

Matthew 8:28-34

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Date: 23 September 2018

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[0 : 00] Mark writes the shortest of the four gospels overall. He has the least number of words overall. He includes way more detail and details matter.

Now here's what you are probably expecting me to say. We're going to take a look at both accounts and kind of fill in the gaps in Matthew so we get the whole story. That is exactly not what we're going to do.

Why not? We're not going to fill in the details precisely because details matter.

Matthew knew what he was doing. He wasn't a lazy writer. He overall wrote a longer book than Mark. So it's not like he couldn't be bothered to write more.

In fact, Matthew was originally from this region so he knows this location. He might even have known these people and the families involved beforehand and could have expounded more on this event than any of the other gospel writers.

[1 : 33] Yet he chose to pare it down and give us only a couple key details. A small number of important things.

And after studying these two passages for a couple weeks, I am convinced that Matthew wants us to see one thing. And one thing only. And to make sure that we see it, he's going to strip away all the other details so that we come away with that one thing.

So here's what we're going to do. I'm going to pray for us that the Lord would guide us into all truth. We're going to read Mark's longer account in Mark chapter five.

Then we're going to read Matthew's sort of stripped down account. And we're not going to merge them together. Instead, we're going to contrast them so we can see what Matthew has excluded and what he is drawing our attention to.

And what is what he finds most important. And when we've seen his great concern, we're going to turn to our own hearts and examine our own lives in life. So will you pray with me?

[2 : 44] Our heavenly father. Thank you that you sent your son for us. Thank you that he is sovereign over our enemies.

And that he's sovereign over our lives. I pray, Lord, that you would help us to see him clearly and that you would work in our hearts. Lord, that this somewhat odd sermon structure would not confuse.

But Lord, that would give life. Pray that in the name of Jesus Christ, our king. Amen. Amen. Let's meet the channel then.

Let's meet the channel then. Let's meet the channel then. Let's meet the channel then. Let's meet the channel then. Let's meet the channel then.

Let's meet the channel then. Let's meet the channel then. All right. We're going to move here to Mark chapter 5 and begin with Mark's account.

[4 : 23] This is Mark chapter 5, verse 1. They came to the other side of the sea, to the country of the garrisons. And when Jesus had stepped out of the boat immediately, there met him, out of the tombs, a man with an unclean spirit.

He lived among the tombs, and no one could bind him anymore, not even with a chain. For he had often been bound with shackles and chains, but he wrenched the chains apart, and he broke the shackles in pieces.

No one. Lost my face. No one had the strength to subdue him. Night and day, among the tombs and on the mountains, he was always crying out and cutting himself with stones.

When he saw Jesus from afar, he ran and fell down before him. And crying out with a loud voice, he said, What have you to do with me, Jesus, son of the most high God?

I adjure you, by God, do not torment me. For he was saying to him, Come out of the man, you unclean spirit. And Jesus asked him, What is your name? He replied, My name is Legion, for we are many.

[5 : 34] And he begged him earnestly not to send them out of the country. Now a great herd of pigs was feeding there on the hillside. And they begged him, saying, Send us to the pigs.

Let us enter them. So he gave them permission. And the unclean spirits came out and entered the pigs. And the herd numbered about two thousand, rushed down the steep bank into the sea and drowned in the sea.

The herdsmen fled and told it to the city and in the country. And people came to see what it was that had happened. And they came to Jesus and saw the demon-possessed man, the one who had the Legion, sitting there, clothed, and in his right mind.

And they were afraid. And those who had seen it described to them what had happened to the demon-possessed man and to the pigs. And they began to beg Jesus to depart from their region. As he was getting into the boat, the man who had been possessed with demons begged him that he might be with him. And he did not permit him, but said to him, Go home to your friends and tell them how much the Lord has done for you and how he has had mercy on you.

[6 : 50] And he went away and began to proclaim in the Decapolis how much Jesus had done for him. And everyone marveled. Before we look to see the details that Matthew chose to include and exclude, I think it's wise first to say a few things about the spiritual realm.

First, Christians believe that there is a spiritual realm. Christianity is not simply a moral or philosophical system. You cannot be a Christian and not believe in the supernatural.

The central idea of Christianity is this. There is a God. And that God took on a human nature and died in the place of ruined sinners, his enemies.

And rose from the grave so he could offer them redemption and forgiveness and reconciliation and life. If they would repent and believe in him.

Every one of those ideas is supernatural. You cannot be a Christian and not believe in the bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ.

[8 : 08] The apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 15 said, If Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain. And your faith is in vain.

And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile. And you are still in your sins. If in Christ we have hope in this life only. We are of all people most to be pitied.

If there is no supernatural. If the tomb is not empty. There is no such thing as Christianity. Walk out the door. But friends, the tomb is empty.

We belong to the living God. The living God. The kind of God who raises the dead.

And as we see in today's passage. Vanquishes the powers of the enemy. And I don't know everyone here. You may not believe that.

[9 : 11] But I bet that even if you don't believe the Bible. You still believe in the supernatural. The vast majority of Americans. Regardless of their religious affiliation.

Believe in the power of prayer. Which is supernatural. If you believe in the concept of purpose in your life. Whether it's purpose you find. Or it's purpose that you make for yourself.

That's something with no physical reality. That's a spiritual belief. Or if you believe that all men are created equal. That equality is something we should fight for.

In the political and social spheres. That's a spiritual belief. That's not a feature of a purely material universe. Where Darwinism is built on the idea that we aren't born equal.

You believe in right and wrong. Not just preferences. But actual rights and wrongs. Those are concepts that have no physical existence.

[10 : 18] You believe in the supernatural. So Christians and essentially everybody else. Believes that there is a spiritual realm. And the Bible tells us that in that.

Like a passage like this one. Mark 5. Matthew 8. That. There is a spiritual realm that's not just a force. But that it is populated by inhabitants.

Some of whom are loyal to the Lord. And some of whom oppose him. And today. The gospel writers show us what happens. When the Lord comes face to face with them. So let's turn our attention now to Matthew's account.

We're going to ask what details did he choose to omit. And which did he retain. We're going to find that he zeroes in on one idea. One thing he wants us to take from the event. And it's not really

about the demons.

It's about Jesus. And who he is. And how we respond to him. If you've already turned to Mark 5. You may actually want to stay there. While I read Matthew 8.

[11:21] It'll help you see where Matthew chose to omit details. And focus our attention. On his main point. Here. Is Matthew's account.

Matthew chapter 8. Verse 28. And when he came to the other side. To the country of the Gadarenes. Two demon possessed men. Met him. Coming out of the tombs.

So fierce that no one could pass that way. And behold they cried out. What have you to do with us? O son of God. Have you come here to torment us? Before the time.

Now a herd of many pigs was feeding. At some distance from them. And the demons begged him. Saying. If you cast us out. Send us away into the herd of pigs. And he said to them.

Go. So they came out. And went into the pigs. And behold the whole herd rushed. Down the steep bank into the sea. And drowned in its waters. The herdsmen fled. And going into the city.

[12:17] They told everything. Especially what had happened to the demon possessed man. And behold. All the city. Came out to meet Jesus. When they saw him. They begged him.

To leave their region. What stands out. In this event. Both in Mark. And in Matthew. Demons. Demons. Tombs. Drowning pigs. Those things are not normal. Right. They stand out. But Matthew's main concern.

Isn't demons. Or pigs. Or tombs. Matthew has stripped. This encounter. Down to its barest details. It's less than half. The length. Of Mark's account.

And what does he choose. To omit. I think there's a first. Major category. Matthew has. Barely. Anything. To say. About the demonized men.

[13:14] That's especially odd. Because. Again. Matthew comes from this region. Of all the gospel writers. You might expect. That he. Would elaborate on this. But. Mark included. Way. More.

Detail. The torment. Seems to have driven. These men. In Mark. To the very gates of hell. Pain. And suffering. Dehumanizes us. And it. Mark shows us.

That they had. Almost been reduced to animals. Mark describes their violence. Telling us. All about their chain breaking. And self cutting. And their screaming. Matthew just says they're fierce.

Mark describes the results. Of the healing. The men are clothed. In their right mind. No longer raving. Matthew tells us. The demons leave. Never mentions the men again. Not once.

Mark reports. They ask. To follow Jesus. Matthew doesn't. Matthew. Matthew records. Matthew records. As little information. About the demonized men.

[14:11] As he possibly can. That's not to say. That they're unimportant. It's just that. The lesson he's teaching us. Is not about them. The second major category.

Is the demons themselves. Matthew admits. Almost all the detail. About that as well. Mark records. More of the discussion. Between Jesus and the demons. Matthew doesn't tell us.

That there are many demons. In the picture. Matthew doesn't show us. That they collectively. Have a name. Legion. Mark shows us. That Jesus said. More to them. Than go. Now Matthew has still included.

The exorcism event itself. Otherwise there wouldn't be a story. To record. But Mark includes. More detail. At every time. The herd contains.

Thousands of pigs. Jesus gets back into the boat. The healed men. Return home. There is a response. In the region. To what has just happened.

[15:08] So what's left. Where is Matthew's focus? He has stripped away. All the other details. So that we can see.

One thing. Clearly. The only places. Where Matthew retains. Significant detail. Are the two. Negative. Responses. To Jesus.

The demons react. And the townspeople react. And they both. Reject him. And they do it. In different ways. And I think.

What Matthew wants to do. Is to warn us. Away. From rejecting. Jesus. Like these two. Groups get. He's not recording.

The miracles. In chapters eight and nine. Just entertain us. He wants us. To see Jesus. To see who he is. And respond accordingly. So here is how.

[16:05] Not. To react. To Jesus. To see who he is. The first reaction. The first reaction. Is the demons. And we see them. In verse 29. Behold. They cried out. What have you. To do.

With us. Oh son of God. Have you come here. To torment us. Before the time. This is such an interesting testimony.

Up to this point. In the book of Matthew. Only at his baptism. When the heavens were opened. And God the father spoke.

And the spirit descended. Has anything close to this. Been said about Jesus. The disciples. Were just asking. At the end of the last episode.

Who is this man. That even the wind. And the waves. Obey him. They don't get it. Yet. But the demons do. This is the highest.

[17 : 00] Christology. In the book of Matthew. Up to this point. Except for when God the father speaks. That's significant. It comes. In the voice. Of demons.

The demons. The demons. See. Who he is. They know. That this is God. In the flesh. His people. No longer. Wait.

For a savior. Because. Christ has come. I needn't see this. He's preaching the kingdom. He is healing the sick. He is calling disciples. He is calming the storm.

And what is their response? What have you. To do with us? Have you come here. To torment us. Before the time. You can say a lot.

About that second part. Have you come. To torment us. Before the time. They know. That evil. Has an expiration date. And that should encourage us. They know. That on that day.

[17 : 55] Jesus. The son of God. Will win the victory. And it will be absolute. And that their time. Is only a holding pattern. Until that day. But what's more interesting.

Is that first part. What have you. To do with us. They know who he is. They know his fate. There is no doubt.

About his identity. Or his purpose. And still. They hate him. They know. Destruction is coming. For them. And yet. They still.

Want to be left. Alone. In their evil. Until then. Don Carson. Put it this way. They knew. Who Jesus was. And yet.

Remained demons. To know Jesus. And yet hate him. Is demonic. And friends. It is not only.

[18 : 50] The demons. Who do this. So do people. Perhaps. The most famous verse. In all the Bible. Is John 316. It comes. It comes.

In a context. That shows us. That people. Respond. To Christ. Same way. These demons. Do. For God.

So loved. The world. That he gave. His only son. That whoever. Believes. In him. Should not. Perish. But have eternal life. That's a part. We always remember. Jesus continues. For God.

Did not send. His son. Into the world. To condemn. The world. But in order. That the world. Might be saved. Through him. Whoever. Believes. In him. Is not condemned. But whoever. Does not believe. Is condemned already.

Because he has not. Believed. In the name. Of the only. Son of God. And this is the judgment. The light. Has come into the world. And people love darkness.

[19 : 47] Rather than the light. Because their works. Were evil. For everyone. Who does wicked things. Hates. The light. And does not come to the light.

Lest his works. Should. Be. Exposed. He comes. Offering light. Love. And redemption. But people. Reject him. Because the light. He brings. Makes them look bad. And so. Whether it's pride. Or shame. The light.

Causes us. To reject. The only hope. We have. Don't reject that light. I find.

I find. I'm going to pause. And come back to that. Let's look at the townspeople. And their reaction.

[20 : 45] To Jesus too. Now he had just freed two men. And those men were family to some of the townspeople. They were friends to others. They were neighbors to all.

And they had just been restored to their community. They were friends to all. They were friends to all. What do you. What do you expect the people to say? At this point? What would be your reaction? Hey.

Jesus. What you did for those guys was pretty cool. Could you. Could you stick around a bit. And do. A few more cool things. For us. There are a few other problems around here.

We'd really like you to take care of. For instance. And we're not pointing fingers. But we seem to be down a few pigs. So. Could you perhaps make us some bacon? Right.

And so. The great Puritan writer. Matthew Poole. Says. Surely. They will fall down at his feet. And beg his grace. And favor. And that he would stay with them. And be the author of more good.
[21 : 43] Among them. Instead. What do they do? They beg him to depart. Just as he had made the demons depart.

Why? If you go get more details. From Mark. And from Luke. They'll tell you that they were afraid. It's not quite clear. What the fear is from.

Whether they feared his power. If they feared his authority. If they feared the loss of more property. Or if they were confused. Simply fearful because of that.

Or if it was something else. But I want to take this. And turn it to us. Because I can't preach to them. But I can preach to us.

Friends. We. Can't. React. To Jesus. The way either of these groups did. We need rescue every bit. As much as the people. Who were dying at the beginning of chapter 8.

[22 : 46] As the disciples. In the storm that raged on the waters. And as much as these two men. Who were oppressed by demons. Jesus. Stands. Ready. To save.

If. Like the townspeople. You're not. You're not sure about Jesus. And maybe you're a little afraid. Please. Don't. Turn. Away from him.

Like they did. They asked him to leave. Because they were afraid. If you're uneasy. About this Jesus. Whether that's because of confusion. Or because his authority. Threatens you.

Because you're afraid. Of what it might cost you. To follow him. Don't say. Depart. Like they did. If you're drawn to this Jesus. Will you repent and believe.

Even now. And if you're still not sure. Don't say depart. Ask questions. Keep going. If you don't believe him.

[23 : 46] Will you believe the testimony. Of the demons. He is the son of God. He has power. Over them. He will one day.

Judge the living and the dead. He will triumph. Over evil. He is the everlasting. Only. Don't say depart. Press on.

Through the darkness. To light. He is the light. And life. Of men. And so to those. Who don't yet. Know Christ.

I say. Don't respond. Like the townspeople. And to those. Who already. Do. Believe. The truth. About Jesus.

I'm going to say something. To you. That will strike you. As odd. At first. I'm going to say. Don't. Respond. Like the demons. The demons.

[24 : 40] Already knew. The truth. About Jesus. Better than we do. But they still. Didn't. Love him. Truth.

Without love. For Christ. Is demonic. And that's saying. The truth doesn't matter. Paul.

In Galatians. One. Says. But even. If we. Or an angel. From heaven. Should preach to you. A gospel. Contrary. To the one. We preach to you. Let him be accursed. Truth.

Matters. Equally. So does love. If you believe the Bible. And have little. Or no. Love. For Christ.

That's only a few. Mile markers. Up. The same road. From where these demons were. Mark Dever. Said it. This way.

[25 : 34] The demons. Are very. Good. Theologians. They understand. All these things. In their minds. But they. Aren't. Changed. By them. Their affections.

Aren't. Touched. By them. But if you're truly. A Christian. It's in the Christian. It is in the nature. Of a Christian. To love. Christ. How can you tell.

If you are. Wandering down. This wrong path. First. You can just ask. Your. Yourself. Do I love. Jesus. You probably know. Your own heart. Pretty well. Where is it?

Is your life. Marked. By a love. For God. Or is your. Christianity. Lifeless. Just going. Through. The motions. Do you know.

The right. Sunday school. Answers. Show up. At church. Out of love. For some other. Do you.

[26 : 41] Pray. I believe it was. Charles Spurgeon. Who said. If you want to humble a man. Ask him. About his prayer life. The apostles.

Called the gospel. The ministry. Of reconciliation. And adoption. Do you live a life.

Of reconciliation. With God. Or is. It fire. Insurance to you. Your prayer life. Will tell you. You treat your. Salvation. Like an escape.

From torment. With the demons. Or do you. Treat your salvation. Like. Reconciliation. You call. On your father.

In heaven. Going to your father. In heaven. With prayers. Of love. And pain. Thankfulness. And request. Worship. And repentance.

[27 : 37] Now. I'm not saying. That if you have a dry season. Spiritually. That you're no longer a Christian. Any more than having a fight. With your spouse. Means you're no longer married.

I am saying. That when you go down the road. Of dead orthodoxy. You have walked away. From the very purpose. For which you exist.

To glorify God. And enjoy him. Forever. How do we fix it. That's where you're at. How do we avoid. Reacting to Jesus. Because Matthew's concern. Again. Is how will you react. To this Jesus. How do we avoid reacting. With loveless truth. Like the demons do.

First. We need to confess. That this is where we are. And we need to repent. Of our attitude.

Towards him. And then we need friends. To cry. Out.

[28 : 38] For help. You can't change. Your own heart. It was God who saved you. And it is God. Who renews you. As well. And then.

I would encourage you. To hear. His words. The book of Revelation. Begins with. Christ. Speaking. To seven. Of the churches.

In the ancient world. The church in Ephesus. Was basically. In this same situation. A loveless. Orthodoxy. Jesus says.

In Revelation. Chapter two. To the church in Ephesus. I know your works. Your toil. And your patient endurance. And how you cannot bear.

With those who are evil. But. Have tested those. Who call themselves. Apostles. And are not. And found them to be false. I know you are enduring.

[29 : 35] Patiently. And bearing up. For my name's sake. You have not. Grown weary. How is that for truth? That's awesome. Right? They're doing right practice.

They're not permitting evil. Among their ranks. They are testing. Teachers. To see if they. Are in accord. With God's word.

They are. Really good at truth. But. I have this against you. That you have abandoned. The love. You had. At first. Remember.

Remember. Therefore. From where you have fallen. Repent. And do the works. You did. At first. Fixing this.

Looks like going. To Jesus. It's about as. Simply. As I can. Matthew. Has. Shown. Us. Jesus Christ. He was careful.

[30 : 31] To. Show us. The details. That confront. Our own. Hearts. How. Will you. Respond. To Jesus. This day. Perhaps.

For the first time. Perhaps. To return. To him. In love. Wherever. Your heart. Is today. I pray. That Jesus. Is drawing you.

Back. To him. Let's pray. Oh. Lord. Lord.

Our God. Thank you. That you've sent your son. Into this world. To rescue. Us. From our own sins. And from the enemy's. Designs. Thank you. That he came. In love. Even though we deserve.

Judgment. Thank you. That he has. Reconciled.

[31 : 27] Us. To you. By the shedding of his blood. And the plundering of his tomb. Lord.

Will you. Excite our hearts. To love. For our great redeemer. Father. May we not react. With indifference.

Or a recoil. Or simply. A loveless. Orthodoxy.

Lord. Will you make us. Passionate followers. Of your son. For your glory. And for our great joy. We pray these things. In the matchless name. Of Jesus Christ.

Our king. Amen. And I'll please stand. And respond. While we're singing. In Christ alone. In Christ alone My hope is found He is my light, my strength, my song This cornerstone, this solid crown Firm through the fiercest drought and storm