

Gospel Gems from Mark



Chapter 5 - Three special miracles

The three miracles recorded in this chapter don't only show us Jesus' power, but they show us the unique needs and personalities of the people who were helped. Can we see ourselves in their stories?

They include: A man who knew he desperately needed help
A woman who was too shy to ask for help
A man who seemed to be beyond all human help



Gospel Gem #1: The man full of demons (5:1-20)

Notice where this incident happened. How is the horrible, miserable condition of this man described? What does his "name" suggest?

This story might be a good time to comment on the reality of bodily demonic possession in Jesus' day and in ours. What sets it apart from mental illness? If we don't seem to encounter this with the frequency with which it is mentioned in the New Testament, what are some possible reasons for this? Does this mean that it no longer exists in the world?

What reaction did the miracle produce in the people of the region? In the man himself?

Why do you think that Jesus did not allow the man to come with him?

How can you apply this story...

...when you feel overwhelmed and outnumbered by temptation and evil?

...when you aren't allowed to have a role or position that you wanted to have?



Gospel Gem #2: A miracle of life from the dead (5:21-24,35-43)

What was a "synagogue ruler"? How did he approach Jesus, and what does his prayer show?

The story in verses 25-34 that we will read in a moment delayed Jesus. How might Jairus have felt about that as this delay was happening? How might he have felt when the news came to him that his daughter had died? What did Jesus tell him?

How and why did Jesus conceal the miracle that he did? Was it completely concealed? (notice his words to the mourners)

What are several things that make this miracle especially amazing?

How could we apply this story...

... at a time when it doesn't seem like Jesus is answering your prayers?

...whenever we do lose a loved one?



Gospel Gem #3: A suffering woman healed (5:25-34)

How is this woman's suffering described? What other unmentioned factor might have made it worse for her?

What can we probably assume about the woman's personality, based on this story?

What is strange about the way that this miracle was performed, and about Jesus' reaction to it?

Why didn't Jesus simply allow the healing to happen without having her come to him publicly? Notice the name he gives to her.

In what sense did the woman's faith make her well?

In what ways is faith displayed differently by different believers? In what ways is every believer's faith the same?

Bonus questions (if time)

Why would Jesus have allowed the demons to enter the herd of pigs which ended up drowning?

This is one of several places where the Bible describes the death of a child of God as a sleep. What is the meaning of that comparison?

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Chapter 5 - Three special miracles - answer page

The three miracles recorded in this chapter don't only show us Jesus' power, but they show us the unique needs and personalities of the people who were helped. Can we see ourselves in their stories?

They include:

- A man who knew he desperately needed help
- A woman who was too shy to ask for help
- A man who seemed to be beyond all human help



Gospel Gem #1: The man full of demons (5:1-20)

Notice where this incident happened. How is the horrible, miserable condition of this man described? What does his "name" suggest? ***This happened in the sparsely populated east side of the Sea of Galilee. This was a more "Gentile" area than the more populated west side of the lake.***

The possessed man lived alone, was constantly tormented physically, spiritually and emotionally, and without any relief.

The name "Legion" implied that he was possessed not by one evil spirit but many, and the incident with the pigs seems to bear out that this was true and not just demonic bragging. A Roman legion had close to 6000 soldiers.

This story might be a good time to comment on the reality of bodily demonic possession in Jesus' day and in ours. What sets it apart from mental illness? If we don't seem to encounter this with the frequency with which it is mentioned in the New Testament, what are some possible reasons for this? Does this mean that it no longer exists in the world?

The New Testament distinguishes between demonic possession and things like seizures (Matthew 4:24). This man's symptoms included things like supernatural strength and self-identifying as a demonic spirit which are not merely mental illness but something even worse. So we shouldn't think that this was merely a primitive misattribution of mental illness to demons.

We can be thankful that we don't seem to often encounter demon possession in our society. Satan may have discerned that it would be an obstacle to his current method of trying to promote atheism. It is possible that some people today who are characterized by mental illness are possessed, but we should not assume that is the case. There are cases reported today in America that may well be genuine, and missionaries through the centuries have encountered it. A WELS mission blog from just last year discussed the handling of a case of demon-possession in Nepal.

What reaction did the miracle produce in the people of the region? In the man himself?

The people were afraid and asked Jesus to leave. They realized he had divine power but they did not put their faith in him. The man himself was thankful and wanted to come with Jesus.

Why do you think that Jesus did not allow the man to come with him?

He had a different calling for the man--to be a missionary to the people of that region.

How can you apply this story...

...when you feel overwhelmed and outnumbered by temptation and evil?

We can be assured that Jesus has control over all the forces of hell and evil, although he may allow them to have influence for a time according to God's plan.

...when you aren't allowed to have a role or position that you wanted to have?

Like the once-possessed man, we can find joy and blessing in the calling and opportunities we do have rather than regretting those we don't have.



Gospel Gem #2: A miracle of life from the dead (5:21-24,35-43)

What was a "synagogue ruler"? How did he approach Jesus, and what does his prayer show? *This was a lay leader of a synagogue, or local Jewish congregation. He might be comparable to a church council member today. His prayer shows that he knew Jesus alone had the power to help him and trusted that he would do so.*

The story in verses 25-34 that we will read in a moment delayed Jesus. How might Jairus have felt about that as this delay was happening? How might he have felt when the news came to him that his daughter had died? What did Jesus tell him? *Jairus must have been tempted to be impatient at the delay and then crushed when Jesus did not reach his home before his daughter died. He must have wondered why Jesus had paused to help someone else while his daughter was not spared.*

How and why did Jesus conceal the miracle that he did? Was it completely concealed? (notice his words to the mourners) *Jesus made sure there were few witnesses and commanded them not to speak, but his words to the mourners gave a clear hint at what he would do, and the girl's later life surely could not have been fully concealed. Even more than his healing miracles, a public announcement of such a miracle would have brought overwhelming requests for more resurrections, increased conflicts with Jesus' enemies and a premature end to his time of ministry.*

What are several things that make this miracle especially amazing?

It seems to have been the first of Jesus' resurrection miracles. While he did many, many healing miracles the Bible records just 3 raisings from the dead, and only a few more in all the rest of Scripture.

Notice how simply Jesus performs the miracle (no magic incantations, etc.). There was not even a prayer! This shows that Jesus raised the dead entirely by his own power.

How could we apply this story...

... at a time when it doesn't seem like Jesus is answering your prayers?

Even when it seemed hopeless for Jairus, his prayer was still answered! We can learn to be patient, and ultimately to wait for heaven for all our hopes to be fulfilled.

...whenever we do lose a loved one?

It beautifully shows that Jesus came to conquer death and has all power over life and death.



Gospel Gem #3: A suffering woman healed (5:25-34)

How is this woman's suffering described? What other unmentioned factor might have made it worse for her? ***She had been bleeding for twelve years (!). The medical treatments of the day were not only ineffective but actually added to her suffering.***

Because her condition caused her to be ceremonially unclean, it would also have likely led to social isolation.

What can we probably assume about the woman's personality, based on this story? ***She seems to have been a shy and quiet person who avoids the spotlight.***

What is strange about the way that this miracle was performed, and about Jesus' reaction to it? ***It was performed simply by touching his clothes, and Jesus seems unaware of the woman's identity. Was this a) an example of Jesus' state of humility, in which he didn't fully use all his divine knowledge during his time on earth? or b) was he only saying this because he wanted the woman herself to come forward rather than pointing her out himself? (Both are possible, but option a is my opinion)***

Why didn't Jesus simply allow the healing to happen without having her come to him publicly? Notice the name he gives to her. ***He wanted the shy woman both to express her gratitude to him and also hear his words that she was truly healed. He calls her "daughter" to assure her that by faith she was in God's family (remember what Jesus said in Mark 3:34).***

In what sense did the woman's faith make her well? ***Her faith in Jesus' power led her to reach out and touch him, so that by his power she was healed. Be aware, too, that the word "healed" (also used by the woman in v. 28) normally is translated "saved." Here it seems to mean "saved from disease" but the fuller meaning is perhaps implied in Jesus' words to her.***

In what ways is faith displayed differently by different believers? In what ways is every believer's faith the same? ***Some people's faith may be expressed by bold proclamations and witnessing, while others display theirs behind the scenes in deeds and words of love. But every believer's faith is the same in that it relies fully on Jesus for salvation and all good gifts.***

Bonus questions (if time)

Why would Jesus have allowed the demons to enter the herd of pigs which ended up drowning?

It's hard to say for certain. One thing worth noticing is that pigs were considered unclean animals according to ceremonial law, so if those tending them were Jews it might have been improper for them to raise the pigs in the first place. It pointed to the power of Jesus' miracle in casting out so many demons. The fact that the people reacted with fear and asking Jesus to leave, rather than faith and joy in the man's healing, might show their misplaced priorities. One Bible commentator put it: "When men care more about swine than Christ, it is time for them to lose the swine."

This is one of several places where the Bible describes the death of a child of God as a sleep. What is the meaning of that comparison?

The point of Jesus' words is that to him, death is as temporary as sleep and it is as simple for him to raise the dead as it is for us to waken a sleeper. So saying that a child of God "fell asleep" is really an expression of faith in the future resurrection. It is NOT intended to teach "soul sleep"--the denial of any conscious existence between death and resurrection. A number of Bible verses strongly suggest otherwise (Revelation 6:9-11, Luke 16:19-31, Luke 23:43, Philippians 1:23-24, etc.)