

The Power of the Kingdom

Mark: The Gospel of the Kingdom

Mark 4:35-5:20

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This morning we continue in the Gospel of Mark, the fourth chapter, as we get to also the end of it and go into the beginning of Chapter 5. Last week we looked at “The Kingdom Coming,” as Jesus taught in parables about a mustard seed, about a lamp, and about the growing seed. The beauty of the kingdom, as we've learned throughout the book of Mark thus far, is that Jesus is the sower of the seed, as well as he is the seed itself. He is the gospel. He is the kingdom. He embodies the kingdom in his life. And even as we ended last week with Pastor PD, as he pointed out [that] as a mustard seed grows into the mightiest of trees in the garden and serves as a refuge for birds that flock to it, Jesus is himself like a great tree that is for us shade and refuge and protection.

As we move to this week, we see Jesus moving from teaching parables, now to acting out what does it look like when the kingdom comes. And we see it most prominently in the power of the kingdom. We see it demonstrated in the work of Jesus in these two vignettes, as Jesus responds to the circumstances around him in the lives of his apostles, as well as to those he comes across. We will see the power of the kingdom as it is embodied, that is, lived out in Jesus. The question is this. How does Jesus utilize his power? And the second is as important. How does he then, therefore. . . How do we live out following Christ, empowered by the Holy Spirit? What can we learn? How can it strengthen us? How can it encourage us? How can it give us hope? This is what I hope this passage will answer for you. Mark Chapter 4, beginning in verse 35, through Chapter 5, verse 20.

³⁵ On that day, when evening had come, he said to them, “Let us go across to the other side.” ³⁶ And leaving the crowd, they took him with them in the boat, just as he was. And other boats were with him. ³⁷ And a great windstorm arose, and the waves were breaking into the boat, so that the boat was already filling. ³⁸ But he 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?” ³⁹ And he awoke and rebuked the wind and said to the sea, “Peace! Be still!” And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm. ⁴⁰ He said to them, “Why are you so afraid? Have you still no faith?” ⁴¹ And they were filled with great fear and said to one another, “Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?”

^{5:1} They came to the other side of the sea, to the country of the Gerasenes. ² And when Jesus had stepped out of the boat, immediately there met him out of the tombs a man with an unclean spirit. ³ He lived among the tombs. And no one could bind him anymore, not even with a chain, ⁴ for he had often been bound with shackles and chains, but he wrenched the chains apart, and he broke the shackles in pieces. No one had the strength to subdue him. ⁵ Night and day among the tombs and on the mountains he was always crying out and cutting himself with stones. ⁶ And when he saw Jesus from afar, he ran and fell down before him. ⁷ And crying out with a loud voice, he said, “What have you to do

with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I adjure you by God, do not torment me.”⁸ For he was saying to him, “Come out of the man, you unclean spirit!”⁹ And Jesus asked him, “What is your name?” He replied, “My name is Legion, for we are many.”¹⁰ And he begged him earnestly not to send them out of the country.¹¹ Now a great herd of pigs was feeding there on the hillside,¹² and they begged him, saying, “Send us to the pigs; let us enter them.”¹³ So he gave them permission. And the unclean spirits came out and entered the pigs; and the herd, numbering about two thousand, rushed down the steep bank into the sea and drowned in the sea.

¹⁴ The herdsmen fled and told it in the city and in the country. And people came to see what it was that had happened.¹⁵ And they came to Jesus and saw the demon-possessed man, the one who had had the legion, sitting there, clothed and in his right mind, and they were afraid.¹⁶ And those who had seen it described to them what had happened to the demon-possessed man and to the pigs.¹⁷ And they began to beg Jesus to depart from their region.¹⁸ As he was getting into the boat, the man who had been possessed with demons begged him that he might be with him.¹⁹ And he did not permit him but said to him, “Go home to your friends and tell them how much the Lord has done for you, and how he has had mercy on you.”²⁰ And he went away and began to proclaim in the Decapolis how much Jesus had done for him, and everyone marveled.

This is the word of the Lord. (Thanks be to God.) Please pray with me. Our Heavenly Father, we ask that you would enable us to see Jesus for who he is. We ask you that through the power of the Holy Spirit that you would open our eyes and open our hearts that we may be able to comprehend the beauty and the power of Jesus, who had with him the power of the kingdom, who has given this power of the kingdom to all who come to him by faith and believe. May you, by your power, the power of your presence, the power of your Holy Spirit, now encourage, strengthen, and give us hope. In Jesus’s name we pray. Help the teacher. Amen.

This passage has two important situations and circumstances in the ministry of Jesus. They are very explicit demonstrations of who he is as the Son of God. They are a demonstration of the power of the Kingdom of God that is come in the ministry of Jesus, that has come in his person. But it is a power that people were not prepared for. They weren't even sure that they wanted it. We see different responses here in this passage. But as we've been walking through the Gospel of Mark, it continues to come to us, too, with the implied question of how do we respond to the person of Jesus. Now here we find—even though two relatively simply-told, with some detail—circumstances in the ministry of Jesus, it confronts us with the person of Jesus. It confronts us by asking the question how will we respond and how do we trust him. But more importantly, how do we understand Jesus's use of power. Then, therefore, as I said earlier, how do we walk by power in faith in Christ. It is this question that I believe many believers and their understanding of the life of faith turns. How do we walk by faith? How do we walk in the strength of Christ? As we end this sermon, I will take you to a prayer that Paul prays for all who would receive his letter; that includes us. And it talks about praying for us that we would walk by power. We can't do that if we misunderstand or do not see how Jesus did that, and how important it is for us by faith to see it. So let's walk together. You'll see in your outline **His Power and The Power of His Person. His Power and The Power of His Person.**

First, **His Power**. You see in this there are two demonstrations of the power of Jesus as he employed it in his ministry with his disciples, as he was going to, ultimately, the cross. These are given to us in two circumstances. First, 35-41, and secondly, 1-20. These two demonstrations are laid out fairly simply, as I've already read. The first demonstration of power is how Jesus exercises power over creation. We see when Jesus responds to his disciples' fear, to their worry, to their anxiety, and even to their questioning of his goodness, of his intent. Jesus would have taken a pillow that would have only been in the part of the boat underneath the seat where a person would sit who is not involved with getting the boat to move forward. He wasn't rowing or anything else; he was simply there resting. And so they say, "Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing?" Not an insignificant question—an understandable question, but not insignificant. Not because they were surrounded by a storm—it's significant because they question Jesus's motivation. Like, what are you doing? Do you not see? Can you not help us? Do you want to help us? And without fanfare he simply rebukes creation. And in the way in which he rebukes it, the words that he chooses, are similar to the kinds of opposition that Jesus faced during his temptation. It's the same kind of response that we see even in the Old Testament as the elements sought to press against God's people, as God would through his power protect his people. Jesus is seeing creation as if it were in opposition to himself and to his disciples. And so by a great work of power and demonstration of power he simply says, "Peace! Be still!" And so what happens is slack tide, as many fishermen would call it. Slack tide is that space where there's not the rising nor the falling. It's calm. And so Jesus says this to them: "Have you still no faith?" Jesus demonstrates that their faith in him ought not to be misplaced, because his power is made manifest over creation. Hold that for a moment.

Secondly, the demonstration of power is the power over evil. This is not the first time that Jesus is confronted with demons. And here yet again, the power of Satan, as it is exhibited through these demons who have taken over this man's life, causing him great torment, great—obviously great fear in those around him. He was a person they tried to keep under control who clearly was running out of control, naked, around the city, crying out. But when the demons recognize Jesus, they come to him and call him by name. But the name which they call him is his divine given name. Jesus, it says, the Son of the Most High God. They are yet again. . . Even though Jesus has already looked at his disciples...do you have no faith...and even they say who is this that even demonstrates power over creation. The people, who at least to this point in Mark, who get who Jesus is and that he has great power—are the demons. Yet again, they come to him and they try to call him by name, because they're trying to enact some degree of power over him. Of course, as it has been before, it is here. It is unfruitful; it's not successful. They do not have power over him. And Jesus turns the table and says no, what is your name? And simply by the word of his power Jesus says: Come out.

Now what's interesting is, is this whole internal debate among scholars as to, okay, why the pigs? Why did he allow it? Why didn't he just go out into the country? Well, he allows it, because he understands, at least, what these demons are bent on. They've already demonstrated what they are bent on, and that was destroying the man that they had inhabited. So Jesus, as a demonstration of his power, but also the demonstration of the evil of the demons, he casts them out into the pigs, recognizing that what they would do in the pigs is what they wanted to do in this man, and that was ultimately to destroy him. And he was right. What happens is he casts them out and he allows them to go to the pigs, and they do, and they

immediately go into the sea. They destroy the pigs, which is precisely what Satan and his demons and his evil power is bent on doing to human beings who bear the image of God. Whether you are a believer or not, he is bent on destroying that which God has called good. And all creation he is bent on destroying, and here Jesus allows it. But notice, they had to ask for permission. Jesus is demonstrating he is the Son of the Most High God, but he's Jesus, the Christ.

Why do I say he's Jesus the Christ? Because the word Christ literally means 'the anointed one.' He has been anointed by the Father to carry out the ministry and the power of the kingdom. And here Jesus demonstrates power over creation, over evil, and it all obeys him. This is the grip of the New Testament, not only to show that Jesus has power, it is also to reveal—not a secret knowledge of Christianity, but the center of it—to reveal Jesus. And that's where I want to take you next. His power is, you see, not only in the demonstrations of his power, but in what is revealed in the Person of Christ. This is something that for Paul was central to his ministry. In Colossians 1:15ff we hear these words, speaking of Jesus.

¹⁵ He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation.

So here he is pointing that Jesus in his incarnated state is the visible image of God, speaking of his birth, the firstborn. Verse 16. He then turns and says something about the power of Jesus.

¹⁶ For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him. ¹⁷ And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together. ¹⁸ And he is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent. ¹⁹ For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, ²⁰ and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross.

²¹ And you, who once were alienated and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds, ²² he has now reconciled in his body of flesh by his death, in order to present you holy and blameless and above reproach before him, ²³ if indeed you continue in the faith, stable and steadfast, not shifting from the hope of the gospel that you heard, which has been proclaimed in all creation under heaven, and of which I, Paul, became a minister. [ESV, Colossians 1:15-23]

I am a minister of the Gospel of Jesus Christ to proclaim to you that his power can never be divorced from his person, that Jesus is the creator of all things by the word of his power. God the Father, through Christ, has created all things and revealed who the Father is in the Second Person of the Trinity, Jesus Christ, the Most High Son of God—in whom all the authority in heaven and earth has been given. He is Jesus Christ, the Anointed One. This is the one we worship. This is the one through whom God made known his work of grace and love, by sending forth his Son and putting into him all his goodness and grace and mercy. And Jesus went before us, tempted and tried, anointed and taught and preached, and came to preach the gospel. And that gospel was this: that he came to redeem human beings by the blood of his cross, to pay the debt of sin, that we might know the Father. And the only way to do that is through the visible, demonstrated power of the revelation of Jesus Christ.

Having said all of that, we still have only scratched the surface of just what Jesus is to you and to me. For if we stop here at the demonstration of his power, at the revelation of his person, we will drift very easily into false teaching. Do you know why? If we do not go a little bit further. . . Now, if you're new to the Christian faith or you're not a Christian, perhaps what I'm getting ready to say to you regarding who Jesus is and demonstrated through this passage may seem difficult to understand. Yes and amen. It is a mystery. And so I'm called to be a preacher of the mystery of the gospel, so I'm still trying to work this out. So you're welcome to come along. But if you are a believer and have known him for some time, perhaps you, too, as I have, have failed to go deeper, even deeper, into the person and work of Jesus as a human being. And how Jesus demonstrated this power, by what means. And what in the world difference does that make for you and me on a Sunday at the end of April, 2017? If we cannot answer that question, then this is simply a seminar about theology. My goal is to give you a hope to walk out with this morning. So let's go there.

It is not just about his power, it is about **The Power of His Person**, and by 'person' I mean Jesus as incarnate man. Look with me, if you will, in considering how Jesus. . . The first question to ask is: If this was Jesus' power and how it was revealed over creation and over evil, how did he do it? The clues have already been there for us in the Gospel of Mark. In Mark 1:9ff we read these words. If you have your Bibles you may turn there. If not, I will read it for you. Mark 1:9.

⁹ In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. ¹⁰ And when he came up out of the water, immediately he saw the heavens being torn open and the Spirit descending on him like a dove. ¹¹ And a voice came from heaven, "You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased." ¹² The Spirit immediately drove him out into the wilderness. ¹³ And he was in the wilderness forty days, being tempted by Satan. And he was with the wild animals, and the angels were ministering to him. [ESV, Mark 1:9-13]

Now hold that in your thought. Jesus was baptized with water, he received the anointing—that's why he is called the Christ—he received the anointing of the Father by the giving of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit descended upon Christ, and then the Spirit drove him out into the wilderness to be tempted. Then flip over, if you will, to Chapter 3. In Chapter 3, which we've just been in a few weeks ago, we learned this about their looking at Jesus's demonstration of power. And they attribute Jesus's demonstration of power as being the work of Satan. If you recall, Jesus has some pretty harsh words to say. But one of the things he says is this, beginning in verse 28.

²⁸ "Truly, I say to you, all sins will be forgiven the children of man, and whatever blasphemies they utter, ²⁹ but whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit never has forgiveness, but is guilty of an eternal sin"— [ESV]

Now, I'm not I'm unpacking that verse; I've already done that. And if you haven't heard it—I normally don't say this—but it's available on our website. But this is important to understand. Notice what Jesus says: If you say that the power which I demonstrate is the power of Satan, I say you have blasphemed the Holy Spirit. Which means this, and this is important and unique for our part of the Christian faith. Within the reformed church of Jesus Christ it has long been taught and held and believed that Jesus had in his one person two natures. He was the divine

Son of God; he had a divine nature. And he had a human nature. But the divine attributes that belong to his divine nature were not communicated to the human nature of Christ. They were not mixed, they did not highlight one another. They were together. Why is that important? Because if we believe that Jesus was demonstrating his power because his divine nature was giving him that power, that makes Jesus a super-man. Therefore he doesn't need the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit would be, as one writer says, superfluous. Jesus, within his person, had a divine nature and a human nature. Therefore he was born, he was born in the womb of Mary by the power of the Holy Spirit, not he was conceived by the Holy Spirit. He was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit. Do you understand the distinction? It was by the power of the Holy Spirit that she conceived of a child, not through a man, but divinely given. It is by the power that Jesus received the anointing from his Father and is called the Christ. It is by the power of [the Holy Spirit] that he was driven out into temptation. It is by the power of the Holy Spirit that Jesus walked by faith. That means—how did Jesus have power to calm down the creation? How did Jesus have power to drive out demons? Not by his human nature, but because the Holy Spirit indwelt him, and by the Spirit he demonstrated the power of God.

This is important, because if Jesus did these things by the power through his divine nature, that means that Jesus didn't feel the same kind of weaknesses and difficulties that you and I feel. But in his human nature he experienced hunger, he experienced temptation, he experienced great persecution, he experienced great pain. He did all of these things because he walked by faith and not by sight, trusting in the will of him, his Father. Jesus did these things by the power of the Spirit. As one writer says: Reform theologians have been careful to insist upon the integrity of Christ's two natures. In connection with this, many have said that on the surface the only immediate act that the person of the Son on the human nature, was the assumption of it into subsistence with himself. (I'll explain in a minute.) This means that the Holy Spirit was the immediate operator of all divine acts of the Son in his human nature. Whatever the Son of God wrought in, by, or upon the human nature, he did it by the Holy Ghost, by his Holy Spirit. But can this view be defended? The answer to that is yes. He was incarnate by the power of the Spirit, he was baptized and anointed by the Spirit. He was able to withstand temptation and remain obedient in his human nature by the Holy Spirit. This is the ministry of Jesus. This is the ministry of the Holy Spirit. Why is this important? It is because of this. The attributes of the two natures of Christ are beautiful and unique and are together in one person without mixture or confusion. He was fully God and fully man. So that when Jesus felt the pain, the emotional pain of persecution, or the loss of a friend to death, it was not as a divine nature only, he felt it as humans feel it. When Jesus, in the garden of Gethsemane, began to sense what was coming before him—the giving of himself on the cross and the beginning of the turning of the Father from him in his wrath for sin—Jesus experienced it as Son, human Son of God. Jesus was not a super-man. He was the god-man. And he went before us and walked by faith by the power of the Holy Spirit, trusting in the Father, depending on the will of the Father, so that...what? So what if all this is the case?

It is for this reason. That in his humanity, in his dependence, in his trust, in his walking, in his empowerment, in his anointing by the Holy Spirit—it is for the sake that when Christ would be raised from the dead on that third day by the power of God, the Holy Spirit, as he was raised and is now seated at the right hand of God the Father, he did what with his Spirit? He is now not just anointed by the Spirit, he is the Lord of the Spirit. And now Jesus is the one who baptizes by the Spirit, which is why he said to his disciples, go and wait in Jerusalem before the

outpouring of the Holy Spirit. Now as the Lord of the Spirit, he gives the Spirit. Do you see? This is why Jesus said I leave you, and when I do, I will not leave you as orphans; I will give you the Holy Comforter. My friends, Jesus walked this life as fully God and fully man, suffered as man, walked by the power of the Holy Spirit, so that he would become the Lord of the Spirit—Savior, Redeemer—but the giver of the Spirit, so that those who come to Christ by faith receive the same power of God. Do you believe that? Why is this important? It is because you and I need the Holy Spirit tomorrow morning, this afternoon, and this very moment. Our Savior walked by the Spirit and now gives us the Spirit so that we can look to him, Jesus, as the preeminent man who walked by the Spirit. As the all-powerful one who enacted and did wonderful things by the power of the Spirit, so that he could prove himself as fully obedient, fully God, fully man, so that he could then give us the blessing of the power of God. How do you and I walk by obedience? How do we even pray? How do we love one another? How do we forgive one another? Praise be to God—by the Holy Spirit.

I know this to be true, because Paul prayed it for you and for me. You remember that passage I was referring to earlier in the book of Ephesians. It is one of my favorite prayers in all of Scripture. And I will close with this.

¹⁴ For this reason I bow my knees before the Father. . .

This is Paul praying for us.

¹⁴ For this reason I bow my knees before the Father ¹⁵ from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named, ¹⁶ that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being, ¹⁷ so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith—that you, being rooted and grounded in love, ¹⁸ may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, ¹⁹ and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

²⁰ Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, ²¹ to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen. [ESV, Ephesians 3:14-21]

How could Jesus be the giver of the Spirit if he was not the one who walked by the Spirit? How could Jesus be the Savior as a man dying in our place, if he did not walk as a man—not as a super-man, but as man? How could Jesus redeem us of our sins if he didn't experience temptations as men do? Yes, friends, Jesus walked, trusting in the Father, by the power of the Spirit, so that he could not just be our Redeemer, but so that he could be the giver and baptizer of the Holy Spirit. So that the power of the Kingdom of God wasn't just for him, but he was the giver of it, so that you and I can walk by that same power. I don't know about you, but I'm weak. I need—by God, I need the grace and power of God to walk by faith. I need the power of the Spirit to give me hope and love and grace and all the fullness of the promises in Christ. And my suspicion—by the authority of God's Word is—you do, too. We had and have Jesus, the anointed Son of God, fully God, fully man, who brought the power of the Kingdom of God to bear, so that he could give it away to redeem us. May the Lord give you hope and

encouragement this day to enable you to walk by the power of the kingdom, the Spirit of God, the power of his person. Let's pray.

Heavenly Father, I pray now that you would fill us with your Holy Spirit. I ask that you would pour out your Spirit afresh upon us this morning, in this hour, in this congregation, for this people. I pray, Father, for those who do not believe. I pray that they would see you, Jesus, as the Redeemer and Savior of their souls, that they would see you as the giver of life, the giver of the Spirit. And may you bring new life into them. And may this day be the beginning of the rest of their lives for all eternity. Father, I pray for Christians who are here who struggle with weakness and disappointment and difficulty and lack hope. I pray that you would fill them with hope and the power of the Spirit, because Jesus has given it to us. May they be reminded in their weakness and in their temptations that their Savior has walked through it before them, yet was without sin, and by faith they can find a refuge in their Savior. And may you, by the gift of your Spirit, so unite us to your power that we would see you work in ways we cannot begin to measure. Glorify yourself, Jesus, in us and in our midst. In Jesus's holy name we pray. Amen.