

February 4, 2024

Steps—Mark, Chapter 5

Miracles



What is a miracle? A miracle is defined as an effect or extraordinary event in the physical world that surpasses all known human or natural powers and is ascribed to a supernatural cause. But just because you can explain it medically or scientifically, does that make it any less a miracle? Part of a miracle is the timing. When something occurs at exactly the time it is needed, you may be able to explain how it happened, but not how it happened at that exact moment, in exactly the right place, to exactly the right people. God's timing is always perfect. There are no coincidences. Notice the timing in these three stories as you study them. How does it contribute to the miraculous nature of the incident?

Demons and Pigs

Jesus was known for his ability to heal both physical and mental illness. This account is one of his most spectacular examples of casting out spirits. Notice that the setting is a gentile community rather than a Jewish one.

Read Mark 5:1-20.

- Why did the man immediately run to Jesus? What does this tell us?
- Knowing someone's name was thought to give you power over them. When Jesus asks the demon its name, what is the answer? What does the name signify?
- What did the demon ask of Jesus? What was Jesus' response?
- What was the reaction of the townspeople? Why do you think they didn't want a powerful healer to stay and help their community?
- Jesus refuses to let the man leave with them. What does he tell him to do instead?
- Why would Jesus tell a Gentile to witness to others about his miraculous healing and yet ask those he healed in Jewish communities to be silent and tell no one?
- When, where and how should you witness? How important is being a witness to Christ for you?

Optional discussion:

In our modern world experts often explain strange behaviors, including hearing voices and hallucinations, as a mental illness caused by chemical imbalance in the brain or serious trauma. But

in Jesus' time, none of this was known. Instead, people blamed behaviors that they couldn't understand on demon possession. For the person possessed it was surely hell on earth.

- How do you view demon possession? Biological, spiritual, medical, or a combination?
- Does your view of possession influence how you feel about this story? Does it matter what caused the problem? Is the healing less or more spectacular because of your opinion?

Illness and Death

What are you more afraid of—serious illness or death? In this two-in-one healing story, Jesus shows his power over both disease and death. In Greek the word *sozo* means both save and heal. Notice how Jesus does both in each instance.

Read Mark 5:21-43.

- Why is it such a surprise that a synagogue ruler would ask Jesus for help? What does this say about his motivation?
- What does verse 23 tell you about Jarius' belief in Jesus' power? How does the woman's faith compare to Jarius' faith?
- Menstrual bleeding made a Jewish woman "unclean." She could not be touched by any Jewish man including a father, brother, or husband. How would this affect her life? How would 12 years of this ostracism and lack of touch make her feel?
- Jesus was surrounded by a crowd. How did he notice that the woman had touched his garment? Why did she only touch his garment and not him?
- Examine the words Jesus uses when he speaks to the woman. Which words signify physical healing and which signify spiritual salvation?
- Jesus asks Jarius to believe, not fear. Why? How would that make you feel in a similar circumstance?
- Why do people laugh when Jesus claims the child is just asleep?
- Why does Jesus request that Jarius' family not tell others what happened unlike his request to the demon-possessed man?
- Jesus touched the dead girl and the sick woman touched him (his garment). What does touch convey in each instance? How might this guide us when we are ministering to the sick and dying?
- Discuss what makes each of these stories miraculous. Is timing a factor? Setting? Characters? How do you define a miracle?

Take Action

Think about the power of Jesus over disease and death. Have a discussion with Him about your own fears of illness and dying. Find passages from the Bible in this chapter of Mark that help you ease those fears.