

# Heart Problems

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[ 0 : 00 ] Mark chapter 6. What do you do when the storms come? After giving the invocation and sitting on the front row in a suit on the first day of July in 2023 on Main Street in Pickens.

My family had to take the walk of shame and leave the Trump rally early due to the heat. Heat hit me like it never had before and I could tell that he was not going to stop talking anytime soon. So my family and I took the shame walk and left early. I crashed on the couch. I had a headache. That's a rare thing for me. The heat had got me and I woke up about 30 minutes later to a torrential storm.

It was bad. There were strong winds. There was thunder. There was lightning. They were popping all around while hell fell from the ground. I thought Pickens was under the wrath of God.

It felt like a tornado, but instead it was probably a microburst. We lost trees. We lost power. And I was wondering what in the world was going on.

[ 1 : 09 ] I had moved from Tornado Alley in Mississippi and I lived there 15 years. I've been in Pickens for four years. Been back in Pickens for four years.

I've seen as many storms here as I did there for 15 years. Kind of amazing, really. I don't care for storms. Storms are rough. But the reality is there are other kind of storms that hit life as well. More personal storms. Storms that are deeper. Storms that are more difficult.

And in our passage today, the apostles were in a literal sea storm, but they also had personal storms going on as well. I want you to see this. It's in Mark chapter 6, beginning in verse 45.

It says, Immediately he made his disciples get into a boat and go before him to the other side, to Bethsaida, while he dismissed the crowd.

And after he had taken leave of them, he went up on the mountain to pray. And when evening came, the boat was out on the sea, and he was alone on the land. And he saw that they were making headway painfully, for the wind was against them.

[ 2 : 28 ] And about the fourth watch of the night, he came to them walking on the sea. He meant to pass by them, but when they saw him walking on the sea, they thought it was a ghost, and cried out.

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. And he got into the boat with them, and the wind ceased.

And they were utterly astounded. For they did not understand about the loaves, for their hearts were hardened.

They did not understand about the loaves. What a statement. There's a lot of people that don't understand about the loaves.

I was a religious studies major in college, and one of my final assignments was to write a paper on the miracles of God. And I read about several of the miracles, and I read about them from several perspectives across the spectrum.

[ 3 : 36 ] One liberal theologian said that what happened at the feeding of the 5,000 was everybody just got caught on to what the boy was doing.

He shared his lunch, so they decided to share theirs. Everybody just pinched in, and there was enough and more than what they needed. The problem with that evaluation is that that's not what Scripture says.

And Scripture is very clear to emphasize how insufficient the people were at that time and how impossible the miracle of Christ was.

It was amazing. Another theory is that Jesus just backed up to a cave, and someone kept secretly handing him food as if he was creating it to form an illusion.

That's not an illusion. That's a lie, which is impossible for Christ to do. Those ideas are made up in our attempts to explain something that is not able to be explained.

[ 4 : 39 ] You don't have to know how it was miraculously done except to know that it was done miraculously by the hand of God.

But once you see something like that, you ought to get in on what's going on. It ought to catch on. The apostles did not. And the reason why they didn't catch on to what God was doing is because their hearts were hardened. We miss a lot of things that God is doing because our hearts are hardened.

It's heart problems. And the worst heart problem is the hardening of the heart. So I ask you this morning, do you have a hard heart?

I want to go over some indicators briefly this morning with you. Indicators of a hard heart. The first one is a wayward mind. After the miraculous feeding, Jesus rushed the apostles to the boat to get them out of that area.

[ 5 : 50 ] John tells us that the crowd that was fed that day was attempting to take Jesus by force and make him king. Now, you need to understand the circumstances.

These are Jews that are living under the oppressive rule of the Romans. They know enough about prophecy to know that there's a coming Messiah that will take over and rule the world.

And they wanted that Messiah to be Jesus to come to rule through Israel and that would be defeating to the Romans. Forty years later, they actually fought the Romans and Jerusalem fell because of it.

But that was not what Jesus came for. Now, understand, he'll be back. But that is not what he came for the first time. He dismissed the crowd and they left.

And then he went to pray. What was he praying about? Well, we can speculate, but I believe we can speculate rather keenly, quite honestly. Because the people wanted him to be king.

[ 6 : 59 ] That's the same temptation that Satan threw at him in the desert. And I believe Jesus had already dealt with that temptation. So I believe the wants of the people were not a temptation at all.

But I believe it was something for him to pray through. I believe his prayer was threefold. I believe he prayed for the task that was at hand and the expectation that the people had and the conflict between the two.

And I believe he prayed for God to give him direction and clarity through that. I also believe he prayed for the training of the twelve. And that is, from this point on, you will begin to see a turn happen where he begins to prepare the disciples for when he would no longer physically be present with them.

They were hard-hearted after seeing miraculous things happen. And I believe it was a prayer concern of his that their hearts would be more ready to receive what he was going to teach them. It burdened him. If you don't believe that, read John chapter 17. John chapter 17 gives us a great example of how Christ prayed for not only them, but also for us.

[ 8 : 08 ] And I believe the third thing he prayed about was the coming of the cross because he knew it was coming and he was praying. I assure you those are matters of his prayers.

And when the storm came, it was a bad storm. They were in the middle of the sea. The journey they were taking was not to be but four miles. But they had rode all night.

John tells us that they left as it turned dark. And Jesus came to them between 3 a.m. and 6 a.m. in the morning, which is the fourth watch.

So 6 p.m., or when the sun goes down, 6 p.m. to 9 a.m. is the first watch of the night. 9 a.m. to midnight is the second watch of the night.

12 to 3 a.m. is the third watch of the night. And the fourth watch of the night is 3 a.m. to 6 a.m. They left when it started turning dark. He didn't get to them to the fourth watch.

[ 9 : 08 ] They had been rowing all night in an attempt to get only four miles. The storms, especially, they were straining. And the storms, especially the rough ones, will make your mind wonder.

It'll make you wonder, where is he? It'll make you wonder, does he care? They had wondered through another storm. The storm in Mark chapter 4 is not the same storm as here.

They had been through another storm. And that time they wondered where he was and what he was going to do about it. And he was even in the boat with them. Now remember, it says they were utterly astounded because they did not understand the feeding.

That means they were amazed. It means they were out of their mind. Their minds were not tuned in to get what God was really up to through the ministry of Jesus.

And the state of the heart makes for a mind that is not in tune to the things of God. Hard hearts lead to wayward minds.

[10:10] That's why Proverbs 4, verse 23 says, Keep, that also means guard, keep your heart with all vigilance, for from it flows the springs of life.

Guard your heart. Wayward minds are not fully focused on the Lord, and that's due to distractions. Now, the distractions that the disciples dealt with was other people's expectations.

They had just heard them people talking about that when they were on the shore. And I bet some of those disciples said, Yeah, become king. We'll be in your cabinet. So it'd be easy to be distracted by those things.

As well, they were distracted by the storm that they were facing, the noise that was around them. We're distracted as well. We're distracted by busy schedules.

We're distracted by the storms in our lives that come. We're distracted by the carnal noise that's all around us. You'll hear me time and time again tell you to spend time daily in God's Word.

[11:12] Be laser-focused to build a pattern in your life to pray to God, hear from God, and then leave that time with God, walking in the way of God.

It'll keep you from a hard heart. It'll keep you from a wayward mind. That's an indicator, that mind is, of a hard heart. Another indicator is distracted eyes.

Distracted eyes is an indicator of a hard heart because Jesus sees their struggle and He comes walking to them on the water. Instead of marveling at His divine ability, they've mistaken Him for a ghost.

Hard hearts make for distracted eyes. Now, what were they distracted by? Well, they were distracted by the storm, for one. We get distracted by storms. The storms we face will surely cause us not to look to the Lord at times, clearly.

We get distracted. In the pretty days of life, it's easy to look to the Lord. When the tough stuff comes, it's tough to look to the Lord. Life storms are tough.

[12:18] They are easily distracted. But the disciples were also distracted by their culture because pagans of the Greco-Roman world believed that the spirits of those that drowned would roam in those waters.

And they also believed that spirits that came at night were bringing disaster. Now, if you put those two myths together, what the disciples saw, based upon the culture of the day in which they were living, was that the people who had died in those waters had come up out of those waters and was going to cause disturbance to them that very night.

That's why they said, it's a ghost! Let me tell you something, friend. If you listen to the myths and the mistruths of the world, you'll easily get distracted.

I told you in the beginning when we started looking at Mark a long time ago that Mark writes in a hurry. He's a man. He writes in a hurry. He don't get into details. Ladies, when we don't know all the details, it's biblical.

Mark wrote fast. He didn't give all the details. And he leaves out a key part of this event.

[13:43] It could be because he wrote in a hurry, but the reality is, I also told you when we first began studying this book, that we believe that Mark got his information from Peter.

Mark was just a teenager at the most when Jesus' ministry was going on. So he got his information from Peter, and he recorded that from Peter. And Peter, after the Spirit came upon Peter in Acts, and he preached that powerful sermon in Acts chapter 2, something changed in Peter's life.

No longer did Peter say dumb things and stick his foot in his mouth. And no longer was Peter all consumed with himself. Instead, he and Paul were the ones that make up the rest of the book of Acts.

Peter literally became the leader of the apostles. Peter, during that time, as he preached the gospel, Peter was a different fan. And Peter did not want to be talked about.

So it's very possible that the reason why Mark didn't even include this account is because Peter didn't want it in there. He gained a humility after receiving the Spirit of God that we didn't see when we watched his activity in the Gospels.

[14:55] But Matthew talks about what happened. And I want you to see what happens. It's in Matthew chapter 14, verse 28. It says this, And Peter answered him, Lord, if it's you, command me

to come to you on the water.

And Jesus said, Come. So Peter got out of the boat and walked on the water and came to Jesus. But when he saw the wind, he was afraid and began to sink. He cried out, Lord, save me!

And Jesus immediately reached out his hand and took hold of him, saying to him, O you of little faith, Why did you doubt? And when they got in the boat, the wind ceased.

And those in the boat worshipped him, saying, Truly, you are the Son of God. Now when you look at Peter's account, or what happened to Peter, what went wrong?

Do you notice what went wrong with him? The moment he took his eyes off of Christ and put them on the winds and the waves around him, he began to sink. That is a principle that we need to remember in our lives.

[16:00] When your eyes are taken off of Jesus, you are bound to sink every time. You will. An indicator of a hard heart is distracted eyes.

Another indicator of a hard heart is dull ears. Verse 50 says, But immediately he spoke to them and said, Take heart, it is I. Do not be afraid. The term take heart there means take courage, be brave. It's a term that only Jesus uses in the New Testament. And Jesus uses it seven times in the Gospels, one time in the book of Acts. However, even though he says it to them, they are utterly astounded due to their hard hearts.

Hard hearts will lead you to hear but not heed God's word. And if you ever wonder how someone can come to church time and time again, hear the message of God's word, but remain in a sinful pattern and never seem to be affected by the convicting of the power of God's word through the Holy Spirit, there's a reason for that.

It's a hard heart. Dull ears are an indicator of a hardened heart. One more indicator.

[17:22] A silent tongue. Matthew 12, verse 34 says, Jesus said, For out of the abundance of the heart and the mouth speaks. What is it that you love to talk about?

When you get the opportunity, what is it that you love to talk about? That means that whatever that is, that means the most to you. That's what means the most to you. And Scripture says that in order to be saved, you have to use your tongue.

It does. Romans 10, 9 says, If you confess with your mouth, that's verbal, that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses, that's verbal, and is saved.

Romans 10, 13 says, For everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord, that's verbal, will be saved. An outward expression of our faith is necessary to come to Christ.

An outward expression of our faith is also evidence that we have Christ. Mark 8, verse 38, Jesus said, For whoever is ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him will the Son of Man also be ashamed when he comes into the glory of his Father with his holy angels.

[18:40] In other words, if you're ashamed of him, you're not of him. And an outward expression of our faith is one of the defining marks of genuine faith because the Great Commission tells us that as we go, it's actually a part of the simple there, going, in other words, or as we go, we share.

We make disciples by sharing the gospel. And if you're not doing that, and there's a silent tongue before the Lord, it's a sign of a hard heart.

Now, I've got great news for you today. Something changed that day. I believe it even changed in that boat before they got out.

It might have been Peter walking on the water, maybe the calming of the sea, maybe the combination of all of that. However, Matthew tells us that before they got to shore, they worshipped him saying, Truly, you are the Son of God.

They went from saying, It's a ghost to saying, Truly, you are the Son of God. And the next day, Jesus teaches a hard truth, and most of those people that are following him leave.

[19:53] And in John chapter 6, verse 66, he looks at the 12 of them and says, Let me read the passage.

After this, many of his disciples turned back and no longer walked with him. So Jesus said to the 12, Do you want to go away as well? And Peter, the dude that sank, answered him and said, Lord, to whom shall we go?

You have the words of eternal life. And we have believed and have come to know that you are the Holy One of God.

And I'm telling you folks, from the evidence of the Gospels, something changed that day. It's been said they went from wondering to worshipping.

It's been said that they went from confusion to confession. From fear to faith. His power, his teaching, his salvation, and their faith in him made a world of difference.

[ 21 : 10 ] We have the opportunity to hear the Gospel today because of the impact that the Holy Spirit of God had upon these disciples when they surrendered their life to follow the Lord.

The question is, how does it affect us? Are you struggling with a hard heart today? There are indicators.

A wayward mind. Distracted eyes. Dull ears.

Hearing stuff but not listening. A silent tongue. A silent tongue. If you've got heart problems today, come to Jesus.

Come to Jesus. Take your heart problems to the Lord. He will cure what ails you. He'll meet you where you are and make you whole.

[ 22 : 17 ] With every head bowed, every eye closed, I ask you this morning. If you've ever given your heart and life to the Lord Jesus, maybe you've been one of those that have been inside the doors of the church many, many times, but in reality, you've got a wayward heart.

You've got distracted eyes. Dull ears. Just not functioning for the Lord Jesus.

My friend, until you surrender your life to the Lord, there is no hope. If you've never given your heart and life to the Lord Jesus, I encourage you today, as we stand and sing, you can come down and say, Pastor, I want to be saved.

Maybe you've done that, but you've never outwardly acknowledged that. Jesus, by his commissioned example, tells us to do that through baptism. We're going to do that in a couple of weeks. If you've never been baptized as a believer, I encourage you to come.

Maybe God's drawing you to Pickens First Baptist Church, and if that's the case, you come. But maybe it's just that when you look at the indicators, the symptoms of a hard heart, you look at your life, and you realize, I need God to do a heart procedure on me.

[ 23 : 48 ] I need God to work in me today. Whether it's in the pew where you stand, or whether it's at this altar, or whether it's a pastor praying for you, deal with that today.

You didn't get that diagnosis on your own. That's the Holy Spirit of God working in you. Repent of that today, and deal with that for his honor.

Heavenly Father, lead us right now to simply be obedient to follow you in everything that we do, Lord, I pray. In Jesus' name, amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.