

We'll begin by looking at the context of our gospel. After His rejection at Nazareth, Jesus moves around to the villages teaching. Jesus then summons the Twelve, gives them authority, and sends them out to do what He did, i.e., announce the kingdom of God by teaching and casting out demons.

The Twelve return and with great enthusiasm exclaim the success of their mission. Jesus then invites them to come away and rest awhile. Unfortunately, their plans for rest become derailed when they encounter the needs of so many sheep. With just five loaves and two fish, Jesus feeds 5,000.

Immediately, before today's verses, Jesus dismissed the disciples (sent them in a boat). This allows Him to pray. The disciples, most likely exhausted, battle a headwind deep into the night (fourth watch – between 3:00 am and 6:00 am). Jesus, again, brings order and peace by walking on water and joining them in their little boat.

This brings us to today's verses. Mark tells us that they landed at Gennesaret, which is a region along the western shore of the Sea of Galilee. Apparently, they had been blown off course because they were supposed to go to Bethsaida, which is on the north end of the lake. In this light, we can ask ourselves how we see Jesus when we are blown off course, or our plans are different than we expected.

After landing, they are encountered by people who have lots of needs. We presume that the disciples (and Jesus) are still extremely tired! After all, they didn't get much sleep struggling against the headwind. Again, this helps us think how we act when we are tired and our demanding schedules press upon us.

The people bring the sick on mats to Jesus. Mark says that the sick begged Jesus that they might touch only the tassel on his cloak. What a beautiful image! The sick are lying on their mats, and with only a little strength, reach up to touch a tassel on his cloak as He walks by.

Do we not sometimes feel like this? Whether physical, emotional, psychological, or spiritual, sometimes we feel overwhelmed. We can barely "reach up" in prayer to touch the tassel on Jesus' cloak. And yet, He is so eagerly wants to "bend down" to strengthen us, encourage us, and heal us. Take courage today!