

“Who’s the Hero?”

Pastor Sam Richards

Texts: Mark 2:1-12; 4:30-41; 5:1-20

**\_\_\_30 And He said, “How shall we [a]picture the kingdom of God, or by what parable shall we present it? 31 *It is* like a mustard seed, which, when sown upon the soil, though it is smaller than all the seeds that are upon the soil, 32 yet when it is sown, it grows up and becomes larger than all the garden plants and forms large branches; so that the birds of the [b]air can nest under its shade.” 33 With many such parables He was speaking the word to them, so far as they were able to hear it; 34 and He did not speak to them without a parable; but He was explaining everything privately to His own disciples.**

Jesus Stills the Sea: “Fairest Lord Jesus! Ruler of all nature. O Thou of God and man the Son!” (Verse 1, #104); “Eternal Father, strong to save, Whose arm hath bound the restless wave, Who bids the mighty ocean deep Its own appointed limits keep.” (Verse 1, #459); “His very word of grace is strong as that which built the skies; The voice that rolls the stars along Speaks all the promises.” (Verse 3, #109).

**35 On that day, when evening came, He \*said to them, “Let us go over to the other side.” 36 [c]Leaving the crowd, they \*took Him along with them in the boat, just as He was; and other boats were with Him. 37 And there \*arose a fierce gale of wind, and the waves were breaking over the boat so much that the boat was already filling up. 38 Jesus Himself 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 got up and rebuked the wind and said to the sea, “Hush, be still.” And the wind died down and [d]it became perfectly calm. 40 And He said to them, “Why are you [e]afraid? Do you still have no faith?” 41 They became very much afraid and said to one another, “Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey Him?”<sup>1</sup>”**

Mark 2:1-12 “Christ has for sin atonement made, What a wonderful Savior! We are redeemed! The price is paid! What a wonderful Savior.” (Verse.1 Hymn 96); “Jesus paid it all, All to Him I owe; Sin had left a crimson stain, He washed it white as snow.” (Refrain, 3 255).

### The Paralytic Healed

**2 When He had come back to Capernaum several days afterward, it was heard that He was at home. 2 And many were gathered together, so that there was no longer room, not even near the door; and He was speaking the word to them. 3 And they \*came, bringing to Him a paralytic, carried by four men. 4 Being**

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#### <sup>1</sup>Footnotes

- a. Mark 4:30 Lit *compare*
- b. Mark 4:32 Or *sky*
- c. Mark 4:36 Or *Sending away*
- d. Mark 4:39 Lit *a great calm occurred*
- e. Mark 4:40 Or *cowardly*

unable to [a]get to Him because of the crowd, they removed the roof [b]above Him; and when they had dug an opening, they let down the pallet on which the paralytic was lying. 5 And Jesus seeing their faith \*said to the paralytic, “[c]Son, your sins are forgiven.” 6 But some of the scribes were sitting there and reasoning in their hearts, 7 “Why does this man speak that way? He is blaspheming; who can forgive sins [d]but God alone?” 8 Immediately Jesus, aware [e]in His spirit that they were reasoning that way within themselves, \*said to them, “Why are you reasoning about these things in your hearts? 9 Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, ‘Your sins are forgiven’; or to say, ‘Get up, and pick up your pallet and walk’? 10 But so that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins”—He \*said to the paralytic, 11 “I say to you, get up, pick up your pallet and go home.” 12 And he got up and immediately picked up the pallet and went out in the sight of everyone, so that they were all amazed and were glorifying God, saying, “We have never seen anything like this.”<sup>2</sup>

Who’s the hero here? Answer: Jesus. He stands out as *teacher*. He is teaching us about the kingdom of God—which He came proclaiming: **The kingdom of God is at hand. Repent and believe the gospel of God.** Proclaiming is not preaching. It is not teaching something: **the kingdom is like unto a mustard seed**—a small thing, a seemingly insignificant thing which is tiny which has a small beginning but an enormous outcome. Size is an element of the mustard seed’s surprise. No one thinks that a plant big enough for birds to nest in will come of it. Or, be housed in(!) could come from such a tiny, even unnoticeable thing. That is, of course, a mystery. It is something we may not have pondered previously: the kingdom—the rule of God in the hearts of man has this origin; or has its origin in smallness. Here’s a little thing that Jesus did:

5 They came to the other side of the sea, into the country of the Gerasenes. 2 When He got out of the boat, immediately a man from the tombs with an unclean spirit met Him, 3 and he had his dwelling among the tombs. And no one was able to bind him anymore, even with a chain; 4 because he had often been bound with shackles and chains, and the chains had been torn apart by him and the shackles broken in pieces, and no one was strong enough to subdue him. 5 Constantly, night and day, he was screaming among the tombs and in the mountains, and gashing himself with stones. 6 Seeing Jesus from a distance, he ran up and bowed down before Him; 7 and shouting with a loud voice, he \*said, “[a]What business do we have with each other, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I implore You by God, do not torment me!” 8 For He had been saying to him, “Come out of the man, you unclean spirit!” 9 And He was asking him, “What is your name?” And he \*said to Him, “My name is Legion; for we are many.” 10 And he *began* to implore Him earnestly not to send them out of the country. 11 Now there was a large herd of swine feeding [b]nearby on the

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<sup>2</sup>Footnotes

- [Mark 2:4](#) Lit *bring to*
- [Mark 2:4](#) Lit *where He was*
- [Mark 2:5](#) Lit *child*
- [Mark 2:7](#) Lit *if not one, God*
- [Mark 2:8](#) Lit *by*

mountain. **12 *The demons* implored Him, saying, “Send us into the swine so that we may enter them.” 13 Jesus gave them permission. And coming out, the unclean spirits entered the swine; and the herd rushed down the steep bank into the sea, about two thousand of *them*; and they were drowned in the sea.**

(Did Jesus save the demons? Or did He exorcise them by transferring them to the swine? Did salt water have anything to do with the purification of the demoniac? Or of the herdsmen, or the citizens of the town? This seems to be an example of corporate infestation! Rather like Sodom and Gomorrah. **Matthew 12:43 “Now when the unclean spirit goes out of a man, it passes through waterless places seeking rest, and does not find *it*.** In the end they are cast into the lake of fire, to be eternally tormented with their master, Satan, and false prophets—the second death<sup>3</sup> where Satan and Hades. (Rev. 20:10, 14)

**14 Their herdsmen ran away and reported it in the city and in the country. And *the people* came to see what it was that had happened. 15 They \*came to Jesus and \*observed the man who had been demon-possessed sitting down, clothed and in his right mind, the very man who had had the “legion”; and they became frightened. 16 Those who had seen it described to them how it had happened to the demon-possessed man, and *all* about the swine. 17 And they began to implore Him to leave their region. 18 As He was getting into the boat, the man who had been demon-possessed was imploring Him that he might [c]accompany Him. 19 And He did not let him, but He \*said to him, “Go home to your people and report to them [d]what great things the Lord has done for you, and *how* He had mercy on you.” 20 And he went away and began to proclaim in Decapolis [e]what great things Jesus had done for him; and everyone was amazed<sup>4</sup>.**

When Jesus crossed the sea to liberate a single, but notorious demoniac—a man of horrendous, demonic strength who could not be restrained, or controlled—chained, or confined! We think what an enormous expenditure of time, energy! For what? One pitiful human being’s salvation? And immediately we are driven to the end of

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<sup>3</sup> There would be “death” still, but a “second death differs from the first, in the fact that it is not a separation of the soul and body, but a state of “continual agony” like what the first death inflicts - like that in intensity, but not in kind” (Prof. Suart, in Barnes Notes on Revelation 20:14)

**And death and hell were cast into lake of fire;** there shall be no more natural death, nor any more separate state of souls, (so *adhv* signifies), they shall all be swallowed up in the issue of the last judgment, where some shall go into life, some into eternal condemnation. Hell here is best pictured—because it is clearly a personification!—as “command central,” or as the base of operations out of which Satan has sought to maintain his dominion over Adam’s hapless race, or fallen mankind. Death and her are both brought under divine judgment. What comes next is entirely new, or a redeemed and permanent order!

a. <sup>4</sup>Footnotes

a. Mark 5:7 Lit *What to me and to you* (a Heb idiom)

a. Mark 5:11 Lit *there*

a. Mark 5:18 Lit *be with Him*

a. Mark 5:19 Or *everything that*

a. Mark 5:20 Or *everything that*

ourselves—he was out of his mind (contemporary man prefers that diagnosis), he was possessed by a barrel full of demons (this diagnosis leaves us uneasy—we want to dismiss it, relabel the problem, or re-catalogue it—file it under something less disturbing to our serenity, our comfort). Let’s just frame it as insanity and all will be well. ***But that would be to entirely miss the point! That would be to treat the mustard seed as merely a seed and not as a parable of the kingdom!*** However, this is disallowed by the text. Verse 33 says: **And with many such parables He spoke the word them as they were able to hear it.** Oh, the word (of God)! The mustard seed is a figure of speech representing the word of God customized to us, **our ability to hear it!** The technical word for this is accommodation, or condescension. It is the Son of God speaking in terms we can conceptualize *about something we cannot conceptualize!* **The kingdom of God is like a mustard seed sown on the ground.** Can’t get more down to earth than that? It is **like a seed**, but more than a seed. It is **sown on the ground**—it is broadcast, not planted; it is a seed and not a transplanted seedling. Sown, not dug out to be planted. **But when it is sown**, by Jesus the Sower(!), **it grows up.** The seed is good and it does its own thing. We are told nothing here about soil condition, and very little about cultivation (only **that it is sown**) **and that is what the kingdom of God is like. Jesus came, broadcast the kingdom, like mustard seed, and something radically transforming began to take place!** And who is it that is doing this? It is Jesus. Jesus sows, the kingdom grows. Well, that really makes sense, in a mysterious way—sowing the kingdom on the ground is precisely what Jesus came to do. He came to announce, proclaim and declare things which were yet to come—yes, He brought the kingdom of God from heaven to earth. It was the rescue mission—it is a picture, a figure of speech, for the coming of the kingdom through the heroic intervention of our Savior, Jesus.

Here’s a startling thing to consider: **faith is not optional.** Jesus doesn’t suggest that we believe in Him. No, what He does is command it. **The time is fulfilled. The kingdom of God is at hand. Repent and believe the gospel; of God.** The seed is sown! The kingdom is now and its power is present at this moment. There is something imperative about **The Kingdom is at hand; something real and incontrovertible.** The seed is sown. The sower, Jesus, has come and done that. Jesus doesn’t suggest we believe in Him, in the Kingdom enterprise; He demands it. Jesus doesn’t recommend that we believe in Him! No, He commands it. When the seed is on the ground, we have moved beyond persuasion. The demoniac had it right. Whatever part of him that was able to, pressed him to **immediately meet Him . . . as He came out of the boat(!) . . . but when he saw Jesus from afar, he ran and worshiped Him** (Mark 5:6). That’s remarkable! He ran, he met, he worshipped Him and then, the demons spoke: **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!** (v. 7) Torment is the future for demons so many expositors render this “**Are you come to torment us ahead of time?**” The demon is pleading for more time to kill, steal, murder and destroy. Jesus casts the demon out and permits them (**for we are Legion, many**) **to enter the swine.** And with that the capital investment of several swineherds went down the drain—to their dismay (which reveals their callous indifference to the main event—the release from captivity of the soul of one man by the heroic love of Jesus! Oh, this was a sowing of the mustard seed! The swine were collateral damage, and the illicit trade in pigs was disrupted for, as it has been suggested, these swineherds were proxies for Jewish investors who were making a profit off their swine! And, if that is a feasible explanation,

we might inquire, “Who would dare complain publicly among the Jews—that would incriminate them?”

Is this something small growing legs, getting bigger . . . like sown mustard seed? Is this the Kingdom come with power? I would say so. Perhaps it is striking that Jesus did not ask the pigs for permission! The demons had territorial concerns: **please don’t send us out of the country** (Mark 5:10)—but Jesus did not honor that request, the demon infested swine perished in the sea! It was game over. The swineherds went to town and reported the incident **in the city and in the country—and they went out to see what it was that happened.** (v. 14) ***The Kingdom had come in power . . . right before their eyes!*** And there was the demoniac, sitting clothed and in his right mind (something for those who prefer to picture demonic possession as mental illness?) **And they were afraid.** (v.15) **Then they began to plead with Him to depart from their region.** How very like the demons they turned out to be! The demons had said “Don’t send us away” and now those who were comfortable with their captivity to the demonic want to send Jesus away. Don’t plant your Kingdom here, we prefer things the way they were—it’s what we are used to. Jesus’ heroic intervention was not welcomed, not rewarded; BUT the Lord gained a most effective evangelist out of the whole business—thus: a mustard seed sower! I wonder how many seed sowers will come from this hearing of the Word? How many will say, “Jesus saves. Come to Jesus” to the confused, perplexed and compromised in whose midst we live?

We are living in turbulent times. Jesus heroically commanding the wind and the waves is surely the central figure in the storm incident! Think about it. In a way, the *whole church leadership* is in the boat and the boat is threatening to capsize from the surging waves. It is all on the line, but this is not the mindset of the disciples. If it were, they might have concluded: as long as we are with Him, we are safe. We will be protected and preserved *which of course they were*. They were imperiled because they **had no faith**. Faith as I said previously is not optional. Nowhere is the boundary of free will more clearly set forth. Jesus stilled the wind, Jesus calmed the sea, free will had nothing to do with it. Jesus didn’t save them because of their faith; He saved them because that is what He came to do. He came to sow, He came to save. And He came to command: wind be still, seas be clam and, as for you, O man, repent and believe the gospel. They were helpless to save themselves, so are we! We can trust and obey . . . or we can perish. When the ship is going down, our options are very limited.

Thank goodness that the Lord of all is in charge of all! Jesus commands the wind and wave! Jesus sows the Kingdom. Jesus came to save you from yourself. He wants to draw you out of the perfect storm that your free will has created! He will draw you out of the mess your choices have created, out of your self-directed life—indeed out of your very self! For that, and nothing less is the matter with us. We are willful sinners, we chase after autonomy, self-pleasing and self-determination. The problem with our free will is chiefly that we choose badly. We are absorbed with what we are doing, and not with tying into what He is doing.

Let me be very plain. There are many, many false gospels out there. For instance, there is the gospel of marital happiness. This moralistic gospel teaches that sex is blessed within marriage and nowhere else. And when gays “hear” this gospel, if they

are thoughtful about it, they might conclude that the goal of the Christian life is heterosexuality, reproduction and family. (At least that is what I have on good testimony.) What do I say to this false gospel? I say that marriage is temporal, it is not a feature of our eternal bliss. In heaven there will only be the Lamb and the church. Some may find it difficult to assimilate—that something so important in this life, might only be preliminary for something better (a trial run? A discipline?) But holiness, a requirement for union with God, the end point of redemption, holiness and not happiness is the better gospel. Jesus came to save, to wash, to sanctify and present us blameless before the Father. And Jesus returned to the Father to make all things ready for our arrival—***if it were not so, He would have told us.***

*Holiness trumps both heterosexuality and homosexuality.* If we get that right, God will take care of everything else. He will make us pleasing to Himself whatever that takes. He wants us to be with Him, to know Him, to love and worship Him forever—He offers bliss for happiness, and entire satisfaction. He aims higher than we typically aspire. I have a friend who likes to play golf. He wants to talk about it, so I listen even though golf is not my thing. But here's what I do not do: I do not criticize him for failing to talk about what interests me when he is talking about golf. Jesus had a whole lot more to say about holiness than He did about our sexuality. I guess He believes that if we would focus on the main thing, things that are more peripheral would fall in line. Thus I preach: **The Kingdom of God is at hand, repent and believe the gospel and Jesus is Lord, Hero, Savior** and I leave the moral transformation up to him. He prefers that we be holy. *Let's get on board with that!*

**Amen.**