

Lake Cities Community Church
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“Extreme Fear. Extreme Faith.”
Mark 4:35 - 6:6

The great evangelist D.L. Moody, in November of 1892 was exhausted from an overseas trip that lasted over a year. He was ready to return to America and to his ministry in Chicago. He and his son along with 281 other passengers boarded a steamer called “The Spree” in Southampton, England. After a week at Sea they expected to enter New York harbor.

But his trip was not going to be normal. In Moody’s biography (written by his son), he says of this trip: “When about three days into our voyage, I remember I was laying on my couch, as I generally do at sea, congratulating myself on my good fortune, and feeling very thankful to God. I considered myself a very fortunate man, for in all my travels by land and sea I had never been in any accident of a serious nature. While engaged with these grateful thoughts, I was startled by a terrible crash and shock, as if the vessel had been driven on a rock. I did not at first feel much anxiety...my son jumped from his berth and rushed on deck. He was back again in a few moments, exclaiming that the shaft was broken and the vessel was sinking.”

Indeed that is what had occurred. The broken shaft had pierced the ship and water was rushing in. With no way to steer the ship, it began to drift and as it filled with water it began to tip over. Fear gripped everyone on board, including D.L. Moody. He wrote, “I was passing through a new experience. I had thought myself superior to the fear of death. I had often preached on the subject, and urged Christians to realize this victory of faith...But on the

sinking ship it was different...my thoughts went to my loved ones at home – and I realized that perhaps the next hour would separate me forever from all these, I confess it almost broke my down. It was the darkest hour of my life.” Moody found his normal world transformed into a world of extreme danger and he was having difficulty applying what He knew to be true about God to his own circumstances.

I wonder if anyone here can relate to this? Have you ever found your “normal” life slipping away? Maybe you (like Moody) have come close to death due to an accident or disease or crime. Perhaps your job is either in jeopardy or gone and your finances are disappearing. Maybe you are angry with God because a child you have loved and nurtured, has departed from the faith. Have you, like Moody, come to “the darkest hour of your life?” Have you felt the deck beneath your feet begin to give way and sink? Have you ever been pushed to the extreme?

Turn with me to Mark chapter 4. We are tackling a large portion this morning, 4:35 – 6:6 - 56 verses containing four stories – but yet it is one literary unit that deals with the most extreme circumstances we have yet seen in the narrative. As we go through each story we are going to want to listen for a couple things - first for the themes of death and fear and second listen to the responses of the people in their extreme situations. Let’s begin with the first story – an extreme storm.

The Extreme Storm (4:35-41)

After Jesus’ teaching (last week) about the Kingdom of God, verses 35-36 present “normal life.” [Mark 4:35](#) On that day, when evening came, He said to them, “Let us go over to the other side.” [Mark 4:36](#) Leaving the crowd, they took Him along with them in the boat, just

as He was; and other boats were with Him. This is normal life - let's go from A to B. Yawn.

Little did they know that "the extreme" was coming" verse 37: **And there arose a fierce gale of wind, and the waves were breaking over the boat so much that the boat was already filling up.**

It was not just a storm but the Greek calls it a "mega" storm – an extreme storm, and the boat is about to sink. The disciples, like Moody, believe they are looking into their watery graves –

death and fear are on the scene. Verse 38: **Jesus Himself was in the stern, asleep on the cushion; and they woke Him and said to Him, "Teacher, do You not care that we are**

perishing?" Jesus is sleeping (the only time in the NT that we find him sleeping) – and how do

the disciples respond? They accuse Jesus of not caring about their dire situation – that is what we do with God when tragedy strikes – How could you let this happen to me? You are literally

asleep at the wheel. It is not a response of faith. So Jesus gets up and rebukes the storm – and

look at the storm's response, **"and the wind died down, and it became perfectly calm. (39) "**

How does nature respond to Jesus' command? Immediate obedience. Jesus turns to the

disciples and says: **"How is it that you have no faith? And they became very much afraid and**

said to one another, "Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him? (41)" The

disciples second response is to say - "Who are you?" In the presence of God's awesome power

and sovereignty – they are stunned and realized that they do not know this man, like they

thought they did. The disciples discover, (like Moody) that to hear and listen to Jesus among

the adoring crowds in their home-town is one thing -- to have faith in a time of extreme trial is something quite different.

Extreme Demons 5:1-20

We move now from an extreme storm to extreme demons. Chapter 5: **Mark 5:1 They came to the other side of the sea, into the country of the Gerasenes. Mark 5:2 When He got out**

of the boat, immediately a man from the tombs with an unclean spirit met Him. Again, we start very normal - they are going to a new area and are met by a demon possessed man. We've seen that several times - not a problem - Jesus will zap him and we will move on - But just as the storm was no ordinary storm, this is no ordinary exorcism.

Mark 5:3 and he (the possessed man) had his dwelling among the tombs. And no one was able to bind him anymore, even with a chain; Mark 5:4 because he had often been bound with shackles and chains, and the chains had been torn apart by him and the shackles broken in pieces, and no one was strong enough to subdue him. Mark 5:5 Constantly, night and day, he was screaming among the tombs and in the mountains, and gashing himself with stones. This guy is a monster - it is terrifying. The smell of death and fear are again in the air as he lives at the tombs - there is blood on the ground as he screams, lashes and mutilates his body. This is an extremely dangerous situation - far beyond any demon possession we have yet encountered. And it goes from bad to worse when Jesus questions him about his name and he says, "My name is legion for we are many (v9). A Roman legion had about 6,000 soldiers - it is likely that this man was possessed by thousands of demons.

But, Jesus casts them out with the same authority. After some discussion, verse 13: "And coming out, the unclean spirits entered the swine; and the herd rushed down the steep bank into the sea, about 2,000 of them; and they were drowned in the sea (5:13). (more death). What is the demons response to Jesus command to leave the man? Immediate obedience. Just like nature - the demons obey Christ's command.

So the townspeople hear of this and they come to find the pigs dead (industry ruined) and the man in his right mind (verse 15). How do they response? "They became

frightened...and they began to entreat Him to depart from their region.” (15,17). Like the disciples were overwhelmed by Jesus’ command of nature – they are also extremely unsettled in the presence of His awesome power. It is kind of like when our kids come into contact with something powerful and awesome – like the edge of the Grand Canyon, or a rushing waterfall, or a hot bon-fire, what do we say? “Take a step back” – the power of such things can be terrifying, and these people like the disciples – when they encounter Jesus’ tremendous power – are terrified and back-up – go away! They say.

Now - verse 18 – what is the response of the restored man? “The man who had been demon possessed was imploring Him that he might accompany Him.” - Mark 5:18. He has experience the benefit of Jesus’ power – but Jesus denies his request and instead makes him an evangelist for the Decapolis area - [Mark 5:20](#) And he went away and began to proclaim in Decapolis what great things Jesus had done for him; and everyone was amazed. We sang “I Stand Amazed” to open the service and we will sing “I stand in awe of you” when we close – to see Jesus at work is an amazing, awesome thing!

Extreme Healing – Part 1 Mark 5:21-23,

We have had an extreme storm, and extreme demons. Now we have two extreme healings – sandwiched together – that literary technique we saw for the first time in chapter three. We begin with the first healing verses 21-23. [Mark 5:21](#) When Jesus had crossed over again in the boat to the other side, a large crowd gathered around Him; and so He stayed by the seashore. [Mark 5:22](#) One of the synagogue officials named Jairus came up, and on seeing Him, fell at His feet [Mark 5:23](#) and implored Him earnestly, saying, “My little daughter is at the point of death; please come and lay Your hands on her, so that she will get well and live.” This is again - pretty normal – we have seen Jesus heal people who were near the door of death. No

problem – been there done that. A little “Be healed – your sins are forgiven” and we move on. But then Jesus is interrupted (vv 24-34) by a woman who need healing (we’ll look at in a minute) and precious time is lost and the normal becomes extreme - verse 35, [Mark 5:35](#) While He was still speaking, they *came from the *house of the synagogue official*, saying, “Your daughter has died; why trouble the Teacher anymore?” To heal a blind man, or make a paralyzed person walk is amazing enough – but to deal with a dead person – to entertain the thought of raising someone from the dead is extreme. Death and fear are once again in the air.

Jesus says, “Do not be afraid any longer, only believe” (36). They go to the official’s house – Jesus takes Peter James and John – and he says to those mourning: “Why make such a commotion and weep? The child has not died, but is asleep” (39) What is their response? “They began laughing at Him” (5:40). And it was not a kind laugh – what a cruel thing to say. She is only asleep. In *Princess Bride* the miracle works says: “there is a difference between mostly dead, and all dead.” They know she is dead – how can Jesus say she is but asleep. They respond with a hopeless laugh.

But Jesus goes to the 12-year old girl and: “He said to her, “Talitha Kum” (which translated means, ‘Little girl, I say to you, arise.’). Immediately the girl got up and *began to walk, for she was twelve years old. And immediately they were completely astounded (5:41-42)*. How does the dead girl respond to Jesus? She gets up and begins walking around – and then she eats lunch.

It was not an average storm – but an extreme storm. Not a normal demon possession, but a man possessed by thousands of demons. Not a normal healing of a disease, but the extreme raising of a dead person.

Extreme Faith 5:24-35

Now we have one last story – another extreme healing, verses 24-34. It is the story of a woman who has been continually bleeding. There are at least two connections between this story and the 12-year-old girl. One – she has been suffering the same length of time the girl had been alive, 12 years, and two – she, like the young girl, is heading toward death; unless Jesus intervenes. In addition, she has no money, is banned from society and labeled as one who is unclean. She is forbidden from touching anyone – she is in an extremely desperate situation.

Because of her impurity and the shame of her situation, she desires a quiet healing – a quick touch and then slip away in the crowd. In that culture she has no business being among a crowd of people, or touching anyone. But she has heard that some are healed who only touch the Lord. So, “she came up in the crowd behind Him, and touched His cloak...immediately the flow of her blood was dried up, and she felt in her body that she was healed of her affliction” (27-29). And just like that, she is healed, but Jesus does not allow her to get away quickly. Jesus finds her and “the woman fearing and trembling, aware of what had happened to her, came and fell down before Him and told Him the whole truth. (5:33)” what is the woman’s response to Jesus? Extreme faith. She came to Jesus in faith – and when asked to go public – she tells the truth and submits to him. She is a true disciple of Christ. Jesus says, “Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace, and be healed of your affliction (5:34).”

This woman’s extreme faith is next contrasted to the extreme lack of faith that Jesus encounters when he returns to his hometown of Nazareth. Chapter 6:1-6 is like an epilogue to our stories – and it mirrors the first story of the faithless disciples as the people in Nazareth ask, “Where did this man get these things, and what is this wisdom given to him, and such

miracles as these performed by his hands? Is this not the carpenter, the son of Mark, brother of James and Joseph and Judas and Simon? Are not his sisters here with us? And they took offense at Him.” Mark 6:2-3 “And He wondered at their unbelief. (6:6)” It boils down to the question we have been asking now for almost 12 weeks, “Who is Jesus?”

Summary

When you face extreme times – you don’t have to know everything about Jesus – but if you know something of Him, and obey that something, and take a step of faith toward Him – then you have found the secret to life. When you go through extreme things it is natural that you will have high emotions, fear and uncertainty. That is fine – no problem with that – very natural. *But don’t let your emotions lead you to respond with a lack of faith* – which would accuse God of not caring for you (like the disciples), or telling Jesus to take a hike (like the townspeople at Gerasene) or laughing at God’s nonsensical plans (like the mourners). Instead respond with humility and honesty – with immediate obedience like the wind and the seas, like the restored man and like the healed woman – extreme times call for extreme faith.

Conclusion

As the S.S. Spree took on water – the people panicked. I found a New York Times article on the incident – and here is how the scene was described: “They were thrown into a state of great alarm. Many of them rushed onto deck in their night clothing, mothers clasping their babies in their arms and husbands half carrying their wives. The scene is described as being one that the passengers will never forget. Paul Kelson was so frightened that he jumped overboard and was drowned. A veritable panic prevailed, and the officers were helpless to calm the prevailing fears. The passengers ran hither and thither in the wildest confusion.”

For most of the passengers, the panic and fear only stopped when the danger of sinking was past. The Times records: "When it was stated by the officers that all danger of sinking was past, the passengers became calm and joked with each other about the fears they had so shortly before entertained."

Is that like you? Can you only have peace once the danger is adverted? There was at least one passenger on the ship who attained peace during the storm. I am reading again from Moody's biography: Here is how he responded, "I could not endure it. I must have relief, and relief came in prayer. God heard my cry, and enabled me to say from the depth of my soul, 'Thy will be done!' Sweet peace came to my heart. I went to bed, fell asleep almost immediately, and never slept more soundly in all my life. Out of the depths I cried unto my Lord and He heard me and delivered me from all my fears."

Respond to Jesus in faith – even in the most extreme times. Sometimes he will calm the storm, and other times he will let the storm rage and calm you, His child.