

"Divine Power" - Mark 4:35-5:20

One of the things I find really difficult to get my mind around is the dual nature of our Lord Jesus Christ. He is and has always been 100% God. He is *Ho Logos*, the eternal Word. He is God the Son and He has all the attributes of Godhood. When Philip said, "*Lord, show us the Father, and it is sufficient for us.*" (John 14:8) Jesus replied, "*Have I been with you so long, and yet you have not known Me, Philip? He who has seen Me has seen the Father;*" (John 14:9) Jesus is Emmanuel – God with us.

But Jesus is also 100% human being. When He came to earth to share our common lot, He became just as human as you and I are human. He voluntarily set aside many of the attributes of Godhood. He was no longer omnipresent, but isolated at a time and place. He was no longer omnipotent, but had to work through the power of God the Holy Spirit. He was subject to every human frailty. He got hungry. He got tired. He was subject to pain, both physical and emotional. He was subject to death.

For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin.
(Hebrews 4:15)

The lot of fallen humanity was difficult for Him to experience, to witness. I'm sure it was often overwhelming. At one point, while witnessing the overwhelming grief of dead Lazarus' family, scripture tells us:

Jesus wept. (John 11:35)

Given Jesus' dual nature, it is not at all surprising that He was sometimes absolutely exhausted. I don't want you to think I'm whining, but I know from first-hand experience that the work of ministry can take a lot out of you. I had no idea how much until I became your pastor. By Sunday evening, I feel almost like I have the flu, or like I've run a marathon. And from time to time, I find myself both physically and emotionally spent. I've found that I have to discipline myself to take a break once in awhile. It's why I try to be faithful in taking my day off. I try to spend a little time every day doing something completely unrelated to ministry because it can wear you out.

If this is exhausting for me, it had to be a hundred times more so for Jesus. Think about what His daily life must have been like. Given his immense popularity, the crowds made incredible, constant demands. At one point, He tells His disciples:

*"Come aside by yourselves to a deserted place and rest a while." **For there were many coming and going, and they did not even have time to eat.*** (Mark 6:31)

Last week, we finished Mark's account of some of Jesus' teaching. The crowds were so immense that He climbed in a boat and had the boys shove off a little way from shore and He taught by means of parables about the nature of the Kingdom of Heaven. When He finished, He had His disciples weigh anchor and head across the Sea of Galilee. He was tired. In His humanness, He needed to rest, but He never ceased being God. As God the Son, He always had access to Divine Power.

On the same day, when evening had come, He said to them, "Let us cross over to the other side." Now when they had left the multitude, they took Him along in the boat as He was. And other little boats were also with Him. And a great windstorm arose, and the waves beat into the boat, so that it was already filling. But He was in the stern, asleep on a pillow. And

they awoke Him and said to Him, "Teacher, do You not care that we are perishing?" Then He arose and rebuked the wind, and said to the sea, "Peace, be still!" And the wind ceased and there was a great calm. But He said to them, "Why are you so fearful? How is it that you have no faith?" And they feared exceedingly, and said to one another, "Who can this be, that even the wind and the sea obey Him!" (Mark 4:35-41)

I can answer that question. Jesus is God. He is God the Son. But His human side was wiped out and he needed rest. He needed to crash, so Jesus went on a sea cruise!

I used to like to do that. When we lived in Everett, we were fortunate enough to own a series of boats – 2 sailboats, and finally, a 35-foot Trawler. I loved using that boat to get away from the daily grind. I found it incredibly relaxing ... unless the weather turned nasty. On a few occasions, I could hear the theme to Gilligan's Island playing in the back of my mind. I can relate to this story on many levels.

As they struck off across the sea, I suspect that the wind was light and fair. Since many of the disciples were fishermen by trade, they would also be experienced boatmen. They probably didn't expect any trouble getting to the other side but because of the topography around the Sea of Galilee, it is not that unusual for bad weather to descend suddenly. And that's what happened to them. In fact, these guys realized that they were in serious peril. While Jesus, was catching Zs on a pillow in the stern of the boat, these fishermen, these experienced boatmen were beginning to panic. So, they woke up their Lord and can't you just hear the panic they felt by the words they used?

"Teacher, do You not care that we are perishing?" (Mark 4:38b)

There is actually a bit of a rebuke there. "Look, Jesus, the boat is taking on water and you're conked out on that cushion as if you didn't have a care in the world!"

Well, Jesus had a rebuke of His own:

Then He arose and rebuked the wind, and said to the sea, "Peace, be still!" And the wind ceased and there was a great calm. (Mark 4:39)

He rebuked the wind! He spoke to the sea! In all my years of boating, the sea never listened to me! Who is this guy?

The disciples should have known. They should have figured Him out by this time. Jesus has complete authority over creation. He has complete authority over the earth, complete authority over the sea, complete authority over the weather, complete authority over everything in the universe, because it is His universe. He spoke it into existence.

All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made. (John 1:3)

When God said, "Let there be light", it was God the Son who was doing the speaking. Not only did He create the universe, He makes sure it stays together. God ...

... has in these last days spoken to us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds; who being the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power, ... (Hebrews 1:2-3)

Upholding all things. All things!

Jesus rebuked the wind and the sea and they immediately obeyed. And then, it's like He just couldn't help throwing in a little dig:

But He said to them, "Why are you so fearful? How is it that you have no faith?" (Mark 4:40)

The disciples were understandably impressed.

And they feared exceedingly, and said to one another, "Who can this be, that even the wind and the sea obey Him!" (Mark 4:41)

His name is Jesus. He is Lord Almighty, King of Glory. He is the King of my heart. Is He the King of your heart?

The sea cruise continues.

Then they came to the other side of the sea, to the country of the Gadarenes. (Mark 5:1)

This was Gentile country. It is an area on the Eastern shore of the Sea of Galilee called the Decapolis. There were 10 Greek cities there, actually, more like semi-independent city-states. We know it was under Gentile control because they were raising pigs. Jews wouldn't have anything to do with pigs. They were unclean animals according to Levitical Law.

And when He had come out of the boat, immediately there met Him out of the tombs a man with an unclean spirit, who had his dwelling among the tombs; and no one could bind him, not even with chains, because he had often been bound with shackles and chains. And the chains had been pulled apart by him, and the shackles broken in pieces; neither could anyone tame him. (Mark 5:2-4)

This was a scary dude! From Matthew, we learn that he had a buddy, someone else living with him in the tombs. From Luke, we learn that he didn't wear any clothes. So, try to picture this: They land on the shore. Jesus disembarks and this lunatic starts running down the hill toward them, naked, maybe with the remnants of chains attached to his arms or legs, screaming at the top of his lungs. Nobody could control this guy!

And always, night and day, he was in the mountains and in the tombs, crying out and cutting himself with stones. (Mark 5:5)

He was demon-possessed in a really bad way. It shouldn't surprise us that demons were especially active while Jesus ministered on the Earth. Satan and his dark angels are completely opposed to Jesus. They hate Him. So as Jesus was engaged with His redemptive work here on earth, these spirits were also doing all they could to keep people from Him. Yet here is something that is really interesting in verse 6.

When he saw Jesus from afar, he ran and worshiped Him. (Mark 5:6)

Worshiped Him? That seems a bit inconsistent on the surface. This wild, naked man, under demonic control, running down toward Jesus' boat I'm sure meant to do him harm. But he couldn't. I believe this speaks to the time when ...

*... at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, **and of those under the earth**, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. (Philippians 2:10-11)*

This demon-possessed man could not help but worship. Demons don't want to bow down to Jesus, but they have no choice.

And he cried out with a loud voice and said, "What have I to do with You, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I implore You by God that You do not torment me." (Mark 5:7)

In Matthew's account, the demon asks Jesus,

"Have You come here to torment us before the time?" (Matthew 8:29)

And Luke tells us that the demons are afraid Jesus is going to cast them into the abyss. The insane thing is, these demons, and Satan himself all know what awaits them. They are bound for the Lake of Fire and nothing can save them. The only thing they can do is beg for a little more time.

For He said to him, "Come out of the man, unclean spirit!" Then He asked him, "What is your name?" And he answered, saying, "My name is Legion; for we are many." (Mark 5:8-9)

Well, it seems that this guy was possessed by a whole herd of demons. A Roman legion was the largest unit of the Roman army. It consisted of over 5,000 men. That's a bunch of demons! No wonder this guy was in such a bad way.

Also he begged Him earnestly that He would not send them out of the country. Now a large herd of swine was feeding there near the mountains. So all the demons begged Him, saying, "Send us to the swine, that we may enter them." And at once Jesus gave them permission. Then the unclean spirits went out and entered the swine (there were about two thousand); and the herd ran violently down the steep place into the sea, and drowned in the sea. (Mark 5:10-13)

This is a strange request, and I admit, I find it strange that Jesus let them do it. Maybe it was a spur of the moment thing on the demons' part, grasping at straws hoping to avoid a worse fate. Maybe it was malicious; by destroying the swine, maybe they were hoping to turn the people against Jesus because of the loss of their pigs. But whatever the reason, Jesus gave them permission. Get this: They could do nothing apart from Jesus allowing them to do it. They were completely subject to our Lord's will.

It is true of Satan himself. Remember, the devil had to ask permission before God allowed him to torment Job. God doesn't cause sin. He doesn't cause temptation. But He allows it, and then superintends it for His own purpose. We are not always allowed to know what God's ultimate purpose is, but we do know that He works all things together according to the council of His will. (Ephesians 1:11) As much as Satan would like us to believe that he can overcome Jesus, he is already defeated.

So those who fed the swine fled, and they told it in the city and in the country. And they went out to see what it was that had happened. (Mark 5:14)

This would have represented a significant financial loss to the owners of the pigs and so the workers, those who took care of the swine herd, had to be pretty frightened. First, they witnessed the supernatural event that resulted in the loss of the animals. But then, they had to go back to town and tell the owners what happened. That would not have been a pleasant conversation.

"What do you mean all my pigs drowned?"

Then they came to Jesus, and saw the one who had been demon-possessed and had the legion, sitting and clothed and in his right mind. And they were afraid. (Mark 5:15)

Folks knew who this demoniac was. He had been completely out of his mind, and possessed supernatural strength. Nobody could safely pass by, says Matthew, yet here he was, sitting quietly with Jesus, fully clothed and in his right mind. But their reaction is profoundly unfortunate. They were afraid.

Now, there is such a thing as godly fear, and it is a good thing. We must always recognize how awesomely holy our God is. We must never take him lightly. We need to approach Him with the utmost humility. We must approach Him with reverence and fear. We must approach Him with an attitude of worship.

But there is also such a thing as craven fear. That's not such a good thing. That's the sort of fear that will cause men to cry out to the stones and the mountains to fall on them so that they don't have to face Jesus.

And those who saw it told them how it happened to him who had been demon-possessed, and about the swine. Then they began to plead with Him to depart from their region. (Mark 5:16-17)

That is so tragic! They witnessed divine power. The Savior of the world was standing right in front of them, yet they begged Him to just go away. Contrast their attitude to that of the man who had been possessed by Legion.

And when He got into the boat, he who had been demon-possessed begged Him that he might be with Him. (Mark 5:18)

This man wanted nothing more than to be with Jesus. He recognized His Savior for who He was. All He wanted to do is bask in the Lord's presence, to be with Him, but Jesus had another plan.

However, Jesus did not permit him, but said to him, "Go home to your friends, and tell them what great things the Lord has done for you, and how He has had compassion on you." (Mark 5:19)

This is remarkable, because up until this point, Jesus told those whom He had healed to keep their mouths shut. Remember the leper He cleansed?

... and said to him, "**See that you say nothing to anyone;** but go your way, show yourself to the priest, and offer for your cleansing those things which Moses commanded, as a testimony to them." (Mark 1:44)

But here, Jesus commanded this Gentile to go home to his friends to be a witness, to tell them of the great things the Lord did for him, to speak to them about God's love and compassion. It is a beautiful model for witnessing. It's what you should be doing if you are a Christian. Go home to your friends. Tell them the great things the Lord has done for you. Tell them about God's love and compassion. Tell them how they can have a living relationship with the King of Glory.

This Gentile was obedient.

And he departed and began to proclaim in Decapolis all that Jesus had done for him; and all marveled. (Mark 5:20)

Jesus possesses Divine Power. He is mighty to save (Isaiah 63:1) and He can save you. All you have to do is trust Him. Confess your sins. Confess Him as your Lord and Your God. Believe that He died for your sins. Believe that God raised Him from the dead. Nurture your desire to be with Him.

But also, strive for obedience. And tell all your friends what great things Jesus has done for you.