

The Gospel of Mark

(Mid-Week Bible Study)

Week 6: The Power of Jesus Over Fear and Darkness -- Mark 4:35–5:20

Picture the boat. It is evening on the Sea of Galilee. Jesus has been teaching all day, and now He says to His disciples, “Let us go across to the other side” (4:35). They push off from the western shore. Jesus, exhausted from a full day with the crowds, lies down in the stern and falls asleep on a cushion. Then the sky breaks. A sudden, violent storm rolls down through the hills around the lake, the kind of squall fishermen feared because it could appear without warning. The wind howls. Waves crash over the sides. Water rises in the bottom of the boat. Veteran fishermen who had spent their lives on this water are now afraid for their lives. And Jesus is still asleep.

The disciples wake Him with one of the most honest prayers in the Gospels. “Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing?” (4:38). It is not a request. It is an accusation. They believe He is asleep at the wheel. Jesus rises, rebukes the wind, and says to the sea, “Peace! Be still!” (4:39). And the wind ceases. The waves flatten. The lake is glassy in a heartbeat. Then Jesus turns to His disciples and asks the question that hangs in the air for the rest of the chapter. “Why are you so afraid? Have you still no faith?” (4:40).

They land on the other side, and the storm gives way to a different kind of darkness. A man comes screaming out of the tombs. He has been living among the dead. No one can bind him, not even with chains. Night and day he cries out and gashes himself with stones. The crowd has long since given up on him. Mark describes him in haunting detail. He is alone. He is in pain. He is owned by a Legion of demons, and even those spirits cower when they see Jesus. Within minutes of stepping out of the boat, Jesus stands face to face with a man no one has been able to help.

Mark 4:35–5:20 is about two kinds of darkness and one all-sufficient Christ. There is darkness in the wind and the waves outside us. There is darkness in our minds and our hearts inside us. Jesus has authority over both. He speaks to the storm and it obeys. He speaks to the Legion and they obey. By the end of the passage, the man who had spent his nights in the tombs is sitting at the feet of Jesus, clothed, and in his right mind, and being sent to his own family with a message about what the Lord has done. This week we will sit with the question Jesus asked His disciples on the boat. Where is fear still telling our story when faith should be telling it instead?

Group Discussion: Both halves of this passage end with people who are terrified. The disciples are filled with great fear after Jesus calms the storm, and the people of the Gerasene region beg Jesus to leave their neighborhood after He delivers the demon-possessed man. Why do you think people would be afraid of Jesus precisely when He has shown His power to deliver them,

and where do you see this same uneasy response to Christ in our culture and even sometimes in your own heart?

Personal Reflection: The disciples cried out in the storm, “Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing?” Underneath their question was the fear that Jesus had stopped paying attention. Where in your own life right now does the storm feel loud and Jesus feel asleep, and what would change for you if you genuinely believed that He is in the boat with you and will not let it sink?

Read Mark 4:35–5:20

Study Questions

1. 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?
2. 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?
3. 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)?
4. 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?
5. 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?
6. 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?
7. 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?

8. 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?
9. 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?
10. 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?

Now or Later

Reflect on these passages: Psalm 107:23–32, the Lord’s rescue of seafarers caught in a storm; Isaiah 41:8–13, God’s repeated command not to fear, because He holds our right hand; Ephesians 6:10–18, the spiritual armor of the Christian for the real war we are in; Acts 1:8, the witness of Christ extending from Jerusalem to the ends of the earth; 2 Timothy 1:7, God has not given us a spirit of fear but of power, love, and a sound mind.