

Tonight is the big game, but there is a lot of strength in this room, too: 'We can do all things through Him who strengthens us (Phil 4:13 NIV).'

What is the strongest force you have encountered?

- I grew up a couple of blocks away from the main east / west line for the Chicago NW railway. As a child I sometimes stood close to the tracks and felt the power of the heavy trains go by. That was the most powerful force I encountered, until ...
- I was in Kobe, Japan. After the 1995 earthquake, I stood in the street and watched the ground roll upwards or downwards towards me like water. 10 story buildings floated like bobbers on the water. Powerful.

We are simply going verse by verse through the book of Mark. Its key verse is: 'For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many (Mk 10:45 NIV).'

We are in the first half of the book, where Jesus' service is highlighted.

Today, Mark bundles four stories of Jesus working miracles to highlight faith and unbelief. Mark wants us to know ...

- Jesus and his authority.
- The power of God's kingdom.
- And the role of faith / unbelief.

### Miracles & Faith Mark 4:35-6:6a

There is a lot of Scripture, so let's jump right in.



#### 1. The Storm, 4:35-41.

'That day when evening came, he said to his disciples, "Let us go over to the other side."<sup>36</sup> Leaving the crowd behind, they took him along, just as he was, in the boat. There were also other boats with him.<sup>37</sup> A furious squall came up, and the waves broke over the boat, so that it was nearly swamped.<sup>38</sup> Jesus was in the stern, sleeping on a cushion. The disciples woke him and said to him, "Teacher, don't you care if we drown (Mk 4:35-38 NLT)?"

- Some of these disciples were experienced fishermen, and they became afraid of this storm.

- We know from the vivid details that Mark was probably an eyewitness.<sup>1</sup>
- They were in this boat because Jesus wants to go to ‘the nearby villages – so I can preach there also (Mk 1:35 NIV).’

‘He got up, rebuked the wind and said to the waves, “Quiet! Be still!” Then the wind died down and it was completely calm. <sup>40</sup> He said to his disciples, “Why are you so afraid? Do you still have no faith?” <sup>41</sup> They were terrified and asked each other, “Who is this? Even the wind and the waves obey him (Mk 4:35-41 NLT)!”’

I love the contrasts here:

- |                          |                                |
|--------------------------|--------------------------------|
| • Jesus sleeping         | Violent Storm                  |
| • Jesus raises his voice | The wind dies down             |
| • The water calms        | The disciples become terrified |

The disciples are terrified of Jesus’ power. They did really did not know yet who Jesus was.

This is about faith and unbelief.

- Though they were disciples, they must learn to believe that Jesus has power over nature.
- It is the same for us, too. We put our faith in Jesus and then learn over time that he really is God Almighty.

For God to do great things, we must have faith.

Jesus can still the storm in your life and save you from your sins today.

## 2. The Possessed, 5:1-20.

‘So they arrived at the other side of the lake, in the region of the Gerasenes. <sup>2</sup> When Jesus climbed out of the boat, a man possessed by an evil spirit came out from the tombs to meet him. <sup>3</sup> This man lived in the burial caves and could no longer be restrained, even with a chain. <sup>4</sup> Whenever he was put into chains and shackles—as he often was—he snapped the chains from his wrists and smashed the shackles. No one was strong enough to subdue him. <sup>5</sup> Day and night he wandered among the burial caves and in the hills, howling and cutting himself with sharp stones. <sup>6</sup> When Jesus was still some distance away, the man saw him, ran to meet him, and bowed low before him. <sup>7</sup> With a shriek, he screamed, “Why are you interfering with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? In the name of God, I beg you, don’t torture me!” <sup>8</sup> For Jesus had already said to the spirit, “Come out of the man, you evil spirit.” <sup>9</sup> Then Jesus demanded, “What is your name?” And he replied, “My name is Legion, because there are many of us inside this man.” <sup>10</sup> Then the evil spirits begged him again and again not to send them to some distant place. <sup>11</sup> There happened to be a large herd of pigs feeding on the hillside nearby. <sup>12</sup> “Send us into those pigs,” the spirits begged. “Let us enter them.” <sup>13</sup> So

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<sup>1</sup> William L. Lane, *The Gospel According to Mark NICNT* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1974), pp. 180-81.

Jesus gave them permission. The evil spirits came out of the man and entered the pigs, and the entire herd of about 2,000 pigs plunged down the steep hillside into the lake and drowned in the water. <sup>14</sup> The herdsmen fled to the nearby town and the surrounding countryside, spreading the news as they ran. People rushed out to see what had happened. <sup>15</sup> A crowd soon gathered around Jesus, and they saw the man who had been possessed by the legion of demons. He was sitting there fully clothed and perfectly sane, and they were all afraid. <sup>16</sup> Then those who had seen what happened told the others about the demon-possessed man and the pigs. <sup>17</sup> And the crowd began pleading with Jesus to go away and leave them alone. <sup>18</sup> As Jesus was getting into the boat, the man who had been demon possessed begged to go with him. <sup>19</sup> But Jesus said, "No, go home to your family, and tell them everything the Lord has done for you and how merciful he has been." <sup>20</sup> So the man started off to visit the Ten Towns of that region and began to proclaim the great things Jesus had done for him; and everyone was amazed at what he told them (Mk 5:1-20 NLT).'

This demon seeks to distort and destroy the image of God this man.

- The demon seeks to weaken that part in us that connects with God. To get us to think we are unworthy, or plan unbelief or confusion in our heart.
- The demons for many years, prompted this man to suicide or self-harm. When the demons went into the pigs, they accomplished this self-destruction, though not with their intended victim.
- The demon called Jesus by his real name and title: 'Jesus, Son of the Most High God.' This is not a confession of Jesus' divinity, but 'a desperate attempt to gain control over him or render him harmless ... (At that time) the use of the precise name of an adversary gave one mastery over him.'<sup>2</sup> This demon senses the end is near and desires to manipulate Jesus.
- We don't know why Jesus allowed the demons to depart into the pigs. Satan was not fully vanquished until the cross / resurrection. Perhaps the death of the pigs somehow kept the demons from terrorizing other humans.
- Regardless, the true intention of the demons was revealed – destruction of its host.

If you are wondering why there were pigs in Israel, Gerasene's of the Decapolis was a very Gentile area – which answers why ...

- Jesus encouraged the man to share his deliverance, but not about who Jesus is.
- The townspeople wanted Jesus to leave. They were afraid of someone having so much power. They did not believe in Jesus; they recognized his power, but not who he really was.

The purpose of miraculous power is to ...

- Destroy the Devil's work, Lk 13:12.

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<sup>2</sup> Lane, *Mark NICNT*, p. 185.

- Validate Jesus as Messiah, Mt 11:4-6; Jn 10:38.
- Validate the gospel and its messengers, Acts 8:6-8.
- Attract people to the gospel, Acts 4:6.
- To bring glory to God, Jn 9:3.
- To build faith in his children, Jn 2:22.
- Because He loves us, Mt 14:14; Mk 1:41.

Jesus can set you free today; he can deliver you from destructive habits and voices.

### 3. The Sick & Dead, 5:21-43.

'Jesus got into the boat again and went back to the other side of the lake, where a large crowd gathered around him on the shore. <sup>22</sup>Then a leader of the local synagogue, whose name was Jairus, arrived. When he saw Jesus, he fell at his feet, <sup>23</sup>pleading fervently with him. "My little daughter is dying," he said. "Please come and lay your hands on her; heal her so she can live." <sup>24</sup>Jesus went with him, and all the people followed, crowding around him (Mk 5:21-24 NLT).'

- Jesus returns to the western shore of the lake and a multitude gathers around him. Note the contrast between the eastern & western shores: one gathered around and the other wanted him to leave.
- Jairus was a lay leader in the local synagogue, like a deacon, he took care of the property and scheduled events.
- What's interesting is the urgent appeal and the confidence that Jesus would heal her with the laying on of hands.<sup>3</sup>

Mark often interrupts one story with another to show a connection. As the crowds follow Jesus to Jarius' home, there was ...

'A woman in the crowd had suffered for twelve years with constant bleeding. <sup>26</sup>She had suffered a great deal from many doctors, and over the years she had spent everything she had to pay them, but she had gotten no better. In fact, she had gotten worse. <sup>27</sup>She had heard about Jesus, so she came up behind him through the crowd and touched his robe. <sup>28</sup>For she thought to herself, "If I can just touch his robe, I will be healed." <sup>29</sup>Immediately the bleeding stopped, and she could feel in her body that she had been healed of her terrible condition. <sup>30</sup>Jesus realized at once that healing power had gone out from him, so he turned around in the crowd and asked, "Who touched my robe?" <sup>31</sup>His disciples said to him, "Look at this crowd pressing around you. How can you ask, 'Who touched me?'" <sup>32</sup>But he kept on looking around to see who had done it. <sup>33</sup>Then the frightened woman, trembling at the realization of what had happened to her, came and fell to her knees in front of him and told him what she had done. <sup>34</sup>And he said to her, "Daughter, your faith has made you well. Go in peace. Your suffering is over (Mk 5:25-34 NLT)."

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<sup>3</sup> First mention in Mark; others are: 6:5; 7:32; 8:23, 25.

This short encounter is a contrast between human methods and spiritual power. We have many fine people who work in the medical field. God can use medical science to heal, but in this case, it only made things worse.

Further, this woman<sup>4</sup> had been ritualistically unclean for 12 years – manmade rules.

- She was shunned by others, an outsider.
- But she broke the rules - touching others in the crowds to ultimately touch Jesus.

By faith she reached and touched. Immediately, they both sensed God's power. I believe she was not afraid of being exposed but trembling because she just experienced the power of God; she was in awe, fully healed.

Instead of condemnation she hears affirmation – 'daughter, your faith has made you well. Go in peace. Your suffering is over (v. 34).'

- What man could not do; God chose to do through Jesus.
- Normally, Jesus would have exercised his will to use God's power, but here her faith is the source of healing. Specifically, faith in Jesus. This story calls us to radical faith.
- Like the faith of the paralytic's friends (2:5), her faith initiated the healing.
- There is no magic here, we do not control God with faith, but God gives us faith to believe his plan.

Jesus quiets raging waters, he casts out demons, even his clothes are powerful.

'While he was still speaking to her, messengers arrived from the home of Jairus, the leader of the synagogue. They told him, "Your daughter is dead. There's no use troubling the Teacher now." <sup>36</sup> But Jesus overheard them and said to Jairus, "Don't be afraid. Just have faith." <sup>37</sup> Then Jesus stopped the crowd and wouldn't let anyone go with him except Peter, James, and John (the brother of James). <sup>38</sup> When they came to the home of the synagogue leader, Jesus saw much commotion and weeping and wailing. <sup>39</sup> He went inside and asked, "Why all this commotion and weeping? The child isn't dead; she's only asleep." <sup>40</sup> The crowd laughed at him. But he made them all leave, and he took the girl's father and mother and his three disciples into the room where the girl was lying. <sup>41</sup> Holding her hand, he said to her, "Talitha koum," which means "Little girl, get up!" <sup>42</sup> And the girl, who was twelve years old, immediately stood up and walked around! They were overwhelmed and totally amazed. <sup>43</sup> Jesus gave them strict orders not to tell anyone what had happened, and then he told them to give her something to eat (Mk 5:35-43 NLT).''

Wow – power over death. The most important point is, 'Don't be afraid. Just have faith (v. 36).'

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<sup>4</sup> Interesting embellishment in early church tradition: She was called Berenice (Latin: Veronica) and was from Caesarea Philippi. Lane, *Mark NICNT*, p. 194.

- Jairus had witnessed the healing of the woman and now was asked to believe that his child would live. This is radical faith in the power of Jesus.
- Jairus' faith is contrasted with the professional mourners: the mourners were certain the girl was dead, Jairus had to be equally certain Jesus could raise her up.

There is no magical formula. Jesus simply says, 'get up.'

- But because there is faith, she arises.
- We have a compassionate God. While everyone there is overwhelmed and amazed, Jesus observes that she needs to eat.

He does not let the parents broadcast what has happened because he needs time to leave. It will be obvious to the community shortly.

He exercises power over nature, over the demonic, over sickness and now over death. Is there anything Jesus cannot do?

#### **4. Unbelief, 6:1-6a.**

'Jesus left that part of the country and returned with his disciples to Nazareth, his hometown. <sup>2</sup>The next Sabbath he began teaching in the synagogue, and many who heard him were amazed. They asked, "Where did he get all this wisdom and the power to perform such miracles?" <sup>3</sup>Then they scoffed, "He's just a carpenter, the son of Mary and the brother of James, Joseph, Judas, and Simon. And his sisters live right here among us." They were deeply offended and refused to believe in him. <sup>4</sup>Then Jesus told them, "A prophet is honored everywhere except in his own hometown and among his relatives and his own family." <sup>5</sup>And because of their unbelief, he couldn't do any miracles among them except to place his hands on a few sick people and heal them. <sup>6</sup>And he was amazed at their unbelief (6:1-6a NLT).'

His hometown had heard of his miracle working power and was curious about the source of his power, wisdom, and teaching. They refuse see the source of power, they 'refused to believe in him (v. 3).'

- Because he is 'just a carpenter,' they dismiss his teaching.
- Calling him the son of Mary - that was an insult at the time - hinting that he was illegitimate.<sup>5</sup>

The unbelief is thick. The townspeople say, 'he's just common' and his brothers thought he was crazy (Mk 3:21).

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<sup>5</sup> Lane, *Mark NICNT*, p. 203.

Verses 5-6 are important: 'And because of their unbelief, he couldn't do any miracles among them except to place his hands on a few sick people and heal them. <sup>6</sup> And he was amazed at their unbelief (Mk 6:6a NLT).'

- It is hard to believe for a miracle when you are surrounded by unbelief. The power of God is released in an atmosphere of faith and belief.
- If Jesus would have done miracles despite their unbelief, their hearts would have been hardened even more.<sup>6</sup>

Those in the four stores of power, were amazed at Jesus' power; Jesus was amazed at the unbelief in Nazareth.

### **Conclusion.**

For God to do great things, we must have faith. Do you have faith today?

- Sometimes, you must seek out a miracle, like Jairus and the woman.
- Sometimes circumstances come against you, like storms.
- Sometimes things hope is dead and looks impossible.
- Nevertheless, Jesus can do the impossible.

Prayer for miracles.

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<sup>6</sup> 'The performance of miracles in the absence of faith could have resulted only in the aggravation of human guilt and the hardening of men's hearts against God', Lane, *Mark NICNT*, p. 204.