

**MARK: Glimpses of the Kingdom**

***The Power of God is Among Us***

**Mark 4:35-5:43**

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The word “omnipotent” is an impressive sounding word that simply means all-powerful. Omni-potent is used to describe God’s ability to do anything. If I asked, “How many of you believe God is omnipotent?” most, if not all of you, would quickly raise your hand, because at its core, being all-powerful is what it means to be God. What kind of god would God be if He weren’t omnipotent? This morning, we’ll be exploring Mark chapters 4 and 5, and as we do, we’re going to pay special attention to Jesus’ exercise of power.

Two weeks ago, I began our series on the Gospel of Mark by focusing on Mark’s introduction of Jesus. Mark starts his Gospel with this statement, which was likely his intended title: “The beginning of the good news about Jesus the Messiah, the Son of God.” In that 14-word sentence Mark used three phrases that clearly communicated Jesus was God’s Son. Mark started with the phrase “good news” or “gospel.” The word “gospel” at that time referred to proclamations in the Roman Empire that only came from the emperor. Mark went on to write that the good news is about Jesus the Messiah. Identifying Jesus as Messiah connected Him with the prophecies of Isaiah and other Jewish prophets who had been foretelling the coming of a deliverer for 700 years. And Mark concluded his opening sentence by announcing Jesus as the Son of God. The phrase “Son of God” at that time was used for only one person—the Roman Emperor—but Mark had the gall to attribute the title to Jesus. Later, in verse 15 of chapter 1, Mark quoted John the Baptist’s message, “The time has come. The kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the good news.” Mark left no doubt that Jesus was God’s promised Messiah, and his arrival meant that God’s kingdom was here.

Last Sunday, we looked at several events at the beginning of Jesus’ ministry in which He consistently challenged the Jewish religious leaders’ understanding of Sabbath. Jesus went out

of his way to make to make the point that people and their relationship with God was God's priority—not the rules, rituals and religion emphasized by the religious leaders.

This morning we're going to focus on the end of chapter 4 and chapter 5 of Mark's Gospel. The simplest way to explain the events that take place is to read them, so I'm going to read a longer section of Scripture than I normally do. I've titled today's sermon, "The Power of God is Among Us," because Jesus clearly demonstrates his power—his omnipotence—in numerous ways in our text today. As I read these verses, I want you to pay special attention to two things. First, notice Jesus' power over nature, demonic powers, sickness, and death. Secondly, take notice of people's reactions to the miracles Jesus performed. I'll begin reading at verse 35 of Mark chapter 4.

That day when evening came, he said to his disciples, "Let us go over to the other side." Leaving the crowd behind, they took him along, just as he was, in the boat. There were also other boats with him. A furious squall came up, and the waves broke over the boat, so that it was nearly swamped. Jesus was in the stern, sleeping on a cushion. The disciples woke him and said to him, "Teacher, don't you care if we drown?"

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

He said to his disciples, "Why are you so afraid? Do you still have no faith?"

They were terrified and asked each other, "Who is this? Even the wind and the waves obey him!"

They went across the lake to the region of the Gerasenes. When Jesus got out of the boat, a man with an impure spirit came from the tombs to meet him. This man lived in the tombs, and no one could bind him anymore, not even with a chain. 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. Night and day among the tombs and in the hills he would cry out and cut himself with stones.

When he saw Jesus from a distance, he ran and fell on his knees in front of him. He shouted at the top of his voice, "What do you want with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High

God? In God's name don't torture me!" For Jesus had said to him, "Come out of this man, you impure spirit!"

Then Jesus asked him, "What is your name?"

"My name is Legion," he replied, "for we are many." And he begged Jesus again and again not to send them out of the area.

A large herd of pigs was feeding on the nearby hillside. The demons begged Jesus, "Send us among the pigs; allow us to go into them." He gave them permission, and the impure 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.

Those tending the pigs ran off and reported this in the town and countryside, and the people went out to see what had happened. 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. Those who had seen it told the people what had happened to the demon-possessed man—and told about the pigs as well. Then the people began to plead with Jesus to leave their region.

As Jesus was getting into the boat, the man who had been demon-possessed begged to go with him. Jesus did not let him, but said, "Go home to your own people and tell them how much the Lord has done for you, and how he has had mercy on you." 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.

When Jesus had again crossed over by boat to the other side of the lake, a large crowd gathered around him while he was by the lake. Then one of the synagogue leaders, named Jairus, came, and when he saw Jesus, he fell at his feet. He pleaded earnestly with him, "My little daughter is dying. Please come and put your hands on her so that she will be healed and live." So Jesus went with him.

A large crowd followed and pressed around him. And a woman was there who had been subject to bleeding for twelve years. She had suffered a great deal under the care of many doctors and had spent all she had, yet instead of getting better she grew worse. When she heard about Jesus, she came up behind him in the crowd and touched his

cloak, because she thought, “If I just touch his clothes, I will be healed.” Immediately her bleeding stopped and she felt in her body that she was freed from her suffering.

At once Jesus realized that power had gone out from him. He turned around in the crowd and asked, “Who touched my clothes?”

“You see the people crowding against you,” his disciples answered, “and yet you can ask, ‘Who touched me?’”

But Jesus kept looking around to see who had done it. Then the woman, knowing what had happened to her, came and fell at his feet and, trembling with fear, told him the whole truth. <sup>34</sup> He said to her, “Daughter, your faith has healed you. Go in peace and be freed from your suffering.”

While Jesus was still speaking, some people came from the house of Jairus, the synagogue leader. “Your daughter is dead,” they said. “Why bother the teacher anymore?”

Overhearing what they said, Jesus told him, “Don’t be afraid; just believe.”

He did not let anyone follow him except Peter, James and John the brother of James. When they came to the home of the synagogue leader, Jesus saw a commotion, with people crying and wailing loudly. He went in and said to them, “Why all this commotion and wailing? The child is not dead but asleep.” But they laughed at him.

After he put them all out, he took the child’s father and mother and the disciples who were with him, and went in where the child was. He took her by the hand and said to her, “*Talitha kum!*” (which means “Little girl, I say to you, get up!”). Immediately the girl stood up and began to walk around (she was twelve years old). At this they were completely astonished. He gave strict orders not to let anyone know about this, and told them to give her something to eat. – Mark 4:35-5:43

In the first account, a violent storm came up on the Lake of Galilee, which threatened to capsize the boat and drown the disciples and Jesus. While the disciples—experienced fishermen who had seen their share of violent storms—feared for their lives, Jesus slept. When the disciples roused Jesus from his slumber with the words, “Don’t you care if we drown?” He

commanded the winds and waves to be still, and they obeyed Him. The disciples were terrified and asked each other, “Who is this? Even the wind and the waves obey him?”

In the second event, Jesus drove a legion of demons out of a man who had become a public menace because he was plagued by demons. The demons went into a herd of pigs, and the pigs rushed off a cliff to their death. When the townspeople saw the formerly demon-possessed man clothed and in his right mind, and when they heard what had happened to the pigs, they asked Jesus to leave their town.

The last two events intersected—a woman who had a bleeding issue for 12 years, for which she couldn’t find relief, and a synagogue leader’s daughter, who was sick and eventually died before Jesus arrived at their house. The woman reached out and touched Jesus’ robe and was immediately healed. She didn’t reveal herself to Jesus until He realized power had gone out from Him and asked who touched Him. After healing the woman, Jesus proceeded to Jairus the synagogue ruler’s home and raised his daughter from death after being ridiculed by the crowd when He told them she wasn’t dead but just sleeping.

In these incidents, Jesus clearly established his power over nature, demons, sickness and death. Jesus’ power, his omnipotence, loudly proclaimed that the kingdom of God had arrived and that He was the promised Messiah, the Son of God. This morning we’re just focusing on chapters 4 and 5, but Jesus’ power is a theme Mark emphasizes throughout his gospel. When Pastor Susan heard I was preaching on Jesus’ power, she gave me an assignment she’d worked on for a class at Ashland Seminary, which identified 36 power encounters Jesus had throughout Mark’s Gospel. Jesus frequently demonstrated that the kingdom of God had arrived by displaying the power of God.

The people who encountered his power had a variety of responses to Jesus—some responded in fear, others with wonder and amazement, and still others responded in disbelief. A question I want us to consider today is this: “What’s my response to Jesus’ power and his ability to exercise that power in my life and in circumstances I face and in the lives and circumstances of people I love?” Do you find yourself responding to Jesus in fear or terror? That’s how many people in these verses responded. Do you respond in wonder and amazement at the power of God? Or do you find yourself responding with doubt and unbelief?

In the Gospels, Jesus talks a lot about prayer and placing our faith in Him, but a passage I often find myself returning to when it comes to placing my faith in Jesus' power to answer my prayers, is Matthew 7:7–11. Listen to these words that are familiar to many of us:

Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; the one who seeks finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened. Which of you, if your son asks for bread, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a snake? If you, then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask him! – Matt. 7:7-11

One of the barriers you and I frequently face in prayer is unbelief, and the unbelief often isn't about God's ability to answer our prayers—his power or omnipotence. Our unbelief typically surrounds questions like, "Does God love me and really care what's happening in my life?" "Am I worthy of God's attention?" "Of all the things God has to worry about, do my concerns matter to Him?" I love Matthew chapter 7 because it answers those questions by reminding us that God loves us as a good father or mother loves and cares for his or her son or daughter. As a dad, I love my three kids, Bronte, Treyton and Kerrigan, deeply. Even though they're adults living away from our home, Greta and I want to do what we can to meet their needs and help them flourish. So, when it's in my power to bless them or to care for their needs, I do that. That's a picture of our Heavenly Father's love for us, and I find that picture reassuring as I go to God in prayer. I can ask, seek and knock in prayer knowing that my Heavenly Father loves me and wants to see his best worked out in my life and in the lives of those I love.

Several moments ago, I asked the question, "What's my response to Jesus' power, and his ability to exercise that power in my life and in circumstances I face, and in the lives and circumstances of people I love?" Now I want to encourage us to apply that question specifically to our lives. Where do I need to see Jesus' power released in my life or in the life of someone I love? John the Baptist and the gospel writers announced that God's kingdom had come near with the coming of Jesus. And Jesus demonstrated the proof of God's kingdom being near

through his teaching and preaching, through signs and wonders, and through miracles that included healing the sick, casting demons out of oppressed people and raising people from death to life. Where do you need to see Jesus' power released in your life or in the life of someone you love?

As we go to a bit of extended time of response this morning, I encourage you to avail yourselves of the opportunity to ask God to release his power in your life and in the lives of those you love. Jesus, let your kingdom come!