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**February 25, 2018 *Jesus in the Gospel of Mark***

**“Who Is This, That Even the Wind and Sea Obey Him?”**

On that day, when evening had come, he said to them, “Let us go across to the other side.” And leaving the crowd behind, they took him with them in the boat, just as he was. Other boats were with him. A great windstorm arose, and the waves beat into the boat, so that the boat was already being swamped. But he was in the stern, asleep on the cushion; and they woke him up and said to him, “Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing?” He woke up and rebuked the wind, and said to the sea, “Peace! Be still!” Then the wind ceased, and there was a dead calm. He said to them, “Why are you afraid? Have you still no faith?” And they were filled with great awe and said to one another, “Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?” *Mark 4:35-41*

Questions in this GPS marked with an arrow bullet point are particularly recommended for group discussion. Group leaders may add other discussion questions, or substitute other questions for the marked ones, at their discretion.

**Parable: a farmer scattering seed**

**MONDAY 2.26.18 Mark 4:1-20**

Jesus often used stories about common objects or events to teach uncommon truths. Likely a farmer was hand-casting seed on a nearby hillside, in plain sight, as Jesus told this story. Verses 10-12 did not mean that Jesus intended parables to hide his message. He quoted [Isaiah 6:9-10](#), which ironically described what was happening, not what God wanted. Hearers with closed minds, in Isaiah’s or Jesus’ day, wouldn’t hear no matter how much they listened.

- Jesus described the usual outcomes when a farmer sowed his seed by hand across a field. Not all the seed grew, but what took root bore an abundant crop. Jesus used that image to teach about the factors that hinder or nurture spiritual life. What steps are you taking to make your mind and heart “good soil” in which God’s word can grow and bear a good crop?
- Jesus ended his parable with a common Hebrew expression: “Whoever has ears to listen should pay attention!” It was not mainly about eardrums. “In the Bible the ear is synonymous with the heart and mind as an organ of cognition (Prov 2:2; Is 6:9–10), and true hearing involves listening and understanding (Job 34:16).” \* What has helped you tune your inner, spiritual “ears” to God’s voice? What helps you persist in seeking to understand God’s teachings, rather than just giving up?

**Prayer:** Lord God, you want me to know you. You reveal yourself in many ways, some of them subtle and quiet. Give me ears to listen, a spirit attentive to all you wish to convey to me. Amen.

\* Leland Ryken, James C. Wilhoit, Tremper Longman III, general editors, *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, USA, 1998, p. 223.

**More parables: lamps, mustard seed**

**TUESDAY 2.27.18 Mark 4:21-34**

Light dispels darkness. It may reveal all the beauty of God’s world, or help lost individuals find their way. Rabbis in Jesus’ day often referred to the mustard seed as one of the smallest objects. Jesus’ picture of the plant may have been a bit inflated—most mustard plants generally grew from 2-6 feet tall. There was a reason for that. “The language...evokes the image of a great kingdom of old that

would be supplanted by God's kingdom ([Daniel 4:12](#)). The glorious future kingdom was already active in a hidden way in Jesus' ministry." \*

- Have you ever flown over a city at night? Or come out of a long, dark tunnel into bright sunlight? As John would later write about Jesus, darkness can never extinguish light (cf. [John 1:5](#)). What dark corners of your neighborhood, your city and your world need to experience the light of God? What can you do to help God's light shine into these dark corners?
- Jesus' mustard seed story pointed his followers toward patience and long-term confidence. Like the tiny mustard seed, his kingdom would grow—but not at all at once. When, even in a growing congregation like Resurrection, do you need to exercise patience? What helps you maintain confidence that, in the end, God will fully establish God's kingdom to end evil and rule the earth?

**Prayer:** God, as I go about my life today, keep me ever mindful of the people who need to find your light in their world. Fill my heart with love for you so overflowing that I cannot keep it hidden. Amen.

\* HarperCollins Christian Publishing. *NIV, Cultural Backgrounds Study Bible, eBook: Bringing to Life the Ancient World of Scripture* (Kindle Locations 219928-219930). Zondervan. Kindle Edition.

### Calming outer and inner storms

#### WEDNESDAY 2.28.18 Mark 4:35-5:20

Jesus' followers (who'd fished Galilee for a living) had a healthy respect for the strong storms that could blow up on that landlocked lake. Only God, Hebrews believed, could restrain the sea's stormy chaos (cf. [Jeremiah 5:22](#)). To see Jesus exercise that divine power before their eyes awed them. Mark then portrayed a man on "the other side" of the Sea—Gentile territory. And the man lived like a beast—terrifyingly strong, unstable, isolated "among the tombs," where "he would howl and cut himself with stones."

- Think of one big personal life "storm" you've had to live through. How did you make your way in that stormy season of life? Did you have any sense Jesus was "in the boat" with you? Scott Krippayne sang, "Sometimes He calms the storm, And other times He calms His child." \* In which of those ways has Jesus most supported you in life's storms? How has that impacted your relationship with God, and shaped the person you are today?
- In *Why Do Christians Shoot Their Wounded?*, \*\* Christian psychologist Dwight Carlson noted that some Christians tragically use a story like Mark 5 to argue that all cases of severe mental/emotional illness spring from spiritual failings. But Jesus did not condemn the man for his condition—he simply set things right. How can activities like Resurrection's Leewood Care Night ([go to cor.org/leewood/carenight](http://go.to.cor.org/leewood/carenight) for more information) or our [Counseling Referral Ministry](#) make church a safer place for people facing mental and emotional struggles?

**Prayer:** Lord Jesus, when you met a man from whom everyone else wanted to run away, you cared, and you healed. Thank you for being willing to care about and heal the parts of me that frighten even me, too. Amen.

\* Lyric from "Sometimes He Calms the Storm." Songwriters: Benton Kevin Stokes, Tony W. Wood © Universal Music Publishing Group, Capitol Christian Music Group.

\*\* Dwight L. Carlson, *Why Do Christians Shoot Their Wounded?* Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1994.

### Healed by a furtive, faith-filled touch

#### THURSDAY 3.1.18 Mark 5:21-34

A desperate woman had heard about Jesus. He moved away, followed by a crowd, to help a synagogue leader named Jairus' sick daughter. (We'll look at that case tomorrow.) The woman's problem would be serious today, but it was worse then. Jewish law saw her condition as permanently

“unclean,” like a leper (see [Leviticus 15:25-27](#)). She couldn’t legally touch anyone; hence her stealthy touch of Jesus’ garment. But “Jesus recognized that power had gone out from him.”

- What a burden of shame this woman must have carried, along with her physical issues. Many people saw ailments like hers as judgments from God (see [John 9:2](#)). How do you see yourself? Are there things in your life you’d rather keep hidden? Was Jesus being unkind when he called the healed woman forward—or was he freeing her from shame as well as from her physical disorder?
- Commentator William Barclay noted that the Jewish Talmud offered cures for this woman’s condition like “carrying the ashes of an ostrich-egg in a linen rag in summer and a cotton rag in winter; or carrying a barley corn found in the dung of a white she-ass.” \* Have you tried to deal with shame, guilt or other pain on your own, using various self-help “folk remedies”? How can Jesus’ love redirect your efforts along more effective paths?

**Prayer:** Lord Jesus, thank you for letting your power flow for the fearful, forlorn woman in this story. Even when I’m afraid or ashamed, I ask you to continue healing me. Amen.

\* William Barclay, *Daily Study Bible Series: The Gospel of Mark (Revised Edition)*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1976, p. 129.

### **A trusting synagogue leader, a “repulsed” home town**

#### **FRIDAY 3.2.18 Mark 5:35-6:6**

Mark had already documented that Jesus’ ministry met hostility from the religious authorities (see [Mark 2:6, 24; 3:6, 22](#)). With his daughter deathly ill, Jairus (“one of the synagogue leaders”) laid aside any objections he might have had to Jesus. When messengers came saying the girl had died, Jesus encouraged Jairus, saying, “Don’t be afraid; just keep trusting.” He repaid the synagogue leader’s trust by giving him back his daughter. Then he went to Nazareth, his home town, where familiarity apparently bred contempt and disbelief.

- When Jesus said the girl was “only sleeping” (Mark 5:39), he did not mean she hadn’t died. People then as now could tell death from unconsciousness. They didn’t ask for professional mourners if a person was still breathing. But with Jesus there, the girl’s time in death would be no longer than a sleep (see also [John 11:11-14](#)). How is Jesus’ power over even death a source of hope and confidence for you as you face life with all its uncertainties?
- In Nazareth, Jesus met rejection and anger. (Luke wrote that Jesus defined his mission by claiming God was fulfilling the words of [Isaiah 61:1-2](#) through him—cf. [Luke 4:16-21](#).) In what ways did “Isn’t this the carpenter? Isn’t he Mary’s son and the brother of James, Joses, Judas, and Simon?” express doubt about Jesus’ messianic claim? Why would Jesus’ work to address physical and spiritual bondage, poverty and blindness “repulse” his home town?

**Prayer:** Lord Jesus, you were (and are) so much more than just “the carpenter.” Help me to find and value time with you. Nourish my spirit, and fill me with your resilience. Amen.

### **Immoral power alarmed by moral strength**

#### **SATURDAY 3.3.18 Mark 6:7-29**

Herod Antipas divorced his wife to marry Herodias. She had previously married his half-brother Herod Phillip. John the Baptist denounced that example of royal decadence, and Herodias hated him for it. Herodias sent a young woman, probably her daughter by Phillip, to dance at Antipas’ birthday party. Dazzled, Herod publicly promised the girl anything she asked. And Herodias told the girl to demand an end to the life of the fearless preacher Jesus called “more than a prophet” ([Matthew 11:7-9](#)).

- Neither Mark nor Matthew gave the name of the young woman who danced before Herod. The Jewish historian Josephus named her as “Salome.” Scholar William Barclay wrote that Herod “kept his promise to Salome because he had made it in front of his cronies and was unwilling to break it. He feared their jeers...he feared that they would think him weak.” \* How do you define true strength for yourself? Has trying to look “strong” to others ever made you weaker?
- Few Bible stories show more vividly why it matters that our faith take the long view. To human eyes, Herodias won. John’s abrupt, unjust execution seemed to silence his voice. But which of them has had a better impact on the world in the centuries since Herod’s feast? Which of them could be more confident of eternal life with God?

**Prayer:** Lord Jesus, even though Antipas arbitrarily arrested and unjustly killed John, you sent your followers out to proclaim your kingdom. It’s much safer for me to share the good news—but sometimes I’m still afraid. Give me more of your courage—and John’s. Amen.

**Family Activity:** Prepare to watch a family movie featuring superheroes (*Star Wars*, *Lego Batman* and the upcoming *Incredibles 2* would be good choices!). Before you view the movie, invite your kids to watch for ways different characters use their power. As you view the movie, serve a fun snack and enjoy! Following the movie, ask your kids one or more of the following questions: “Who was good/evil in the movie?” “Why do you say that?” “What were some choices the characters had to make regarding how they would use their power?” “What do you imagine you would have done when...?” Let your child know that though we may not have the powers of a superhero, we have God’s power within us which is even greater. Talk about how God wants us to use his power for good in the world. Pray and ask for God’s help.

**Prayer Requests – [cor.org/prayer](http://cor.org/prayer)** Prayers for Peace & Comfort:

- Bonnie Fox and family on the death of her husband Bob Fox, 2/18
- Mary Louise Gibson and family on the death of her husband Howard Gibson, 2/18
- Mandy Shoemaker and Jim Gibson and families on the death of their father Howard Gibson, 2/18
- Dorothy Hyder and family on the death of her husband Dick Hyder, 2/14
- Pattie Shaw and family on the death of her son Cory Shaw, 2/12
- Valerie Burton and family on the death of her brother Cory Shaw, 2/12
- Angela LaVallie Tinsley and family on the death of her aunt Tammie Lawson, 2/12
- Family and friends of Gail Wasserman on her death, 2/11
- Carol Walje and family on the death of her sister Cheryl Reed, 2/9
- Drew Quinn and family on the death of his mother Sally Quinn, 2/5