

Mark is the fast break Gospel. It's a Gospel on the move. In seeming perpetual motion. Mark's favorite word? **Immediately.**

He uses the Greek word that means immediately some 41 times in 16 chapters!

- *We'll read two of them in the half dozen verses we'll read tonight.*

His Gospel starts with a sense of immediacy. There's no nativity. No backstory. It starts with Jesus' baptism which starts his ministry.

The focus of his account and the goal on his basket: tackling the question- *Is Jesus the Messiah?* We see in the structure of the Gospel –

- It begins in the first chapter with God the Father's affirmation... *This is my son...*
- At the heart of the book, Jesus asks his disciples - *who do you say I am?*
- And not to be overlooked – at the end, at Jesus' crucifixion, it's the Roman Centurion that says: *“surely this was the Son of God”*

And soon after this verse, Mark ends just as quickly as it starts.

Your footnotes in your Bible will tell you that the earliest and most reliable transcripts ended with Mark 16:8. – *“Trembling and bewildered, the women went out and fled from the tomb. They said nothing to anyone, because they were afraid.”*

The end

“Wait, what? Timeout. What just happened.”

All this time we thought he was this Messiah- this figure who would set up his kingdom on earth. Now he's dead...

But the Gospel of Mark has prepared us for this moment.

The format of the Gospel of Mark:

The first half is about **WHO** Jesus is – the Messiah.

The second half is about **HOW** he walks this out – the Messiah would have to suffer.

The first half and second half of the Gospel is split in the middle by a couple chapters that slow the pace down. It's like Mark himself calls a timeout from the fast break pace. And this is where we see Jesus have the conversation with his disciples, asking *“Who do you say that I am?”*

We see it's the culmination of the first half detailing WHO Jesus is, setting the stage for HOW. When Peter confesses you are the Christ... Jesus explains HOW he will establish his kingdom. Namely suffer and die on the cross.

Peter calls a **timeout**. He has his own personal, **“wait what”** moment.

He's so startled that he effectively calls timeout, pulling Jesus aside and rebuking him.

But Jesus famously calls him Satan and explains himself again – how he would suffer and die.

He desperately wants the disciples to understand who he is, why he came, and what that meant for them.

He desperately wants that for you.

He wants that for each of us.

He wants an understanding of who HE is. What HE does. And how WE relate to HIM.

In 2016 the **Harvard Dean of Education** gave a commencement address that went viral and sparked a NY Times best seller called “**Wait, What?**” about asking life’s most important Q’s.

In his speech he said: “*Wait, what?*” is actually a very effective way of asking for clarification. “*Wait what?*” is at the root of understanding.

It pays to slow down to make sure you truly understand.
I wonder how often we fail to do this when we read the Bible.
Not because the whole Bible moves at a fast break pace.
Because we do.
Because we’re so booked by our busy-ness,
our Bible reading is often a transaction instead of relational.
Relationships take time and investment. But we want a microwaved transaction.
We skim the surface to check the box and we miss the depth of relationship that comes with understanding who God is and what He’s done for us.

If “wait what” is at the root of understanding, then we miss out on understanding when we fail to “wait, what?” the confusing moments in scripture, the verses that don’t make sense on the first pass.

Often confusion on the surface is an invitation to dig deeper.
But we don’t RSVP. We keep on moving at a fast break pace.
This series is an RSVP as I want to tackle some of those moments in Mark’s fast break Gospel.

MARK 6:45-51

He **makes** them get on the boat to cross the lake. NLT says “*he insists*”
The deep theological reasoning would be he’s testing them as they were about to go into a storm.
The “let’s be real” reasoning is the same way you need a break from your kids, Jesus needed a break from his disciples – we forget Jesus was fully human, and the disciples were mostly teens.

But why do people think it was a test?

They’re in the deepest waters. The middle of the lake.
You feel like you’re drowning in anxiety. In conflict. In confusion.

They’re in the darkest part of night. 4th watch = 3-6AM
- *You feel like there’s no path forward. You’re in a fog. You’re unsure where to turn.*

Been there? Neck deep in a dark place.
God seems absent. Off the job. God seems like He’s forgotten you.

It says Jesus “*saw they were straining.*”

God doesn’t just see and observe. He isn’t the God of deism, the God who creates and then sits back and watches it play out, never intervening.

He’s transcendent. But He’s also imminent.

He pursues us. He sent his son to pursue us. And here it says his son, Jesus, “*came toward them*”

God is among you even when you don’t see Him coming.

Jesus comes to his disciples...

To rescue them right? To save them? To deliver them?

“He was about to pass by them...”

Timeout.

Wait, what?

This idea that Jesus was going to walk right past them in their time of need on surface level seems problematic. It’s only after they cry out in terror, thinking they’ve seen a ghost, that he seems to make a turn.

This has sparked “wait, what” moments with theologians for centuries, trying to understand what was going through Jesus’ head. And there’s all kinds of speculation:

- *Jesus wanted to sneak past them so he could surprise them on the other side. Like an episode of impractical jokers. Sure, it seems playful and fun ...but shows no pity.*
- *Jesus was going to pass them but stopped when he saw they were struggling. ...but the text says he saw them struggling before he started walking to them.*
- *Twist tense and verbiage to make it say he was “about to pass them” or it simply meant he wanted to walk alongside them...but those language stretches don’t hold up.*
- *Maybe the disciples simply misread his intentions... but the text doesn’t support this.*

The verb “**parerchomai**” (to pass by) when connected to a divinity, refers to a theophany.

What’s a theophany? A visible manifestation of God to humankind.

We see it in scripture- in terms of “passing by”- twice in the Old Testament.

In **Exodus 33** Moses is on Mt Sinai seeking reassurance that God wouldn’t abandon the Israelites.

*Then the Lord said, “There is a place near me where you may stand on a rock. When my glory passes by, I will put you in a cleft in the rock and cover you with my hand until I have **passed by**. Then I will remove my hand and you will see my back; but my face must not be seen.*

In **1 Kings 19** a troubled Elijah, feeling depressed and alone and being hunted by King Ahab and his wife Jezebel, is on Mt Horeb and has just cried out to God in his troubles when God says: *Go out and stand on the mountain in the presence of the Lord, for the Lord is about to **pass by***

To pass by in light of the greater context doesn’t mean to slip past us in hiding.

It speaks to the opposite – revealing not just his presence. But his person. Who He is.

We expect theophanies and epiphanies to happen on mountaintops- the traditional locale for encountering divine presence.

But we miss the situations Moses and Elijah were in. Elijah, for instance, was suicidal and had been on the run for over a month from people that sought to kill him.

You talk about drowning in deep water.
You talk about a dark season.
He was physically on a mountaintop but spiritually in a valley.

Psalm 23:3-4

*He guides me on paths of righteousness for his name's sake
Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death...*

If we're honest, that's a **"wait what"** in one of the most famous passages of scripture that we often pass over.
If God is this "good shepherd," why are you walking through a valley of the shadow of death?

Paths of righteousness and valleys of the shadow of death sounds like a crazy contrast of two wildly different paths. Two paths diverging in a yellow wood like Robert Frost's poem says, and you take one of the 2. But what if they are one and the same?

What if **the valley of the shadow is the path of righteousness?**

What if – God being light – it's those dark places where we recognize his glory most readily?
What if – like an old school photograph being developed – our picture of God is best developed in the dark?

What if the deepest and darkest seasons are where he drops his theophanies?

Psalm 23 has two very different settings. The idyllic. And the dark.

In the green pastures and by the still waters David speaks of God in the third person.
He speaks ABOUT God. HE leads me beside still waters. HE leads me to green pastures.

But his pronouns make a powerful pivot mid-chapter.

It happens in the valley. In the dark, deep valley. YOU are with me. YOUR rod comforts me.
God has drawn near.

The epiphany happens in the valley.

The theophany is in the deep and dark place.

In scripture we do see God reveal himself to people on physical mountaintops.

But it's on the proverbial mountaintops and in the green pastures where God gets forgotten.

Early in scripture, as God is set to usher the Israelites into the Promised Land after centuries in slavery followed by 40 years in the wilderness, He gives this warning as they come out of the valley...

Deuteronomy 8:13-14 (MSG)

When you... watch your standard of living going up and up—make sure you don't become so full of yourself and your things that you forget God, your God.

What happens? We read later in the OT:

Hosea 13:6

When they had pasture, they became satisfied; they were satisfied, and their hearts became proud. Therefore they forgot Me.

Sometimes circumstances can blur our vision.
If we're honest, we project our circumstances onto God.
We are in a season of pain and doubt his goodness.
We get in a season of loss and doubt his love.
We are in a season of hardship and doubt his power.

But God's greatness isn't determined **BY** your circumstances.
God's greatness is often experienced **IN** your circumstances.

Sometimes there's miraculous deliverance, God parting the waters so you can walk on dry ground. Sometimes there's his ministering presence, God joining you in the boat.

Jesus doesn't rescue his disciples out of the sea.
But he enables them to continue to row.

Sometimes you miss God because you're waiting for deliverance, rather than him joining you in the middle of the storm.

This episode in Mark 6 seems to be a derailed attempt at a theophany, as the disciples were filled with fear instead of faith.

How often do we fail to see God walking past or his blessing and presence in our lives?
Because we don't want presence. We want deliverance.
We want a transaction. And miss out on relationship.

This isn't a rescue mission by Jesus. The disciples were frustrated, but not in peril.
The only mention of panic in the text isn't in the storm, but it's when they see Jesus.
Ultimately they are more frightened in his presence than they were in his absence.

We see again and again in the Gospels, and we see here: miracles don't always spark faith.
Vs. 52 says – "their hearts were still hard."
We see again and again in the Gospels, and even in our own lives - God is among us and some of us are too dense to see it.

Again – the panic we see in the story isn't caused by the storm, but by Jesus.
And the end of this account isn't the disciples walking in new revelation about who Jesus is.
It says they were perplexed by Jesus.

Last point, and the most important point for some of you:
The ultimate peril in your life isn't the storms or suffering that life may throw your way.
The ultimate peril in your life is being unsure who Jesus is.

"Who do you say I am?" Some of us need to call timeout on that question.
We need to say "wait, what" and get to the root of understanding what that means for us.

That's a dangerous place to be - never giving much thought to "*who do you say I am?*"
Are you much like the disciples in the first half of Mark?
You've spent time in his presence, but you're still not sure of who he is to you?

Some of us have grown up knowing those answers, but we need to "wait what" that question in the specific season we're in.
In need of healing from sickness.
In need of peace from anxiety.
In need of rest from burdens.
In need of courage instead of discouragement.

Who is Jesus to you when you're neck deep in a dark place?
Healer?
Provider?
Your portion?
Sovereign?
Father?
When you think of him what do you see?

We can't run through this at a fast break pace like we do the rest of life.
Your "**wait**" in the "wait, what?" will likely be longer than this moment. Longer than tonight.
Answering that question is something we all wrestle with.

Practical:
Take a run through Mark.
And it's main goal is to show who Jesus is as Messiah.

Worship:
Through God's Word.
Through the Words of worship.
They remind us of God's unchanging character when our circumstances blur our vision.

If you've been in a storm. Anxiously working the oars.
I pray you'd be able to look up tonight and see Jesus in his power. In his grace. In his love. In his might. Whatever you need in this season.

He sees you.
He's already come.