

October 11, 2009/ Mark 4:35-5:20 (ESV¹)

the official text this morning is about the first 20 verses of Mark 5 ... let's back up a bit into Mark 4 and look at two episodes that show plainly the divinity of Jesus ...

Mark 4:35 On that day, when evening had come, he said to them, "Let us go across to the other side."

36And leaving the crowd, they took him with them in the boat, just as he was. And other boats were with him.

this is the Sea of Galilee ... it's not large, about 6-8 miles east to west and 15 north to south ... but it lies in a deep depression, its surface close to 700 ft below sea level ... apparently at times differences in air temperature and pressure send some incredible winds ripping down on it through deep ravines leading from higher surrounding countryside, and extremely violent storms arise with no warning ... Jesus leads the disciples onto the boats ... this is His idea to cross the sea west to east, and they are simply going along, doing what He's asked/told them to do ...

it's worth noting that there are details in Mark's version of this story that testify to it coming through an eye-witness ... the other boats play no part in the rest of the account, but their mention speaks to us of Mark's closeness to someone who was there and saw them ...

37And a great windstorm arose, and the waves were breaking into the boat, so that the boat was already filling.

this is a truly violent piece of weather ... at least 4 of the guys in the boat are fishermen and know that they are in big trouble ... they know enough about the sea to see themselves, from their ordinary perspective, to be in mortal danger ...

38But he was in the stern, asleep on the cushion. And they woke him and said to him, "Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing?"

Jesus is asleep ... in a vivid eye-witness detail, Mark tells us that Jesus is asleep on the helmsman's pillow ... the Son of God is both fully divine and fully human ... He's exhausted ... He's been teaching and healing and looking after the well-being of others, and now He's worn out ...

the reaction of the disciples is a poignant commentary on the human condition ... this is us, you and me ... these fellows are in the boat with Jesus (I'd say Jesus is in the boat with them, but that turns reality on its head) ... they are in the boat with Jesus, they are about His business ... they've cast their lot with Him ... and without warning, the hard thing comes ... something that everything in their make-up screams at them will be their undoing ... it's more than they can take, says their experience to date ... the truth is, that if they could soberly take stock of it all, it makes no sense for them to fear ... God's Messiah is going to drown crossing the lake? ... Jesus doesn't know what's going on? ... He and they are at the mercy of random acts of nature? ... that's absurd, as is our panic when things seem to us to be going poorly ... the disciples have what they need ... they need the presence of the Master ... what they WANT, is for Him to do something to change their circumstances ... they don't like the storm ... but as Ryle puts it "He has never promised that we shall have no afflictions. He loves us too well to promise

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that. By affliction he teaches us many precious lessons which without it we should never learn. By affliction he shows us our emptiness and weakness, draws us to the throne of grace, purifies our affections, weans us from the world, makes us long for heaven. On the resurrection morning we will all say 'It was good for me to be afflicted.' Psalm 119:71. We will thank God for every storm." ...

but the cry of the disciples is "we're going to drown" ... better they had said with Job: **(Job 13:15a) Though he slay me, I will hope in him;** ... that would have been far more grand and would have expressed real faith/dependence upon Him ... but they, and most times we with them, can only at best cry out "Lord, save us" ... at worst we accuse God of indifference towards us ...

39And he awoke and rebuked the wind and said to the sea, "Peace! Be still!" And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm.

40He said to them, "Why are you so afraid? Have you still no faith?"

you still have no faith? ... why are you so afraid? ... real faith and fear are not compatible ... casting oneself truly on the mercy of God ends fear ... there is here gracious rebuke/instruction for the disciples and us with them ... it's not that they didn't get in the boat ... it's not that they don't believe that Jesus can deliver them ... after all, that's what they are crying out for ... the nature of their lack is that they cannot rest in the sufficiency of His presence and His love ... isn't that enough to guarantee that all will be well? ... if we're His, what is fear? ... is it not a slur on His character and intentions? ... cannot any situation be left in His hands? ...

the wonder and comfort of what happens here is that despite our foolishness, He has a heart for us ... He doesn't say to the disciples, "you guys are so clueless, I'm going to look for another bunch of followers" ... instead, He shows them His care for them ... in spite of their weakness, He loves and protects them ... as the Psalmist says: **Psalm 103:13 As a father shows compassion to his children, so the LORD shows compassion to those who fear him. 14For he knows our frame; he remembers that we are dust.** ... He rebukes the wind and waves and it is immediately dead calm ...

41And they were filled with great fear and said to one another, "Who then is this, that even wind and sea obey him?"

indeed, who then is this? ... any good Jew knows that what has just happened is only the province of the Creator ... see **Job 38:8-11, Psalm 65:5-8, or Psalm 89:8 O LORD God of hosts, who is mighty as you are, O LORD, with your faithfulness all around you? 9You rule the raging of the sea; when its waves rise, you still them.**

what Jesus has just done belongs only in the realm of the Creator and Sustainer of the Universe ... the disciples are beginning to see who this is they are following ... a rabbi, even Messiah, but far more than that ... Paul put it this way in Colossians ...

Col. 1:16 For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him.

17And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together.

now to the account of the deliverance of the Garasene demoniac ... exactly where this is commentators are not sure ... the best guess seems to be that it is Gentile territory ...

5:1 They came to the other side of the sea, to the country of the Gerasenes.

2 And when Jesus had stepped out of the boat, immediately there met him out of the tombs a man with an unclean spirit.

3 He lived among the tombs. And no one could bind him anymore, not even with a chain,

4 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 had the strength to subdue him.

this sounds harsh to us ... but people had done all for this fellow that was possible in purely human terms ... he's been to Bellevue ... family and friends and the local psychologists have had their shot at helping him, to no avail ...

5 Night and day among the tombs and on the mountains he was always crying out and bruising himself with stones.

there is a real enemy of our souls, a real opposer of the God of all goodness and grace ... the evil one and his minions have defaced the image of God in this man ... he's in utter misery, absolutely tormented in soul, physically self-destructive ... but he has enough control over himself to run to Jesus ...

6 And when he saw Jesus from afar, he ran and fell down before him.

7 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."

the Matt version of this verse is: **Matthew 8:29 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?"** ... the understanding here is that at the end of time, at the last judgment, the demons will be dealt with and completely and permanently restrained ... but the point is that with the presence of Jesus, the Kingdom of God has already come ...

8 For he was saying to him, "Come out of the man, you unclean spirit!"

9 And Jesus asked him, "What is your name?" He replied, "My name is Legion, for we are many."

the *man* is asked for his name (otherwise it would be "it" in place of "him") ... the answer comes from the demon or demons ... it says its name is "Legion" ... a Roman legion could have as many as 6,000 men in it ... these demons are saying this guy is hopelessly fragmented and under the control of an army of evils ... but, thank God, it is an army that has no strength to stand against the Son of God ...

10 And he begged him earnestly not to send them out of the country.

11 Now a great herd of pigs was feeding there on the hillside,

12 and they begged him, saying, "Send us to the pigs; let us enter them."

13So he gave them permission. And the unclean spirits came out, and entered the pigs, and the herd, numbering about two thousand, rushed down the steep bank into the sea and were drowned in the sea.

it's a good thing PETA wasn't there ... Jesus would have been arrested on the spot ... but the Biblical fact is that a human life and a human soul are far more valuable than the lives of these animals ... a human is created in the image of God ... that reality was marred by these demons ... and the sacrifice of the animals for the good of this man and the glory of God is appropriate and good ...

14The herdsmen fled and told it in the city and in the country. And people came to see what it was that had happened.

15And they came to Jesus and saw the demon-possessed man, the one who had had the legion, sitting there, clothed and in his right mind, and they were afraid.

clothed and in his right mind ... what a beautiful statement and contrast ...

16And those who had seen it described to them what had happened to the demon-possessed man and to the pigs.

17And they began to beg Jesus to depart from their region.

the locals recognize that the God of the Universe is near ... and the truth is that despite all the blather natural man puts out about interest in knowing (about) God, except that God work in us and draw us to Himself, we don't really want Him around! ... His demands aren't going to end with the getting rid of the pigs ... He'll want more ... He'll demand everything that we are ... and fallen human nature instinctively hides from that possibility ... notice too that Jesus doesn't stay where He isn't wanted ... until the final judgment, humans are given real freedom to go their own foolish rebellious way ...

18As he was getting into the boat, the man who had been possessed with demons begged him that he might be with him.

there is a real contrast here ... the townspeople want Jesus to go ... the man who has been touched, knows it, and wants only to go with Him ... Calvin: "Here we learn how wide is the difference between the knowledge of the *goodness*, and the knowledge of the *power* of God. *Power* strikes men with terror, makes them fly from the presence of God, and drives them to a distance from Him; but *goodness*, draws them gently, and makes them feel that nothing is more desirable than to be united to God." ...

19And 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."

at least in Jewish territory, Jesus doesn't often tell those he helps that they are free to spread the news ... but this man is commissioned to go home and tell ... and that he does, to the glory of God ...

20And he went away and began to proclaim in the Decapolis how much Jesus had done for him, and everyone marveled.

the Decapolis was a group of 10 Greek cities, all but one of which is to the east of the lake off in the direction of Damascus Syria ... this guy is faithful to relate what Jesus has done for him ...