

# READ THIS FIRST

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## The Gospel of Mark: The King and His Kingdom

### Note from Pastor Luke Simmons

The mission of Second Mile Church is to “embody Jesus’ mission and message in every place that God sends us.” The Bible refers to the followers of Jesus as his “ambassadors” (2 Cor 5:20) and expects us to faithfully represent him to the world. In order to faithfully live out this mission we must grow intimately familiar with who Jesus is and what he has done. Thus, it makes sense to have our first weekly study focus on the life, ministry, death and resurrection of Jesus, as described in the Gospel of Mark.

Though this series, “The King and His Kingdom,” will not be an exhaustive study of the person of Jesus, we will become thoroughly acquainted with his message, mission, attitude and actions. Not only will we see Jesus in action, but we’ll also get a glimpse of what life looks like in Jesus’ Kingdom. Mark is a fast-paced, hard-hitting, action-packed book and we will spend fourteen weeks examining the highlights of his account.

This study guide, designed for individual study or for use in Community Groups, is intended to help us dive deeper into the Scripture and apply the things we learn. The Bible calls us to “be doers of the word, and not hearers only” (James 1:22). These study guides are designed to help us not just hear the word on Sunday, but put it into practice Monday through Saturday.

My prayer for this series is that God will use it to deepen your love for Jesus. Whether you are just beginning to explore what it would be like to follow Christ or you’ve trusted him for a long time, my hope is that your heart would be delighted by his majesty, power, humility, trustworthiness, sacrifice and victory. Only as we grow satisfied in Jesus will we be able to bring his love and grace to our hurting world.

Because the Tomb is Empty,

Luke Simmons  
Lead Pastor

### The Format

Each study begins with a **key verse** that summarizes the truth found in the entire section. These key verses, if memorized, would allow you to learn the big ideas found in Mark’s Gospel. Then there is an **introduction** to the passage that you can use for review or, if you miss a Sunday, you can track with us wherever we are. Next are some questions for **investigation** (getting into the text) and **implication** (applying these truths to daily life). Each study concludes with a section on **other issues**, which expand on any other issues or questions raised by the passage that we may not take time to cover during the sermon.

### Suggestions for Individuals

- Before you begin, pray that God would open your eyes to see what he is saying in the Bible and give you the spiritual strength to do something about it.
- Work through the study and write out answers to the questions.
- Resist any temptation to skip over the **implication** section. It is important to ponder how the truths apply to your life. Though these questions are sometimes penetrating and difficult, they are designed to help you think seriously about your life.
- Take what opportunities you can to share with others about what you’ve learned and how you’d like your life to change as a result.

### Suggestions for Community Groups

- It is recommended that you study the passage *after* it has been preached. This way you can discuss the issues raised by the sermon as well as the study itself.
- In your time together as a community, focus on the **implications** for your lives individually and as a group. Share with one another how you sense God calling you to change, pray for one another about these things, and invite one another to encourage you and hold you accountable to apply the truth.
- In your time together as a community, use this guide as a launching point for discussion and care for one another. Resist the urge to try to discuss every question or “get through the material.”

### Questions or Comments?

If you have feedback or questions about the series or studies, please feel free to email them to [info@secondmilechurch.com](mailto:info@secondmilechurch.com).

Week 6

# KINGDOM WHOLENESS

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Mark 4:35-5:43

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*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.*

(Mark 5:15, ESV)  
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## Introduction

Have you ever been really broken? Have you ever had moments or seasons of life when things in your life were falling apart and out of order? Do you know people whose lives are always disjointed and messed up?

Often times, when we face situations like that, we think that what we need is a change of scenery. We think that if our circumstances change, then everything will be okay. Though a change in surroundings can be beneficial, they are only temporary. The brokenness we experience will only return in one form or another. What we need is true healing. We need to be restored to wholeness.

When our first parents sinned in the Garden of Eden, the world broke. At that moment human beings began to experience alienation from God, ourselves, each other and creation. But Jesus' announcement that "the kingdom of God is at hand" (Mark 1:15) is the news that he is *beginning* to restore what's been broken and bring it into wholeness. This doesn't in any way mean that Jesus' followers won't experience pain, difficulty, suffering, disease, agony, or death. Until Jesus returns and the kingdom comes in fullness and finality, we will continue to deal with these troubles. Nonetheless, this section of Scripture gives us a picture of the kind of wholeness that Jesus brings to broken lives.

Up to this point, Mark has made it clear that Jesus is authoritative. But this section teaches us that he's also compassionate and gracious to people whose lives are falling apart. C.S. Lewis described this masterfully in *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*, which describes Aslan (a lion representing Jesus) and his work like this:

*Wrong will be right, when Aslan comes in sight,  
At the sound of his roar, sorrows will be no more,*

May the love and power of Jesus roar through your life with kingdom wholeness and restoration!

## Investigation

Read Mark 4:35-5:43.

1. What was Jesus trying to teach his disciples by leading them into a furious storm and then calming it?
2. Mark 5:15 says that people "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." Why did this scare the people so much?
3. How do you think the woman with the issue of blood felt before, during, and after her encounter with Jesus?
4. What is Mark trying to communicate through these stories of healing and resurrection?

## Implication

5. When people had encounters with Jesus, they walked away in reverence, trembling, and amazement (4:41, 5:15, 33, 42)—but in today's world, people rarely feel these kinds of things when they think about Jesus. Why do you think that is?
  
6. Immediately after healing the demon-possessed man, Jesus sends him out to tell his friends what the Lord has done for him (5:19). What has the Lord done for you? To which friends has God sent you?
  
7. The woman with the issue of blood had struggled with this issue for a long time and had exhausted all other options. What issues are you struggling with in your life that require the healing touch of Jesus?
  
8. Jesus seems to indicate that fear is the opposite of belief (5:36). What have you been fearing that you need to trust God with? How can you grow in your trust of Jesus?

## Other Issues

### **Why did Jesus seem to have no concern for the pigs, their owners, or the economic factors surrounding their destruction?**

In the age of Greenpeace and animal rights the idea that Jesus of Nazareth sentenced two thousand pigs, one of the more intelligent mammals, to death by drowning by allowing demons to invade and terrorize them raises problems for most readers. Didn't Jesus care about animals? And even if Jesus did not care about pigs, shouldn't he have cared about the livelihood of the swineherds and the owners? He certainly did not ask anyone's permission.

It becomes clear that the Gospel writers were interested in quite different issues than those with which modern readers have struggled. We tend to romanticize the role of animals, while in the first century animals were raised for food or for other useful purposes. Everyone was familiar with animal sacrifice, whether for a secular marketplace or in the temple. We also see the economics of the story, while the Gospel writers were far more concerned with God's present provision (Mk 6:7–13) and future treasure in heaven than in preserving economic security now. Furthermore, we see the violence done to animals, while the Gospel writers were concerned with the violent destructive behavior of demons and their effects upon human beings (which they knew from firsthand observation). Therefore, the Gospel writers saw the whole story from another perspective.

Mark records that Jesus comes into the land of the Gerasenes and later notes that this is part of the Decapolis, underlining the fact that it is Gentile country, even if it once belonged to Israel. In other words, Jesus is in an unclean land. The demonized man even uses a title for God ("God Most High") normally used by Gentiles. He lives in the tombs, an unclean place, the place of the dead. He is controlled by "an unclean spirit." The pigs, of course, are unclean animals (Lev 11:7; Deut 14:8), which Jews were not even to raise for others. So the unclean spirits go into the unclean pigs and drive them to their deaths, while the man who was in the place of the dead (and surely would soon enough die) is delivered and reenters life (returns to his own house). From this perspective the pigs are not the issue—they are unclean—and the townsfolk miss the point when they see only their loss of pigs and fail to see the delivered man. Indeed, the pigs plunging into the sea may suggest that the unclean land had been freed of the unclean spirits with the removal of the unclean animals; but the people do not want salvation, preferring pigs.<sup>15</sup>

### **Is physical healing dependent on the amount or quality of a person's faith?**

No. The Bible describes many faithful people who endure difficult physical pain and suffering. Jesus was surely the most faithful man who ever lived and yet his Father allowed him to suffer terribly. If he experienced pain and suffering, who are we to think that we should be exempt? Paul is another wonderful example of a

<sup>15</sup> Walter C. Kaiser, *Hard Sayings of the Bible* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1997, c1996). 372.

faith-filled person who was not healed. We don't know exactly what Paul's "thorn in the flesh" was (2 Cor 12: 7-10), but we know that he was not exempt from the difficulty.

Consider the woman described in this section of Mark, whose faith was weak and flawed. The woman's faith is quasi-superstitious. In verse 27, she thinks "*if I just touch his clothes, I will be healed.*" There are all sorts of mistakes being made here! She seems to think of Him as a sort of magician, with abstract power that would flow through mere physical objects. She has no idea that Christ's power does not work through physical contact, but through spiritual-faith contact. She doesn't realize that what she needs is a personal relationship with Christ through faith.

Despite this extremely faulty conception of who Christ is and how we relate to him —she is healed (v. 29)! And then Jesus actually tells her, "*Daughter, your faith has healed you.*" (v. 34).

This flies full in the face of the common view that "it doesn't matter what you believe, as long as you believe it with all of your heart". The Bible teaches almost the opposite. We could put it like this: "It's not so important that you believe fully, perfectly, or purely, as that you believe in the true Savior." The classic illustration is the skaters and the ice on the pond. The first skater goes out on to 1/4" ice saying, "I know this will hold me up", while a second skater goes out on to 4" of ice saying, "I'm scared — I hope this will hold me up". The skater with lots of faith will sink, while the one with little faith will be safe. Why? It is not the faith that saves, but the ice — the object of faith. All you need to live is enough faith to commit to the proper object. So we see that it is not the strength of the faith, but the object of faith that saves us. So faith is ultimately not a matter of psychological certainty at all, but a matter of commitment to the right object.

This is a great comfort. Jesus will respond even when our faith is filled with flaws and weaknesses, as long as we simply look to him. We must be careful when we hear the Bible say, "we are saved by faith." That does not mean we are saved because of our faith — because of the quality of it. That turns faith into a "work." Rather we are saved *through* faith. If we go to Him, it is His love and his work that saves us, not our faith quality.