

Mark 4 The Perfect Storm and the Demoniac

Mark 4:35—5:20, The Perfect Storm and the Demoniac

By harmonizing the three Gospel accounts of Matthew, Mark and Luke, we can see that Jesus and His disciples had been through a whirlwind of activity before the events of Mark 4:35. They were very tired, but the only way to get away from the crowds was to get in a boat and go across the Sea of Galilee to the east side that was at that time under Gentile control—surely over there they could get some rest! Jesus ordered the disciples to get in the boat and go to the other (east) side of the lake. Exhausted, Jesus lay down in the boat and fell asleep. I think the boat, and His disciples in the boat served as an image of those living in fellowship with Jesus, being obedient to Jesus, and being separated from the world by Jesus. Amazingly when they obeyed Jesus and rowed out into the middle of the lake, a fierce storm hit the lake threatening to capsize the boat and kill all of them. The storm came up in the very path of their obedience, and if they had not obeyed Jesus they would have been safe on the shore with the crowd. The disciples were professional fishermen and expert sailors, which makes this miracle all the more dramatic. The professionals were terrified, but the carpenter from Nazareth was sleeping peacefully. In the next two connected stories, we will learn that Jesus is not only sovereign over demonic forces, but He is also sovereign over nature. Jesus was tired, but we will see a deeper significance that His sleep is a sign of trust in God, which served as a dramatic contrast to the disciples' fear.

Being ordered by God to go out into the storms of life is a reoccurring theme in the Bible. Abraham was ordered to Canaan, but when he got there a famine wiped out all the food supply. Jacob was sent to Mesopotamia where his uncle tricked and cheated him for 20 years. Joseph was sent to Egypt where he spent years in a dungeon. David was obedient to God by fighting Goliath, but afterward spent years in the wilderness threatened by King Saul. The Apostle Paul was sent by the Holy Spirit to Philippi (Acts 16:9-10) where he was imprisoned. In all these cases and more, it appears to God's people that He is indifferent to their circumstances and their lives are in danger. In this story of Mark 4:35-41, we can see that God does care, and Jesus was testing and building their faith. Jesus had said they were going to the other side, and no storm would prevent God's will.

In Mark 4:38, the disciples show their fear and doubt about Jesus' care by waking Him with, "Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing?" Jesus got up and actually commanded the storm to stop, which it did. Then in verse 40 we see the point when Jesus rebuked the disciples with, "How is it that you have no faith?" They may have expected Jesus to say "Wow, close call, thanks for waking Me", but instead they got admonished for their lack of faith. We the students realize that to learn this kind of faith, we must have the experience of the storms of life. Then in verse 41, we see that their previous fear shifted to the awe of the awesome power of the person (Jesus) in the boat with them. So my question to you is, IS IT SAFER TO BE IN THE BOAT WITH JESUS IN A STORM, OR IN THE CALM W/O HIM? We must come to the inescapable conclusion that we are safer anywhere with Jesus than without Him.

Mark 5:1-20, The Gerasene Demoniac

Jesus and His disciples had just survived a terrible storm so we can imagine the relief they felt to get on dry land on the east side of the Sea of Galilee. They probably thought Jesus was taking them away from the crowds to a quiet peaceful place, but not so fast! They were in Gentile territory, and they would find an alien world of demons, pigs, tombs, and hostile Gerasenes—but God reigns there also. Jesus and His disciples got out of the boat, and they were immediately confronted by a demon possessed man who lived in the tombs with the dead people. It seems that wherever Jesus goes His holy presence triggers a reaction from the forces of the adversary of God. This wild man was way different than the other demon possessed people Jesus had helped. He was so wild and powerful that the locals couldn't control him. He was also very self-destructive as he gashed himself and roamed around naked screaming like a banshee. It struck me that this wild maniac was a picture of humanity as outcasts from God, self destructive and subject to the god of this world (Satan). The maniac's encounter with Jesus would make him fully human again, and it is also true that we are not at peace and fully human without Jesus.

In Mark 5:6-9, Jesus had a unique and puzzling encounter with the wild man and the demons in him. During the conversation it is difficult to determine if the man or the demons are talking because it shifts from singular to plural, "What do you want with me?" to "we are many". It turns out this guy has a Pandora's Box of demons in him. Jesus tells them to come out, but these demons are evasive, conniving, and want to negotiate. As always, the demons recognize Jesus and fear Him. They know the destiny of their final resting place will be in the Lake of Fire, but they don't know when. It is interesting in v. 7 that they ask for mercy using God's name because they beg Jesus not to torment them even though they had tormented this poor man. When Jesus asked the man's name they answered with a number instead of a name—Legion, which was the number in a Roman

regiment of 6000 soldiers. They had been tormenting this man and terrorizing the countryside as a combined force within this wretched man. At this point, I can't help but wonder what the disciples-- Peter, John, and the boys are thinking, "Jesus brought us over here to this hornets nest of paganism, demons, pigs, and tombs of dead people? What good could we possibly do over here?"

Swine to the Rescue, Mark 5:10-17

We can be sure that this was a Gentile area because Jews would never have a herd of 2000 pigs. Obviously the demons liked that pagan area because once they realized Jesus was not yet sending them into the abyss, they begged Jesus to let them stay there. Jesus made it clear that they had to come out of the man because Jesus had plans for that guy, so they begged Jesus to send them into the pigs feeding nearby on the mountain ridge overlooking the lake. Their demonic plot is to destroy the herd so the owners and the people in the area will be outraged and make Jesus leave. Sure enough, for His own reasons, Jesus gave them permission to go into the pigs. The next thing you know, BOOM, they all went right over the cliff into the lake and drowned the pigs.

Should We Care about the Man or the Pigs?

Maybe Jesus allowed this to happen as a test of the locals to see if they would choose Jesus or would they be outraged at the economic loss of the pigs. I say this because when the people came to see what happened they passed right by the now restored man who had been oppressed by the demons. The man was now clothed and in his right mind, and I think Jesus had cleaned him up. The people "observed" the new man and it actually scared them. The wild man that they could not tame was now calm, cool, and collected. Did they throw a party and celebrate the healing and his miraculous recovery? Not at all, I think their major concern was for the economic loss of the pigs. I'm guessing everyone had stock in the local company, Acme Swine Inc., and the stock had plummeted in after hours trading. Amazingly, they asked Jesus and His disciples to leave their region. Like our world today, they are more comfortable with the demons than they are with Jesus who can expel the demons. People can tolerate spiritual things as long as it does not affect business.

Mark 5:18-20, the New Missionary

The ex-demoniac, now a new man in Christ, wanted to accompany Jesus back to Israel, but Jesus told him to go home and tell everybody about the great things the Lord did for him. The irony is that three different characters—the demons, the man, and the people, all made a request of Jesus, and Jesus granted every request except the request of the healed and saved man. The area around there was called The Decapolis because there were ten cities, and the man went to all those cities as a witness to give testimony about Jesus. When he told them about what Jesus had done for him, "everyone marveled". The demons probably thought they had outwitted Jesus, but the net result was that the Gospel was proclaimed throughout the area. JESUS FOUND THE MAN A DEMONIAC AND LEFT HIM A MISSIONARY. How effective was the man's testimony? In Mark 7:31, Jesus came back to the Decapolis area, and He was welcomed by a multitude.

C. S. Lewis Testimony

C. S. Lewis used the imagery of this story in describing his own life before Christ. "I was a zoo of lusts, a bedlam of ambitions, a nursery of fears, a harem of fondled hatreds---my name was Legion---and then Jesus came into my life.

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