Or have you ever tried to have your people do some profound New Testament exegesis? You’ll be surprised at how they take to it. Let them look with you at Mark 4:35–41 and compare it with Mark 6:45–52. The two stories are similar in some ways. In both, a group of disciples are in a boat and there is a storm. Both incidents follow a period when Jesus has been with crowds of people, and He wants to get away. In both stories Jesus plays the part of savior. But notice the differences, for they tell us something important for Mark. In the first story, Jesus is in the boat with the disciples when the storm breaks. In the second, Jesus is up in the hills alone, His disciples having gone to sea without Him. Jesus sees the storm and goes out to them walking on the water. In the first story Mark is telling us about the human Jesus. The second story, I would think, is a re–placed resurrection appearance. Mark wants us to know not only the human Jesus but the risen Christ.

Both stories are memories of real storms; but they are used symbolically and imaginatively. We are not being asked, “Did it happen just like this?” We are being searched: “Who do you think He was . . . is? What is the meaning behind the events for you?” Suppose you went to New York to see the Tall Ships on July 4. It was an event everyone talked about, saw on television. But suppose you met a girl there who got under your skin and you’ve seen her every weekend since. If things go on as they are, then the Tall Ships will have an altogether different meaning for you than for the rest of us. I think that that’s what Mark has done. He’s trying to look at the stories of two storms from the inside. He’s saying that Jesus made something happen that is more than outward event. He is savior in more than calming the sea.

In the first story Jesus, tired, puts himself in their hands. They were the sailors, the competent ones, and He was the passenger. It’s their chance to serve Him. The winds rise, the boat fills up with water, and there is Jesus asleep. “Wake up!” they cry, “don’t you care if we perish?” It’s no time for idle hands. They call Jesus “rabbi” but He doesn’t raise a hand to help. Rather He goes to the cause of their problem: “Why are you afraid? Haven’t you got faith?” The storm subsides, or we might say, Jesus overcomes their fears. But afterwards they begin to change their ideas about Jesus: “Who is this that even wind and wave obey Him?” They are confronted by the mystery of Jesus.

If the other story is possibly a resurrection appearance, as I think it is, it has to be read in connection with what went on immediately before, and clarifies it. Jesus had finished feeding the five thousand, had broken bread and distributed it among them. Then, almost immediately, He left the crowds and sent His disciples off by boat to go across the lake, while He went up into the hills alone to pray. When the storm broke, and the boat was filling with water, Jesus observed their distress and went to them. In this story Jesus takes the initiative. It is night and dark; and when Jesus comes, they think it is a ghost. They see Him and are