

DAY 7: A STILLER OF STORMS

Mark 4:35–5:43

JESUS STILLS THE STORM AT SEA (MARK 4:35-41) Mark records the calming of the storm in vivid details: the hour of the day, the presence of other boats, the boat taking on water, and Jesus asleep on the cushion. The Sea of Galilee, 12 miles long by 6 miles wide, is famous for its strong squalls. This storm, however, caused the disciples—some of whom were veteran fishermen—to wake Jesus for fear of drowning. Ironically, Jesus is asleep in the boat as the storm rages. The disciples awaken Him, in a panic, asking, “*Teacher, do You not care that we are perishing?*” (Mark 4:38).

Jesus rebukes the wind and waves, as if they were living beings. His words produce “*a great calm.*” He “*rebuked the wind*” and (literally) *muzzled* the waves (Mark 4:39), and they obeyed (4:41). He uses the kind of language normally used to overcome demonic forces. Jesus then addresses His disciples: “*Why are you so afraid? Have you still no faith?*” (4:40). The disciples do not yet really understand Jesus. He questions them about being “*afraid,*” which in Greek means *losing heart* or possibly *cowardice*. Such thinking, such feelings, are the enemy of faith. The disciples were then “*filled with great fear*” (4:41). Their terror at what Jesus did is different from and greater than their fear of the storm! They ask each other, “*Who then is this?*”

THINK ABOUT how our finite minds can never fully understand the infinite God. Each of us needs to answer the same question the disciples asked of one another, “*Who then is this?*” If He is the Son of the living God, the loving Savior, and the powerful Lord, can we trust Him to be all that He claims to be—in our lives? Allow His words in John 14:27 to replace your fears with implicit faith in the One who said, “*Peace I leave with you; My peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid.*”

CHAOS AND CREATION (MARK 5:1-20) The encounter with the Gerasene demoniac takes place on the east shore of the Sea of Galilee. The herd of swine reminds us that Jesus is in Gentile territory. According to Jewish oral tradition, no Jew could raise swine anywhere during this historical period. This is Mark’s most graphic description of an exorcism. This wretched man’s violence shatters all constraints of society, including chains, banishing him to a graveyard in a mountainous area, where he lives a living death among the buried dead. There he wreaks havoc against himself night and day, wailing among the hills and cutting himself on the sharp stones. He aches for release, yet rejects, repulses, or actually menaces anyone who approaches him.

Spotting Jesus from afar, the demoniac “*ran and fell down before Him ... crying out with a loud voice*” (5:6-7). A demon, using the man’s voice, identifies himself as “*Legion*” (5:9); a Roman legion consisted of at least 6,000 soldiers. Even a mob of demons powerful enough to destroy a human being and catapult a herd of swine into the lake cannot match Jesus’ might. Their cry, “*Jesus, Son of the Most High God*” (5:7) identifies the uniqueness of Jesus’ person, and the stampede of pigs establishes the uniqueness of His power. A herd of 2,000 pigs is obviously very valuable; understandably, the swineherds lament its loss. For Jesus, however, individuals are far more valuable than material assets.

The Gerasenes are eyewitnesses of a stupendous miracle and they are awed by it, but it does not lead to faith. Instead, they resent Jesus’ intrusion into their world and ask Him to leave! Israel will not receive Him; and now, the Gentile world also refuses Him a place.

But there is one beautiful moment. The demoniac is now sitting with Jesus, “*clothed and in his right mind*” (Mark 5:15). What a contrast to his earlier description! Once again Jesus brings order out of



chaos. The rescued man wants to become a disciple, but Jesus refuses to let him accompany Him. But note that Jesus does not swear the man to silence as He has done in Israel. Perhaps in Gentile territory He need not fear false Messianic expectations. Instead, Jesus sends the restored demoniac to the Gentiles to proclaim what the Lord has done for him.

