

Mark Chapter 4 v 35 - Chapter 6 v 6

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[0 : 00] Good morning. Welcome to Whitby Evangelical Church, especially if you're a visitor like me. And we pray that God will be with us, speaking to us this morning, changing us by the power of his word.

And we're going to start with hymn number 305, Christ Centred Hymn, reminding us of who he is and what he's done for us.

Christ, triumphant, ever-reigning, saviour, master, king. Number 305, we'll stand to sing. Okay, let's come to God in prayer. Let's pray.

Father, what a good thing it is to begin the day and to begin the week by focusing on the Lord Jesus Christ, our saviour, your beloved son, the one of whom you said, this is my son, with whom I am well pleased.

And Lord, we are well pleased with him as well. Those of us who know him, those of us who have been saved by him, who love him, and whose hope is in him, how pleased we are that you sent him, how pleased we are that we know him and that we've been saved.

[1 : 30] Thank you that he is the eternal word incarnate. The word become flesh. The word of God, who always was God, and was always with God.

Now come to be Emmanuel, God with us. Taking our flesh and making it his own. Taking human nature and making it his very own nature.

So that from the time of the incarnation onwards, he was as truly man as he was truly God. What a tremendous thing. And Father, we thank you that he acted on our behalf.

And he is your servant. That servant prophesied in the Old Testament. Who would be wounded for our transgressions and bruised for our iniquities.

Who would take the punishment that brings us peace. Lord, we thank you for that victim crucified. And thank you that through his cross, death is defeated and sinners like us are justified.

[2 : 28] Made right with you. Thank you that he is the priestly king. And thrown forever. Making intercession for all those for whom he died. Lord, we thank you for Jesus.

And we pray that you'd help us to trust him more as a result of being here today. Bless your word to us, we pray. And help us to focus our minds throughout this morning on him, on the Lord Jesus.

Be with us, we pray, in his name. Amen. Okay, I've got two readings this morning. One now and one after the children have left us.

And I'm going to read from Mark's Gospel, chapter 4. And the two readings together will take us right through to chapter 6, verse 6.

But just now we'll read from chapter 4, verse 35. Mark chapter 4, verse 35. Down to chapter 5, verse 20. That day, when evening came, Jesus said to his disciples, Let us go over to the other side.

[3 : 51] 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. Then the disciples walked 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 evil 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.

[4 : 55] 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? Swear to God that you won't torture me. For Jesus had said to him, Come out of this man, you evil 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 evil spirits came out and went into the pigs.

The herd, about 2,000 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.

[6 : 01] 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 didn't let him, but he 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.

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. Well, that's the end of 5 again.

Mark chapter 5, and it's verse 21. Mark chapter 5, and it's verse 21. 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 rulers named Jairus came there. Seeing Jesus, he fell at his feet and 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.

[7 : 30] 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 12 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'll 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.

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 men came from the house of Jairus, the synagogue ruler.

[8 : 38] Your daughter is dead, they said. Why bother the teacher anymore? Ignoring what they said, Jesus told the synagogue ruler, Don't be afraid. Just believe.

He didn't let anyone follow him, except Peter, James, and John, the brother of James. When they came to the home of the synagogue ruler, 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 walked around.

She was 12 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. Jesus left there and went to his hometown, accompanied by his disciples.

[9 : 40] When the Sabbath came, he began to teach in the synagogue and many who heard him were amazed. Where did this man get these things, they asked. What's this wisdom that has been given him?

That he even does miracles. Isn't this the carpenter? Isn't this Mary's son? And the brother of James, Joseph, Judas, and Simon? Aren't his sisters here with us? And they took offense at him.

Jesus said to them, Only in his hometown, among his relatives, and in his own house, is a prophet without honor. He could not do any miracles there, except lay his hands on a few sick people and heal them.

And he was amazed at their lack of faith. Okay, can we keep that passage open in front of us?

It was a long reading, but I don't apologize for that, because in many ways, the reading of the Bible is the most important part of the service, because it is just God's word and nothing else.

[10 : 46] So, it's vital that we read the Bible in our services. Let's pray before we look at it. Heavenly Father, we thank you for your word, which is a lamp to our feet, and a light to our path, and which is able to make us wise unto salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.

Open our minds, open our hearts, to receive and to obey your word, and to believe your word, this morning. In Jesus' name, Amen. Well, yes, it was a lengthy reading, and it was good to be able to divide it up into two sections.

We've got a string of four of Jesus' greatest miracles, and we ended up in the synagogue, his home synagogue at Nazareth, where he could do hardly any miracles, except just heal a few sick people, and he was amazed at their lack of faith.

So, he stills a storm on the Sea of Galilee, with a word of command. He casts out a legion of demons, again, with a word of command. He heals this woman with a persistent hemorrhage, without any words at all, actually.

And then, he raises a 12-year-old girl from the dead, just with a word or two. And then, as I say, the section closes with him unable to perform miracles at his home synagogue of Nazareth, not because he didn't have the power, but because he, it wouldn't have been right to have performed miracles for such an unbelieving people.

[12 : 39] Now, I'm sure you've heard sermons, good sermons, on any of these four miracles individually in the past. And we could consider, and I've certainly preached many times on each of those four miracles.

But I want to speak tonight, this morning, sorry, I want to speak this morning on all of them together, a string of miracles.

And I think Mark puts these miracles together deliberately, because he wants us to feel their cumulative power. So I want to look at all four of them together this morning, briefly, and then just ask the question, what can we learn from them?

I think the first thing we can learn from these four miracles is the sheer power of Jesus, the power of Jesus. I think Mark is telling us in the passage that we read that there is nothing that Jesus can't put right.

Absolutely nothing that Jesus can't put right. If you read your Old Testament, you'll find that God made everything good, but that everything has gone completely wrong.

[13 : 59] Because of human rebellion against our creator God. But right from the very beginning, God said that he was going to put right what we had put wrong.

He was going to put it all right again. And he was going to do this through a king, an anointed one, a king. And the Jews call this king the Messiah, the anointed one.

And the Greek for Messiah or anointed one is the Christ. And Mark believes the New Testament teaches that Jesus is that Christ.

He is the one, in other words, the promised one who has come to put everything right that we've put wrong. And in the passage that we read, you can see Jesus putting everything right.

So, the storm on the Sea of Galilee or the Lake of Galilee. Water in the Bible, the sea in the Bible is something threatening.

[15 : 20] Obviously, it's a blessing, water, but it is also a threat. And it's a symbol of disorder and chaos.

those of you who have read the book of Revelation will have been slightly disappointed towards the end where it describes the new creation and it says there'll be no more sea.

Some of you have come to Whitby for the sea. In the new creation, there'll be no more sea. There'll be something better, I'm sure.

But you might think that's a puzzling statement, but in the Bible, the sea has a dark side to it. I mean, sea journeys in biblical times were dangerous.

It's amazing the Apostle Paul in 2 Corinthians says that he'd been shipwrecked three times. That's not bad, is it? Shipwrecked three times and there was another one, at least another one to come because he hadn't had that final journey to Rome yet when the ship sunk again.

[16 : 27] So that's at least four shipwrecks in a lifetime. Most of us haven't done as well as that as far as shipwrecks are concerned. So, you thought twice about travelling on the sea, on the waters in biblical time.

people didn't get sentimental about the sea in the ancient world. It was a threatening force totally uncontrollable by man.

Human beings were at the mercy and still are of the sea. Only God can control the waters. Only God can control the sea.

One of the first things he does in Genesis chapter 1 is separate the dry land from the waters and keep them apart. And that's an indication of his power.

And in this first miracle you've got disciples who are seasoned fishermen terrified at this unusual and perhaps even unique storm.

[17 : 37] They can do nothing. They're at the mercy of the waters. they're about to sink. But Jesus stills that storm with one word of command.

So this is the power of God. He is the king who has come to subdue to overcome the disorder, the powers of disorder and evil that have ruined God's world.

He's in charge of the water. then we've got that man with a legion of demons. He's out of control. No one can restrain him.

Excuse me. He breaks the chains that they try to shackle him with. No one is strong enough to subdue him. He cuts himself.

He self-harms with stones. He lives in the tombs. He lives amongst the dead crying out with terrifying shrieks day and night. So this is another humanly impossible situation.

[18 : 48] He hasn't got just one demon. He's got a legion of them. You can't just remember how many in the world are in a legion. But however many it was, that's how many he had.

He's totally out of control. humans are helpless with this man. They can't control him.

They don't know what to do. But Jesus again has total power over these demons. And they end up in a herd of pigs, which is where they belong.

Because pigs for Jewish people were unclean. And of course the pigs go off and commit collective suicide. So again, the amazing power of Jesus in this situation which is completely beyond human power to control.

And at the end of the story you've got this madman naked, this naked madman sitting clothed and in his right mind.

[19 : 58] The power of Jesus. He's come to put everything right. And then you've got this woman with this chronic bleeding problem, which as you probably know, was not just for Jews a physical problem.

That was bad enough. But there were other implications as well. And in the law of Moses, this condition rendered a woman unclean.

woman and she was excluded from public worship and possibly even from social contact, which is why she was so secretive about this.

It's why she came up behind Jesus and just touched the hem of his robe. This was embarrassing. She didn't want anybody to know about that.

she'd spent a great deal for 12 years on many doctors and she'd just grown worse.

[20 : 57] She hadn't got any better. So again, another situation which is humanly hopeless. The experts don't know what to do. There's no human solution to this woman's problem.

But Jesus puts her right. And then finally we've got the raising of Jairus' daughter from the dead. This is the climatic miracle I think of the four, because death is the ultimate human problem.

The three earlier problems actually have connections with death. The three previous miracles that I've just described have connections with death.

The disciples were afraid of the storm because they thought they were going to die. The demoniac lived in the tombs amongst the dead. The woman with the persistent bleeding problem, well the Old Testament says the life of the flesh is in the blood.

She was losing blood and therefore she was losing life. It was a living death. And finally, Jesus comes to this situation where a little girl of 12 years of age is at the point of death and then while Jesus is dealing with the bleeding woman, she dies.

[22 : 21] And men come to her, to Jesus from the house and they say, look, it's too late. There's no point anymore. She's dead. There is nobody, there is nothing that anybody can do.

She's dead. But Jesus goes there into that situation where the funeral, there's probably preparations for the funeral have already started.

The professional mourners have been hired and they're making a noise, wailing like they did at Middle Eastern funerals. And Jesus goes in there and he says, she's not dead, she's just asleep.

Imagine it. And he goes in there into the room where the little girl is lying and he says to her, Talitha, Coom, and up she gets.

Jesus raises her from the dead. By his own power, unlike Elijah and Elisha who occasionally raise dead children, but by praying to God to do it, Jesus does it by his own power.

[23 : 41] Jesus puts everything right, even death. Jesus puts right. Okay. So what's Mark telling us here? Mark is telling us here that there is nothing in this fallen, broken creation that is beyond the power of Jesus to put right.

Utterly hopeless situations, Jesus puts right simply by a word. Even death and everything that leads to death are in his control.

Jesus has come to put creation right. God's love. So that's the first thing we can learn from these stories. And then the second thing we can learn is the variety of people, the variety of people on whose behalf Jesus acts.

Did you see that in this long reading? The variety of human beings involved here. Jesus delivers men and women.

women. There are two women and there are men. So men and women, old and young. The girl is 12 years old.

[24 : 59] The respectable and the anything but respectable, the synagogue ruler and a naked man who self-harms and shrieks amongst the tombs.

Now those are the two opposite ends of the spectrum as far as respectability is concerned. Jews and Gentiles, the Decapolis, which means ten cities, were Gentile cities or towns they were really, not cities as we would understand them.

But it was a Gentile area. And you can tell that, definitely, from the fact that they were keeping pigs, which was the last thing that any Jew would do. So this demoniac was a Gentile.

So Jesus acts for Jews and he acts for Gentiles. So Jesus can solve any difficulty for any body.

God's God's God's kingdom. That's what this reading tells us. There is no one beyond his help. There is nobody that he won't help if they come to him.

[26 : 25] So God's kingdom is not just for Jews, it's for Gentiles as well. It's not just for respectable people, it is for people who are far from respectable.

not just for people who fit in easily and who are popular and who are socially skilled. It's for outcasts. It's for people who are disturbed.

It's not just for people who have got it all together. It's for people who nobody knows what to do with. men. It's not just for women and children, it's for men.

And probably more relevant in that society, it's not just for men, it's for women and children as well. So Jesus is dealing with all kinds of human beings in this reading, in this passage.

that's the second point. And the third and the final point that I want to make is the response to Jesus.

[27 : 35] The response to Jesus. If Jesus is God's king who has come to put everything right, to restore creation, to restore mankind, to take away the results and the effects of sin, what should our response be to Jesus?

Well, nothing could be clearer from these incidents. The one thing that unites these different individuals, with all their differences, the one thing that unites them is faith in Jesus.

Why are you so afraid? Do you still have no faith? To the terrified disciples? Daughter, your faith has made you well.

Go in peace and be freed from your suffering. To the bleeding woman, to Jairus, when he hears that his daughter is dead, don't be afraid.

Just believe. And the sense of the verb is just continue to believe. Just go on and believe it. You believed originally, that's why you came to me in the first place. Okay, you thought I could deal with the sickness, now she's dead, don't stop believing now.

[28 : 57] Continue to believe. So faith links all, or certainly three, and it's probably implied in the demoniac.

Three of the people, or the groups of people in these situations, their faith in Jesus is described.

And that's why I put chapter 6 in with this section. Jesus goes to his home synagogue in Nazareth, and he cannot do any miracles, except lay his hands on a few sick people and heal them.

And he's amazed at what? Their lack of faith. faith. And this lack of faith is also seen incidentally in the response of the people of the area to the healing of the demoniac.

They ask him to leave. They're more worried about their pigs than they are about him. And they ask him to leave. And so he goes. So the essential response to Jesus, who has come from God to put everything right that has gone wrong, is faith.

[30 : 19] And the whole Bible is clear about this. Hardly need to spell it out. Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved. It is by grace you are saved through faith.

God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son so that whoever believes in him, believes in him, should not perish but have everlasting life. The gospel is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes.

Thomas, you have believed because you've seen me. Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed. End of John's gospel.

These things are written that you might believe that Jesus is the son of God so that by believing you might have life through his name. The whole of the New Testament is absolutely clear about this.

The response of sinners to God's son, to Jesus, is to trust him, to trust his words, to trust his actions, to trust him to do what he says, to trust what he has done, to put your trust in Jesus.

[31 : 29] Jesus. What does it actually mean to believe in Jesus? Well, I think we can learn one or two things from these stories. I think probably the best example is that woman with her bleeding problem.

She reaches out from the crowd to Jesus personally. I mean, there are many in that crowd who have contact with Jesus, some kind of contact with Jesus.

There's a whole crowd of people thronging against him and the disciples are amazed when he says, who touched me? How can you say who touched me? Everybody's touching you. But nothing happened to them.

The miracle happened when this one individual woman personally reached out from the crowd to Jesus for herself in faith.

And Jesus knew immediately that she'd done that. Her faith wasn't perfect, it was mixed with superstition actually. There was nothing magical about Jesus' clothes.

[32 : 48] And Jesus made a point of explaining that to the woman when he made her identify herself even though she didn't want to and personally reassured her that he had healed her and saved her.

So have you reached out personally to Jesus? There may be people here this morning. I'm sure there are people this morning. There are probably in every evangelical church.

There are people here this morning who've had plenty of contact with Jesus in the crowd. You've been brought to church since you were a child.

You grew up with a Christian peer group. You're probably still part of the church. You may even have some responsibility in the church. You're sort of, you're there, you with the crowd, you're there around Jesus.

You've got some kind of impersonal contact with him. You know all about him. But have you ever personally reached out to him from the crowd?

[34 : 02] Have you ever said this is for me? I want this. I want Jesus. I want him to save me. Have you ever personally responded to Jesus like this woman did?

Without that, you can know all about him like the congregation in the synagogue at Nazareth. Oh, we know Jesus.

We know all about Jesus. We know his four brothers and his sisters came from a large family, Jesus. We know them all. We know his mother.

We knew perhaps his father who may have been dead by now. We know all about Jesus, but they didn't know him.

They knew about him, but they didn't know him. And there may be people here this morning like that. You know all about Jesus. You've known all about Jesus since you were a child in Sunday school.

[35 : 06] Christian parents and so on. But have you ever personally reached out to Jesus like that woman did from the crowd.

Another thing we learn about faith from these stories is that having trusted Jesus, you keep trusting him.

However stormy life becomes, however dark and difficult things get, you keep on trusting Jesus. with Christ in the vessel, you smile at the storm, as John Newton put it.

You trust him in the midst of the darkest storms and the most difficult storms. You keep on trusting him. He never promised us an easy passage.

Mark's gospel was written probably from Rome, probably around about the time when Nero was giving Christians a terrible time. It was as bad as being a Christian in Syria or Nigeria these days with ISIS and so on.

[36 : 24] He did terrible things to Christians. He tried to completely destroy the Christian church in Rome for about four years, 64 to 68 A.D.

and it's probably then that Mark's gospel, round about then that Mark's gospel was written. Mark was writing to people who were being given a terrible time for their Christian faith. They were going through a dark and difficult storm and his message is keep on believing.

And even death itself, keep on believing, Jairus. All right, your 12-year-old daughter has died, that's just about the worst thing that can happen to a parent, to lose a 12-year-old child.

What do you do? Keep on believing. Don't stop believing in Jesus. Don't be afraid.

Just believe and Jesus will wake the dead as easily as you wake up a sleeping child. Although having had some experience actually with sleeping teenagers, that is not always as easy as it sounds.

[37 : 42] But yeah, Jesus will wake the dead. Okay, now I've just got one little matter to sort out with you before we finish.

And that's this. Some of you might be thinking, well, okay, great. If I believe in Jesus now, will all my problems immediately be solved now?

Will all the storms be stilled now? Will all my personality problems, my mental issues be sorted now? Will all my sicknesses be healed now?

Will I not have to die? Well, you know the answer to that. These miracles are actually signs of God's future kingdom.

kingdom. Jesus is showing us what he's going to do on a universal cosmic scale in the future. All storms at peace.

[38 : 43] The devil completely abolished, thrown into the lake of fire. All sickness gone, and death destroyed.

And these are signs of that. And we won't actually experience all that until Jesus comes again. You might think, well, why the delay? Why doesn't he do it now?

I'll tell you why he doesn't do it now. Because he wants you to do what Legion did. He wants you to tell your friends and your family what great things the Lord has done for you.

If God was to take you to glory as soon as you believed in Jesus, all right, you'd be free from all your problems and your difficulties of living in this fallen world, but who would hear the gospel?

No one would hear the gospel. So why are you still here? You are here to tell your friends and your family what great things the Lord has done for you. Okay, is that what you believe about why you're still here?

[39 : 48] Well, if it is, do it. Find ways of doing it. If you want to do it, you'll find ways of doing it. Honestly, if you want to do it, you'll find ways of doing it. One thing I've done is joined the local U3A, University of the Third Age, now they're retired, and I joined the philosophy group.

Because I thought, well, you know, if they're philosophers, they're trying to find out what life is all about, I might be able to help them. So I've been going along and trying to find little opportunities to ask awkward questions, not being silly about it yet, I probably will get silly about it sooner or later, but not sort of in your face yet.

Obviously being wise, I hope. Most of them are total atheists. But I've had a few opportunities to say a few little things, and I hope I'll get more.

You'll find ways. If you want to tell people about Jesus, you will find a way of doing it. That's why you're here. So do it. And the other reason why there's a delay is because if God's kingdom was to come straight away, well, there would be judgment for everybody.

if the king was to come in judgment straight away, then all rebels would be destroyed.

[41 : 29] And that would include me, and he would include you, because we're all sinners. And therefore God's king, the Messiah, unbelievably, didn't just come to judge.

he came to die. He came to die for rebels. He came to die for those who had sinned against God. And Jesus, who had all this power over death that we've been looking at, he went to death himself, crowned with thorns.

He could have come down from that cross, obviously. There's nothing he couldn't do. But he didn't. And he stayed there, dying for rebels, taking God's judgment for rebels, so that they can be forgiven, and so that they can have a part in the kingdom, in the new creation.

That's the reason why we believe in Jesus, not just to get healed, or even to overcome death. that's certainly one reason why we believe in Jesus, but we believe in Jesus because we need our sins forgiven, like this woman, unclean, reaching out to Jesus, saying, make me clean, make me fit for fellowship with God and with his people.

Jesus died for that purpose and rose again, and that is the good news of the gospel, as Mark will tell us later on in his gospel, and that is why Jesus didn't come immediately in judgment.

[43 : 18] There's this delay when the good news of what Jesus has done for sinners can be preached to the world. And when the world has heard, Jesus says, that the Son of Man will come.

Okay, so let's turn to our closing hymn. No, it's not our closing hymn, it's the hymn.