

# **Sermon**

**8 May 2016**

**West Kirk of Calder & Polbeth Harwood**

**By: Rev Dr Jonanda Groenewald**

**Text: Mark 6:45-56**

**(Kids: Superhero Sunday)**

---

So on the theme of superheroes: Who needs a superhero if you have Jesus in your life?! Jesus walked on water, he calmed the sea, he fed 5000 people with 5 loaves and 2 fish. We believe in a God of impossibilities – he can do absolutely anything!

I'm sure you've all seen some sort of a film with an amazingly attractive superhero in it – swooping in at just the right moment in a desperate situation – looking deep into the pretty-girl-in-distress' wide eye's, saying: "trust me", and then, in some magnificent move he pulls her right out of danger into safety, as if it was nothing at all...

And you know, although the *supermen* and *spidermen* of the pictures are just figments of somebody's imagination, I'm almost certain that the scenes portrayed in these films are based on real life events, because every so often we find ourselves in situations where we feel overwhelmed, as if only a miracle will be able to get us out of this mess...

Superman and Spiderman might not really exist, but God does, and he can change our chaos into calmness. We just need to *trust* him. *That* is the secret: Trust.

But, *trust me*, that's easier said than done! And that's always been the case. Just look at the disciples.

I once listened to a sermon by the famous American preacher Chuck Swindoll, and he said something that I will never forget. He called what happened to the disciples in the story we read this morning "failing to connect the dots".

They *have just seen* Jesus feed 5000 people with 5 loaves and 2 fish. In other words – they have seen the *impossible* happen at the hand of Jesus.

Now they are in a boat, on stormy waters, and they are scared. Give them their due – I think there are few things in life as scary as being out on the open waters in a wee boat during a storm, but it's not as if this was the first time they'd been in a situation like this!

In Mark 4, just 2 chapters before, we read that they were in a boat during a storm, and although they were really scared, Jesus was fast asleep. Eventually they woke him up and he couldn't believe that they were so stressed out about what was happening! Jesus then said: "Why are you so afraid? Do you still have no faith?" And then he calmed the storm.

It's easy for us to think: "What were they thinking?! Was the boat going to sink with Jesus – the son of God – in it? I don't think so!!" But they

didn't yet realise who Jesus was. You would think that they would get it *this time*, after he'd calmed the storm once before, but still, they failed to connect the dots.

Did they forget what had happened that day? Because here they were again, in a very similar situation, and panic started to get the better of them *again!* Did they forget what Jesus did? Did they forget what God can do?

Would Jesus tell them to go out on the boat, just so they could die? Of course not! So he saw them panic and decided to go to them. *As he does.*

The Romans divided the night into 4 different stages, so the 4<sup>th</sup> watch (when all this happened) would have been somewhere between 3 and 6 o'clock in the morning. They were in the worst possible situation – in a wee boat, on stormy waters, in the dark... What was the only thing that could make their situation worse? A ghost!

But really? Why on earth would they think it was a ghost? After all the times Jesus had rescued them out of hopeless situations, you would think that by now they would maybe expect Jesus to appear when they were in need! But no, they imagined the worst...

Failing to connect the dots.

*That person*, who calmed the wind and the sea not that long ago, who just miraculously fed 5000 people, that same person who *told* them to

get in the boat – *he* can do absolutely anything. Why would he not help them once again this time?

It's almost as if they didn't trust him. By now they should have known that they will always be safe with him in their lives – that he will make sure things work out the way they are supposed to. That he will provide in their every need.

Two wee things that might not make sense at first glance in this story, but which can be easily understood when we take the background of the Old Testament into consideration, are the following:

- We read that when walking on the water, Jesus was “about to pass by them”. That's what God always did in Old Testament times when he revealed himself to his people – he would “pass by them” and then they would recognise him. So Jesus wasn't ignoring them, as one might have thought.
- Secondly, when Jesus spoke to them, he said: “It is I. Don't be afraid.” They thought he was a ghost, why doesn't he just say: “Hi guys! It's me, Jesus!”? Because when God revealed himself to Moses in the burning bush, and to many other people in Old Testament times, he introduced himself as “It is I. I am who I am.” A phrase that would have been very familiar to anybody in those days. Jesus was giving them another hint that he wasn't just some special person – he was God.

But even with all the hints given, they still couldn't connect the dots...

.....

*They* might have had the excuse that they didn't realize who Jesus really was, but *we* don't have that excuse anymore. We have the evidence of the cross, the resurrection, the ascension, the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, as evidence of who Jesus is. We have the Bible and 2000 years of studies and interpretations and lessons and sermons. *We have all this to look back on*, and still sometimes we miss the obvious!

We have absolutely no excuse – we should be able to always, in all circumstances, connect the dots with ease... But curiously enough – we don't!

It's easy to think: "How could the disciples have been so blind?" It's really obvious that Jesus wasn't ever going to desert them. But are we any different?

Do you trust God with your life completely? Or do you go into a state of absolute panic when things go wrong in your life?

It feels as if the disciples forgot so quickly that God would never leave them alone. But do you always remember that? Were you here in church last week? Being reminded that God will be with you every step of the way? And did that prevent you from worrying about things this past week?

Probably not, because we get scared so easily!

But this morning God wants to urge you – connect the dots! Look at all the stories in the Bible – no matter how big the mess, God was always by his people's sides. He will do the same for us too.

Nowhere does it say that if we have God in our lives the storms of life will pass us by. But over and over and over it says that no matter what kind of a storm you find yourself in, God will be there with you. He will hold your hand; he'll get you through it. Just trust him!

Sometimes it feels as if the storms of life are ripping us apart completely... When you work hard to make something happen and then it doesn't; when the doctor gives you bad news; when your relationship with your partner, your family, your friends, are hanging by a thread; when you struggle financially; when you have a big decision to make but you have no idea what to do; when someone you love dies; when life just doesn't make sense at all... In all these situations, God *will* be with you.

He *will* answer your prayers. But that doesn't mean that the answer is always going to be yes, because he sees the bigger picture. And sometimes what we want just isn't the right thing for us, although we can't see that.

If you want God to carry your burdens, you need to put them down first. Stop making your life harder than it has to be – hand over control to God. *Trust* him!

Let's not fail to connect the dots. God has never left us alone in the past, and he'll not leave us alone now either. God can provide in our every need. He will always be there for us. Even when we don't expect it.

So

when the winds of adversity blow things you hold dear away from you,  
when the hailstones of hate batter holes in your existence,  
when the dark clouds of worries appear to warn you of worse times to  
come,  
when the rain of hardship and trouble threaten to wash all your hope  
away...

Don't be afraid! Trust God.

Connect those dots, and see how something that didn't make sense at  
one point, can actually form a very important part of the picture of your  
life.

Your boat will never sink if God is in it with you, no matter how severe  
the storm is.

Amen