

The Gospel of Mark, Teacher's Guide

Week 6: The Power of Jesus Over Fear and Darkness

Mark 4:35–5:20

Teaching Aim (Teacher Orientation)

Mark 4:35–5:20 binds two scenes tightly together. The storm on the sea (4:35–41) and the Legion in the Gerasene tombs (5:1–20) are meant to be read as a pair, and Mark intends his readers to feel the cumulative weight. In the first scene the storm rages outside the boat and fear floods the hearts of the disciples. In the second scene the storm is inside a man and the same fear floods the hearts of an entire region. In both, Jesus speaks, the chaos obeys, and the witnesses are left to decide what to do with the One whose word commands both wind and demons. Doctrinally, this lesson presses on several large themes. The deity of Christ revealed in His authority over creation. The reality and personal nature of demonic forces. The decisive authority of Christ over the spiritual realm. The breadth of His saving work, which here visibly crosses into Gentile territory for the first time in Mark. And the restoration to wholeness (body, mind, identity, and community) that Christ alone can bring.

At the same time, this is one of the most formationally pointed passages in Mark. Most students sitting in front of you are not currently being attacked by a demon. But most of them are quietly being run by fear. Fear of the storms they cannot control. Fear of the darkness inside themselves or someone they love. Fear of what life will look like if they really let Christ have control of it. Jesus' question, "Why are you so afraid? Have you still no faith?" is the question of this lesson. It must be allowed to land. Help your students name the storm they are actually in. Help them recognize the places where chains have not held the chaos. And help them believe that the same Christ who silenced the wind, the waves, and the Legion can speak peace into those very places this week.

Finally, do not miss the missionary turn at the end. The man who has been delivered begs to go with Jesus, and Jesus sends him home instead. The first commissioned witness to the Gentile world in Mark's Gospel is a man no one would have chosen, telling people who already knew him just how much the Lord has done for him. Close the lesson by inviting your students into that same calling. Their families, their neighbors, their coworkers, their old friends are the Decapolis to which they are sent. Christ has done much for them. It is time to tell.

Question 1

Student Question:

After Jesus calms the storm, the disciples are filled with great fear and ask each other, "Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?" (4:41). Connecting this scene with passages like Psalm 89:8–9, Psalm 107:23–30, and John 1:1–3, what is Mark teaching us about

the identity of Jesus, and why is His authority over creation such a central proof of who He really is?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

The disciples' cry at the end of the storm scene is not so much an answer as a question that defines the rest of the Gospel. "Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?" (4:41). Mark wants every reader to ask this question. Everything in his Gospel is engineered to answer it.

To understand the force of this scene, we have to remember what the Old Testament says about who has authority over wind and sea. In the Psalms, it is the Lord who "rules the raging of the sea; when its waves rise, you still them" (Psalm 89:9). In Psalm 107, sailors cry to the Lord in their distress and "he made the storm be still, and the waves of the sea were hushed" (107:29). In Job 38:8–11, it is God Himself who set the boundaries of the sea. The Hebrew imagination connected the raging sea with chaos, and only the Creator was able to silence it.

Jesus does not pray to God to calm the storm. He does not invoke God's power as a prophet might. He simply speaks, and the storm obeys, in the same way that the Creator spoke and the world came into being (Genesis 1; John 1:1–3). The disciples, knowing their Scriptures, would have felt the weight of this. The man standing in the boat with them was doing something only God can do.

This is one of the strongest implicit claims to deity in the Gospel of Mark. The same kind of claim is made later when Jesus forgives sins (Mark 2:1–12), when He is recognized as the Son of God by His Father and by demonic forces (Mark 1:11; 3:11; 5:7), and when He claims to be the "Son of the Blessed" before the high priest (Mark 14:61–62). Mark does not give us a single chapter on the deity of Christ. He gives us scene after scene in which Jesus does what only God can do, and asks us what we will make of Him.

For students, this is the foundation of everything else in the chapter. If Jesus is who Mark says He is, then His authority over our storms, our fears, and even our most desperate darkness is not in question. It is just a matter of whether we will trust Him.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The deity of Jesus Christ, demonstrated in His authority over creation (John 1:1–3; Colossians 1:16–17; Hebrews 1:1–3)
- The Old Testament identification of the Lord as ruler of wind and sea (Psalm 89:8–9; Psalm 107:23–32; Job 38:8–11)
- Jesus speaking with original creative authority, not as a prophet invoking God
- The Gospel of Mark's pattern of revealing Christ's identity through what He does (forgiving sin, ruling the storm, casting out demons)

- The full humanity and full deity of Christ working together (asleep in the boat, then silencing the sea)
- The right response to Christ's authority over creation: worship, faith, and obedience

Discussion Prompts

- What other Scriptures would you point to in order to defend the deity of Christ to a friend?
- How does Jesus calming the storm parallel God speaking creation into being in Genesis 1?
- What is at stake for the Christian life if Jesus is only a great teacher rather than the Son of God who commands the sea?

Question 2

Student Question:

The disciples were experienced fishermen on familiar water, yet this storm was beyond what they could handle. Where in your own life right now are you in a "storm" that has moved past your experience and competence, and what would it look like to bring that specific storm to Jesus rather than to manage it on your own?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

It is easy to read this passage as a story about ancient men in a small boat. It is harder to admit that we are still those disciples. Most of us are in a storm of some kind right now, and most of us are trying to manage it the way the disciples did at first: with experience, with effort, with grit, and with a quiet hope that we can get through it before it gets out of hand.

Some of these storms are circumstantial. A diagnosis. A layoff. A wayward child. A marriage that is fraying. A financial pressure that will not relent. A grief that will not lift. Some of them are interior. Anxiety that will not quiet down. A temptation that keeps returning. A shame that will not let us sleep. A long-running disappointment with God or with ourselves. Veteran disciples can handle a lot of weather. But every disciple eventually meets a storm beyond their experience.

The question this lesson presses is simple. What is your storm, named honestly, in this season of your life? The disciples did not pretend the wind was nothing. They told Jesus plainly. We tend to spiritualize our storms long before we have admitted what they really are. Naming the storm out loud is often the first act of faith.

And then comes the second act. They woke Jesus. They believed (even imperfectly, even angrily) that He was the One worth calling on in this moment. They did not bring the storm to a counselor first, or to a friend first, or to a search engine first. They brought it to the One in the boat with them. That is the basic pattern of Christian life in a storm. Not to deny that storms come. Not to pretend they are smaller than they are. But to bring them, with everything in us, to the Christ who is in the boat.

For the student honest enough to name their storm, the next step is concrete. What does it look like, this week, to bring that specific situation to Jesus in prayer, in the Word, in conversation with brothers and sisters in Christ, and in the assembly of the saints? The storm may not lift immediately. But Christ has never abandoned His own to drown.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Christ as the present, with-us Lord through every storm of the Christian life (Matthew 28:20; Hebrews 13:5)
- Prayer as the believer's direct access to Christ in distress (Hebrews 4:14–16; Philippians 4:6–7)
- The role of the local congregation in carrying one another through hard seasons (Galatians 6:2; James 5:14–16)
- The Word of God as a steady anchor when circumstances are not steady (Psalm 119:50; Romans 15:4)
- Suffering as a normal, not unusual, feature of Christian life (1 Peter 4:12; Romans 5:3–5)

Discussion Prompts

- What storm are you in right now that you have been trying to manage on your own?
- What would it look like, in concrete steps, to bring that storm to Jesus this week?
- Who in this group could carry that storm with you?

Question 3

Student Question:

Jesus does not simply calm the storm; He turns and asks His disciples, “Why are you so afraid? Have you still no faith?” (4:40). What is Jesus teaching about the relationship between fear and faith in the life of a disciple, and how is this consistent with Scripture’s repeated calls not to be afraid but to trust the Lord (Isaiah 41:10; Psalm 56:3–4; 1 John 4:18)?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Jesus does not rebuke the disciples for being in a storm. He rebukes them for being in a storm without faith. “Why are you so afraid? Have you still no faith?” (4:40). The question presses on the relationship between fear and faith in the life of the disciple, and it is worth slowing down for.

Fear is not always sinful. The same Gospel writers record Jesus Himself in agony in the garden (Mark 14:33–36). Scripture honors honest weakness and does not pretend it does not exist. But fear that takes the steering wheel away from faith is exactly what Jesus is naming here. The disciples were so consumed by the storm that they assumed Jesus had stopped caring. They had let the visible chaos eclipse the present Christ.

Throughout Scripture, the call to faith is also a call away from fear. “Fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God” (Isaiah 41:10). “When I am afraid, I put my trust in you” (Psalm 56:3). “Perfect love casts out fear” (1 John 4:18). The pattern is consistent. Fear does not have to be eliminated before faith can rise. Faith rises by attaching itself to the Lord precisely in the middle of the fear.

The disciples thought their fear was about the storm. Jesus showed them their fear was actually about not knowing who was in their boat. That is almost always the diagnostic question. Fear that runs our lives is rarely about the visible problem in front of us. It is about a missing or weak confidence in who Christ is and what Christ does. When the disciples saw Jesus rebuke the wind, the fear did not vanish; it shifted. Now they were afraid in a different way (4:41), but the kind of fear they had moved from the panic of doomed sailors to the awe of people standing in the presence of God.

For the disciple in any storm, this is the great training of faith. Stop staring at the storm. Look at the Christ who is in the boat. Speak truth to your soul (Psalm 42:5). Soak yourself in His word. Pray honestly even when the prayer comes out as accusation. Faith is not the absence of fear. It is the deliberate orientation of the soul toward the Lord while the storm is still going on.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Fear and faith as opposing orientations of the heart (Isaiah 41:10; Matthew 14:27–31)
- Faith as confidence in the character and presence of Christ, not the absence of difficulty (Hebrews 11:1, 6)
- The biblical call not to be afraid grounded in God’s presence and promises
- Honest prayer in the middle of fear as a means of growing faith
- Perfect love casting out fear (1 John 4:18) as the long-term work of being secure in Christ
- The proper kind of fear (reverent awe of God) versus the destructive kind (panic before circumstances)

Discussion Prompts

- How does fear typically take the steering wheel in your life?
- What practices help you turn your eyes from the storm to the Christ in the boat?
- What is the difference between godly reverent fear and the kind of fear Jesus rebukes?

Question 4

Student Question:

Fear has a way of running our lives quietly. Where do you see fear shaping your decisions, your speech, your relationships, or your willingness to obey the Lord more than faith does, and what would faith-driven living actually look like in that specific area this week?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Fear is one of the most powerful and least honest forces in the human heart. We rarely call it fear in our internal narration. We call it being careful. We call it being realistic. We call it being responsible. But when we look at the decisions we have not made, the conversations we have not had, the obedience we have not offered, and the steps of faith we have not taken, fear is almost always somewhere underneath.

Help students get specific. Where are you not having a conversation you know you should have? Where are you not setting a boundary you know you should set? Where are you not stepping into a ministry, a relationship, or a confession you know God is asking of you? Where are you holding on to a habit because the alternative feels frightening? Each of these may be fear hiding under a more respectable name.

The corrective is not bravado. It is faith. Faith does not eliminate the felt difficulty of the step. It simply changes who is in charge of the decision. When fear is in charge, the storm decides. When faith is in charge, Christ decides. Faith-driven living means we ask, “What does Christ want me to do?” rather than, “What is least likely to disturb my comfort?”

A practical way to lead students through this question is to invite them to identify one fear-driven pattern, name the deeper Christ-centered truth that would replace it, and identify one specific obedience that would put faith in motion. “I am afraid to have this conversation. The truth is that Christ promises His presence with me as I obey. The step is to have it this Saturday.” That is the basic shape of faith doing its work in the middle of fear.

Encourage one another not to spiritualize this. The Christian life is not a series of vague feelings about trust. It is the daily, costly, sometimes uncomfortable work of obeying Jesus in the specific places fear has been telling us not to.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Faith as the obedient choice to act on what God has said, even when fear remains (Hebrews 11:8)
- Christ’s presence and power as the foundation of courageous Christian living (Matthew 28:20; 2 Timothy 1:7)
- The biblical pattern of “fear not” commands attached to God’s presence and promises
- Sanctification as the progressive replacement of fear-driven living with faith-driven living
- Repentance from sinful fear (Revelation 21:8 lists the “cowardly” alongside other patterns leading away from Christ)
- The need for honesty and accountability in identifying our true fears

Discussion Prompts

- What conversation, decision, or obedience are you avoiding because of fear?
- What truth about Christ would replace that fear at the level of belief?
- What single step of faith could you take this week to put that truth into action?

Question 5

Student Question:

When Jesus reaches the other side, He encounters a man possessed by an entire “Legion” of demons (5:1–13). The demons speak, they know who Jesus is, they beg, and they are sent into the herd of pigs. What does this passage teach us about the reality of the spiritual realm, the genuine but limited power of demonic forces, and the unchallenged authority of Christ over them?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

The scene Mark paints in chapter 5 is one of the most vivid descriptions of demonic oppression in the New Testament. A man is living among tombs. No chain can hold him. He cries out night and day. He cuts himself with stones. When Jesus arrives, the demons inside him recognize Jesus immediately, fall down before Him, and beg not to be tormented. They identify themselves as Legion, a Roman military term suggesting a force of thousands. They are real. They are organized. And they are completely subject to the authority of Christ.

This passage assumes a real spiritual realm in which a personal Satan and his organized forces oppose the work of God and afflict human lives in various ways. The New Testament consistently presents this reality: Satan as the “prince of this world” who is being cast out (John 12:31), demons as personal beings under his command (Ephesians 6:12), and demonic activity as one of the realities Christ came to defeat (Hebrews 2:14; 1 John 3:8).

At the same time, Scripture is careful not to give Satan more credit than he deserves. The demons in this scene are powerful enough that no human chain could bind the man, but they cannot touch a herd of pigs without permission from Christ. They speak, but they grovel. They know exactly who Jesus is, and they beg. The spiritual realm is real, but it is not equal. Christ stands above it without struggle.

For believers today, this means several things. First, the spiritual battle is real, and we are not to be ignorant of it (2 Corinthians 2:11; Ephesians 6:10–18). Second, the weapons of that battle are spiritual, not physical (2 Corinthians 10:3–5), and Christ has already won the decisive victory (Colossians 2:15). Third, the believer in Christ is not in danger of being possessed in the way this man was, because we have been transferred out of the domain of darkness and into the kingdom of God’s beloved Son (Colossians 1:13). Fourth, the right response is sober vigilance and confident trust, not fear or fascination.

Help students see that the demons’ confession in this passage is doctrinally accurate. They call Jesus “Son of the Most High God” (5:7). They believe and tremble (James 2:19). What is missing is not knowledge, but submission. The same applies to all knowledge of Christ. Knowing who He is matters. Bowing to who He is matters more.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The reality of Satan and his demonic forces as personal, organized, and opposed to God (Ephesians 6:10–12; 1 Peter 5:8–9)
- The absolute authority of Christ over the demonic realm (Colossians 2:15; Hebrews 2:14)
- The decisive victory of Christ at the cross and resurrection (1 Corinthians 15:54–57; Hebrews 1:3)
- The Christian’s transfer from the domain of darkness into the kingdom of Christ (Colossians 1:13)
- Sober vigilance and resistance to the devil through faith, the Word, and prayer (James 4:7; Ephesians 6:13–18)
- The difference between knowing about Christ (the demons) and submitting to Christ as Lord (the disciple)

Discussion Prompts

- How does the New Testament describe the spiritual battle, and what does it teach about how Christians engage in it?
- What is the danger of denying the spiritual realm? What is the danger of being obsessed with it?
- How does this passage shape your confidence about Christ’s authority over evil?

Question 6

Student Question:

Our culture tends to either deny the reality of the spiritual realm altogether or to be unhealthily obsessed with it. Where are you tempted toward one of those two errors in your own thinking, and how does this passage point us to a sober, biblical view that takes spiritual realities seriously while keeping Christ on the throne?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

There are two reliable ways for Christians to go wrong on the question of spiritual warfare. The first is to deny the spiritual realm altogether. This is the dominant temptation in modern Western culture, which has been shaped by an assumption that only the material world is real. Faithful Christians can absorb this without noticing. They affirm the existence of God in theory but live functionally as if Satan, demons, angels, and the unseen realm have no actual relevance to daily life.

The second error runs in the opposite direction. Some Christians become so fascinated by spiritual warfare that nearly every difficulty becomes demonic. A bad day at work, a hard conversation, a recurring temptation, a moment of anxiety, a lost set of keys, all get explained as direct demonic attack. This often becomes a way of avoiding personal responsibility, ignoring ordinary biblical wisdom, and elevating the experience of the spiritual realm over the clear teaching of Scripture.

The biblical path runs between both errors. Take the spiritual realm seriously. Read Ephesians 6:10–18 with attention. Pray accordingly. Use the means of grace the Lord has actually given (the Word, prayer, the assembly of the saints, the Lord’s Supper, baptism into Christ, faithful obedience). At the same time, keep Christ on the throne. The strong man has been bound (Mark 3:27). The Christ who silenced the Legion in Gerasa is the same Christ who reigns from the right hand of the Father today.

Help students examine their own thinking. Where have they absorbed materialism that crowds out the reality of the unseen? Where have they perhaps over-spiritualized in ways that bypass responsibility, repentance, or ordinary wisdom? The Mark 5 passage offers a calibrating picture. The spiritual realm is real and powerful, and Christ is over it without struggle.

Encourage students to develop a sober, biblically calibrated view. Confidence in Christ, vigilance about the enemy, ordinary obedience to Scripture, regular participation in worship and the Lord’s Supper, and the daily renewal of the mind by the Word (Romans 12:1–2). The Christian life is not magical, but it is supernatural at every point.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The biblical balance between sober vigilance and confident trust in Christ
- The danger of materialistic functional atheism in modern Christian thinking
- The danger of over-spiritualizing in ways that bypass responsibility and Scripture
- The sufficiency of ordinary means of grace (Word, prayer, assembly, the Lord’s Supper) for the Christian’s formation
- The decisive victory of Christ at the cross as the foundation for Christian confidence (Colossians 2:13–15)
- The renewing of the mind through Scripture as the steady answer to both errors (Romans 12:1–2)

Discussion Prompts

- Where do you see materialistic thinking quietly shaping modern Christians?
- Where do you see over-spiritualizing producing problems in the church?
- What practices help keep you in the biblical middle: vigilant about the enemy, confident in Christ?

Question 7

Student Question:

Mark gives us a quiet, almost shocking picture: the people of the region come out and see the man who had the legion of demons “sitting there, clothed and in his right mind” (5:15). What does this image tell us about the kind of salvation Jesus brings (the restoration of the whole

person, body and mind and identity), and how does it shape our expectation of what it means to be transformed in Christ?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Mark gives us one of the most beautiful pictures of salvation in the New Testament. The people who had given up on the demon-possessed man come out and see him “sitting there, clothed and in his right mind” (5:15). Three simple words, but each one matters. Sitting (at peace). Clothed (with dignity restored). In his right mind (with identity and reason renewed). Salvation in Christ is not a partial fix. It is the restoration of a whole person.

The man had been profoundly lost. He was alienated from God, from himself, from his family, from his community, and from the basic human dignity of being clothed and sane. Jesus did not just exorcise demons. He gave the man back his life. He restored him to himself and to others.

This is the shape of biblical salvation. The gospel does not just address one part of us. It addresses the whole. By His death and resurrection, Christ deals with our sin (forgiveness and justification, Romans 5:1), our identity (we become children of God, John 1:12–13; sons and daughters by adoption, Galatians 4:4–7), our minds (we are renewed by the Holy Spirit, Romans 12:1–2), and our community (we are added to the church, Acts 2:47). And in the resurrection at the last day, even our bodies will be raised in glory (1 Corinthians 15:42–57).

This is profoundly different from a salvation that is only a future ticket to heaven. The salvation Christ offers begins here and now. We become new creatures in Christ (2 Corinthians 5:17). We are washed, sanctified, and justified in His name (1 Corinthians 6:11). We are clothed with Christ in baptism (Galatians 3:27). We are made part of the family of God by an inner work of the Spirit. And, over time, we are increasingly restored to our right mind, to our true identity, and to our intended community.

For students, this matters. Many believers think of salvation primarily as forgiveness of sins (which is true, and central) without thinking through everything else Christ has done and is doing. The man at the feet of Jesus, clothed and in his right mind, is a picture of what is being formed in every disciple. The work may be slower in us than it was in him, but the same Christ is doing it.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Salvation in Christ as restoration of the whole person, not merely forgiveness of legal guilt (2 Corinthians 5:17; Colossians 3:9–10)
- The Christian’s identity in Christ as a new creature, son or daughter, adopted child of God (John 1:12–13; Galatians 4:4–7)
- Baptism into Christ as the moment we are clothed with Christ (Galatians 3:27; Romans 6:3–4)

- The renewing of the mind as ongoing work of the Spirit through the Word (Romans 12:1–2; Ephesians 4:22–24)
- Restoration to community in the local congregation as part of the saving work of God (Acts 2:42–47)
- The future resurrection of the body as the final restoration of the whole person (1 Corinthians 15)

Discussion Prompts

- Which parts of “clothed and in his right mind” salvation have you most experienced in your own life?
- Which parts are still being formed?
- How does seeing salvation as restoration of the whole person change the way we talk about the gospel?

Question 8

Student Question:

This man had been beyond the reach of human help. Chains had not held him. Family had not been able to restore him. Where in your own life or in someone you love is there a “beyond human help” situation, and what would it mean to actually entrust that situation to the Christ who restored this man no one else could reach?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This man was beyond human help. Chains had not held him. Family had not been able to restore him. Society had given up and stationed him among the tombs. He represents every situation in which we, or someone we love, has reached the end of what human resources can do. The lesson Mark wants to teach is that the end of human help is not the end of hope.

For most students, there is some version of this in their life right now. A loved one trapped in addiction. A child who has walked away from the Lord. A relationship that human counseling has not been able to repair. A long-running depression. A pattern of sin that they have tried to break a hundred times. A medical or financial situation in which the visible options have run out. The temptation is to give up. The invitation of this passage is to hand the impossible situation to the Christ who handled the Legion no chain could hold.

This is not a magic formula. It is a real, costly act of trust. To bring such a situation to Jesus means to keep praying when the answer is delayed. To keep loving when the response is rejection. To keep telling the truth when the truth is unwelcome. To stay involved in worship and the Lord’s Supper and the assembly of the saints, even when our emotions tell us nothing will ever change. And to keep believing that Christ has not lost any authority since the day He sent Legion into the pigs.

It also means clarity about what Christ is doing. Sometimes He delivers immediately and dramatically. Sometimes He works slowly across years and decades. Sometimes the visible result we hoped for does not come in the form we expected, but a deeper work is being done. Trust is not naive optimism. It is grounded confidence that the One who delivered this man is still on the throne, and that He cares about what we have brought to Him.

Encourage students to name a specific “beyond human help” situation, to ask the local congregation to pray with them about it (James 5:13–16), and to commit to bringing that situation to Christ regularly until He acts. The Mark 5 man is a permanent reminder that no one is past the reach of Jesus.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The absolute sufficiency of Christ to save in every situation (Hebrews 7:25)
- The role of the local church in carrying impossible situations together (James 5:13–16; Galatians 6:2)
- Persevering prayer as the believer’s response to seemingly impossible needs (Luke 18:1–8)
- Trust in God’s timing and methods, not only the outcomes we expected (Isaiah 55:8–9)
- The gospel as good news for people who have run out of human options
- Christ as the present, reigning, accessible Lord, not a remembered historical figure

Discussion Prompts

- What “beyond human help” situation are you carrying right now?
- What would it look like to bring that situation to Christ this week in a concrete way?
- Who in your church family could share that burden with you?

Question 9

Student Question:

The Gerasene region was Gentile territory. The presence of a herd of pigs, the location east of the Sea of Galilee, and the cultural setting all underline that Jesus has deliberately crossed into the world of the nations. After the man is delivered, Jesus tells him, “Go home to your friends and tell them how much the Lord has done for you” (5:19), and the man begins proclaiming in the Decapolis. Connecting this scene with Isaiah 49:6, Matthew 28:18–20, and Acts 1:8, what is Mark showing us about the scope of Christ’s saving work, the breaking down of the wall between Jew and Gentile, and the church’s ongoing mission?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This passage is the first major scene in Mark where Jesus deliberately ministers in clearly Gentile territory. The Gerasene region is east of the Sea of Galilee, populated largely by Gentiles. The presence of a large herd of pigs (forbidden food for Jews under the Law) confirms the cultural

setting. Jesus did not happen to drift there. He told the disciples to go to the other side (4:35), and He went specifically into the territory of the nations.

This crossing is theologically loaded. Throughout the Old Testament, God promised that His salvation would reach the nations. “It is too light a thing that you should be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob and to bring back the preserved of Israel; I will make you as a light for the nations, that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth” (Isaiah 49:6). The Servant of the Lord would bring justice to the Gentiles (Isaiah 42:1). All nations would be blessed in Abraham’s seed (Genesis 12:3; Galatians 3:8). Christ Himself is that seed.

Mark places this Gentile mission inside the ministry of Jesus, not just at the end of His ministry. The Twelve will eventually carry the gospel to the nations (Matthew 28:18–20; Acts 1:8), but the pattern is already being set here. Jesus crosses the sea, delivers a Gentile man, and sends him to “his friends” in the Decapolis to tell “how much the Lord has done for you” (5:19). Mark notes that the man begins proclaiming in the Decapolis, and “everyone marveled” (5:20). The first Gentile missionary is a delivered demoniac.

This carries enormous implications for the church today. The kingdom of God is not for one nation, one ethnic group, one culture, or one social class. It is for the whole world. The church of Christ is, by its nature, a community drawn from “every tribe and language and people and nation” (Revelation 5:9). The local congregation is meant to reflect that breadth as much as is possible in its setting. And every believer participates in the mission of bringing the gospel to people who have not yet heard.

Notice also the form of the mission. The man is not sent to a strange foreign field. He is sent home, to his own people, to tell what the Lord has done for him. This is the basic missionary pattern of the New Testament. The gospel travels through ordinary believers telling their own families, friends, neighbors, and coworkers what Christ has done. The same pattern applies to us. We are sent, first of all, to the people who already know us.

For students, the takeaway is twofold. First, the gospel is for everyone. There is no person, no people, no neighborhood that is outside the reach of Christ. Second, you have a Gerasene region of your own (the network of people who know you, whose marvel you might cause if you spoke clearly about what the Lord has done for you). The man in the Decapolis is your model.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The universal scope of the gospel, for all nations and peoples (Genesis 12:3; Isaiah 49:6; Matthew 28:18–20)
- The breaking down of the wall between Jew and Gentile in Christ (Ephesians 2:11–22)
- The church as a multi-ethnic family drawn from every nation (Revelation 5:9; Galatians 3:28)
- The Great Commission as the church’s ongoing mission until Christ returns (Matthew 28:18–20; Acts 1:8)

- The personal testimony of God’s work in our lives as a primary mode of mission (1 Peter 3:15)
- Christ as the one Savior and one Mediator for all people (1 Timothy 2:5–6; Acts 4:12)
- The faithful witness of ordinary believers in their own networks as the engine of gospel advance

Discussion Prompts

- How does this scene foreshadow the mission of the church to all the nations?
- What walls between people groups still need to be broken down in our own thinking and practice?
- Who in your own “Decapolis” (your circle of family, friends, neighbors, coworkers) most needs to hear what the Lord has done for you?

Question 10

Student Question:

The freed man begged to go with Jesus, but Jesus sent him home to his own people instead. As you close this chapter, where is Jesus calling you to “go home” (to your own family, your own workplace, your own neighborhood) and tell the people who already know you how much the Lord has done for you, and what one specific person comes to mind?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

The chapter ends with one of the most touching scenes in Mark. The delivered man, now clothed and in his right mind, begs Jesus to let him get into the boat and come along (5:18). It is hard to blame him. Why would he want to stay in a region full of memories of his torment? Why would he not want to be with the One who set him free? But Jesus says no. “Go home to your friends and tell them how much the Lord has done for you, and how he has had mercy on you” (5:19).

This is the call of every Christian. The Lord does not, in general, take us out of our families, our neighborhoods, our jobs, and our communities the moment we follow Him. He often sends us back to exactly those places with a new message and a new identity. The people who knew us before now meet a transformed version of us, and the transformation itself is the message.

The scope of the man’s mission is local. “Your friends.” His Decapolis. The people who knew him before. He is not sent across the sea. He is sent across the street. He goes home, and he begins to proclaim in his own region how much Jesus had done for him. Mark says all who heard marveled. The first missionary to the Gentiles is a man telling his neighbors what Christ did in his life.

For students, this is a deeply concrete invitation. Who is the one specific person in your life who most needs to hear what the Lord has done for you? It will usually not be a stranger across the

world. It will be a family member, an old friend, a coworker, a neighbor, an adult child, a parent, a former classmate. They have seen the storm in your life. Many of them have seen the wreckage. What they have not yet heard is how much the Lord has done for you.

Encourage each student to leave the lesson with a name in mind. Not a vague intention. A name. And a step. A coffee. A text. A letter. A visit. A simple conversation. "I want to tell you something the Lord has done for me." The chapter ends with that kind of obedience. The lesson should end the same way.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The Christian's primary mission field as their own family, neighborhood, and network (Acts 1:8 working outward)
- Personal testimony as a chief instrument in the spread of the gospel (Revelation 12:11; 1 Peter 3:15)
- Mission as an ordinary, lifelong responsibility of every believer, not the work of a few specialists
- Christ's transforming work in a believer as the visible authentication of the spoken word
- The local congregation as the support, training, and sending base for personal witness

Discussion Prompts

- Who in your own Decapolis most needs to hear what the Lord has done for you?
- What is one specific step you could take this week to begin that conversation?
- How could our class or church family support each other in faithful witness to the people we already know?