

The King Who is Mighty to Save

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[0 : 0 0] Let's pray. Heavenly Father, again, we thank you for the opportunity we have to meet together as your people this morning. Again, we thank you for your word. We ask now that you would indeed give us minds to understand it and hearts that would seek to live in light of it. We ask it for Jesus' sake. Amen. Please grab a seat. I should also add a welcome back to our Senior Minister, Andrew. He's just arrived back from PNG last night and it's nice to have him back. It really is nice to have him back. He doesn't want me to do this, but he celebrated his birthday while he was away, so you might like to wish him a happy birthday if you see him. I said 21 again this morning, but maybe more realistically, what, 31?

51. 55. Still a spring chicken. Well, last year I played some soccer with some friends as a way of getting to know them as well as some non-Christian guys. Actually, last month the fullback in our team became a Christian, which was great news. But in the four years that we played together, it was well over 100 games, I had yet to score a goal. My seven-year-old son who started playing his first season last year had already scored three goals. He was humiliating. And so when the game, the last game of the season came, I was determined to get at least one goal to save my pride. But instead of scoring, I actually snapped a ligament in my knee. I needed a knee replacement, not yet, but knee reconstruction. And when I told Michelle this, she said, look, I think it's time for you to retire. And I said, I'm not that old yet, surely. And she said, well, apparently your knees are. Thanks, my love. She did it with a grin on her face. But it did remind me that we are all frail human beings. We get old and our bodies deteriorate. You see, because sin has entered the world, our bodies will not last forever. And so we are all living under the shadow of death, as it were. That is, death is hanging over us. I've got a statistic for you. One out of every one person will die.

That is, we will all die one day. And it's only a matter of time before you die. Well, welcome to Holy Trinity. I hope you're having a great time so far. But as we come to Mark chapter four and five this morning, we'll see four scenes, four people who are living under the shadow of death in a very real way. Yet scene after scene, we'll see Jesus, who is the King who powerfully saves. For example, have a look at scene one, the perishing disciples, point one in your outlines and verse 35 in your Bible. So it'd be great if you had your Bible open.

Otherwise, it will be dull. Chapter four, verse 35, page 816. On that day, when evening had come, he said to them, let us go across to the other side of the lake. 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 a cushion. And they woke him up and said to him, teacher, do you not care that we are perishing? Now, you might remember from last week that Jesus was teaching all day. He'd been teaching the people and us about the word of God. He'd been teaching us that it is through this word that God bears fruit in our lives for him. And it is through this word that God will grow his kingdom into the greatest of all kingdoms. And so when it comes to God's word, we're to be big eared. You might remember my ears last week. Now, by the end of this day of teaching, Jesus was understandably tired. And so after getting into the boat and going to the other side of the lake, Jesus somewhat understandably falls asleep on a cushion. Now, just an aside for a moment, why does Mark include the fact that he fell asleep on a cushion? Why not just say he fell asleep? Or in verse number 36, he says there that there were other boats there with them. Why does he add that detail? They add nothing, these details, to the story. You wouldn't have noticed if they weren't there. So why include them? Well, I take it it's because that's how Peter remembered it. And so that's how he described it to Mark, who then wrote it down. You see, these little details are the kind of things that an eyewitness gives, because that's what they saw. In other words, it's an indication that what we are reading here this morning really did happen. People were really there and really saw it. It was real, in other words. And what they saw in verse 37 was a great windstorm come up. Now, the phrase great windstorm isn't a bad translation. Another Bible translation says a great squall comes up.

Squall is a bit of a funny word, really, isn't it? I mean, it sounds a little wimpy. Imagine if the NRL team Melbourne Storm changed their name to the Melbourne Squall. You know, it wouldn't go down so well, would it? But a squall is a huge storm. A literal translation would be a mega storm. In other words, it's a storm so big that even these professional fishermen who would have seen plenty of storms before, even they were scared. And so in verse 38, they say, teacher, do you not care that we are perishing? You see, here are people under the shadow of death. They are perishing.

[5 : 51] So what does Jesus, this carpenter do? Well, verse 39, he woke up and he rebuked the wind and said to the sea, peace, be still. Then the wind ceased and there was dead calm. You see, at Jesus's word, it went from literally a mega storm to not literally not dead calm, but mega calm. The word mega is repeated twice to emphasize Jesus's complete power over the storm. And the disciples were saved. You see, Jesus has power to save. And the disciples should have known this already. For Jesus says to them in verse number 40, he said to them, why are you afraid? Have you still no faith? And they were filled with great awe or literally great fear and said to one another, who then is this that even the wind and the sea obey him? You see, the disciples should have known by now, they should have been able to trust or have faith in Jesus by now because they had seen so many things already. They'd already seen how Jesus had healed so many before. And now they're starting to realize in an even bigger way that Jesus is certainly more than an ordinary man. In verse 41, they ask, just who then is this man?

Who is this guy? And this time they're not afraid of the storm, but actually Jesus. In verse 41, where it says they were filled with great awe, it's literally they were filled with great fear.

Not at the storm, that's been calmed now. They're filled with great fear of Jesus who calmed it. You see, perhaps they got a glimpse that in the presence of Jesus, they were actually in the presence of God. For as we heard in our first reading, it is only God who can calm the waves.

And here is Jesus being God, the son who has control over the elements and who has power to save. And this is exactly what we see in the next scene where we meet a possessed man. Point to chapter 5 verse 1, they came to the other side of the sea, to the country of the Gerasenes.

And when he had stepped out of the boat, immediately a man out of the tombs with an unclean spirit met him. He lived among the tombs and no one could restrain him anymore, even with a chain. For he had often been restrained with shackles and chains, but the chains he wrenched apart and the shackles he broke in pieces, and no one had the strength to subdue him. Night and day among the tombs and on the mountains, he was always howling and literally cutting himself with stones, it says.

[8 : 27] And now the region of the Gerasenes was a Gentile place. It was a non-Jewish place, a place where there were lots of unclean things if you were a Jew, like a herd of pigs that we'll meet in a moment. And in this place of unclean things was a man who had an unclean spirit.

And the picture we get of this man is somewhat scary. I mean, for starters, he lives among the tombs. Imagine getting an invitation to his place at dinner time. Yeah, kind of like a place. It's just among the tombs there. It'll be lovely, wouldn't it?

What's more, he tore metal chains apart. He cuts himself with stones and he screams or howls all the time. And Luke adds in his gospel that he was also naked. Now imagine you were there with Jesus when this violent, naked, insane man turns his head and spots you standing next to Jesus in front of the boat. You've just got off the boat and he's up on the mountainside. He turns and spots you and then he hurtles down towards you in saying, naked, screaming. I think if it was me, I'd be saying, Jesus, I think I left something back on the boat. Just let me go and check on it now. And I'd run out of there. Well, this picture is actually more sad than scary though. For here is a town who lives in fear of this man so much so that they've tried to bind him again and again, presumably for their own safety. And here is a man who is constantly tortured night and day by his evil invaders, who do the bidding of the evil one, Satan. And so here are people living under the shadow of

Satan and death. And so when this man sees Jesus in the distance, he hurtles down to Jesus and attacks him. No, that's not what it says. Verse six, when he saw Jesus from a distance, he ran and bowed down before him. And he shouted at the top of his voice, what have you to do with me, Jesus, son of the most high God? I adjure you or plead with you by God. Do not torment me.

For he had said to him, come out of the man, you unclean spirit. See, like the spirits before, this one recognizes who Jesus is, the great son of God. And so they, you know, plead with Jesus, ironically, to not torture them, even though they've been torturing the man night and day.

[10 : 42] And then they begged Jesus two more times. See verse nine. Then Jesus asked him, what is your name? He replied, my name is Legion, for we are many. And he begged Jesus earnestly not to send them out of the country. Now they were on a hillside, a great herd of pigs feeding, and the unclean spirits begged Jesus, send us into the pigs, let us enter them. So he gave them permission. And the unclean spirits came out and entered the pigs. And the herd numbering about 2000 rushed down the steep bank into the sea, and were drowned in the sea. Notice all the things here that show Jesus's power. At first, they bow down to Jesus. Then they beg Jesus. Then they need Jesus's permission to do anything.

It's very clear here who the powerful one is, isn't it? It's Jesus. He is more powerful than these unclean or evil spirits who possess the man. Even more powerful than Satan who sent them.

And Jesus has power to save people, you see. Now Jesus will deal with Satan and his minions once and for all at the appointed time, but not yet. And so he allows these unclean spirits to enter those unclean pigs and do what evil does best, destroy. But the man has been saved. And now look at the contrast in verse number 14. The swine herds, it should be the swine herders, ran off to tell the other people. The pigs don't run off to tell the people. But the people looking after the pigs ran off and told it in the city and in the country. Then people came to see what it was that had happened.

They came to Jesus and saw the demoniac sitting there clothed and in his right mind, the very man who had had the legion, and they were afraid. This man who was once violent, restless, naked, tormented, is now sitting, calmly, dressed, and in his right mind. It's a complete contrast, isn't it? It's kind of a reminder of the storm, doesn't it? Once there was a storm that was out of control and now it was brought under control by the word of Jesus. What was once violent and deadly is now quiet and calm. And the people this time were afraid. The same word is used that describes the disciples' reaction in the boat. Perhaps these people also glimpsed that in the presence of Jesus, they were in the presence of God. And what follows are two requests. The first from the townspeople in verse number 16. Those who had seen what had happened to the demoniac and to the swine reported it. Then they began to beg Jesus to leave their neighborhood. It's a sad state of affairs when people want God to leave them alone. I remember going surfing with a friend who I used to work with at the time and I just asked him one question about Christianity. He knew I was a Christian and he quickly replied, look, I'm really not interested in any of that. Don't ever talk to me about it again.

And it was quite sad. He clearly didn't want God to be part of his life. And in the end, God will give people what they want. If they want a life without God, then he'll give them that. The only problem is without God, there is no life, no eternal life in heaven, only eternal death in hell. That's the first request, a sad one. But the second request is from the man. He begs not that Jesus would leave, but that he might follow. Have a look at verse number 18. As he was getting into the boat, the man who had been possessed by demons begged him that he might be with him. But Jesus refused and said to him, go home to your friends and tell them how much the Lord has done for you and what mercy has shown you. And he went away and began to proclaim in the Decapolis how much Jesus had done for him. And everyone was amazed. You see, this man's request is to be with Jesus, to be one of his followers. And it's the right request, isn't it? To follow the one who has saved him. And while this man did not physically stay with

[14 : 45] Jesus, he was with Jesus on his side, if you like, by obeying Jesus. He did follow Jesus' instructions by telling others about Jesus the Lord. You see, his response to being saved was to obey the one who saved him. And I suspect there's something in there for all of us, isn't there? But again, the big point is that Jesus is powerful to say, for he's the King, God himself. And in case we haven't quite got the point yet, Mark hammers it home in the two final scenes that are intertwined, which brings us to point three, verse 21. When Jesus had crossed again in the boat to the other side, a great crowd gathered around him and he was by the sea. Then one of the leaders of the synagogue named Jairus came and when he saw Jesus fell at his feet and begged him repeatedly, my little daughter is at the point of death. Come and lay your hands on her so that she may be made well and live.

So he went with them. Jesus crosses back over to the Jewish side of the lake now, and he's met by a synagogue ruler whose daughter is dying. You see, she's living under the shadow of death. And Jesus is asked to come and heal this daughter. Actually, the words made well at the end of verse 23 is literally save her. Jairus begs Jesus to save his daughter. Notice the word begs comes up again.

It kind of ties these scenes together. And Jairus begs Jesus, not just once, but repeatedly for Jesus to come and save his daughter that she might live. You can almost sense his pain, begging, falling at Jesus's feet. I know of a man whose daughter was diagnosed with meningitis last year, which is potentially fatal for young children. She's okay now, but at the time, her father was beside himself. He dropped everything. He stopped work. He cancelled appointments. He did everything he could to help his daughter. The problem was he couldn't do much. All he could do was trust in Jesus and pray and trust like Jairus did. But as they head back to Jairus's house, something else happens. Have a look at verse number 24 or the rest of verse 24. And a large crowd followed him and pressed in on him. Now, there was a woman who had been suffering from a hemorrhage for 12 years. She had endured much under many physicians and had spent all that she had, and she was no better, but rather grew worse, it says. You see, here's a woman who's been bleeding for 12 years. That's as long as Jairus's daughter has been alive. It's a long time. And quite frankly, we who are males here don't quite understand how bad this is, but it's an absolute nightmare to bleed all month for 12 years. On top of this, it made her ceremonially unclean. That is, she couldn't come into contact with other people because she'd make them ceremonially unclean. In other words, she had to isolate herself socially. Plus, she'd seen many doctors who had caused her only, her suffering to go worse, as well as take her money. On top of all that, her bleeding grew worse, which meant she had a real chance of physical death. In other words, here is someone who is living under the shadow of death socially, financially, and physically. And so in verse 27, we read that she heard about Jesus and came up behind him in the crowd and touched his cloak. For she said, if I but touch his clothes, I will be made well. Immediately, her hemorrhage stopped and she felt in her body that she was healed of her disease, it says. Notice that Jesus here is unlike any of those other doctors. You know, after many doctors who no doubt tried all sorts of cures but simply made the bleeding worse, the touch of Jesus' cloak heals her immediately, it says. You see Mark's point?

Jesus is powerful to save. And when Jesus realized that power had gone out from him, in verse number 30, Jesus turned around and he said to the crowd, who touched my clothes? And his disciples said to him, you see the crowds pressing in on you? How can you say who touched me? But he looked around to see who had done it. But the woman, knowing what had happened to her, came in fear and trembling, fell down before him and told him the whole truth. He said to her, daughter, your faith has made you well. Go in peace and be healed of your disease. This woman came trembling and in fear before Jesus, possibly because she knew what she did was not kosher, but also perhaps because she also realized that in the presence of Jesus, she was in the presence of God. Whatever the case, she obeyed the call of Jesus and fell at his feet, confessing the whole truth. And Jesus says, your faith has literally saved you, it says. Though do know that it's not her faith as such that saves her, it's who her faith is in that saves her. It's an important point to notice. Jesus is the one who saves her. And similarly,

Jairus needed to keep trusting in Jesus. For as we read in verse 35, he gets some bad news. Verse number 35, while he was still speaking, some people came from the leader's house to say, your daughter is dead.

[20 : 17] Subtly of a sledgehammer. Why trouble the teacher any further? But overhearing what they said, Jesus said to the leader of the synagogue, do not fear, only believe, have faith, trust. You see, as the woman who was bleeding for 12 years was saved and made clean, the 12-year-old daughter has passed from the shadow of death to the reality of death. It's almost as though as life came to the woman, death came to the daughter. But ignoring the messenger, Jesus said to Jairus, trust me, believe or have faith in me, I can save your daughter. And so in verse number 37, we read, he allowed no one to follow him except Peter, James and John, the brother of James. When they came to the house of the leader of the synagogue, he saw a commotion, people weeping and wailing loudly. When he had entered, he said to them, why do you make a commotion and weep? The child is not dead, but sleeping. And they laughed at him.

Here, we need to understand why these mourners changed from weeping to laughing so quickly. And the reason is that in the ancient world, it was normal to have professional mourners at a funeral. In fact, even the poorest of people was required to have at least one professional mourner at the funeral of his wife. It was a normal custom. And so that's why they changed from their weeping to laughing so quickly. Of course, it's still inappropriate. And so in the rest of verse 40, we read that Jesus put them all outside. And then he took the child's father and mother and those who were with him and went in where the child was. He took her by the hand and said to her, Talitha, come, which means little girl, get up. And immediately the girl got up and began to walk about. She was 12 years of age. At this, they were overcome with amazement. He strictly ordered them that no one should know this and told them to give her something to eat. This little girl rose to life, death no more. You see, in the presence of this king, death is but sleep. After death comes life again. Now, you don't see miracles like this today, do you? You might see miracles, people healed from cancer or some other hard to heal disease, but not like this. And no wonder it says in verse number 42 that they were overcome with amazement. In fact, that's actually an understatement. In the original Greek language, it says they were astonished with great astonishment.

You get the point? Perhaps again, they are starting to realize that in the presence of Jesus, they are in the presence of God. In fact, throughout these scenes, there's almost a crescendo effect.

Not only did Jesus calm the storm, defeat evil spirits and heal the woman, he now even raises the dead. He is indeed no ordinary man, but the king who has power to save.

Well, I started this morning today by saying that my broken knee reminded me that we are all living in a broken world under the shadow of death. But more than that, because we have all sinned or ignored God in our lives from time to time, then we're actually all under the shadow of eternal death, what the Bible calls hell. But Jesus offers us hope beyond death. For as we have seen from these scenes, Jesus is powerful to save. He is the one who can bring us from the shadow of eternal death into the reality of eternal life. For as we read on in Mark's gospel, we'll see how Jesus goes to the cross to pay for our sin, to pay for the times we've ignored God. And on the cross, he suffers hell in our place, so that we might be saved from it. All we need to do is to believe in him.

[24 : 05] And so the first question I need to ask you is, do you believe? Do you trust Jesus to save you from the shadow of eternal death that we're all under because of sin? Do you trust Jesus is the one who has power to raise you to eternal life? As we read on in chapter 6, he goes back home to his townspeople and they acknowledge what deeds of power are done by his hands, verse 2 of chapter 6. But then they say, isn't this Jesus, the carpenter? Isn't his brothers and sisters here with us? And so they refuse to believe.

You see, they think they know who Jesus is. They've boxed him in and they're not going to investigate any further. Don't be like those people who have boxed Jesus in, who think they know who Jesus is and won't investigate further, but rather investigate further. There is evidence to believe. These are historical accounts seen by eyewitnesses. It happened. And so do you believe in Jesus?

If you want to be saved from the shadow of eternal death and given certainty for the future, then Jesus says, as he did to Jairus, don't be afraid, just believe. And if you'd like to help with that, then please write it on the tear-off slip in your bulletin. But for those of us who do believe, then are we living in light of it? That is, if we really believe Jesus is the one who is powerful to save people, then are we doing all we can to introduce Jesus to others? I once heard a non-Christian man say this. He said, I do not respect Christians who don't evangelize. Because if you really believe there's a heaven and hell, and if you really believe that eternal life is possible, but don't tell people, then how much must you hate them? A non-Christian man said that. If we know the one who has power to save, but don't do all we can to tell others, then it's pretty unloving, isn't it?

Now, I don't mean we should all have to go out and do, you know, walk-up evangelism on the streets of Doncaster or Shopping Town or wherever, although you can do that if you want. But it will mean at least praying for those who don't know Jesus. It will mean inviting people to Christmas services that they might hear about the one who was born to die for us. If you'd like some exercise as well, there's some flyers you can let a box drop. Just pick them up on the way out. It will also mean taking the opportunities that come our way to share something of Jesus with others. You see, if we really believe Jesus is the king who is mighty to save, then we'll do all we can to tell others about him. But secondly, if Jesus is the one who has powerfully saved us, then are we seeking to live for him in thanks? Remember the demon-possessed man? He sought to live for the one who saved him, who gave him life. In 1979, a man called Eric Fellman met a Chinese man who had been released from prison. Eric writes that as he went with his friend to this man's house, he knocked on the door and, let me read it to you, and a Chinese man in his 60s opened the door. His smile was radiant, but his back was bent almost double. He led us to a sparsely furnished room. A Chinese woman of about the same age came in to serve tea. As she lingered, I couldn't help but notice how they touched and lovingly looked at each other. My staring apparently didn't go unnoticed, for soon they were both giggling. What is it? I asked my friend. Oh, nothing, he said with a smile. They just wanted you to know it's okay. They're newlyweds. I learnt that they had been engaged in 1949 when he was a student at Nei King Bible College. On the day of their wedding rehearsal, Chinese communists seized the

Bible College. They took the students to a hard labour prison, and for the next 30 years, the bride-to-be was allowed only one visit per year. Each time following their brief minutes together, the man would be called into the warden's office. You may go home with your bride, he said, if you will renounce Christianity. Year after year, this man replied with just one word, no. I was stunned, says Eric. How had this man been able to stand the strain for so long, being denied his family, his marriage, and even his health? When I asked, he seemed astonished at my question. He replied, with all that Jesus has done for me, how could I betray him?

[28 : 31] So here is a man who knew what it cost Jesus to save him, and so in thanks he sought to live a life for the one who saved him, no matter the cost. Our friends, it is unlikely to cost us anything like what it cost that Chinese man. So how much more ought we likewise to serve the one who saved us, to live for him and his kingdom rather than ourselves in this world?

Jesus is the king who has power to save. Let's pray that we might live like those who truly believe it. Let's pray. Our gracious Heavenly Father, we do thank you for Jesus. We thank you that there were people back there and then who witnessed what he did and what he said, and that they recorded it reliably for us.

Father, we pray that you would help us to live in light of who Jesus is, the king who has power to save. We ask it in his name. Amen.