God's taking a nap; the relationship you have with Him may seem to be on hold.

b) It may seem like the waves are swamping your boat and you can't bail fast enough to stay afloat.

c) The disciples – out in the middle of the lake in a violent storm – were caught up in the Neutral Zone,

that place where everything is up in the air (or seemingly under water!).

3. And before they could come to the new reality that Jesus offered, they had to find the answers to those questions that kept popping up in the Neutral Zone.

II. Lessons for Negotiating the Neutral Zone

A. *Get Back in the Boat*

1. The disciples ended the first voyage with a question: "Who is this?" So, Jesus put them back in the boat:
 - a) Mark 6:45 NIV Immediately Jesus made his disciples get into the boat and go ahead of him to Bethsaida, while he dismissed the crowd.
2. Jesus had just experienced the HIGH POINT of His earthly fame and popularity.
 - a) He had fed perhaps 20,000 people with a child's lunch.
 - b) The people were, according to John's Gospel, ready to crown Him the Messiah King who would lead them in victory over the Romans and usher in the Kingdom of God.
 - c) In other words, an utterly FALSE IDENTITY was there for the taking.
 - d) And this was NO PLACE for a group of insecure, ambitious and confused young men who wanted nothing more than to be coregents with Jesus in this new kingdom!
3. That is why Jesus compelled them to get in the boat and out of harm's way.
 - a) They would never learn the answer to their question on shore.

b) The question would be answered out in the Neutral Zone.

B. Lose Sight of Shore

1. Mark tells us that their journey took them far from shore and far from Jesus:

a) Mark 6:47 NIV When evening came, the boat was in the middle of the lake, and he was alone on land.

2. You can't change in your armchair.

a) You may be able to surf the cable channels with a click of your thumb, but you have to get away from your comfort zone if you are going to be transformed into the person God calls you to be.

3. Interestingly, this time Jesus wasn't asleep in the boat; He wasn't even IN the boat.

a) For the disciples to learn who Jesus really was, they needed to, in a sense, have a fresh start.

b) They needed to be away from Him so that they could see Him again, for the first time.

C. Transition is Work

1. Mark tells us that it was hard work making the journey Jesus had sent them on:

a) Mark 6:48a NIV He saw the disciples straining at the oars, because the wind was against them.

2. Ever feel like you were rowing against the wind?

a) You work and work, but don't seem to be making any progress?

b) The Neutral Zone can be like that – lots of effort and seemingly little to show for it.

3. The good news is that God hasn't forgotten you!

a) **Mark 6:48 NIV** He saw the disciples straining at the oars....

4. In fact, Jesus was praying that night, undoubtedly praying for them as they worked their way off shore, away from the dangerous political schemes of the mob, and out to the place where they would find the answer to the question, “Who is this?”

III. “Who Is This?”

A. Moses in the Neutral Zone

1. Moses spent much of his life – and certainly his most important years – entirely in the Neutral Zone.

a) God called him to take the Israelites out of Egypt to the Promised Land.

b) But in order to do that, they all had to cross the Neutral Zone – a physical desert and a place of spiritual uncertainty and discovery.

2. It is there – in the Neutral Zone of the desert – that Moses asks God for a special favor:

a) **Exodus 33:18 NIV** Then Moses said, “Now show me your glory.”

3. God agrees to reveal Himself in a new way:

a) **Exodus 33:19 NIV** And the LORD said, “I will cause all my goodness to pass in front of you, and I will proclaim my name, the LORD, in your presence.”

4. The next morning, high on Mt. Sinai, God keeps His promise:

a) **Exodus 34:5 NIV** Then the LORD came down in the cloud and stood there with him and proclaimed his name, the LORD.

b) **Exodus 34:6 NIV** And he passed in front of Moses, proclaiming, “The LORD, the LORD, the

compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger,
abounding in love and faithfulness....”

B. Just Passing By?

1. Mark uses the language of this story in describing how Jesus came to the disciples that night out on the lake:

a) Mark 6:48b NIV About the fourth watch of the night (3:00 a.m.) he went out to them, walking on the lake. He was about to pass by them,

b) Mark 6:49 NIV but when they saw him walking on the lake, they thought he was a ghost. They cried out,

c) Mark 6:50 NIV because they all saw him and were terrified.

2. In the wee hours of the morning, out in the middle of the lake, Jesus came to answer the disciples’ question, “Who is this?”

a) He came, not as the familiar rabbi, but as the Lord of all creation.

3. He is the One Job spoke of:

a) Job 9:8 NIV He alone stretches out the heavens and treads on the waves of the sea.

C. The Great “I AM”

1. In answer to the disciples’ cries of terror, Jesus says:

a) Mark 6:50b NIV “Take courage! It is I. Don’t be afraid.”

2. When Moses asked God to tell him His Name:

a) Exodus 3:14 NIV God said to Moses, “I AM WHO I AM. This is what you are to say to the Israelites: ‘I AM has sent me to you.’”

3. Jesus uses the very same words to reveal Himself to the disciples:

a) “It is I” = “I AM” in the original text.

4. Who is This?

a) He is the One who “alone stretches out the heavens and treads on the waves of the sea.

b) He has “passed by” the disciples and has shown them a glimpse of His glory.

c) He is I AM.

IV. Learning in the Neutral Zone

A. Going to the other side

1. Jesus calls each one of us to get in the boat and cross over to the “other side.”
2. He sends us out into that Neutral Zone where even the most familiar things are no longer familiar.
3. Then He comes to us in a new way.

B. Back in the boat

1. Mark tells us that Jesus rejoined His disciples out on the lake:
 - a) Mark 6:51 NIV Then he climbed into the boat with them, and the wind died down. They were completely amazed,
 - b) Mark 6:52 NIV for they had not understood about the loaves; their hearts were hardened.
2. Once again, they were amazed, but not yet transformed:
 - a) They had seen Him feed thousands with a handful of food, but had not seen WHO HE was.

b) They had seen Him walk on the lake, but had not yet seen WHO HE was.

c) It was too much of a stretch; they had no categories for God in the boat with them.

3. “Who is this?”

a) They weren’t quite ready for the answer – even when it walked out on the water to them!

C. Learning in the Neutral Zone

1. The Neutral Zone:

a) It is in the Neutral Zone that you meet God and discover Who He really is.

b) It is in the Neutral Zone that you meet yourself and discover who you really are.

c) It takes more than one boat ride to take it all in.

d) Sometimes you’ll feel like you’re out there in the boat all by yourself, rowing against a powerful headwind, nearing exhaustion in the middle of the night.

2. But THAT is when He comes and reveals WHO HE IS – the I AM.

3. And it is only when you discover who He is that you discover what it truly means to be you.