

POWER OVER CHAOS

MARK 4:35–5:20

Monday – Big Picture Overview (Mark 4:35–5:20)

Read Mark 4:35–5:20 in one sitting. After teaching about the kingdom in parables, Jesus demonstrates its power through two dramatic acts. He commands the wind and waves to obey him, then crosses into Gentile territory where he confronts a man possessed by a “legion” of unclean spirits. Both episodes reveal Jesus exercising the authority of Israel’s God over forces of chaos—both natural and spiritual. The disciples, terrified by the storm and its sudden calm, ask, “Who is this?” The Gentile townspeople, confronted by Jesus’ power to heal and restore, beg him to leave. Between these two responses stands one formerly possessed man, now clothed and in his right mind, sent back to his community as a witness to what the Lord has done.

1. What common theme connects the storm and the demon-possessed man?
2. How do different characters respond to Jesus’ display of power?
3. What does crossing to “the other side” reveal about the scope of Jesus’ mission?

Theological Prompt: The kingdom of God confronts and conquers the forces of chaos—whether wind and wave, spiritual oppression, or the powers that dehumanize—restoring God’s creative order and bringing wholeness to people and places trapped in darkness.

Practical Application: Identify one area of chaos in your life or community where you need to trust Jesus’ power to bring order and peace.

Prayer Prompt: Ask the Lord to deepen your trust in his authority over every force that threatens to overwhelm you.

Tuesday – Jesus Calms the Storm (Mark 4:35–41)

Jesus directs the disciples to cross to the other side of the Sea of Galilee, but a fierce windstorm threatens to swamp their boat. While Jesus sleeps, the disciples panic and wake him with an accusatory question: “Don’t you care that we’re perishing?” Jesus rises, rebukes the wind and sea with a word, and the storm instantly becomes calm. His question to the disciples cuts deeper than theirs: “Why are you afraid? Have you still no faith?” Their fear of the storm gives way to a greater fear—awe at the one who commands nature itself. The ancient Israelites knew that only God rules the raging sea (Psalm 65:7; 89:9; 107:23–30). When Jesus calms the chaos with a word, the question “Who is this?” hangs in the air.

4. What does Jesus’ ability to sleep during the storm reveal about his trust in the Father?
5. How does Jesus’ rebuke of wind and sea echo God’s creative ordering of chaos in Genesis 1?
6. Why does Jesus question the disciples’ faith rather than simply celebrating their rescue?

Theological Prompt: Jesus exercises the authority that belongs to Israel’s God alone—the power to subdue chaos and bring order from disorder.

Practical Application: Consider a situation where fear has crowded out faith. How might Jesus’ question “Why are you afraid?” reframe your response?

Prayer Prompt: Pray for the kind of faith that rests in Jesus’ presence even when storms rage around you.

Wednesday – Creation, Exodus, and the Calming of the Sea (Mark 4:35–41)

The sea held deep symbolic meaning for ancient Israel. Unlike their seafaring Phoenician neighbors, the Israelites experienced the sea as a place of threat and chaos—the dark waters from which God brought forth creation (Genesis 1:2), the sea God divided for Israel's escape from Egypt (Exodus 14), the depths from which monsters emerge in apocalyptic visions (Daniel 7). The Psalms celebrate God as the one who stills the storm and calms the waves. When Jesus rebukes the wind and sea, he acts with the authority of Israel's creator God, demonstrating that the kingdom of God means the restoration of God's ordering power over a chaotic world. The disciples, witnessing this power firsthand, are confronted with a question they cannot yet fully answer: if Jesus does what only God does, who is he?

7. How does the sea function symbolically in Israel's scriptures and in this story?

8. What connections do you see between Jesus calming the storm and God's earlier acts of delivering his people?

9. In what ways does this miracle serve as more than just a rescue—what does it reveal about Jesus' identity and mission?

Theological Prompt: Jesus embodies God's creative power, bringing order where chaos threatens and demonstrating that God's kingdom breaks into a disordered world with sovereign authority.

Practical Application: Reflect on how recognizing Jesus as the one who calms chaos changes your understanding of his presence in the midst of disorder.

Prayer Prompt: Thank God for his faithful power to bring order and peace, shown decisively in Jesus.

Thursday – The Gerasene Demoniac (Mark 5:1–20)

Jesus crosses into Gentile territory, the Decapolis region east of the Sea of Galilee, where he encounters a man living among the tombs—unclean, isolated, violent, and possessed by a “legion” of demons. The man’s condition represents multiple layers of uncleanness: demon possession, dwelling among graves, and existing in Gentile territory. The name “Legion” evokes Roman military occupation, suggesting both the man’s internal torment and the oppressive reality of imperial rule. When Jesus commands the unclean spirits to leave, they beg to enter a herd of pigs—themselves unclean animals—which then rush headlong into the sea and drown. The townspeople, confronted with the healed man now “clothed and in his right mind,” respond not with joy but with fear, begging Jesus to leave. Yet the restored man becomes a witness, proclaiming throughout the Decapolis what the Lord has done.

10. What do the multiple markers of uncleanness (demons, tombs, pigs, Gentile territory) reveal about the scope of Jesus’ healing power?

11. How does the name “Legion” connect the man’s personal torment to the broader political reality of Roman occupation?

12. Why might the townspeople fear Jesus’ power more than they feared the demoniac’s violence?

Theological Prompt: Jesus’ kingdom breaks down every barrier—ethnic, ritual, and spiritual—bringing God’s restoring power even to places considered unclean and unreachable.

Practical Application: Where do you see Jesus crossing boundaries to bring healing in ways that challenge your comfort or expectations?

Prayer Prompt: Ask God to open your eyes to the places and people you might consider beyond the reach of his kingdom, and to see them as Jesus does.

Friday – Healing, Witness, and the Way of the Kingdom (Mark 5:1–20)

The healed demoniac begs to follow Jesus, but Jesus refuses. Instead, he sends the man back to his own people with a commission: “Go home to your friends and tell them how much the Lord has done for you, and how he has had mercy on you.” This command stands in striking contrast to Jesus’ frequent instructions for silence elsewhere in Mark’s Gospel. Here, in Gentile territory, Jesus appoints this formerly demon-possessed man as a witness—perhaps the first missionary to the Gentiles. The man’s restoration is not merely personal; it reintegrates him into his community and gives him a vocation. His healing includes not dependence on Jesus’ physical presence but empowerment to witness to Jesus’ work. The kingdom advances not only through dramatic displays of power but through the testimony of those who have experienced Jesus’ mercy and been sent to proclaim it.

13. Why does Jesus send the healed man back to his community rather than allowing him to become a follower?

14. How does this commission to witness in Gentile territory anticipate the later mission to the Gentiles?

15. What does the man’s obedience—proclaiming what Jesus has done—teach us about the relationship between healing and witness?

Theological Prompt: Kingdom healing restores people not only to health but to community, vocation, and mission—equipping them to witness to God’s mercy in their own contexts.

Practical Application: Consider how your own experience of God’s mercy positions you to witness in places where you already have relationships and credibility.

Prayer Prompt: Pray for courage and faithfulness to proclaim what the Lord has done, trusting that your testimony matters in God’s kingdom purposes.