

Mark

Lesson 6

Chapter 4:35-5:43

Leader Guide

Leader Guide Bible Studies

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The Son of God's Authority over Creation and Demons

Lesson 6, Mark 4:35-5:43

Opening Prayer

Introduction

The school of faith was in session. Jesus was the teacher, and the disciples were the students. The disciples already heard the testimony of John the Baptist, possibly God's own voice, and witnessed many healings; the official's son in Cana, a paralytic and a demon-possessed man in Capernaum, a leper, and a Centurion's servant. They witnessed Jesus' immense popularity and also his claims of deity as the Son of Man who had the power to forgive sin and the Lord of Sabbath, which gave the Pharisees cause to plan to murder him. Now, Jesus would reveal more amazing lessons of who he was.

Read Mark 4:35-41, Jesus Calms the Storm [Comments included from Matthew]

Mk 4:35 That day when evening came, he said to his disciples, **"Let us go over to the other side."**

Mk 4:36 Leaving the crowd behind, they took him along, just as he was, in the boat. There were also other boats with him.

Mk 4:37 A furious squall came up, and the waves broke over the boat so that it was nearly swamped.

Mk 4:38 Jesus was in the stern, sleeping on a cushion. The disciples woke him and said to him, ["Lord, save us!] "Teacher, don't you care if we drown?"

Mk 4:39 He got up, rebuked the wind and said to the waves, **"Quiet! Be still!"** Then the wind died down, and it was completely calm.

Mk 4:40 He said to his disciples, **"Why are you so afraid? Do you still have no faith?"**

Mk 4:41 They were terrified and asked each other, "[What kind of man is this?] Who is this? Even the wind and the waves obey him!"

1. How would you describe the disciples' encounter with the storm, chance, or something more?

Jesus told his disciples to cross over to the other side of the lake. Crossing a lake would have been a routine event in the lives of 8 professional fishermen, but they had a divine appointment on this night.

2. Jesus scolded the disciples because of their lack of faith. What kind of response from the disciples would have been pleasing to Jesus?

It is hard to imagine any other response to imminent death than the fear the disciples expressed. I am sure that as persecution arose in the early church, remembering this experience and the night of their betrayal would strengthen their faith and assurance that Jesus was in control.

3. What was Jesus' point of taking the disciples into the storm? See also John 1:1-3, Colossians 1:15-16, Hebrews 1:1-3

Jn 1:1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ² He was with God in the beginning. ³ Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made.

Col 1:15 He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. ¹⁶ For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him.

Heb 1:1 In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, ² but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom he made the universe.

Heb 1:3 The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word. After he had provided purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven.

The disciples witnessed the miracle of the storm's calming and asked, "What kind of man is this?" The experience in the storm was a step in training the disciples to understand that Jesus was the God-Man, God in the flesh. He was the creator of the universe, and all creation submitted to him as Lord. People today have issues accepting Jesus as the God-Man. They can accept him as an extraordinary teacher, moralist, perhaps even a healer, but God in the flesh and Savior is beyond their faith.

4. Do you agree with the idea that God tests people's faith? Summarize the meaning of the following (4 of 55 references on "test"):

Exodus 20:20 Moses said to the people, "Do not be afraid. God has come to test you so that God's fear will be with you to keep you from sinning."

Testing teaches us that we should not fear the test; instead, we should come to repentance and not sin.

Zechariah 13:8-9 In the whole land, declares the LORD, "two-thirds will be struck down and perish; yet one-third will be left in it. ⁹ This third I will bring into the fire; I will refine them like silver and test them like gold. They will call on my name and I will answer them; I will say, 'They are my people,' and they will say, 'The LORD is our God.'

Testing refines our faith to be God's people.

Psalms 139:23-24 Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. ²⁴ See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.

God tests us and searches our hearts to reveal our fears and to guide us to everlasting life.

James 1:12-14 Blessed is the man who perseveres under trial because when he has stood the test, he will receive the crown of life that God has promised to those who love him. ¹³ When tempted, no one should say, "God is tempting me." For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone; ¹⁴ but each one is tempted when, by his own evil desire, he is dragged away and enticed.

God does not use evil to test us. Temptation is from our own desires.

5. What statement do you agree with most?
- Faith vanishes under stress
 - Faith deepens under stress
 - Faith grows after stress and reflection
 - Faith grows most deeply during periods of peace and quiet

For me, faith has grown while under stress, although I would much prefer growth during quiet times. Pressures as a young man centered around my career, God provided. Later, stresses were relational; God was the forgiver, restorer, and healer of a broken spirit. Most recently, health has become an issue, even to the point of life and death. God has given great assurance of forgiveness, healing, and has been my sustainer.

6. Can you discern the difference between God's testing and merely a hard time or tragedy?

No, I really can't. Sometimes I can reflect on a situation and see how the ending of a bad situation led to life-changing blessings in another. Sometimes the answer is not so clear. The question "Why?" simply stops being so important, and life goes on.

7. Storms may threaten any aspect of our lives, physical safety, relational, financial, or spiritual. Do you remember when you felt that all was lost but found you were never outside Jesus' compassion and care?

Personal reflection. Jesus' love and assurance have never seemed closer than during those most difficult times.

8. As I write this lesson, I can't help but think of how the coronavirus has been a global plague affecting everyone and its similarity to the plague in Luther's time. No one knew the plague was from bacteria carried by rat fleas and spread by touch and respiration. Luther attributed it to filth in the city. The best thing they knew to do was evacuate the town when it occurred since death resulted in as little as 24 hours. Luther refused to evacuate from Wittenberg when the plague struck in 1527, even though his wife was pregnant. He reflected, 'If I leave, who will care for the sick?' Along with a sense of compassion for the sick, there was also a sense of heightened responsibility to take the available medicine, disinfect the house, and avoid other people and places to spread the disease. What is the appropriate Christian response to the plague of our time?

Compassion and responsibility are the guiding qualities of our response to the virus outbreak too. We should make every effort to self-quarantine, disinfect, and avoid situations that put our health and others at risk. Unlike the medieval plague, coronavirus is spread by people. The exponential increase in daily infections and death is because people fail to cover their faces with a mask or limit their contact with other people since the virus spread before people are symptomatic. At the same time, we also need to be compassionate to others, very possibly the other people who have failed to limit their contacts with others! We are the oldest couple on our cul-de-sac, so neighbors ask what they can do for us (I do appreciate their concern but have never regarded myself as an older person – yet!). Our family has encouraged us to move to online grocery service (trying, but hard to schedule!) as an effective means of limiting our significant exposure to the virus. Our compassion and generosity will be tested as the health, financial, and unemployment crises deepen.

Read Mark 5:1-17, The Healing of a Demon-possessed Man [Additions from Matthew and Luke]

Mk 5:1 They went across the lake to the region of the Gerasenes.

Mk 5:2 When Jesus got out of the boat, a man with an evil spirit came from the tombs to meet him.

Matthew adds, [Mt 8:28 When he arrived at the other side in the region of the Gadarenes, ³⁴ two demon-possessed men coming from the tombs met him. They were so violent that no one could pass that way.

Mt 8:29 “What do you want with us, Son of God?” they shouted. “Have you come here to torture us before the appointed time?”]

Mk 5:3 This man lived in the tombs, and no one could bind him anymore, not even with a chain.

Mk 5:4 For he had often been chained hand and foot, but he tore the chains apart and broke the irons on his feet. No one was strong enough to subdue him.

Mk 5:5 Night and day among the tombs and in the hills he would cry out and cut himself with stones.

Mk 5:6 When he saw Jesus from a distance, he ran and fell on his knees in front of him.

Mk 5:7 He shouted at the top of his voice, “What do you want with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? Swear to God that you won’t torture me!”

Mk 5:8 For Jesus had said to him, **“Come out of this man, you evil spirit!”**

Mk 5:9 Then Jesus asked him, **“What is your name?”** “My name is Legion,” he replied, “for we are many.”

Mk 5:10 And he begged Jesus again and again not to send them out of the area. [Lk 8:31 And they begged him repeatedly not to order them to go into the Abyss.]

Mk 5:11 A large herd of pigs was feeding on the nearby hillside.

Mk 5:12 The demons begged Jesus, “Send us among the pigs; allow us to go into them.”

Mk 5:13 He gave them permission, and the evil spirits came out and went into the pigs. The herd, about two thousand in number, rushed down the steep bank into the lake and were drowned.

Mk 5:14 Those tending the pigs ran off and reported this in the town and countryside, and the people went out to see what had happened.

Mk 5:15 When they came to Jesus, they saw the man who had been possessed by the legion of demons, sitting there, dressed and in his right mind; and they were afraid.

Mk 5:16 Those who had seen it told the people what had happened to the demon-possessed man—and told about the pigs as well.

Mk 5:17 Then the people began to plead with Jesus to leave their region.

Mk 5:18 As Jesus was getting into the boat, the man who had been demon-possessed begged to go with him.

Mk 5:19 Jesus did not let him, but said, **“Go home to your family and tell them how much the Lord has done for you, and how he has had mercy on you.”**

Mk 5:20 So the man went away and began to tell in the Decapolis how much Jesus had done for him. And all the people were amazed.

The account of the healing of the demon-possessed man called Legion is in Matthew, Mark, and Luke. Matthew includes the fact that there were two demon-possessed men, Mark and Luke refer to only the one who was called Legion, because many demons possessed him. Matthew said the possessed man lived as the Region of Gadarenes while Mark and Luke called it the Region of Gerasenes. Gerasa and Gadara are towns in a league of cities known as the Decapolis (ten cities). The region was on the southeastern shore of the Sea of Galilee and extended eastward to encompass much of present-day Jordan. The gospel writers refer to the region of Gerasenes and Gadarenes by either of the two cities and not the actual place the miracle occurred.

9. The account of the healing of the demon-possessed man is significant and appears in three of the four gospels. What are aspects of the healing of Legion that make the account extraordinary?

The accounts of chapters 4 and 5 include calming the storm, casting out demons, and raising a little girl from the dead. These events show Jesus’ supremacy over the physical and spiritual realms as well as over death. They show Jesus as the God-Man, God in the flesh, before whom the demons tremble. There are other themes, too, like Jesus’ compassion illustrated by the healed man at the feet of Jesus and his joy in telling his story throughout the region. There is also sadness when Jesus is rejected despite his miraculous power like the people of Gadarenes. They witnessed the miracle but chose the safety of a life they knew rather than the uncertain life of following Jesus.

10. Accounts of demon possession in the gospels are very similar – all harming and seeking the ultimate destruction of the possessed person. What was the possessed man’s life like?

The man lived in a tomb, in isolation from others. Demon possession made him strong, violent, and self-destructive, so others feared him. Without compassion from others and filled with self-loathing, the man’s spirit had become captive to demons.

11. Verse 28. Why did the man fall at Jesus' feet?

The man did not fall at Jesus's feet to worship him - demons drove him there out of fear to ask for mercy so they would not be thrown into the Abyss. The book of Revelation reveals the Abyss as the place prepared to hold demons until the last days when they will be released for a short time and then imprisoned for eternity. Anything was better than the Abyss; the demons asked to be sent into the pigs instead.

12. What was the role of faith in the healing of the demon-possessed man?

The man was out of his mind and had no faith. Jesus healed him out of compassion.

13. What was the response of the community to the healing of Legion?

The community had seen a great miracle. The community knew the man had been demon-possessed and was now in his right mind. Rather than praising God, they responded in fear of the economic loss of the pigs and asked Jesus to leave. Better they had responded with praise and faith and gained the riches of salvation and eternal life.

14. The picture of the healed man sitting at Jesus' feet is one of the most beautiful in the Bible. What are some other of your favorite Bible images? When do you experience the joy of your relationship with Jesus?

Personal reflection

15. The man obeyed Jesus' command to tell his family how much the Lord had done for him. What is your story to share with your family and friends?

Personal reflection

Applications

1. Jesus is Lord over his creation.
2. Jesus demonstrated the power of faith and the power of his word.
3. Jesus' healing is not limited to people with great faith but is an outpouring of his compassion and love for the lost (and possessed).
4. After the right amount of time, Christ ministers to our need out of his love and compassion. "The Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister." Mt 20,28.
5. A quote from Luther's sermon on the storm: "God's Word, spreads farther through persecution. Thus, it becomes stronger, and faith increases. This is a paradoxical characteristic of the Gospel compared with all worldly things which decrease through every misfortune and opposition, and increase through prosperity and peace."

Closing (Horatio Spafford, 1873)

When peace like a river, attendeth my way,
When sorrows like sea billows roll;
Whatever my lot, Thou hast taught me to *say*
It is well; it is well, with my soul.
Amen!