

**SELECTED MIRACLES**  
**How To Study The Bible**  
**Part 6**  
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We're looking together at the gospel of Mark and using our time together kind of walking through some sound principles of study of the Bible. Hopefully there's some transference that's taking place, some seepage as we share together principles that I'm using in the study of Mark that are become effective in your own life.

We want to take a moment as we always do when we set down with a passage of scripture to think for a moment of where we're at. One of the critical things in Bible study is to always set a context. If we don't set a context then we might dive in and not get good doctrine, not get good teaching because we're sort of picking up a verse that we don't think has any reference to something that's come before it or behind it. I want to take a moment to contextualize, if you will.

We have looked now at Mark 1:1 through Mark 4:34. In the course of doing that we've come up with some major sub divisions. We're titling every paragraph and then we put paragraphs together in a unit of thought and try to create a title for them. Rather than walk through all the paragraphs we've covered let's just walk through the units. There are five units that we've already looked at. The first being, 1:1-1:13 four paragraphs that dealt with the theme of Preparation. The next seven paragraphs 1:14-4:5 is Opening Events. Jesus has begun his ministry by three actions – preaching, healing and calling disciples. Then the third section, 2:1-3:6 is Opposition where for the first time he generates opposition which arises first of all over his forgiveness of sins and then continues over his breaking of tradition and breaking Sabbath laws. So much so that when that section is done there is a plot to kill him. The fourth section 4:7-35, the end of chapter 3, deals with Counter Opposition. Now Jesus is going on the attack. He is calling disciples to himself. He is charging the Pharisees with the prospect of having committed eternal sin. He's also forcing his family to redefine their relationship to him. The fifth part we covered, 4:1-34, deals with a series of parables that are about the theme of the kingdom. Kingdom Parables.

So now we come tonight to the sixth major part of the gospel of Mark beginning with 4:35. Notice we say this new section begins with 4:35. We think sometimes by reading by chapters that there's a division of thought with a chapter unit. But unfortunately sometimes the chapter units are mislabeled. They were not labeled until the 17<sup>th</sup> century. When did we get chapter titles and verses? With the invention of the printing press that's where. Suddenly you had the Bible that was being mass produced and people needed to know where to find things. So there was insertion of chapter titles and verse titles. Sometimes they can be helpful. Sometimes they can be confusing.

We want to read each of these paragraphs then we'll come back and do an overview of the section. Then we'll look individually again at what truth is coming across to us.

“On that day [the day he was teaching the parables of the kingdom] when evening had come he said to them, ‘Let us go across to the other side.’ Leaving the crowd they took him with them in the boat just as he was and other boats were with him. A great storm of wind arose and the waves beat into the boat so that the boat was already filling. He was in the stern asleep on the

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cushion and they woke him and said to him, ‘Teacher, do you not care if we perish?’ He awoke and rebuked the wind and said to the sea, ‘Peace, be still.’ And the wind ceased and there was a great calm. He said to them, ‘Why are you afraid? Have you no faith?’ And they were filled with awe and said to one another, ‘Who then is this that even wind and sea obey him?’”

If you’re reading the new translation the NIV, you have several different paragraphs there. The NIV here is messed up and incorrect. There’s only one paragraph here, one unit of thought and they’re just trying to break it down into newspaper style language where a common person today finds it difficult to read a paragraph that is more than two sentences long. There’s really only one paragraph here and it deals with the theme of Storm. Or Sea Storm. It’s the Galilee Sea, not an ocean but Galilee Sea so Sea Storm will be sufficient.

Now we get to this really incredible paragraph that goes from verse 1-13. “They came to the other side of the Sea in the country of the Gadarenes [also Gerasenes and Gergesenes – there are three parallel words that can be used.] When he had come out of the boat there met him out of the tombs a man with an unclean spirit who lived among the tombs. No one could bind him any more even with a chain for he had often been bound with fetters and chains but the chains he breaks part and the fetters he broke in pieces and no one had the strength to subdue him. Night and day among the tombs and on the mountains he was always crying out and bruising himself with stones. When he saw Jesus from afar he ran and worshipped him 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.’ For Jesus had said to him, ‘Come out of the man, you unclean spirit.’ And Jesus asked him, ‘What is your name?’ he replied, ‘My name is Legion for we are many,’ and he begged him eagerly not to send them out of the country. Now a great herd of swine was feeding there on the hillside and they begged him, ‘Send us to the swine. Let us enter them.’ So he gave them leave and the unclean spirits came out and entered the swine and the whole herd numbering about 2000 rushed down the steep back into the sea and were drowned in the sea.”

That’s an action filled paragraph, isn’t it? What’s one word in that paragraph that leaps right out? Legion. Or you could call this Gadarene demoniac or Gerasene demoniac or Gergesene demoniac. But legion will do. It’s the only time the word “legion” occurs in the gospel of Mark.

The next paragraph isn’t quite as easy to title. Verse 14 “The herdsmen fled and told it in the city and in the country and the people came to see what it was that had happened. They came to Jesus, saw the demoniac sitting there, clothed and in his right mind, the man who had the legion and they were afraid. Those who had seen it told what had happened to the demoniac and to the swine and they began to beg Jesus to depart from their neighborhood. As he was getting into the boat the man who had been possessed with demons begged him that he might be with him but he refused and 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.’ He went away and began to proclaim into Decapolis how much Jesus had done for him and all men marveled.”

This paragraph is a little bit more difficult to title and the reason why it’s difficult is there are three things going on. One is the herdsmen flee. Two, the man has an encounter with Jesus. Three, Jesus sends the man away. When you’ve got that much action occurring within a paragraph it’s more difficult to title. I simply call it from the first phrase, Herdsmen Flee and that does it for me. When I say Herdsmen Flee I can think of the rest of it.

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So we have now Sea Storm, Legion, Herdsmen Flee and we've memorized the first 20 verses of 4:35-5:20. That's rather easy isn't it?

Verse 21, the next paragraph, "When Jesus had crossed again into the boat to the other side a great crowd gathered around him and he was beside the sea. Then came one of the rulers of the synagogue Jairus by name and seeing him he fell at his feet and he saw him saying, 'My little daughter is at the point of death. Come and lay your hands on her so that she may be made well and live,' and he went with him." Who's the central person other than Jesus in this? Jairus. What's he doing? He's making a plea, a request. So it could be Jairus' Plea or Jairus' Request.

The word "request" is not in the text but I suppose we could substitute it there. Jairus is asking Jesus to do something.

The next paragraph begins in the middle of a verse. See how the verse doesn't do an adequate job of dividing the paragraph unit. "A great crowd followed him and thronged about him and there was a woman who had a flow of blood for twelve years and who had suffered much under many physicians and had spent all she had and was no better off but grew worse. She had heard reports about Jesus and came up behind him in the crowd and touched his garment for she said 'If I touch even his garments I'll be made well.' And immediately the hemorrhage ceased and she felt in her body that she was healed of her disease. And Jesus perceiving in himself that power had gone forth from him, immediately turned around in the crowd and said, 'Who touched my garments?' And his disciples said to him, 'You see the crowd pressing around you and yet you say, "Who touched me?"' He looked around to see who had done it but the woman knowing what had been done to her came in fear and trembling and fell down before him and told him the whole truth. He said to her, 'Daughter your faith has made you well. Go in peace and be healed of your disease.'"

Central person in this story is a woman. There's many women that Jesus will minister to in the course of his early ministry so what separates her from all the others? She is hemorrhaging. So hemorrhaging woman would be an easy way to remember this particular unit of thought.

This is the fundamentals of Bible study. What makes a Superbowl winner or a number one in any kind of a sport? It's because they always do the fundamentals exceedingly well. They don't do the fancy passes or the Statue of Liberty plays except first of all they learn how to block and tackle and all those good kinds of things. It's the same way with Bible study. You start off by just doing the fundamentals.

Then the last paragraph in this section. "While he was still speaking there came from the ruler's house some who said, 'Your daughter is dead. Why trouble the teacher any further?' But ignoring what they said, Jesus said to the ruler of the synagogue 'Do not fear only believe.' And he allowed no one to follow him except Peter and James and John the brother of James. When they came to the house of the ruler of the synagogue he saw tumult and people weeping and wailing loudly. And when he had entered he said to them, 'Why do you make tumult and weep? The child is not dead but sleeping.' And they laughed at him. But he put them all outside and took the child's father and mother and those that were with him and went in where the child was. Taking her by the hand he said to her, [and Mark is still hearing Aramaic. Peter probably is the source for the gospel of Mark and Peter could never really translate what Jesus said because he would always hear it in Aramaic.] 'Talitha cumi' which means, 'little girl [and by the way, you

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can tell that Mark is writing to people who don't know Aramaic because he has to turn right around and immediately translate it.] I say to you arise.' And immediately the girl got up and walked. She was twelve years of age. They were immediately overcome with amazement and he strictly charged them that no one should know this and told them to give her something to eat."

Who's the central figure of this other than Jesus? Jairus' daughter. So Jairus' Daughter Raised. Jairus' Request in an earlier paragraph. Now Jairus' Daughter Raised.

So we walk through now this section and we've got Sea Storm, then Legion, then Herdsmen Flee, then we have Jairus' Request, then we have Hemorrhaging Woman, and then we have Jairus' Daughter Raised.

What ties these paragraphs together? What kind of action is happening here? What joins these as the common theme? Miracles. Healings/Miracles. So we ought to certainly call this Miracles. Have you noticed how many miracles are there in this passage? Four miracles. Have you noticed that each of these miracles fall into a different category? The miracle of the storm at sea is a miracle that shows Jesus' power over nature. The miracle of the Gadarenes demoniac is a manifestation of Jesus' power over demons. The third miracle is the manifestation of Jesus' power over illness and therefore is a healing not an exorcism. The fourth miracle is a miracle over death itself. Four distinct category of miracles. We might therefore then call this whole section when it's all put together simply Selected Miracles.

What Mark has done was take an example from the four realms in which Jesus did mighty works. He takes one example from each of the four realms and gives an outstanding testimony. If you look at all the miracles Jesus did you'll find that all of his miracles can be boiled down to these four categories. – miracles over nature, miracles over illness, miracles over demon possession, miracles over death. In fact if you want to take the time to do this count the specific miracles that the gospels report that Jesus did. If you don't allow for any duplication like the feeding of the 5000 is a miracle that happens in all four gospels, just count that once instead of it occurring four times. If you count all the miracles and boil them down, you have when it's all reduced the gospels report 35 specific acts of power or miracles that Jesus did in his earthly ministry.

Of these 35 miracles they fall into these four categories – 18 belong in the realm of illness or healing. Of the healing miracles those further subdivide into two categories – acute illness and chronic illness. Acute illness is something that suddenly happens to you. You weren't sick but now you've got fever of 105 degrees. It's something like Peter's mother-in-law had. She came down ill with a fever. Then there's chronic illness which goes on and on. Like blindness or deafness or leprosy. It's a condition. The healings in the gospel are not psychosomatic healings. They occur out of the 18 physical healing miracles, 13 of them are occurring in the chronic realm – lameness, paralysis, blindness, deafness, leprosy, etc. That's one category.

Then what Mark does is take one of the outstanding examples of physical illness – the hemorrhaging woman, to serve as example of Jesus' power over illness.

Then 9 miracles of the 35 miracles in the gospel that attest to his power over nature. How are you going to know that he's the Lord who made the heavens and the earth? We know him by the

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creative work. So we have the nature miracles. Water to wine, loaves and fishes, now the storm at sea. And by the way, there's a tremendous miracle of communication taking place here. Jesus simply speaks to the elements and they obey him. The power of Jesus is speaking through the elements. There's a built in receiving instrument within nature itself to hear the voice of the Son of God. Even if he's speaking Aramaic. It's a built in thing within nature to hear the voice of the Son of God and line up and obey it. Amazing.

Five of the Lord's miracles are in respect to demon possession. Three of his miracles – the smallest category – is in respect to death. Jairus' daughter who had been dead for hours, the widow's son of Nain who had been dead for a day, and Lazarus who had been dead for four days. As Jesus' ministry progresses they come at increasing levels of intensity. Those are the four categories of miracles and Mark simply gives us an example, an outstanding example of each category of the Lord's authority and power.

Why do I go into that? If you do some comparison you'll find that comparing Luke's gospel with Matthew with Mark where these miracles are all reported you'll find that there is a difference in chronology. Mark and Luke together report all four miracles as one after another. But when Mark reports that he has the storm at sea and then legion and then a rearrangement of the material so that in chapter 9 he has the paralytic healed and he has the call of Matthew and the paragraphs on fasting and fasting. Then he comes to the hemorrhaging woman and to Jairus' daughter. In other words Matthew takes the material in the early part of Mark 2 and jams it into what we would say was the middle of Mark 5. When we look at this our tendency right away is to say, I thought the Bible was infallible but when I'm reading the chronology it's a clear obvious break in chronology. The two gospels do not track together in the same chronology.

John says an interesting thing in his gospel. He says Jesus did so many things that if they were all written down in a book the world itself couldn't contain them. There were hundreds and hundreds of miracles. So the gospel writers were in effect literary photographers. They have taken snapshots. They have all the photos and they're all spread out and the Holy Spirit having them write is saying to them, use this one, use this one... put it in your literally slide tray. The Holy Spirit in his wisdom has let the authors arrange on occasion the order in which those slides occur. And the order may be determined not by the chronology in which the events occurred but may also be ordered by the particular topic that the gospel writer at that moment is attempting to trace. So you find in Mark who is highly topical at times Mark is at a simple point in his development of the gospel where he wants to talk about the miracles of Jesus. He's not nearly as chronologically conscious as we are. He does the same thing as you if you were on a trip. You may go through Jerusalem and take all the slides and show how chronologically you went from day to day in Jerusalem. Or you could show subjects together. Probably in Matthew's gospel we find the correct chronological order. Matthew's gospel is topical formulation.

Let's dive a little into the text now. Let's talk first of all about the storm at sea.

It's just like Jesus to get us into problems when we're dead tired. Have you found that your greatest tests often come when you're the most bummed out. You don't really have the strength to deal with what's going on and all of a sudden the circumstances of life are such that you get pushed into something that you don't think you're up to. It would be nice if after a busy day that Jesus had taught the crowds – remember the disciples all the time had to be crowd control experts – Jesus said let's get to the other side. They get in the boat and Jesus goes to sleep. If

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you want to see the humanity of Jesus just look at the gospel of Mark. Jesus gets into the boat and falls sound asleep. He is in the middle of the storm asleep. Mark tells us a little detail that none of the other gospel writers include. It's the fact that he's asleep on a cushion or on a pillow. A little detail. Why don't other gospel writers pick it up? Who knows? If Peter stands behind Mark, if Mark is writing down what Peter preached the common assumption, one of the reasons why it's believed that Peter does stand behind the gospel of Mark is everywhere in the other gospels where Peter looks good, in Mark it is downplayed or omitted all together. He doesn't puff himself up. Peter downplays himself.

The eyewitness account is coming through. Peter is probably the one who got him up. He still remembers what his head was lying on. J. B. Phillips in his book Ring of Truth talks about those moments when you read the gospels when you know there is such a ring of authenticity and eyewitness characters that nobody could have fabricated that kind of thing. It strikes at the heart that this is the real stuff. Who would have thought if they were making up a story to have that little detail in there?

The lake of Galilee is also called the Lake of Chinnereth which means "harp" and it's shaped like a harp. It's a lake that has mountains all around it. It's the lowest fresh-water lake on earth. It's about 650-700 feet below the level of the sea. When the Mediterranean winds come it funnels through the mountain chain and can whip up today even – obviously the wind conditions are the same today – terrible storms at certain times of the year. They rise suddenly and dissipate suddenly. The disciples are caught in that moment and they panic. They wake the Lord up. I doubt they have in mind at all that he's going to do a miracle. I think they were sort of upset that he was sleeping while they were bailing water like crazy. They simply want him to grab a pail like everybody else. "Master don't you care if we perish? How can you sleep?" He gets up and does a very profound thing. He speaks to the elements because he has this ability to communicate to them and they quiet down. Then he rebukes the disciples because they didn't have faith. Why should they have had faith? Because Jesus had begun that segment by saying, "Let us go across to the other side." It was his assurance, we're going to cross to the other side. In the middle of the storm they forgot the word of the Lord. That's really what faith is all about. Faith is remembering what Jesus said even when he says it calmly. In the middle of the storm they forgot he said that. And when you forget what Jesus has said you can't have faith. Fear will dominate. So he rebukes them: Don't you have faith? They thought they were lost.

We look back on that now and think, "How stupid of the disciples! How could the boat have gone down? The Lord of heaven and earth was on the path. There's no way it could have sunk because he'd have gone down with it." It's nice for us to be armchair critics. There are moments in life when we feel like we're sinking. We ought to look more seriously at what the disciples are feeling.

They get to the other side and there's this wild man from Gaderea. In the scriptures you can see that there are gradations of demon possession. How do I say that? This man was way gone. He lived among the tombs. Anybody who lives in tombs has got to have some things wrong in their personality. He'd been tied down many times but he had super human strength. He was punishing himself, bruising himself with stones. He was always crying out night and day. And he was also without clothes. The mad man of Gederea. I submit to you that there is great deal of difference between his condition and Mark 1, Jesus first miracle that Mark records in the synagogue at Capernaum. Remember Jesus begins his ministry and suddenly while he was

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preaching there same a man that said, “What have you to do with us, Jesus the most high God. I know who you are, the holy one of God.” That man in the synagogue in Capernaum was normal enough and regular enough to at least get in a worship audience such as this. But in the presence of Jesus he erupted. This guy at Gederea he would have never fit in any synagogue. He was uncontrollable. So there are gradations of possession.

People say what’s the difference between possession and mental illness? There are some who look at the gospels and say the gospels are classic misreading of human illness. What we have is people in those days were superstitious and they were simpler educationally than we are so they simply misdiagnosed schizophrenia or mental illnesses for demon possession. Everything had a demon behind it.

I differ with you. Mental illness is a very real thing. You don’t cast something out of a mentally ill person. It doesn’t go into a herd of pigs and stampede down to the sea. When a person is possessed they have an alien spirit within them. I think C. S Lewis was so right. He said the devil is smart enough to adapt his strategy to fit the culture. The fact is in western culture our emphasis has been upon ideas and technology so the devil has infiltrated our idea system. We do not recognize things as demonic – such a secular humanism, playboy philosophy, hedonism, Marxism or the like. All those are manifestations C. S Lewis says of the demonic in our culture. But since the demonic has invaded the realm of ideas we don’t see it. But in the east where people engage in meditation and personal absorption and the like the demons enter into that capacity and become personally possessive of an individual. If you’re in the orient, India, a place like that you see a great manifestation of demon possession because people are into mysticism and contemplation and mantras and the like. I think what we’re seeing in America right now is the east cross in the west and there is now a moving into our culture of personal possession that is far greater in 1987 that it was when I was a young person back in the 40s and 50s and early 60s.

This person is like all the demon possessed people. He immediately recognizes who Jesus is and he’s torn. The human side of him is wanting to be free. The demonic side is begging Jesus. And Luke makes an interesting comment. Luke says that he begged Jesus not to send them into the abyss. When you’re dealing with the plagues in the book of Revelation and you see in the end time a demonic plague come upon mankind, the demons arise out of the abyss. That is, the Bible presents the idea that underneath the earth there is sort of a demon pit, holding place for demons.

One of the strategies of the devil is to, in our day, make western oriented people think that he doesn’t exist. He’s the only major world power I know of whose basic foreign policy is to convince people he doesn’t exist. You’re nutty and flaky and religious and all that if you believe in the devil.

“Don’t send us to the abyss.” Jesus gave them leave. They came out of the man and entered the swine that was feeding on the hillside and they ran down the hill and perished in the sea.

Let’s look at that for a moment from a western point of view. What’s Jesus doing here. He’s taking a pig farmer’s property and destroying it. There have been some people who have looked at this story and said, “Was there ever rejoicing in the orthodox quarters when word got around that Jesus wiped out a pig farm!” Some have said what Jesus is doing is endorsing the staying

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away from swine. But we know that Jesus allowed his disciples to eat on the Sabbath and he had a general disregard of Pharisaic interpretation of things. And besides, this is the area across the sea where gentiles lived and they're probably gentile pigs.

It looks like a wanton destruction of Jesus of a lot of property. What is he doing allowing this to happen? It struck me that the real key to understanding what happened is to note the reaction of the townspeople to the healing of the demoniac. When they see him sitting there whole and in his right mind, instead of rejoicing, instead of being happy about it they beg Jesus to depart out of their neighborhood. That is the key to why I think Jesus allowed the destruction of property. It had to do with the value that the townspeople held. The people would have voted to keep the pigs rather than the demonic. Their value was not on the person. It was on things and property. Jesus like it or not is scrabbling our ethical and moral values. Telling us that people are always more important than things and property. That doesn't mean he just endorses wanton destruction of property but he's saying that when your values of life are saying that things are more important than people then you're messed up in your values and you need to get things straight. That's my guess.

Matthew's gospel is a difference in the account. Matthew talks about there being two demoniacs. Mark and Luke only talk about one. Why this divergence? The key is if you look at Mark and Luke's account there is longer treatment. They go on to talk about the man who goes into the Decapolis. That's a wide area consisting of ten non-Jewish gentile cities and share how much the Lord had done for him. What happened was this. Matthew takes a panoramic shot of the whole thing. Mark and Luke come in with a zoom lens. Why are they concerned about the one? Because he is the one of the two who went out and did something with his healing. He talked about it until everybody in the Decapolis heard. He became an evangelist. So Mark and Luke center and focus upon him since evidently the other person was simply delivered and then did nothing after that. In fact this one demonic says to Jesus, "Let me go with you." He begged that he might go with him. Surprisingly Jesus doesn't allow him to do it. He says I think the hardest words I think he ever said to anybody. "Go home and tell your friends how much the Lord has done for you." So he fades into history as a nameless person. If he had been allowed to come with Jesus we would have known his name like we knew Peter's and Andrew's and Mark's and John's and all the rest. But Jesus says, No you go home and tell what the Lord has done for you.

I think in that we see a marvelous application is that for most of us the call of Jesus on our life is not to go to Africa or China. The call for us is to go home. To go to work, to go to school, to go back to the everyday common tasks of life and within the midst of that everyday, ordinary tasks of life to minister and lift up the name of Jesus. It would be far more glamorous to go somewhere else and share Christ. But for most of us the Lord simply says go home and tell what the Lord has done.

That passes into the other instances – the woman with the hemorrhage. She is such a classic example of a person who has faith. She doesn't let her twelve-year condition get her down. She believes that Jesus can overrule the physicians. Mark and Luke did an interesting thing here. Mark says she'd spent all her living on physicians. Luke being the doctor – Luke is always noting medical details remember – he remembers that Peter's mother-in-law had the high fever, that the man with the withered hand it was his right hand, that the man with leprosy was *full* of leprosy. He's the diagnostician. Luke is not about to let doctors take the brunt end so he makes

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an additional statement that only Luke makes, that no doctor could help her. Meaning that her disease was beyond what any physician could give. He defends the trade.

You have to read Leviticus 15 alongside Mark 5 to get the real imprint of this story. Leviticus 15 this woman was disqualified from being in public because she was ceremonially unclean. She had an unstopped flow of blood. A hemorrhaging condition which under the Leviticus law rendered her in a ceremonial condition of impurity. That meant that whatever she touched and another came along and touched it, both would be impure. Being impure meant one must abstain from temple worship, stay on the house until evening and cleanse himself, it meant to abstain from normal human relationships including sexual relationships so anything she touched or any person she touched became unclean. She comes out of that condition of uncleanness and here are all the Pharisees and scribes surrounding Jesus, believing they're keeping God's law. This little lady is coming through the crowd pushing people aside, defiling people left and right and they don't even know it. She knows when she touches Jesus that he is in violation of that Leviticus 15 ordinance about touching the clean thing. He's clean and pure. Always uncleanness worked that way. Whatever was unclean, to touch something clean, contaminated the clean thing. It was never something clean uncontaminated the unclean. It was always the unclean contaminated the clean. But when she touches Jesus who is clean he stops and the disciples think it's ridiculous in a pressing crowd like that that he would ask who touched him. But he felt power go out of him. He said, "Who touched me?" She, knowing he meant her, and fearing that he would now call her to task for having defiled him says, "Lord, it was me." He says, "Daughter!"

It's interesting in the gospels there are only three people Jesus calls by specific titles. One person he calls Son, one person he calls Child and the third person he calls Daughter. All three of them were people who regarded themselves as standing outside of relationship with God. Sachems because he was a tax collector and not godly at all. Jesus calls him Son. The paralytic who was filled with sin did not regard himself as God's child. And this woman who felt isolated, away from God, Jesus calls Daughter.

Isn't that like the Lord in dealing with us? How could I ever be a child of God? He just calls the most unlikely people those kind of titles. He really loves people. Jesus teaches us something that is so very important. He's saying, when the unclean touches the clean and I am the clean the energy is reversed. There's a whole different energy flow. Nothing unclean can contaminate Jesus. He can take the sins of the whole world and take the negative energy turn it around and pass his purity back into that which is unclean and that which is sinful. So this woman serves as a great model for us of what happens when our personal uncleanness hits the lord. He takes it, turn it around and jams back righteousness and purity into our lives. Marvelous thing.

Then there's Jairus' daughter, the little girl who just died. This is Jesus' first raising from the dead. Notice he puts all the unbelievers out of the room and he takes three – Peter, James and John – into the room and says to her, "Little girl I say to you arise." Notice that the girl was twelve years of age and the woman had had the flow of blood for twelve years they're sort of linked structurally together because of the word "twelve".

One interesting thing. If you flip over to Acts 9 and see Peter's ministry after the day of Pentecost. Peter's been ministering in the area outside of Jerusalem and he comes to a place called Poppa where there is a deaconess by the name of Dorks who's Aramaic name was

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Tabitha. She had done all kinds of good works and she died. Peter when he came upon the scene found all the widows weeping because their Dorcas was dead. There's almost a sense of *deja vu*. Like Peter's been in a situation like this before. Jesus went in and bent over the lifeless form and said, "Little girl I say to you arise." I think that's how the gift of faith works. The gift of faith works when we've seen it happened somewhere else and we come in and have strong courage to bring it to bear on the present need. Peter comes in and he says *Talitha cumi* and she rises up from the dead. The training that Peter had gotten in Jairus' daughter's house becomes applicable in Peter's later ministry. When we're around that which builds faith and builds courage and builds discipleship then we have it ourselves when we need it.

So the Lord is moving on these fronts in life. Miracle over nature, miracle over demons, miracle over illness and a miracle over death.

I wrote this 22 years ago. It became my observation of what Jesus was doing in the storm at sea. It is a way of looking at this great miracle. Probably my favorite spot in all this world is dead center in the Lake of Galilee. Long before I ever got there God had given me kind of an interpretation of how we apply the lesson of that storm to our own lives. I pray as I share this this evening that it may speak to you if you're going through a situation that in any way parallels what these disciples went through.

"God has appointed limits, boundaries, for all things. Nothing can infinitely continue unless he allows it. All things early have their appointed season. The most excruciating pain, the most loathsome disease, the despondency of soul have limits, boundaries beyond which they cannot pass. They may tarry so long and no longer. God has appointed limits for all things. High winds have limits. Mankind has learned through long experience that no wind can blow forever and no storm can endlessly continue. The high winds while raging may be fierce, they may batter land and sea and man. They may wreck untold havoc leaving in their wake battered towns and blown down trees but high winds must pass. High winds do not blow everywhere at once. Nor do they blow anywhere in one place forever.

"A storm had risen on the Sea of Galilee, a storm of high winds. The storm might blow for hours even days but what if it blew longer. Permit that storm to keep its fury in collective heaps of force and it will soon effect more than Galilee's sea. The unspent winds will gather and gather. Hurricane force will be added to hurricane force. Tornado funnel to tornado funnel. Grant the flying storm of fury and foment long enough time and the ability to gather momentum and the world could be destroyed.

"But high winds have limits. They may blow so far, only so long. High winds are fought. The disciples in the boat, the other fishers on the lake, the boats round about were not at all concerned with the truth that high winds have limits. Mathematical odds favor the storm's disintegrating before morning. Small assurance. Let that storm continue only minutes longer and they would not be around to witness its dissolution. Their leaking boat was listing dangerously, driven recklessly, hurled about furiously. One concern was theirs: bail water fast. Keep the boat floating until the high winds are conquered by the limits. High winds have limits. High winds are fought. How many are the high winds of life?

"Speak to the man lying on a bed of illness, wracked by a thousand instruments of pain. Join in a conversation with a soul who is passing through the dark valley of despair racked by the high

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winds of inner doubt, inferiority, insecurity, unbearable sorrow, disillusioned hope. Stand by the side of a disappointed lover or a grief stricken husband. In normal days they know high winds have limits. That sickness has an ending. That doubts do go away. That grief has termination. But little assurance, little comfort fills our heart when the day of high winds comes. The high winds must be fought, the unseen elements must be wrestled with. Meager power must join conflict with insurmountable opposition. The fight is ever to last it out until the high winds have passed.

“High winds call forth desperate voices. Only when hope is fading fast, only when human strength will not avail, only when the demon elements drive us without mercy, only then do we cry aloud, “Master! Carest thou not I few perish?” Desperate voices arise when the familiar threatens.

“In your meditation on this ancient record of that Galilean Sea storm take care that you do not look at the disciples disdainfully. Do not laugh. Do not call them cowards. Do not make light of their danger. This was not the first time they had sailed a ship. This was not their first journey across that lake. This was not their first storm. These were men of the sea, hour by hour, day by day, year in and year out they had sailed under azure skies upon blue green water. They knew the lake of Galilee, its harbors, its deep points, its sandbars, its shoals, its dangers. Sailing was old hat to them. They were mature men, experienced fishers. No ordinary wind would frighten them. But it was night – black night. A thousand hells were raging around their ship. A thousand furies leaped to beat them backed away and beat again. No light, no compass, no hope for the storm to quickly end. What a change. What a sudden change. The sea so familiar to them ahead suddenly become an uncharted expanse. The sea that provided them a livelihood had now become their greatest enemy. That which they were most used to had become that which they could no longer handle.

“We all get used to life. We all get settled in our ways. We all dwell in the rut of the common. We know how to make the most of fair days. But how often that which we are most familiar becomes suddenly our greatest anxiety, our homes peace and serene, full of Christian faith and love, suddenly destroyed. Our loved ones, patient, dear, full of life and hope suddenly cut down. Our health taken for granted. Thoughtlessly enjoyed in a moment gone. How sudden are the high winds. How urgent are the desperate voices. Perishing, perishing. Master, carest thou not if we perish?

“If desperate voices call when the familiar threaten so also desperate voices call from the strongest of people. He disciples were men of physical strength. To keep up with Jesus you had to be strong. In the midst of the high winds every muscle is taunt, every effort that can be spent is being spent. All hands are bailing water, water that was swamping the boat. Water pouring in from the raging sea. All their strength was being brought to bear on that situation. But their strength was not enough. On land they could have easily lasted out the bantering of the storm. On land their legs could run. Run to shelter from the lashing gale. But their strength now was weakness and they were weak because they were in the boat. That boat floated upon the waters in days of calm. On many a lazy afternoon it had carried its passengers well across a glass smooth sea. But it is in the storm when the waves are beating high when life is caught in the swell and swamp of breaking hostile force that the boat shows its weakness.

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“The boat, says Mark was already filling. Never boast of strength. Never believe you are indestructible. Or un-temptable. Never thing even for a moment here is no situation which you cannot master in your own power. God may place you in a boat and try your faith. God may put you in a situation you cannot escape. Where all your powers and all your abilities are locked within the boat and you cannot get to safer shoes. In spite of your own strength high winds and a leaking boat may lead you to utter desperate words. Desperate voices often fail in giving the solution “Master do you not care if we perish?” Are they not really saying, “Wake up! Help us bail water. One more hand may make the difference. Jesus, fit into our prescribed pattern. It’s an energy. Do it our way.” If Jesus would only follow the directions we give him, if he would only take our pain. But what to him is a pail? A desperate voice calls forth when the familiar threatens. It calls forth from the strongest of men.

“Desperate voices also call forth with loudness and brevity. Have you ever been on a lake on a fair day? Then you know how far the voice travels. You can hear the normal conversation in a boat furlongs away or you can call from far out to a friend on the bank and be heard easily. In speaking to the large crowds, Jesus often taught them by the sea. Certainly they could hear him better. Peter and his crew were old hands a round the sea. On clear and sunny days they’d fish in their boats or clean their nets and their banter back and forth from boat to boat and within the boat served to break the stillness of the lakeside quiet. How relaxed is the voice in balmy days. How easily it carries. How endlessly and effortlessly does it give forth words. But have you ever been at a storm at sea? Have you ever been in a small fishing vessel in the dead of night when the billows of the deep and the winds of wildness meat on the surface of the lake and churn the once moonlit waters into boiling waves of ambition. The noise of water meeting wind, of near and distant thunder clasps. Of mountainous foam breaking in continuous roar fills he once still silence. Stand now on the deck and call to the little boat only yards away, “Is it well? How goes he ship? Ahoy! Ahoy!” Stand closer to the rail. Cup your hands again. Call more mightily. “Ahoy! Is it well?” But the high winds have carried away your voice. And no one else can hear.

“The disciples found this so. The other little ships were with them. But they were beyond communication. The storm was battering and tossing, heaving and weaving their small boat in and out and among the slamming waves.

“The thunder of the waves roaring, the whipping of the mighty gale, the boiling waters beating stern and prow, blotted out all other sounds and the loudest shout was only a whisper. The whisper of desperate voices, “Master do you not care if we perish?” We learn in times of high winds that Jesus is the only one to whom we can go. On normal days we converse among ourselves freely and easily. But when our soul faces the terrible onslaught, when all human communication has been cut off, when father or mother or loved one cannot hear for you cannot break through, there is one to whom you can go. One to whom you must go. You will waste no words with him. You will come urgently, insistently, desperately. Calling loudly in his ear, “Master, I am perishing! Don’t you care?” Desperate voices. High winds call forth desperate voices and desperate voices call forth an unexpected word “Peace be still.” Only a command from Jesus and the tempest is done. Mark says a great storm of wind arose. And there was a great calm.

“Until now how free have been our thoughts upon this text. How well do we understand the fury of the storm. And the desperate plight of our humanity. How much easier it always is to focus it

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on turmoil and crisis. How much more does the painting strike our eye when deep blotches of black and brown sweep across the canvas. How often have fought the high winds? How well do we know the nine dependencies of doubt. The inner terror brought by the fear of failure, the personal inadequacies, the haunting sin filled memory, the spiritual storm that rages in our heart, pressed by Satan left alone in the teeming mass of humanity hating life and death. Peace be still. Peace be still. This is the last thing we are expecting. We know too well the high winds, the desperate voices but too little the word of peace. And the quiet of victory. We're hearing the blast of high winds these days. The age appears to be hopeless. The night we are told is dark. The church of Jesus Christ is not the trained army it should be. Our contribution appears so potentially insignificant. And yet, the Lord of the lake of Galilee stands in our midst and from him is coming this command, "Peace to the crashing waves. Be still to the mighty winds. Peace be still is the last thing we are expecting. It's precisely the last thing the disciples were expecting. Thus Jesus speaks a second unexpected word "Why are you afraid? Have you no faith?" No faith. Hear that. At least the disciples might have had some faith. At least they might have believed that as long as Jesus was in the boat nothing could happen to them outside his will and control. At least they might have had a grain of mustard seed faith. But they had no faith. Not even a little. And when you have no faith you will always be afraid. Jesus expects us to have faith, no matter what. He told his disciples, let us go across to the other side. They had forgotten that word. When you forget the word of Jesus no faith is the result.

"Frequently we find consolation in the knowledge that God has appointed limit for all things. That no wind can blow everywhere at once or in one place forever. But it does not require faith to believe a storm will gradually end. It does not require to believe at life passes into death. No consolation is found in knowing that the highest wind must eventually taper off into a gentle breeze. So the word of Christ jars us. Why are you afraid? Have you no faith? Has not he who began a good work in you able to complete it. We are not serving a powerless Christ. We are not calling on the name of some miserably crucified man whose life forever ended nailed tight to a Roman cross. We are not gathered in these moments to sing songs to a God who cannot hear. Or to pray prayers to a God who cannot answer. Or to preach the redemption of a Christ who cannot redeem. We worship and serve the king of kings and Lord of lords. He sets his glory and dominion before us and bids us become large in faith. He says, "Look not at the storm but at me. Look not at your little boat but at me." And if Christ becoming man means anything it means he is in the boat. The winds beat, the waves roll, the ship is going down, God is asleep, the disciples could see it. He who that day had taught the crowds, had said such wonderful words about the sower and his seed and who had spoken so forcefully of the kingdom of God he was asleep. The ship was filling. The king is lost. The king's subjects are sinking. Ahh! If we could but realize for a moment, the ship cannot go down. If we are lost, God is lost. He has committed himself to our boat. If we drown he drowns. Why are you afraid? Have you no faith? He does not curiously and conditionally ask us if we have faith. He demands it of us and rebukes us when we lack it. High winds. Desperate voices and an unexpected word. They all tie in. High winds, the circumstances of life. Desperate voices – the weakness of our humanity in the midst of the circumstances. An unexpected word – a rebuke to the circumstances – Peace be still! And a rebuke to the weakness of our humanity – Why are you afraid? Have you no faith? Thank God he is with us. Thank God he cares if we perish. Thank God he saves us in our desperate plight and thank God also he speaks the word of rebuke in order that we might come to trust him more. As the hymn writer has said, The wind and the waves shall obey my will. Peace be still. Whether the wrath of the storm tossed sea or demons

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or men or whatever it be, though water can swallow the ship where lies the master of ocean and earth and skies. They all shall sweetly obey thy will peace be still.”

You do speak your peace, Lord, to our heart. There are moments when the storms in our life are as turbulent as the storms in Galilee. There are moments we are as frightened as are the disciples on the boat. There are moments when we think you’ve gone to sleep on us. There are moments when we call upon you desperately to help us. Thank you Lord for helping us. Thank you that you will not go on sleeping when we are in life’s storms. Thank you, Lord, for being not only the Lord on the lake of Galilee but being the Lord over our own circumstances. No matter what storm any of us faces in this room tonight you are the Lord and when we put our trust in you and believe your word that we are going to the other side and depend upon that with all of our heart that we are going from man’s side to your side that when we believe that and trust in you we’ll see it come to pass. And when our faith fails as did the disciples it doesn’t mean that you won’t still act, for you always Lord are acting on our behalf. So we pray lord a special little prayer for those here who are going through storms. That you would minister to them in their circumstances, give them faith to persevere and lord in your own power smite the storm which they face. And bring peace both to the elements and to the heart. We ask it in your name. Amen.