

Mark 4:35-5:43 (PM)

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Date: 23 October 2022

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[0 : 00] As you sit, you may have noticed, there's a lot of verses in our text, 50, and I normally give slides for the people at the back to have the verses behind me, but I didn't want to give them 50 slides to have to do.

So you might want to open the Bible in front of you to page 839 and 840. Our Bible text tonight is full of the entire spectrum of human suffering.

And crisis. It's stories of chaos and catastrophe. And the reality is all of us suffer.

All of us endure storms in life. Sometimes our suffering is acute. It is instant and absolute.

It's like a hurricane of hardship that hits in an instant and leaves us devastated. Sometimes our suffering is chronic.

[1 : 04] It's a lifelong thorn in the side. It's a deep wound that constantly bleeds and never fully heals. And we have stories that capture both of those types of suffering.

And so as we open God's word, I wonder if you'd be honest with yourself and ask yourself, what is your hardship tonight? What's the pain that you are currently carrying?

What is the storm that you are sailing through? What is the storm that you are going to do? What is the storm that you are going to do? What is the storm that you are going to do? In Mark chapters 4-5, Jesus sails into our stormy seas of suffering.

He enters our deepest darkness. He goes head first to confront the absolute worst kinds of evil. And he brings with him life and peace.

He walks into the middle of our mess and he proclaims, the kingdom of God is now here. Because I am here. Repent and believe in the good news.

[2 : 10] So all of our texts tonight show us what happens when God's king brings God's kingdom into every kind of human suffering. The first scene is in Mark chapter 4 verse 35.

Jesus and the storm. And this is immediately after Jesus had been teaching tons of people about the kingdom of God. So he's been teaching, teaching, teaching. And then all of a sudden he suggests that evening, instead of a quiet night to recover, that he and the disciples get in a boat and cross the lake to go to a Gentile country.

To leave the Holy Land. To leave God's people. To extend the kingdom of God beyond Israel. This is Jesus practicing what he preaches. And so with a boat full of professional sailors, they embark on a dangerous night crossing to a hostile foreign land.

And in the absolute middle of the night, in the middle of the sea, a storm starts. You should know, Israelites were terrified of the sea. Because they understood it to be beyond the boundaries of God's blessing.

If you were an ancient Israelite, you believed the sea is where chaos reigned. It was the place of disorder and danger and death. And so here they are in the middle of the kingdom of chaos, in the deepest dark, completely vulnerable.

[3 : 33] And they're engulfed by a hurricane. We're told in verse 37 that the waves are breaking into the boat. And the boat is already filling with water. So here we have a literal life-threatening storm.

A fatal crisis. And where is Jesus? Verse 38 tells us, Jesus was in the stern, asleep on the cushion. The disciples wake Jesus up, exasperated. Teacher, don't you care that we are perishing? Jesus, don't you care we are about to die? This storm is a matter of life and death.

These are fishermen. They spend every day on these waters, and they know they're about to die. They know they're past any possible rescue.

They're past saving. We're told Jesus wakes up, he rebukes the wind and says to the sea, peace, be still. This is exorcism language.

[4 : 40] In Mark's gospel, Jesus rebukes demons. Yet here he rebukes creation, as if demonic forces are trying to rule over it. The kingdom of darkness reigns over the sea in Jewish thought.

It's beyond God's creation, beyond God's order and blessing. It's the place of chaos, of evil, of danger and death. And yet at the word of Jesus, the winds cease, and there's a great calm. Jesus' words bring order. That overthrows chaos. The kingdom of God is at hand, because its king is extending his kingdom's borders.

And then Jesus turns to his disciples, and he says, why are you so afraid? Have you still no faith? In the midst of a life-threatening crisis, the disciples had to choose between faith and fear.

All of us, in the middle of all of our crises, have to choose either fear or faith. Verse 41 tells us, after watching Jesus rule over and rebuke the storm, that the disciples are filled with great fear.

[5 : 58] Literally, they're filled with the fear of all fears. The greatest of fear. Because Israelites know there's only one who controls the wind and the seas.

And it's the one who made them with his words. God spoke, and creation was created. And now there's a man in their midst, on their boat, who speaks.

And like listening to God himself, creation obeys. Their life-ending storm is now eclipsed by a far greater crisis.

They say to each other, who is this man? That even the wind and waves obey him. Who is in our boat? That's what they're terrified of.

This man does what only God can do. It's a crisis. And in a crisis, you need to choose either faith or fear. The disciples choose fear.

[6 : 58] They're filled with the greatest fear of all fears. And yet Jesus saves them anyway. Their lack of faith does not disqualify them from his salvation.

Now, this story on its own, if true, is enough for all of us to know who Jesus is. He's the Lord over all.

He has in his power the ability to save us from any storm. And that's why he has come. But Jesus is only just getting started. The second story is in Mark 5.

We're told in verse 1, they get to the other side of the lake, the country of the Gerasenes. These are Gentiles, non-Jews. And the moment Jesus steps out of the boat, immediately out of a graveyard, bounds a man who is unclean, for he is possessed by an unclean spirit.

This man is triply unclean. First, he's a Gentile. He's not Jewish. He's not a member of God's people. He lives outside God's people, and therefore God's law.

[8 : 08] Secondly, he's possessed by an unclean spirit. He's controlled and tortured by evil. And thirdly, he lives amongst the dead, in their tombs.

Here's a man who's more dead than alive. I can't think of a more dire description of a person in all of scripture or history. It's as if Mark is trying to tell us, here is the most unclean, least holy, most messed up, most broken, most awful, hopeless human you could ever imagine.

There is no deeper, darker pit of the human experience than the hell that this man is living. He's a danger to everyone, including himself. Verses three to four tell us he's uncontrollable by society.

He's unrestrainable by chains. Human power is completely impotent to do anything to help or hold this man. He cries out day and night. He mutilates his own body.

He is tortured and oppressed constantly. Now, I don't know your situation. I do not know the pain you are enduring. Or the storm you are struggling through.

[9 : 19] But Mark describes this man as if to say, no one in all of history is as hopeless a case as this guy. Jesus asked for the unclean spirit's name that's controlling this man.

And in verse nine, we're told, the spirit says, my name is Legion, for we are many. A Roman legion was made up of at least 4,200 soldiers.

And it swelled up to 6,000 in times of combat. So this man is possessed and oppressed by thousands of demonic spirits.

It's pandemonium, complete chaos, total evil dominates his existence. And yet this entire legion of darkness falls to their knees before Jesus, before he says a word.

See, they didn't come to battle Jesus. The battle is over the second Jesus steps out of the boat.

The kingdom of God is at hand. God's king is on the move. He is taking back his creation from the clutches of evil.

[10 : 25] He's stepping into the deepest domains of darkness. And his kingdom is being established without a battle and without a fight. God's king arrives. And so his kingdom is

immediately here.

Like how darkness is instantly banished by the presence of light. Legion begs Jesus to allow them to possess a herd of pigs nearby. Remember, pigs are not kosher.

They're unclean animals. You're not allowed to have pigs in Israel. So we're reminded from this detail, again, that we are in Gentile land. We are outside the boundaries of Israel, the land of the people of God.

We're told the pigs are possessed, as Jesus allows, and immediately they run into the sea, which we know is the place of chaos. So here's scene two.

Jesus steps into the darkest darkness, the messiest mess, the place where evil reigns supreme. Confronted by a 5,000 demon army. And with a word, the darkness is dispelled.

[11 : 32] The demons are destroyed. And this hopeless, helpless man is restored to life. How will the surrounding Gentiles respond to the arrival of the king of the kingdom of God?

In the midst of their crisis, will they choose fear or faith? Verse 15, they came to Jesus, saw the demon-possessed man who had had the legion sitting there, clothed in his right mind, and they were afraid.

Fear, not faith. In light of God's salvation, they are afraid. In verse 17, they beg Jesus to leave their region.

And Jesus leaves. He won't force himself into the lives of people living in darkness who do not want him. They had a choice, faith or fear.

They chose fear. They want Jesus gone. And so he leaves. He crosses back over the same lake to the place where he started. Now think about that for a minute.

[12 : 41] Why did Jesus cross the lake in the first place? Why did he endure a middle-of-the-night hurricane on a fishing boat, followed immediately by a confrontation with a legion of demons, and then immediately being rejected to his face by an entire nation of Gentiles?

He did it to save one man. A man who seemed to everyone to be past any human help. He went to extend the kingdom of heaven.

To show that there is no person who is past his saving. He came to show us that there is no spot on earth too dark, too evil, too far gone for Jesus to bring life with his word.

Abraham Kuyper says, there is not a square inch in the whole domain of our human existence over which Christ, who is sovereign over all, does not cry, mine. The kingdom of God is at hand.

Christ comes to claim the entire world. His dominion shall be from sea to sea. His righteousness shall flow as the waters cover the sea.

[13 : 52] His light is the life of all humankind. Of his kingdom there will be no end. Scene three. The darkest dark.

Back in Galilee in Mark 5, verse 22 now, a man who is well respected, whose name is Jairus, falls at Jesus' feet just as Legion did and he implores him earnestly, full of faith, my little girl is dying. Come and lay hands on her so that she may be made alive, made well, and live. This man is in crisis.

And so he comes to Jesus in faith. We're told Jesus went with him. In verse 25, a woman with chronic bleeding comes through the crushing crowd to reach Jesus.

She spent everything she has on medical treatments to no avail. Her condition worsens. She is desperate and she is destitute. She is unclean and she is hopeless.

[14 : 59] There is no future for this woman and her present is perpetual pain. This woman is as hopeless a case as the man who is possessed by Legion.

She has unending menstrual bleeding making her unclean under Jewish law and therefore commanded to be an outcast of society until her bleeding stops, which it hasn't for 12 years.

She is a total outcast, unclean, with probably no family, no money, no future, no hope. She's the total opposite of Jairus. She's the furthest end of the social spectrum from him.

Except, like Jairus, she is in a crisis. And like Jairus, she has faith that Jesus will save her. In verse 28, she comes up behind Jesus so he won't see her and simply tries to touch his clothing thinking, if I even just touch his garments, I'll be made well.

And that's exactly what happens. She knows instantly that she's healed. And Jesus knows too.

Jesus tells her in the most tender of language, in verse 34, daughter, my child, your faith has made you well.

[16 : 22] Go in peace and be healed of your disease. This woman in the midst of her crisis had faith. And her faith in Christ made her well.

And more than that, her faith in Christ adopted her into Christ's family. He calls her daughter. As Jesus is commending this newfound daughter for her faith, Jairus receives word about his own daughter.

She's died. Jesus hasn't come in time. There's no need to trouble him anymore. Anymore. I wonder if you'd place yourself in the shoes of Jairus.

Some of you know that deepest, darkest of places, this ultimate crisis. How would you respond? As Jairus is processing this news and experiencing it, Jesus enters into that darkest abyss, death, and he speaks, do not fear.

[17 : 35] Only believe. In Jairus' moment of absolute devastation, at perhaps the lowest possible point of human experience, the death of a child, Jesus invites him to not be afraid, but only to believe.

That's what all the stories have told us to do. In the storm, in the midst of evil, in illness, and now in unspeakable loss, do not be afraid. Only believe. No storm is past his control.

All four of these situations are hopeless. Any one of them would threaten to destroy any one of us, except that Jesus has come.

The kingdom of God is at hand. Do not be afraid. Only believe. Jesus goes to Jairus' house, even though the situation is past all human hope.

He goes into the room, he clears everyone out, goes in with the mom and dad, three disciples, takes the little girl by the hand, and he says to her, Talitha kumai. This is Aramaic.

[18 : 47] It's Jesus' first language. It's his heart language, the language of Galilee, the language of this little girl. Talitha is a term of endearment that means little lamb.

Jesus takes this dead girl's cold hand, reaching down into death, and he gently speaks, my little lamb, little girl, I say to you, arise.

It's time to get up. And she does. The word of Jesus overthrows the irreversible reign of death. death. And did you notice the reaction in the room? It's not fear this time. We're told in English they are immediately overcome with amazement.

That is so stiff a translation. It just does no credit. The words in Greek are literally ecstasy, ecstasy of ecstasies.

[19 : 51] The parents are literally out of their minds, beside themselves ecstatic. The family is mind blown. They've lost their minds as Jesus breaks the most permanent of realities.

His words can save us even from death. Now, if these words of the eyewitnesses are to be believed, Jesus is the Son of God.

There's no other conclusion. He brings with him the kingdom of heaven to every inch of earth, no matter how bleak or dark. He comes to still the storms, to silence and overwhelm all evil, to heal all sickness, to reach his hand down into death, and to bring us new life.

And if this is who Jesus is, it's good news. It's good news for you. Because it means you are not too far for his mercy.

You are not past saving. This storm will not sink you. Jesus fearlessly enters the deepest and darkest waters of human suffering and sin, and he brings with him light and life.

[21 : 07] And as the gospel progresses, we see to what depths he will go to save us. This man, who is God's king and God's son, will give himself completely to death itself, absorbing all our sin and suffering and sickness upon himself, bearing the cross that all of us deserve because of our rebellion against God and against his kingdom.

He gives himself for us, for you, to buy you back, to raise you to life, to heal your sickness, to silence the storms of your life, to bring peace, to establish God's kingdom here in our hearts.

If you're experiencing any degree of suffering, I imagine we all are. Nothing is outside his control. Nothing.

Do not be afraid. Only believe. Now this does not mean that Jesus will end all of our suffering tonight if we believe in him. It doesn't mean that he'll silence the waves that are crashing against us or that he'll raise the ones we love and are losing or have lost.

But it does mean that our crises will not prevail over us even if they kill us. Because Jesus is Lord over even death. He will raise us that believe in him just like he raised that little girl.

[22 : 41] Our current troubles will look light and momentary when we contemplate the weight of glory that he's preparing for all of us that will far surpass all of our current suffering.

So we don't lose heart. Though the world is wasting away because he has overcome the world. I want to finish where we started.

In your current crisis, in your storm, have you been living in fear or in faith? If you're living in fear, what would it look like to respond to your situation with faith?

To invite Jesus to enter into your deepest darkness, to get on your knees and pray, let your kingdom come, let your will be done.

Jesus has come to bring God's kingdom, to eclipse the darkness, with the ecstasy of his eternal life, and he offers it to you right now. You can respond with fear and ask him to leave, and he will.

[23 : 49] But if you do, you will miss out on life to the full, on life lived with God himself. Upon being healed, the Gentile man who is possessed by the legion of demons, longs to go with Jesus.

He longs to be with Jesus. He doesn't want to be in this pagan land where no one wants Jesus around, but Jesus doesn't let him go with him. But rather, he says, go home to your friends and tell them how much the Lord has done for you, and how he has had mercy on you.

And friends, that's how we who follow Christ ought to respond to this story. This is the call of our king. Go home to your friends and tell them how much the Lord has done for you, and how he has had mercy on you.

What are we to do in light of who Jesus is? We're to not be afraid of any crisis, but only to believe in the one who has come to save us. And we are to go, and we are to tell.

To enter boldly into the places of deepest darkness, into the lives of the most oppressed, to look out for the loners, the outsiders, the sick, the dying, those who are past any human hope, and to bring the life and the light of Jesus Christ by sharing his gospel with them.

[25 : 16] We're told the man went away and began to proclaim in the Decapolis, that's ten cities, how much Jesus had done for him, and everybody marveled. And friends, they'll marvel at us as well as we share with them the good news of King Jesus.

Amen.