

THROUGH THE BIBLE STUDY

MARK 5-6

“The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly.”

These are Jesus’ words in John 10:10, *and what a contrast!* Satan destroys... Jesus gives abundant life...

And nowhere in Scripture are *the blessings of Jesus* and *the destruction caused by Satan* better illustrated than in Mark 5... Perhaps in modern societies Satan acts in more sophisticated ways, but his intentions have always been the same - *He steals, kills, destroys.*

Satan wants to **ruin** lives. Jesus wants to **redeem** lives! And our Lord encounters His enemy in verse 1...

“Then they came to the other side of the sea, to the country of the Gadarenes...” The country of the Gadarenes was east of the Sea of Galilee - across the lake from where the disciples set sail the previous day.

Recall a few hours earlier Jesus had calmed a storm at sea. In 4:39 He “rebuked the wind, and said to the sea, “Peace, be still!” But notice He “rebuked the wind.” This is what you do to a demon... You *rebuke him*.

The storm at sea was more than a meteorological phenomenon, it was a spiritual attack. The devil didn’t want Jesus coming to Gadara. *He had a stronghold...*

“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...” Tombs were off-limits to Jews - and seen as haunts for demons. This demon possessed man spent his days wandering around in a limestone graveyard.

“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...” The demons inside the man could not be restrained. They welded supernatural strength that kept people away who might’ve try to help him.

“And always, night and day, he was in the mountains and in the tombs, crying out and cutting himself with stones...” The demons had driven the man crazy. He turned into a cutter. Self-mutilation was ruining his life.

The townsfolk didn’t know what to do with him so they isolated him to the tombs - a hopeless situation.

I wonder how many patients in today’s psychiatric hospitals have been treated the same? Certainly, there is such a thing as mental illness, but I also believe some folks who’ve been labeled “mentally ill” have been misdiagnosed. More probably, they’re possessed by a demon. And sadly, rather than bring them to Jesus, like the Gadarenes we send them away. Our prisons and hospitals have taken over for the tombs.

Well, “When (this man) saw Jesus from afar, he ran and worshiped Him. 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.” It

seems to be the voice of the demon speaking through him rather than the man himself...

“For (Jesus) 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.” Apparently, the man was occupied by a nest of demons - a whole den of demons.

A “*legion*” was a battalion of Roman soldiers made up of 4000 to 6000 troops. J Vernon McGee translates verse 9, “What is your name? And he said, “Mob.”

Verse 10, “Also he begged (Jesus) earnestly that He would not send them out of the country. Now a large herd of swine was feeding there near the mountains.”

On our trips to Israel we visit the one spot on the eastern coastline of the Sea of Galilee where the steep cliffs slope into the lake. *Mountains meet the water...*

It’s almost certainly where Jesus met this demoniac.

“So all the demons begged Him, saying, “Send us to the swine, that we may enter them.” And here we’re given an interesting insight into the nature of demons.

Demons don’t like being disembodied spirits. They seek a body to inhabit. Both the *Holy Spirit* and *demonic spirits* want to dwell in people. The Holy Spirit wants live in you to *conform* you into the image of Jesus. *Satan* wants to live in you to *deform* His image.

In Matthew 12:43-44 Jesus said, “When an unclean spirit goes out of a man, he goes through dry places, seeking rest, and finds none. Then he says, ‘I will return to my house from

which I came." Demons want a house to inhabit. They take up residence in humans.

But here's good news. If you're a Christian a demon can't have *your body!* The Bible teaches it's impossible for you to be inhabited by a demon. God's Spirit lives in you, and the *Holy Spirit* never bunks with *evil spirits*.

2 Corinthians 6 asks the question, "What fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And communion has light with darkness? And what accord has Christ with Belial (that is, Satan)?" God's Spirit never hangs out with evil spirits You might get hassled, or attacked, or *oppressed* by a demon, but never *possessed*.

If you're a follower of Jesus, and a demon walks by he sees a "no vacancy" on the shingle of your heart.

Yet if you're NOT a Christian you're vulnerable. Your body was made to be inhabited by God's Spirit - yet Satan wants to be like God. That's why, if you spurn God's grace, evil spirits can try to take up residence.

Demons want a body. Preferably a human body - but *any body* is better than *no body*. So that's why they asked Jesus to send them into the herd of swine...

"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." You might say, after leaving the man, the demons *went hog wild* or *pigged out*. They really *hammed it up*. You could call this, "the case of the deviled ham."

On a serious note though, this does illustrate the sinfulness of man... This fellow had tolerated the presence of the demons for years, while the pigs couldn't handle them for a few minutes. As soon as the demons enter them, the hogs go nuts, and run into the lake. You might say they committed **“sooeyside.”**

But don't feel too bad for the pigs, after they drowned, I'm sure they all went on to... *hog heaven*.

On one of our trips to Israel we'd spent the day in the Golan Heights above the Sea of Galilee, and were returning down the road that intersects with Gadara.

Suddenly, a wild boar runs in front of the bus, strikes the front fender, rolls over, and runs off into the brush.

I turned to our guide, and said, **“Wow, how did you arrange that - you've got real connections!”** It was wild to have that happen to us near the site of this story.

Verse 14, **“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.”** The workers who fed the swine reported this to the townspeople.

“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.” Notice the three ways Jesus liberated and changed this man's life...

The man is now **“sitting”** - he's no longer thrashing and wandering in the tombs. He's at home with Jesus.

He's now "clothed" - Luke says he'd been naked. His nakedness had revealed a lack of shame. He was oblivious to his sin. The fact he's now clothed indicates that a sense of right and wrong has returned to him.

And he's "in his right mind" - all the symptoms we associate with mental illness: *paranoia, self-mutilation, delusions, manic episodes, depressions, violence* - had all vanished, replaced with God's amazing peace.

This was an obvious miracle... But note the reaction of the townspeople when they see the transformation...

Verse 15 tells us, "They were afraid. 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."

Rather than appreciate the deliverance, perhaps they were upset that Jesus had destroyed 2000 swine.

He'd crippled the local economy. The city fathers of Gadara thought more of *their money*, than *this man*.

Jesus doesn't stay where He's not wanted, so "when He got into the boat, he who had been demon-possessed begged Him that he might be with Him.

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. And he departed and began to proclaim in Decapolis all that Jesus had done for him; and all marveled." The "Decapolis" was the region east of the Sea of Galilee. It consisted of ten

cities - “*deca*” means “ten”, “*polis*” is “city” - *Decapolis* or ten cities.

These were Gentile cities. This was the Gentile side of the lake, in contrast to Capernaum - which was the Jewish side of the lake. This is why they raised swine.

Here, the delivered man wanted to go with Jesus, but Jesus knew his witness would be far more powerful among folks who were familiar with his past.

In fact, early church history recounts a group of Christians who met on the eastern shore of the lake - probably the result of this former demoniac’s witness.

And this is applicable to us. “The first place to shine your light is among those who shared your darkness.”

The folks who saw your pain are the ones most impressed with your healing. Imagine, this man walking down Main Street in Gadara - an amazing testimony. Sometimes following Jesus begins with going home.

Verse 21, “Now when Jesus had crossed over again by boat to the other side, a great multitude gathered to Him; and He was by the sea. And behold, one of the rulers of the synagogue came, Jairus by name.”

Now He’s back on the Jewish side of the lake, and He’s confronted by the ruler of the synagogue.

This was the most respected man in the community. He’s a religious and civic leader. Jairus was powerful and privileged - but notice what he does to Jesus...

“When he saw Him, he fell at His feet and begged Him earnestly, saying, “My little daughter lies at the point of death.

Come and lay Your hands on her, that she may be healed, and she will live.” Few situations in life will bring a man to his knees faster than a sick child. His princess was dying. Jairus was desperate!

“So Jesus went with him, and a great multitude followed Him and thronged Him.” The crowd was *pressing* and *pushing* on Jesus from all sides. “Now a certain woman had a flow of blood for twelve years...”

Before we go further, note the contrast. Jump ahead to verse 42 and you discover that Jairus’ daughter was 12 years old. So for the same 12 years that he and his princess had *been going on daddy-daughter dates, and playing Barbies, and getting ice cream at Brusters, and dreaming of the future...* this “**woman**” - *who is not even named* - has been hemorrhaging and suffering.

Her disease had cost her spiritually. An issue of blood made her ineligible for worship at the temple.

And it cost her financially... Verse 26 says she “**had suffered many things from many physicians. She had spent all that she had and was no better, but rather grew worse.**” She had wiped out her 401K... all her savings... on doctors who failed to relieve her ailment.

It’s amazing the contrast... *Jairus is a prominent man. The woman isn’t even named... Jairus is wealthy. The woman is poor... Jairus is the leader of the synagogue. This woman isn’t even allowed to enter...*

For 12 years Jairus lived a merry life. For 12 years this woman suffered a miserable life. The only commonality they now share is their faith in Jesus!

Verse 27, **“When she heard about Jesus, she came behind Him in the crowd and touched His garment; for she said, “If only I may touch His clothes, I shall be made well.”** This woman believed one touch of Jesus’ robe would heal her. She pressed in and reached up, and with a fist-full of faith grabbed the hem of His robe.

And we’re told what happened, **“Immediately the fountain of her blood was dried up, and she felt in her body that she was healed of the affliction.”** Realize, her faith was actually mixed with superstition. The ancients believe the garments of a holy man contained virtue. Healing came from the garment itself... Perhaps this was part of her belief, but she also believed in Jesus.

Jesus looked through her superstition and had faith.

He calls this woman out of the crowd, **“And Jesus, immediately knowing in Himself that power had gone out of Him, turned around in the crowd and said, “Who touched My clothes?”** But His disciples said to Him, **“You see the multitude thronging You, and You say, ‘Who touched Me?’”** Hundreds of people - a whole crowd had been pressing and pawing after Jesus.

Yet here’s a wonderful truth... The love of Jesus is personal, intimate. It’s tailored to each of us. **“He loves each one of us as if there were only one of us to love.”**

This woman is never named, *but Jesus knew her name*. He loved her with a special and specific love.

It's interesting, though she was anonymous when she touched Jesus, and was healed, He refused to let her remain anonymous. He called her out of the crowd.

Jesus challenged the woman to go public with her faith. He wants *secret saints to be public witnesses*.

God's forgiveness, like this woman's healing, costs us nothing. But once its received, Jesus wants us its recipients to step out and stand up for what He's done.

Verse 32 tells us, **“(Jesus) looked around to see her who had done this thing. But the woman, fearing and trembling, knowing what had happened to her, came and fell down before Him and told Him the whole truth.”**

This is where Jesus explains to her, the healing wasn't due to *His robe*, but *her faith*. **“He said to her, "Daughter, your faith has made you well. Go in peace, and be healed of your affliction.”** The key was faith.

Today, if you're miserable - if you've wasted time, money, energy on silly cures... If you've been looking for answers in all the wrong places, reach out to Jesus with a fist-full of faith, and your bleeding will stop!

But in that same moment, **“While (Jesus) was still speaking, some came from the ruler of the synagogue's house who said, "Your daughter is dead. Why trouble the Teacher any further?”** Again, notice the contrast, in an instant the woman's

12 years of misery turns to joy, while a girl's 12 years of joy turns to grief.

And life is like that - you never know what a day might bring... Life is full of surprising twists and turns.

Verse 36, "As soon as Jesus heard the word that was spoken, He said to the ruler of the synagogue, "Do not be afraid; only believe." And He permitted no one to follow Him except Peter, James, and John the brother of James. Then He came to the house of the ruler of the synagogue, and saw a tumult and those who wept and wailed loudly." Realize, the Jews hired professional mourners to weep and wail over the dead.

History tells us even the poorest family would hire *two minstrels - two flautists - and one screamer*. Jairus who was a wealthy man, probably had hired more.

"When (Jesus) came in, He said to them, "Why make this commotion and weep? The child is not dead, but sleeping." "*Sleep*" is the word used in 1 Corinthians 15 to describe the bodies of those Christians waiting for the resurrection. At death our spirit goes to be with Jesus, but our body occupies the grave. In essence, it's asleep, waiting for Jesus to return and resurrect it.

Of course, the mourners were familiar with death, *and this little girl was a goner* - thus in verse 40, "*they ridiculed Him.*" Imagine, they laughed at the King of kings. They mocked the resurrection and the life...

“But when He had put them all outside, He took the father and the mother of the child, and those who were with Him, and entered where the child was lying.”

Notice, **before Jesus works a miracle He first puts out the mockers.** Sometimes the mockers are cynical people... At times they are our own cynical, negative, doubting thoughts... But Jesus shows that miracles most often happen in an atmosphere of faith and praise. If you need a *miracle* - get rid of the *mockers!*

“Then (Jesus) took the child by the hand, and said to her, “Talitha, cumi,” which is translated, “Little girl, I say to you, arise.” Immediately the girl arose and walked, for she was twelve years of age. And they were overcome with great amazement.” Even death was a minor technicality for Jesus. And if Jesus can raise the dead... *let’s believe Him for the miracle we need?*

Verse 43, “But (Jesus) commanded them strictly that no one should know it, and said that something should be given her to eat.” I like this combination. Even a miracle doesn’t replace a bowl of chicken noodle soup. The little girl still needed some food on her stomach.

And notice the near impossible command Jesus gives, “*Tell no one, are you kidding me? My little girl was resurrected and I’m suppose to sit on the news?*”

Jesus was concerned with crowd control. Thus, He downplayed His miracles, rather than headlined them.

Chapter 6, “Then He went out from there and came to His own country, and His disciples followed Him...”

It's a 22 mile walk from Capernaum to Nazareth, *but it's always downhill when you're headed home.*

The last few months had been a whirlwind of busyness for Jesus. His newfound notoriety had been stressful. I'm sure He was excited about a break. Some time hanging with His brothers... seeing His mom...

And especially worshipping in the synagogue He'd grown up attending... **“And when the Sabbath had come, He began to teach in the synagogue.”** Of course, they asked Jesus to teach. Everyone wanted to know His intentions. *Who did He really claim to be?*

“And many hearing Him were astonished, saying, “Where did this Man get these things?” He impressed them with His wisdom and command of the Scriptures.

“And what wisdom is this which is given to Him, that such mighty works are performed by His hands! Is this not the carpenter...” **“Tekton”** the root of our word **“technical”** is the Greek term translated **“carpenter.”**

A **tekton** was a technical carpenter. In contrast to framing houses, He made furniture or tools. He was a detailed craftsman. There's a legend that says Jesus' specialty was wooden yokes. A wooden harness had to be an exact fit - or it would rub and irritate the animal. This added meaning to His words, **“My yoke is easy...”**

The legend has it that a sign hung over His carpenter shop, **“The Best Fitting Yokes Made Here.”** The yokes Jesus crafted were perfect fits... *and they still are!*

When Jesus asks you to climb into His harness, and submit your life to His will it's a perfect fit. What He calls you to do, He has and will equip you to do!

Along *with the task* will come a *love for the task*.

If today, you're under a heavy burden... *it didn't come from Jesus*. His burden is light. His yoke is easy !

But they not only called Jesus "**the carpenter**" - they called Him, "**the Son of Mary.**" This was an insult, not a compliment... In ancient Israel men were referred to by the patriarch's name - even if the father was deceased.

By calling Jesus the "**the Son of Mary**" they were questioning His parentage. Jesus' hometown crowd remembered the scandal surrounding His birth. Mary had turned up pregnant before her marriage to Joseph, and few people believed her explanation of a miracle.

By calling Jesus, "**the Son of Mary,**" the Nazarenes were saying, "*We don't know who His father was?*"

They called Him, "**the carpenter, the Son of Mary, and brother of James, Joses, Judas, and Simon? And are not His sisters here with us?**" Roman Catholics teach Mary remained a virgin the rest of her life. They call it her *perpetual virginity*. I think *perpetual fertility* is more like it. After Jesus was born, Mary had a minimum of six kids - four boys, and at least two girls.

But here's the point, we're told in verse 3, "**And they were offended at Him.**" They thought Jesus' claim to be anything more than a neighborhood homeboy was sheer scandalous. They rejected Him as the Messiah.

Here's the problem - the men of Nazareth were too proud to acknowledge one of their own as more than a peer. *"We played in the sandbox with Jesus. How can He be special, he's one of us..."* It's true, *"familiarity can breed contempt"* - the more familiar a person is, the more likely he or she will be taken for granted.

Verse 4, *"But Jesus said to them, "A prophet is not without honor except in his own country, among his own relatives, and in his own house."* What a disappointment this had to be. Jesus came home looking for *affirmation*, and ended up with *rejection*.

And maybe you've had a similar experience. Your commitment to Jesus is frowned on by your homeboys.

You hoped they'd be accepting, instead they've rolled their eyes. You've been met with skepticism, if not outright rejection. *At least, you're in good company!*

If this is how Jesus' friends treated Him don't be surprised if it happens to you. As He said, *"A prophet is not without honor except in his own country"...* *You're going to have to re-win their respect in a different way!*

Verse 5 is one of the saddest verses in the Bible.

"Now He could do no mighty work there, except that He laid His hands on a few sick people and healed them." This was Jesus' own hometown. If He worked a miracle anywhere, He wanted it to be here among His friends and family, but He was limited by their unbelief.

Lois Cheney wrote a probing poem inspired by this episode, *"There was a place where the unbelief was so great that*

Jesus - Jesus, the Son of God - could not heal and help, and so He left them. Has anyone seen Jesus lately?" *Has Jesus been seen in your life?* He can do amazing works, but the prerequisite is faith!

Verse 6, "He marveled because of their unbelief."

Two times in Scripture we're told that Jesus "*marveled.*" Here, at the unbelief of the Nazarenes. And in Luke 7 over the faith of a Roman centurion, who believed Jesus could heal his servant with just a word!

Jesus marveled at a Gentile's faith, and the unbelief of Jews. *Does he marvel at our faith, or lack thereof?*

"Then He went about the villages in a circuit, teaching. And He called the twelve to Himself, and began to send them out two by two, and gave them power over unclean spirits." Note, they go two by two...

Batman and Robin - Andy and Barney - Mantle and Maris - Starsky and Hutch - God uses dynamic duos...

When you serve the Lord take a pal. *One of you can pray, while the other talks. You can watch each other's back.* It proves, "Good fruit always comes in pairs."

And verse 8, "(Jesus) commanded them to take nothing for the journey except a staff..." He's not talking about an assistant, a CPA, a bodyguard, etc...

It's amazing what some preachers need to minister these days. They take along an entourage. The staff Jesus is talking about is a **stick** - not a *pastoral posse*'.

Also, “no bag..” Literally, a beggar’s bag. Don’t beg for funds. Hey, “God’s work done God’s way will never lack God’s support.” *Where God guides He provides.*

“No bread, no copper in their money belts - but to wear sandals, and not to put on two tunics.” In other words, God’s ministers should travel light and live by faith. Be simple. Don’t be burdened by lots of baggage.

“Also He said to them, “In whatever place you enter a house, stay there till you depart from that place.”

I love this paraphrase, “Don’t think you need a lot of extra equipment for this. *You* are the equipment. No special appeals for funds. Keep it simple. And no luxury inns. Get a modest place and be content there until you leave.” In short, **KISS** it. *Keep It Simple Saint!*

“And whoever will not receive you nor hear you, when you depart from there, shake off the dust under your feet as a testimony against them.” Forget it and move on. *Don’t stand around feeling sorry for yourself while folks need saving elsewhere.* Don’t get bogged down in bitterness. Wipe the dust off your soles - and move on to other souls. God will deal with the resisters.

“Assuredly, I say to you, it will be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment than for that city! So they went out and preached that people should repent. And they cast out many demons, and anointed with oil many who were sick, and healed them.” His disciples were now empowered by Jesus.

“Now King Herod heard of (Jesus), for His name had become well known.” This was Herod Antipas - son of Herod the Great. “He said, “John the Baptist is risen from the dead, and therefore these powers are at work in him.” I’m sure this was a guilty conscience speaking to him. Antipas was complicit in the Baptist’s murder.

“Others said, “It is Elijah.” And others said, “It is the Prophet, or like one of the prophets.” But when Herod heard, he said, “This is John, whom I beheaded; he has been raised from the dead!” Remember, Jesus and John were cousins. Tradition says they had a striking resemblance. *Herod was haunted by John’s memory.*

It’s interesting, Herod had wealth, power, and luxury, but he was tormented. He was tortured by guilt...

A guilty conscience is defined, “As the part of you that hurts when everything else feels good.” A condemned conscience prohibits us from enjoying life.

It’s also said, “A bad conscience has a good memory.” The next few verses recall Herod’s crime...

“For Herod himself had sent and laid hold of John, and bound him in prison for the sake of Herodias, his brother Philip's wife; for he had married her. For John had said to Herod, “It is not lawful for you to have your brother's wife.” Herod Antipas was a seedy, immoral man. On a visit to Rome he fell in love with his half-brother’s wife, Herodias. He divorced his wife, and stole Herodias from his brother... She was not only his sister-in-law, she was also his niece... Add it all up, and the king was guilty of *divorce, adultery, and incest.*

Herod turned Israel's royal house into a soap opera, *but John called him on the carpet*. John was fearless. Intimidated by no one, he took on this ruthless king... "It is not lawful for you to have your brother's wife."

"Therefore Herodias held it against him and wanted to kill him, but she could not; for Herod feared John, knowing that he was a just and holy man, and he protected him. And when he heard him, he did many things, and heard him gladly." In his own warped way, Herod respected John... He was a politician who based his decisions on the latest poll. In contrast, John had integrity. The two men couldn't be more opposite.

Yet despite Herod's admiration of John, Herodias hated the Baptist with a vengeance. She was a wicked, wily queen who didn't like being publicly rebuked.

"Then an opportune day came when Herod on his birthday gave a feast for his nobles, the high officers, and the chief men of Galilee." Did you know two birthdays are mentioned in Scripture? Pharaoh's when the baker was hung. And here! *Biblical birthday parties are dangerous!* And I hope you never have a birthday party like Herod's. It was a drunken orgy - a stag party.

Verse 22, "When Herodias' daughter herself came in and danced..." This was a strip tease. Her name was Salome. Usually these seductive dances were performed by prostitutes. It was rare for a princess - a woman of social standing - to perform such a dance.

But her dance "pleased Herod and those who sat with him, the king said to the girl, "Ask me whatever you want, and I will

give it to you." He also swore to her, "Whatever you ask me, I will give you, up to half of my kingdom." So she went out and said to her mother, "What shall I ask?" And she said, "The head of John the Baptist!" Immediately she came in with haste to the king and asked, saying, "I want you to give me at once the head of John the Baptist on a platter. And the king was exceedingly sorry; yet, because of the oaths and because of those who sat with him, he did not want to refuse her." Realize, Herod had an out. He promised her *"up to half (his) kingdom."* He could've said John was worth more than half, but lust and pride warps your values. You throw away what's precious for a few empty sips of what's cheap. It's a terrible trade off...

"Immediately the king sent an executioner and commanded his head to be brought. And he went and beheaded him in prison, brought his head on a platter, and gave it to the girl; and the girl gave it to her mother." How sad... *What a way to get ahead!*

In essence, **John lost his head so Herod could save face.** It was all about pride. Herod didn't want to break a promise and look bad in the eyes of the nobles. He should've buried his pride... instead they buried John.

This is similar to the choices people make everyday. What's more important, *what's right or looking good?* Don't ever sacrifice your *integrity* for some *popularity!*

"When his disciples heard of it, they came and took away his corpse and laid it in a tomb." The flashback is over. We now know why Herod was afraid of Jesus...

Mark returns to the disciples who had gone out two by two. They come back in verse 30, “Then the apostles gathered to Jesus and told Him all things, both what they had done and what they had taught.”

“And He said to them, “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.” It’s true, “If we don’t learn to *come apart* we’ll *come a part*.” Life’s stress and strain pulls at the seams of our lives. Hyper-busyness fogs our vision.

It’s been said, “The bow that’s always bent ceases to shoot straight.” Jesus knew *time away* - a break from the action - is essential to maintaining godly priorities.

And if it were true for Jesus, it’s true for us!

Verse 32, “So they departed to a deserted place in the boat by themselves. But the multitudes saw them departing, and many knew Him and ran there on foot from all the cities. They arrived before them and came together to Him. And Jesus, when He came out, saw a great multitude and was moved with compassion for them, because they were like sheep not having a shepherd.” I can hear the disciples, “*Won’t they leave us alone?*” But Jesus was “*moved with compassion.*”

He saw people not as a nuisance, or an obligation, but as lost sheep who desperately needed a shepherd.

“So He began to teach them many things.”

“When the day was now far spent, His disciples came to Him and said, “This is a deserted place, and already the hour is late. Send them away, that they may go into the

surrounding country and villages and buy themselves bread; for they have nothing to eat.”

In the spring the sun sets in Galilee around 6:00 pm. It's about to be dinnertime, and there's a lot of people to feed. Verse 44 tells us 5000 men. Add women and kids and there could've easily been 15,000 people.

And there was no Chick Fil-A anywhere in sight!

“But (Jesus) answered and said to them, “You give them something to eat.” There're times when Jesus lets us try to do it ourselves to remind us how hopeless we are. I picture these men doing the math, scratching their heads, drawing the conclusion, “*There's no way!*”

“And they said to Him, “Shall we go and buy two hundred denarii worth of bread and give them something to eat?” That was sarcasm. They know there's nowhere around to purchase that much bread.

Finally, Jesus does some math of His own - *not new math, but miracle math*. “He said to them, “How many loaves do you have? Go and see.” And when they found out they said, “Five, and two fish.” Then He commanded them to make them all sit down in groups on the green grass. So they sat down in ranks, in hundreds and in fifties.” Notice, Jesus tells them to organize into groups. It'll make the distribution easier...

Some super-spiritual people think any effort from us to organize will quench the work of the Holy Spirit. *It didn't this day*. In fact, here it's Jesus' idea. *Spirit-led organization* and a *Spirit-filled miracle* go hand in hand.

Verse 41, “And when He had taken the five loaves and the two fish, He looked up to heaven, blessed and broke the loaves, and gave them to His disciples to set before them; and the two fish He divided among them all. So they all ate and were filled. And they took up twelve baskets full of fragments and of the fish.

Now those who had eaten the loaves were about five thousand men.” It was a miracle of multiplication. The Creator of matter, rearranged the molecular structure of the fish and bread. Jesus manipulated the molecules to make enough food for 5000-plus hungry mouths.

And notice the twelve baskets of leftovers... I think Jesus left *one for each disciple*. He was showing them *and us* - He is able to meet our needs in abundance.

This story forever teaches us, that if we give Jesus all we have, He'll turn our *meagerness* into *much*.

But here's the key - before Jesus multiplies the fish and chips notice what He does. *This is what He does with us* - He **takes, blesses, breaks, then gives**...

Jesus takes us out of the world, and blesses us with spiritual blessings! He wants to give us to the hungry folks around us, **but before we can be given we first have to be broken...** If not, people will choke on our pride. We'll cause spiritual indigestion. Hungry people will break their teeth on our hardness and spit us out.

This is why we have to be broken, humbled... And Jesus has His ways: an *obstinate boss or financial crisis*. **Brokenness isn't pleasant, but it's necessary!**

Verse 45, “Immediately He made His disciples get into the boat and go before Him to the other side, to Bethsaida, while He sent the multitude away.

And when He had sent them away, He departed to the mountain to pray. Now when evening came, the boat was in the middle of the sea; and He was alone on the land. Then He saw them straining at rowing, for the wind was against them.” Notice, Jesus is on a mountain, but He sees His men straining in the storm.

This is where He is today. Hebrews tells us, He’s seated next to God in the heavenly mountain, while interceding for us. *And He comes at the right time!*

“Now about the fourth watch of the night He came to them...” Jesus waited until the darkest hour. The fourth watch began at 3:00 am... Jesus came when they were utterly exhausted. They’d been rowing 8 hours.

And this is what Jesus does in our lives...

He comes to us after the storm had beaten out of us all our self-sufficiency. Jesus waits to appear until we’re *mentally befuddled* and *physically depleted*.

That’s when Jesus came to them “walking on the sea, and would have passed them by.” They weren’t expecting Him. His coming was a complete surprise.

In one moment Jesus was *nowhere* to be found - in the next He’s *now here*. How quickly *nowhere* can change to *now here*... Remember that in your storm...

“And when they saw Him walking on the sea, they supposed it was a ghost, and cried out; for they all saw Him and were

troubled. But immediately He talked with them and said to them, "Be of good cheer! It is I; do not be afraid. Then He went up into the boat to them, and the wind ceased. And they were greatly amazed in themselves beyond measure, and **marveled.**" Jesus calmed the storm inside the boat, before He calmed the storm at sea... *And this is how He works in us...*

Jesus wants you and I to trust Him *in the midst of the storm*, before He gives us victory *over the storm*.

And notice the reason for this trial - it's the reason for all our trials. Verse 52, "**For they had not understood about the loaves, because their heart was hardened.**"

They didn't learn the first time, so Jesus re-issued the test. If you don't like the test, then learn the lesson.

"**When they had crossed over, they came to the land of Gennesaret and anchored there. And when they came out of the boat, immediately the people recognized Him, ran through that whole surrounding region, and began to carry about on beds those who were sick to wherever they heard He was. Wherever He entered, into villages, cities, or the country, they laid the sick in the marketplaces, and begged Him that they might just touch the hem of His garment. And as many as touched Him were made well.**" Needy folks were flocking to Jesus. And we're among them. *Tonight, why don't you reach out and touch the hem of His garment?*