

Sacred Ground  
Harbor: Final Message  
September 10, 2015

**Introduction:** It's good to be with you! I can't think of a better weekend for me to wrap up almost ten years at Harbor than our Baptism and BBQ celebration weekend.

Today, we'll be celebrating alongside people who are saying 'yes' to Jesus with their lives...and if you've ever been to a baptism celebration, you know there will be clapping and whooping and hugging and crying and eating. It's a wonderful way to move into the year ahead, so I hope you'll join us!

Weeks ago, when I began to realize that I would teach a final message here...I happened to be reading through the gospel of Mark and I came around to chapter six where Jesus feeds a crowd of 5,000 with a Happy Meal and then calms a storm that is about to take his disciples under. In doing so, He taught us that He is trustworthy to meet all our needs AND He is greater than the storms we face!

**In that moment, I knew that this is where needed to go on my final day with you as your Lead Pastor!**

If there is one thing I can leave you with...one thing that will summarize what I've learned over the last ten years...one thing that I hope and pray you come to see and experience in your own life, it is this!

**Jesus Christ is worthy of your life, and you can trust Him, no matter what life brings!**

You might be on a mountaintop today, or you may be looking into the eye of a storm. Your circumstances may be marked with peace and stillness or riddled with turmoil and unsteadiness. No matter what you're facing, there is no one in this life more capable, more dependable, or more worthy of the trust of your heart than Jesus...and if you hold on to Him, everything will be ok!

And not only will everything be ok...but even more importantly, you will come to see and know Jesus personally as the King of your life!

**So...in these few minutes we have, I want to read Mark 6 together and draw out three observations that teach us something about the character and trustworthiness of Jesus!**

**Go to Mark 6:45...**

*"Immediately after this (feeding of the 5,000 – important detail), **Jesus insisted** that his disciples get back into the boat and head across the lake to Bethsaida, while he sent the people home. After telling everyone good-bye, he went up into*

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*the hills by himself to pray. Late that night, the disciples were in their boat in the middle of the lake, and Jesus was alone on land. He saw that they were in serious trouble, rowing hard and struggling against the wind and waves..."*  
Mark 6:45-48a

**#1 – Jesus will call you out of the Safe Place and into the Storm to Strengthen your trust in Him!**

**Look at verse 45 again...**

*"Jesus insisted that his disciples get back into the boat and head across the lake..."* Mark 6:45

Hang out with Jesus for very long, and you're going to walk through storms! In fact, when you read the gospels, you get the feeling that Jesus doesn't try to protect his disciples from storms. Instead, He sends them into the eye of the storm to show them that He is Lord of the storm!

Only two chapters earlier, the gospel writer, Mark, records another boat ride that Jesus took with His disciples across the same lake. Midway through their journey, as Jesus was napping, a storm overwhelmed the boat...the disciples started freaking out...and ran to the back of the boat to awaken Jesus, Mark writes...

*"When Jesus woke up, he rebuked the wind and said to the water, "Silence! Be still! Suddenly the wind stopped, and there was a great calm." Mark 4:39*

**Why would Jesus allow His followers to walk through the storm? Why would He allow us to walk through storms in our lives?**

Think about your own life. Isn't it true that the storms of life are where we find it most difficult to trust Jesus! Storms make us uneasy and afraid. Storms take away all illusion that we are in control.

**Camping** – Last month, our family was camping with some friends, and we canoed out to the middle of a lake in New Hampshire. It was perfectly beautiful and relaxing! The kids were out on a rock jumping off while I was sitting in a canoe taking the whole thing in. When it came time to get the kids, I had to paddle to them while holding on to my oldest son's empty kayak...so I was paddling and pushing, paddling and pushing my way over. I was quite proud of my skills until I went to push the kayak one last time and when I did, I turned my canoe way over to one side, and it immediately filled up with water!

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Here I am in the middle of the lake completely soaked. My friends realize what happened and they're just having a great time at the sight of me bailing out water (I have really good friends, shy on compassion). And there was a moment where I freaked on the inside just a little and thought, "*I'm going under*" even though this was a small canoe on a calm lake on a beautiful sunny day!

**When we feel like we're going under, our first reaction is to freak out as well, isn't it?**

*How do you respond when you face the storm of sickness or you get a bad prognosis or you lose someone you love?*

*What's your first thought when you face storm of job loss or financial insecurity.*

*Some of us have faced the storm of a broken marriage or a wayward child or an unrealized dream, haven't we? Some of us have experienced failure or disappointment.*

Isn't it true that these tend to be the moments when we worry and like the disciples, we panic? Aren't we much like the disciples who said to Jesus, "*Don't you care if we drown? God, If you really loved us, you wouldn't let us hurt or struggle like this.*"

But don't you see...This text shows us that Jesus does allow the people He loves to walk through storms. In fact, I would suggest that until you walk through a storm, you will not fully understand the depth of his love for you, nor will you experience Jesus as the One who is more powerful than the storms of your life! Which is why...

**Jesus will call you out of the safe place and into the storm to strengthen your trust in Him!**

**#2 - Your Storm is the Sacred Ground upon which Jesus does his best work!**

*"About three o'clock in the morning Jesus came toward them, walking on the water. He intended to go past them, but when they saw him walking on water, they cried out in terror thinking he was a ghost. They were all terrified when they saw him. But Jesus spoke to them at once. Don't be afraid, he said. Take courage! I am here! Then he climbed into the boat, and the wind stopped. They were totally amazed..." Mark 6:48b-51a*

One moment they're freaking, the next moment Jesus gets in the boat, says, "*Take courage, I am here!*" And then, Mark writes, they were amazed! (Hi-five) Wouldn't

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you love to experience Jesus' power and presence in your life so personally and vividly that no matter what storm you're facing, He replaces your fear with awe! And instead of constantly worrying and losing sleep...you fall down in worship!

### **How do we learn to trust Jesus in the face of the storm?**

Notice in the text that Jesus went to the disciples. He could have stayed at a distance and calmed the storm, but instead He went to them and got into their boat. In the same way, you've got to go to Jesus.

*"Jed, do you mean, 'Go to Jesus'?"*

**Yes...I mean, go to Jesus. I believe He's the same today as He was yesterday! Literally say to Him...Jesus, I am looking into the eye of a storm, and I'm inviting you into the boat of my life! Help me to see that you are here! If He is real, He will meet you in the storm!**

Year's ago, a woman started attending Harbor, and quite honestly I'm not sure what brought her here. Week after week she came back in spite of the fact that she didn't believe that Jesus was anything more than a teacher or prophet, and yet she acknowledged that when she came to Harbor, she encountered God. Months turned into years of searching intellectually and spiritually to determine who this person Jesus was...

**Her storm was unbelief...skepticism. She couldn't get past it on her own...and right when the storm was about ready to take her under, Lisa called out to Jesus.**

**(We want to share her story with you)**

**(Video – 5 minutes)**

Isn't that beautiful? Jesus, if you're real, hit me upside the head with a 2x4. I'm not saying Jesus will always meet you over bachoi, but I am saying that the Lord who met Lisa in the storm is equally as real and powerful to meet you in yours!

**Oftentimes it's in the storm that Jesus does His best work, because it's in the storm that we become most receptive. We come face to face with our weakness and finiteness and we realize, *"Unless Someone rescues me through this storm, I'm sunk!"***

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**There, when all control is gone, we can finally hear Jesus say, *“Take courage, I am here!”***

**Your Storm is the Sacred Ground upon which Jesus does his best work! Don't run from it...run to Him!**

**#3 – You will never know how Trustworthy He is until you step out and Trust Him.**

I don't know what storm you've faced...what storm you're looking at today, or what storm will come tomorrow. What I do know is that until you step out and trust Him, you'll never know how trustworthy He is!

**What does it mean to trust Jesus?**

**Elise (Hands): I've shared this with you many times, but I'll share it again because it's the best way I know to describe what it looks like to trust Jesus!**

My 8 year-old daughter, Elise, still goes with me just about everywhere I go, and to this day, every time we walk through a busy parking lot, or work our way through a crowded store, Elise places her hand in my hand! When she does this, she's saying to me, “Dad...I trust you...I feel safe with you...and I know that as long as you're holding on to me and I'm holding on to you, everything will be ok!”

**I love Elise deeply and would give anything for her, but my love for Elise is a drop in the ocean compared to Jesus' love for her.**

You see...Jesus Christ doesn't simply love you in some general sense of the word! He's not a distant, sentimental God who offers a little help or support when the seas of life roar. He's not looking at you tonight saying, *“Just keep trying, you're going to make it. I know you can do it!”*

**No...His love is so much greater than that! You see, Jesus loved you enough to walk into the storm for you!**

**Isaiah 53 – Changed Lisa's life. Do you know what it says? Talking of Jesus, the prophet writes...**

*“Yet it was our weaknesses he carried; it was our sorrows that weighed him down. And we thought his troubles were a punishment from God, and punishment for his own sins. He was beaten so we could be whole. He was*

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*whipped so we could be healed. All of us, like sheep, have strayed away. We have left God's paths to follow our own. Yet the Lord laid on him the sins of us all." Isaiah 53:4-6*

Historically, various religions describe storms as a sign of the displeasure of the gods. If you don't keep the gods happy, they pour out their wrath through wind and rain!

There is no other religion in all of history that tells of a God who walks into the storm for his people because He loves them!

**On the cross, Jesus Christ bore the storm of our sin so we don't have to bear the punishment we deserve!**

**He was beaten and whipped so that we could be healed; so we could have peace.**

We have walked away from God (sin)...but God didn't walk away from us! Instead, the Father placed our sin on the back of Jesus so we could come back into His arms!

**He did it because He loves you! Go to Him...cry out to Him...place your hand in His hand, and trust Him!**

**You will never know how Trustworthy He is until you step out and Trust Him.**

Close

It's possible that you're unsure of Jesus and skeptical of Christianity altogether. Some of us, if we're being honest, don't believe that we need Jesus! Many of us believe that if we live well and work hard, we'll avoid the storms of life! We're living an illusion! No matter how fit you are or how strong you feel, you'll grow weary, your strength will fade, and you will sag. No matter how much money you make, you'll lose it or it will stop satisfying you. No matter how liked you are, people will disappoint you, some will fail you...amidst the joy, there is pain...and if you're older than thirty, you know it's true!

You must have something or someone you can trust! And the world will never be able to give it to you.

**Jesus is the only one who will never fail you. And when you fail Him, He'll forgive you completely!**

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**If you are a Christian, I'm guessing that there is an area where you're having a difficult time trusting!**

**Trusting him with your money (to provide, generosity).**

**Trusting him with your marriage (to love, to trust).**

**Trusting him with a relationship (to reconcile).**

**Trusting him with your future.**

**Harbor** – Many times throughout this season of saying goodbye, I've felt uncertain. I've been unsure of how God would provide for us...for Harbor. My tendency in those moments is to grab control and become worried.

But Jesus is teaching me that He is faithful to provide...to supply all our needs! I could give you ten reasons not to be concerned by the transition (incredible leadership, staff, lay leaders, unity, passion, financial provision).

**But the one reason you shouldn't fear...the one reason you can have peace and joy in the midst of the storms of life is because we serve the Lord of the Storm. And our storms are the sacred ground on which He does His best work!**

On Wednesday evening I was having dinner with friends, all are leaders at Harbor. I was talking with one of my very good friends about Harbor's future and he looked at me, no joke, and said, "We're good. The future of this church has never been about a person (I'm paraphrasing). It's about a spirit that has come to define this place...it's about our commitment to help people find their way back to God. **"Jed, your leaving doesn't change that!" He couldn't have given me a greater gift!**

Told you several weeks ago...I'll remind you again. The church, and Harbor specifically, has never been about a single person or leader or communicator or visionary or pastor, but about the One True Leader and Pastor, Jesus Christ! We are made right with God through Jesus Christ! He unites us together in spite of our differences and fills us with His Spirit so that we can work together for His glory in all things!

Circumstances may change, but our Lord does not change, and because of that we can be confident that the God who started a work within us will bring it to completion for our good!

**Harbor**, I am confident that what God began in you he will bring to completion!

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**I love you!**

**Pray**