

Jesus Is Lord of the Storm

Turn with me to the gospel of Mark once again. The past two Sundays we have talked about two healing miracles of Jesus. He healed the paralytic whose friends made a whole in the roof and lowered their friend to Jesus. Last Sunday we saw Jesus in the Synagogue as he healed the man with a withered hand. Both of these were regenerative miracles. Both conditions were irreversible and Jesus healed them both. It was obvious to all that Jesus had power over sickness and disease as the people in Capernaum and the surrounding areas brought the sick to Jesus and he healed them.

Mark's gospel is revealing to the reader, to us, who Jesus really is. We understand as we see the disciples learning and understanding who he is. This morning we are going to look at two more events: the calming of a storm on the sea and the calming of a storm in a demon possessed man. Both of these events brought further revelation to the disciples: this is no ordinary man. Even the wind and the waves obey him! Even the satanic forces of hell have to obey him. All of these things were beyond their control - beyond our control - and for the disciples and for us today - we discover that Jesus has power over natural forces and Jesus has power over spiritual forces. **Jesus is Lord of the Storm.**

Let's look quickly at these two stories. Turn with me to **Mark 4:35**. Jesus had been teaching the people in parables and at the end of the day, as evening was approaching, Jesus said to his disciples, "**Let us go over to the other side.**" We talk about the Sea of Galilee, it is really a big lake, but either way, it is a large body of water and it would be a long walk around it. Let's read the story and then let me make some observations. (Read Mark 4:35-41)

1. Don't doubt in the middle of the journey what Jesus said at the start. Jesus said "let us go over to the other side." There was no reason to think they would not make it to the other side. So what if a storm comes up suddenly? It was a major storm. It would be frightening but for two things – Jesus was in the boat with them and he had already said "let's go to the other side." Be encouraged today if you are in stormy seas: If Jesus is in the boat with you and he has already said we are going to the other side, you're going to get to the other side. Nothing has changed just because a storm came up and you got a little wet. Don't start doubting in the middle of the journey. He is faithful. You are still going to the other side.

2. You have to take him just as he is. Verse 36 says, "Leaving the crowd behind, they

took him along, just as he was, in the boat.” What ever the writer had in mind when he wrote those words, I think there is an important truth for all of us. It’s the only way you get to take Jesus – just as he is. We keep trying to tame him, clean him up, make him politically correct, more seeker friendly, user friendly. We want to make him more inclusive, more palatable to the post-modern culture and mindset, but you have to take Jesus just as he is. He isn’t tame, he won’t be tamed. You can’t make him into something or someone he isn’t. You can’t turn him into a heavenly Santa Claus just there to grant you all your wishes. When we bring Jesus into the boat with us, into our lives, it doesn’t guarantee smooth sailing. It won’t be smooth sailing. He will undoubtedly take us through some storms and some rough waters because we have joined him on his mission and that involves some dangerous waters before we get to the other side.

Notice he didn’t tell them why they were going to the other side and they didn’t ask. I assume they thought he would just go and teach and heal a few people like he had been doing. The truth was, this wasn’t a pleasure cruise. It turned out to be more like a special forces extraction team going to liberate one man who was being held captive and tortured by the devil. It was hostile territory to which they were going - pagan soil, and the storms were already aimed at them. You take him as he is, that’s the only way to follow him.

3. Don’t let fear override your faith. Through all of these events in these first chapters of Mark’s gospel, Jesus is revealing himself, his nature and character and his mission to the disciples. They were learning as he explained the parables to them. Their faith was growing each time. But then this storm confronts them. It came so suddenly with such ferocious force. And this was something of which they had intimate knowledge. Some of them were fishermen like Peter, James and John. They made their living on this body of water and they knew just how dangerous it could be. They knew the legends about the sea and its storms. All of them lived and worked around the sea of Galilee. They knew its power, its unrelenting force and its unforgiving nature. Sick people are one thing, but this is nature itself. This is something outside of us, something quite beyond us.

They awakened Jesus, perhaps just hoping for another hand to help them bail the water that was swamping the boat. “Don’t you care if we drown? Get busy.” Jesus’ response was more like, “What’s all the fuss? You had to wake me up for this? I thought you guys were fishermen and could handle this.” “He got up, rebuked the wind and said to the waves, ‘Quiet!

Be still!’ Then the wind died down and it was completely calm.” Mark 4:39. With his word he calmed the storm. With his word he quieted the waves and then he said to his disciples, these students of his who were learning more every moment about who he was, “Why are you so afraid? Do you still have no faith?” Did they still not understand who he was and what he had been telling them? Did they still not understand what he could do, that he was Lord of all? Even Lord over the storm, the wind and the waves? Did they still not have faith in him as the one who would safely get them to the other side? “Trust me, when I say we are going to the other side, we are going to the other side!”

The storms we encounter can be frightening, I won’t try to minimize that. But I will tell you that **Fear diminishes as faith finds its rightful resting place.** Our faith rests in Jesus, the only one who can calm the storm that rages in our life; the one who has promised to take us all the way to the other side of this life and into his presence. Put your complete and absolute trust in him and do not be afraid, even in the storm.

4. From great storm to great calm in three words. That’s what Jesus’ power can do. The bible speaks of a furious squall in verse 37 but after Jesus speaks those three words, “Quiet. Be still” the bible says “it was completely calm.” The same word is translated as “furious” and “completely”. It is the Greek word from which we get the prefix mega. It was a mega storm and it became mega calm through Jesus’ mega power. (KJV says great storm and great calm.)

Understand there are no storm-less seas. We all encounter storms. And the point of Mark’s telling us this story is not that Jesus will always jump right up and calm the storm and silence the wind and waves. Ask the apostle Paul in Acts 27 if that is how it always works. Ask Jonah if that’s how it works. The truth is, sometimes he delivers us from the storm and sometimes he delivers us out of the storm and sometimes he takes us through the storm, but regardless, there are **Two things we need to remember in a storm: 1) he reveals himself as Savior and Lord in the storm 2) he will get us to the other side in spite of the storm.**

The disciples knew him as a healer and a miracle worker but when he calmed that storm, they had a new revelation of Jesus as Savior. He saved them from death on the sea that night – he rescued them when no one else could and they began to see him in a new light. They knew him as a Savior and from then on they could testify that if Jesus said they were going somewhere, regardless of what else happened, you could trust him to get you there.

The disciples are left wondering to themselves, who is this that even the wind and the waves obey him. What can this mean? Revelation continues to come to these fellows that will culminate in Mark 8 when Peter declares, “You are the Christ!”

They survive the storm and arrive at the region of the Gerasenes. As Jesus gets out of the boat a man with a storm on the inside of him comes charging at Jesus. This man’s life is chaotic. His behavior is chaotic. The bible tells us he is possessed by demons. By a legion of demons in fact.

Do we still believe in demons today and demon possession? Look around, read the paper, watch the news and then you tell me. Do you believe in evil? I believe there is more than a malevolent force at work in the world. I believe there is real evil and there are demons, evil spirits that attack and torment and bring terror and chaos in the world. Supernatural evil beings.

How did this man get in this condition possessed by demons? I don’t know. Somehow he must have opened his heart and life to demonic powers and influence. Some people look for and find demons everywhere. We don’t have time to go into detail about demons but let me share some quick cautions. I’m quoting from a commentary by David Garland who references another writer, a professor of theology named Sydney Page. **1) “We should not see demons behind every rock and tree, ready to ambush unsuspecting, innocent bystanders. The exorcisms in Mark convey exactly the opposite mood. Jesus is always victorious. The enemy powers are being vanquished – usually with just one little word. 2) One may be tempted to blame demons for everything and thereby evade any personal responsibility. Some things that people call demons are simply the displays of human vices. 3) Some present day expressions of belief in demons border on the superstitious and sub-Christian. One should exercise discernment and not accept every claim about the demonic at face value. 4) Scripture shuns any attempt to name and rank demons, and one should avoid any such speculation. We do not conquer demons by knowing their names. 5) Demon possession is a rare phenomenon. We should not explain every strange behavior as demonic or label every human opponent as demonic. Those who focus their efforts on a sensational warfare with demons and the rescuing of their victims may neglect the more mundane spiritual warfare that each Christian must wage in his or her own heart. People today are more likely to be controlled by a legion of cravings, captivations, and destructive impulses than by a legion of demons.”**

Let's quickly read this account and then make some observations. **Mark 5:1-20**

I doubt there are any demon possessed people here this morning, but I think there are likely some folks who have been demonized, terrorized by the devil - by fear, by thoughts you can't seem to control, by worry and anxiety, by depression or thoughts of suicide. And there are plenty of us that know the feelings - not necessarily as a result of demonic activity - but the feeling of being out of control, of too much chaos in your life - of so much emotional and inner pain that you feel like you are losing your mind. You want to run and hide or scream and you find yourself making desperate choices, poor choices, wrong choices.

Notice this man in v5 was cutting himself. We have heard a great deal in recent years about the incidence of people, young girls in particular, cutting themselves. It inflicts physical pain as a release for the emotional pain and torment on the inside. Please listen: I am not suggesting that cutting is a sign of being demon possessed - you don't need that on top of the other issues you are dealing with. I am simply pointing out that we can see something of our selves and our pain in this desperately tormented man in Mark 5. And if you are cutting yourself, young or old, female or male, I believe there is an answer to be found in Jesus for you, just as it was for this man in Mark 5. He can deliver you from your pain, inwardly and outwardly.

Jesus got out of the boat and this man comes running toward him. Maybe that was his usual response when anyone approached and most people would likely have been frightened away. Verse 7 tells us he was screaming at the top of his lungs. If you've ever had a crazy person suddenly screaming at you, it is pretty intimidating I have to admit. I move away pretty quickly.

Can we find ourselves anywhere in this man's story? Again, I'm not suggesting anyone here is demon possessed, but can we find ourselves in the desperation of this man and his condition? Look at this.

- 1. He was more dead than alive.** He was living among the dead in the tombs. These were likely caves on the hillside. Everything about him identified more with the dead than the living.
- 2. Unclean.** To the Jews he would be considered unclean because he was living among the dead.
- 3. Mistreated.** The townspeople had done it for their own safety, but he had been chained and tied. The passage we read said no one was strong enough to subdue him. The word there is used

for taming a wild animal. It more accurately reads, “no one was able to tame him.” Perhaps they bound him, chained him, whipped him, beat him, all in an effort to tame him, to break him, to beat the devil out of him.

4. Bound. He had been physically bound, chained and restrained by the people, but more importantly he was spiritually bound by the devil. A slave to demonic spirits, voices, thoughts and actions.

5. Isolated. He was an outcast from family, from society, forced to live alone among the tombs.

6. Estranged from everyone that loved him and knew him. He had family as Jesus speaks of them in verse 19, but he couldn't be around them. Imagine the pain his family had experienced.

7. Pulled apart by an inward spiritual battle. While we can't identify with demon's controlling us, perhaps you can identify with something Eugene Lowry wrote in paraphrasing the demoniac's response to Jesus. “I feel like 6,000 soldiers inside me...sometimes they all march left, sometimes right...sometimes in all different directions. I'm pulled one way, then another. There's an army inside me, and I think I'm losing the war.”

You aren't demon possessed, but you feel more dead than alive on the inside. You feel unclean because of the way you are living, how you are living your life. You feel mistreated and like you've been abused by someone, misunderstood by others. You feel bound, trapped, isolated, cut off, outcast, unwanted. You are estranged from family members, pulled apart inwardly by conflicting thoughts and desires. Your whole life is like an inward storm. You know something of how this man felt

Is there any hope for you? No one thought there was hope for this man. The whole town gave up on him. His family and friends had to finally give up on him and wrote him off. And then Jesus came to their shores. Don't give up. There is hope. Let's look at the rest of the story. Look at the demons and their encounter with Jesus.

1. Demons always recognize Jesus' authority. They weren't trying to battle with Jesus. The movies always make the forces of good and evil just about equal don't they, or evil often triumphs in the movies nowadays. But notice what the demon said to Jesus - “Swear to God you won't torture me!” We would do well to recognize and remember Jesus' authority. James 2:19 says the demons believe and tremble. It's only humans that fail to recognize the authority of Jesus and who he really is. Jesus is Lord and the devil knows it!

2. From one to many. Notice the demon goes from singular to plural. “My name is Legion for we are many.” A Roman legion was 6,000 men plus 120 horsemen. This demon indicates there are many of them ravaging this man’s life and body. It sounds ominous, but notice in verse 10 the demon, Legion, begged Jesus again and again not to send them out of the area. A legion of demons is still no match for Jesus.

The demons didn’t want to be sent out of the area. The bible mentions demons wandering in dry places. Apparently demons don’t want to be without a host and notice this: they were claiming this territory as their own. This was a pagan, Gentile area. They had influence and control apparently and they didn’t want to leave, but Jesus had come to their shores and their influence was being broken. He is establishing his rulership and reign in the heart of this one man and just one believer can wreck their demonic reign.

3. Demons can’t help but sow chaos, destruction and death. The demons begged Jesus to allow them to go into a herd of pigs that were feeding on a nearby hillside (v11-12). They wanted to stay in the area, they wanted to be inside the pigs, but as soon as they entered the pigs, they stampeded them into the sea where they all drowned. The very thing they wanted to avoid happened. Why? Because they just can’t help themselves. They can’t help but destroy and kill, even if it means their own destruction.

You can’t trust the devil. He is a liar and has come to kill, steal and to destroy. He can’t help himself. He will deceive you and destroy you. You can’t outsmart him or bargain with him or trick him. Stay away from him and stay close to Jesus. While the devil can’t help destroying,

4. Jesus can’t help but bring life! Jesus set this man free, the demons are gone and when the townspeople came to see what had happened - mostly to see about their pigs - they found this man sitting, dressed and in his right mind. Completely restored. Just like the storm. From great storm to great calm in this man’s heart and mind and spirit.

The townspeople were frightened and begged Jesus to leave. They didn’t know what to do with such power. They cared more about their pigs and their profit than they did about Jesus or this man. What a sad thing. These people could have had the same miracles that Capernaum had been having. They could have brought their sick and possessed and Jesus would have healed them, but they were afraid of the cost. Would it mean giving up their herds? Giving up their way of life? Sacrificing something? They chose to ask Jesus to leave.

Look at verse 18 - as Jesus is getting in the boat to leave the man, now delivered, begged Jesus to take him with him. I can imagine him saying, "I can't go home. I've burned every bridge I ever crossed. No one loves me any more. I've caused everyone that ever knew me or loved me too much sorrow, too much embarrassment, too much grief and shame. Please let me go with you." And Jesus says, "Go home. Show them. Tell them what the Lord has done. They'll understand when they see you. Go home."

And this man did more than just go home. He told his family and he told everyone in the Decapolis, the ten cities, what Jesus had done for him. That Jesus, the rabbi of Capernaum, had power over the devil, even legions of devils.

Jesus has power over sickness, over natural forces, over the wind and the waves, and he has power over the devil and every cause of brokenness and destruction at work in our lives. He is lord over all and he is Lord in this place today. He is Lord over the storms that are coming against you this morning. He is lord over the storms that are raging inside you like this poor man of the Gerasenes. He has come into the midst of a great storm this morning to bring you to a place of great calm. Will you come to him? Trust him? Turn to him?

Lord of every storm, you have come to us this day to bring deliverance and calm to our hearts and minds. Speak your words of quiet and victory to us today. Assure us again that this storm will not defeat us nor overwhelm us but we will arrive safely on the other side where even greater victories await us. Amen.