



TRUTH APPLICATIONS

Sermon Notes

Drawn to Jesus

Mark 5.21-43

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What Would It Have Been Like . . . ?

Many of us have been blessed to travel to more places than our grandparents would have imagined. And we've been to even more places vicariously. For example, I once "saw" Moscow through the eyes of friends who went, took pictures, and then shared them with several of us when they returned.

A few of you have seen the land where Jesus walked. But most of us see it vicariously, through the eyes and reports of others. The better the travelogue, the better the sense of Jesus we have.

Hans Bayer suggests that reading his gospel is like being "Mark's traveling companion as he assembles his documentary on the life of Christ."¹ He wrote a narrative, but he didn't tell Jesus' story in a continuous line. He collected events, like a series of still pictures taken on a vacation. "There are crowd scenes, small-group scenes, public scenes, and private scenes. The resulting book is a collage or mosaic of the life of Jesus" (Bayer, 1891). His report is like a travelogue.

Students of the gospel have noticed how the story includes vivid descriptions that have the ring of an eyewitness report. That fits with reports by early Christians that Peter was Mark's source. For example, the early church historian Eusebius cites a church leader named Papias (d. ca. 130 AD) who cited "John the Presbyter" as follows:

Mark became Peter's interpreter and wrote down accurately, but not in order, all that he remembered of the things said and done by the Lord. . . . Peter used to teach as the occasion demanded, without giving systematic arrangement to the Lord's sayings, so that Mark did not err in writing down some things just as he recalled them. For he had one overriding purpose: to omit nothing that he had heard and to make no false statements in his account.²

So apparently in Mark we have Peter's travelogue. Who had a closer view? What did he think was important? What does he show us that brings Jesus alive and draws us to him?

A Big Picture View

Most students of Mark state its purpose in terms like Bayer's description: "The ultimate purpose and theme of Mark is *to present and defend Jesus' universal call to discipleship*. Mark returns often to this theme, and as the narrative unfolds he categorizes his main audience as either followers or opponents of Jesus" (Bayer, 1890).

The book builds toward Peter's confession in 8.29, and then moves on from that to show what it meant to say Jesus was "the Christ." Throughout the book, but especially in the first part, "Mark's central effort in presenting and supporting this call [to discipleship] is *to narrate the identity and teaching of Jesus*" (Bayer, 1890). Three traits of following stand out.

1. Discipleship is essentially a relationship with Jesus, not merely following a certain code of conduct.
2. Fellowship with Jesus marks the heart of the disciple's life, and this fellowship includes trusting him, confessing him, taking note of his conduct, following his teaching, and being shaped by a relationship to him.
3. Discipleship also means being prepared to face the kind of rejection that Jesus faced (all from Bayer, 1890).

Our focus in this study will be on the first and second of these. Why be in a relationship with Jesus in which one trusts him, confesses him, and submits to his teaching?

Insight from an Extended Episode (5.21-43)

- After exorcising the legion of demons in the country of the Gerasenes (5.1-20), Jesus returns across the Sea of Galilee and is met by a great crowd.
- Jairus, a local synagogue ruler, pushes through the crowd, begging Jesus as his last hope to heal his daughter who is "near the end" (literally, v. 23).
- On the way to Jairus's house, a woman who had been afflicted twelve years with a flow of blood gets close enough to touch Jesus and is immediately healed (vv. 25-34).
- Despite hearing from a messenger that Jairus's daughter had died, Jesus continues to the man's house, accompanied only by Peter, James, and John (vv. 35-37).
- He sends the professional mourners and other grievers outside, enters the girl's room with her parents, and awakens her from her sleep of death (vv. 38-43).

As we think about why we should (or continue to) follow Jesus, consider these observations from our text.

1. Something made people seek him (the crowds, Jairus, the sick woman - vv. 21-23, 25-28).
2. Something about him led them to trust him, no matter how seemingly impossible the hope or request (vv. 27-28, 40-41).
3. Jesus surpassed anything they had known or could accomplish. Doctors had failed to heal the woman; it's reasonable to think that some had tried to heal the girl, too (vv. 23, 26-28).
4. What would have made anyone else unclean was under Jesus' authority:
 - a. the woman's bleeding (vv. 27-28; cf. Lev 19.15-23, 25-28);
 - b. the fact that she had probably made others unclean (vv. 31-33; cf. Lev 15.19-27);
 - c. the fact that he touched a dead body (v. 31; cf. Lev 22.4; Num 19.11).³
5. In Jesus, they see compassion that others (and the law as they understood it) would have condemned (vv. 25, 34, 42; cf. 10.13-16).
6. They found someone who could give them wholeness (see the word *σῶζω*, *sōzō* in v. 23, 28, 34; also vv. 42-43).⁴

These things add to the answer to the disciples' question in 4.41 ("who is this?"). We continue to see his power, like that displayed in 5.1-20. But we also see more explicitly other traits that

reveal God to us in a way never before seen (cf. John 1.18). Put another way, we see compelling reasons to follow him.

Drawn to Jesus?

An old hymn declares, “I want Jesus to walk with me.” Mark suggests that perhaps we should reverse that, that we ought to want to walk with Jesus.

It is a way of commitment, even sacrifice. But it’s the way of a loving compassionate Lord who can make us whole, regardless of what we might face.

Keep walking with Jesus.

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Notes

¹ Hans F. Bayer, “Introduction to Mark,” *ESV Study Bible* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2008), 1891.

² Paul L. Maier, trans., *Eusebius: The Church History*, 3.39 (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Academic and Professional, 1990, 2007), 114-115.

³ Bayer comments: “By touching Jesus’ garment, she technically renders him ceremonially unclean (cf. Lev. 15:19–23), but Jesus is greater than any purity laws, for he makes her clean by his power instead of becoming unclean himself (cf. Mark 1:41; 5:41). . . . Touching a dead person renders one ceremonially unclean (Lev. 22:4; Num. 19:11), but once again (cf. note on Mark 5:25–27) Jesus overcomes uncleanness, for the girl comes back to life (cf. 2 Kings 4:17–37; Acts 9:39–41)” (Bayer, 1902-1903).

⁴ Although many tend to restrict their understanding of *sōzō* (σῶζω) to theological salvation, it is a term with a wider range of meanings; indeed, the theological idea of salvation cannot be properly understood without an awareness of the word’s broader meanings of deliverance or restoration. Louw and Nida note this meaning and its significance as follows:

“σῶζω; σωτηρία, ας f: to rescue from danger and to restore to a former state of safety and well being — ‘to deliver, to rescue, to make safe, deliverance.’ σῶζω: καὶ ἄρξάμενος καταποντίζεσθαι ἔκραξεν λέγων, Κύριε, σῶσόν με ‘and as he began to sink, he shouted, Lord, rescue me’ Mt 14:30.

“σωτηρία: ἐνόμιζεν δὲ συνιέναι τοὺς ἀδελφοὺς αὐτοῦ ὅτι ὁ θεὸς διὰ χειρὸς αὐτοῦ δίδωσιν σωτηρίαν αὐτοῖς’ and he thought that his own people would recognize that God would provide for their deliverance through him’ Ac 7:25; διὸ παρακαλῶ ὑμᾶς μεταλαβεῖν τροφῆς, τοῦτο γὰρ πρὸς τῆς ὑμετέρας σωτηρίας ὑπάρχει ‘therefore, I urge you to take some food, for this is important for your deliverance’ or ‘... for your survival’ Ac 27:34” (Johannes P. Louw and Eugene A. Nida, eds., *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains*, 2d, Accordance electronic ed., version 4.4. New York: United Bible Societies, 1989).