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Text: Mark 4:31-5:43

Title: Fear and faith

Place: Swansea, Charlestown AM

File: mark 5

Preacher: Stephen Taylor

Slide 2

A few years ago TIME magazine ran a story on SM (name withheld), a 44 year old American mother of three who feels no fear. She has casually picked up large snakes that terrified her children, and tried to touch tarantulas despite being warned about their painful bites. When a mugger put a knife to her throat, she reacted with such eerie coolness that the man simply let her go. Another time she was crossing the road and made a mistake of walking right in front of a speeding truck. Apparently there was no increased heartbeat, no sweaty palms, she remained cool and calm. You see this woman is completely fearless.

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Apparently she is one of only 400 people on the planet with Urbach-Wiethe disease, a genetic disease that destroys a part of the brain that registers for us our fears. Now would you like to swap places with that woman? Can you imagine having no fear?

In our house A (name withheld), must lock the doors and windows before bed for fear of strangers coming in. Whereas B (name withheld) is scared of spiders and so I need to come remove them **immediately**! And C (name withheld) is frightened of cancer. And me?

If I am honest, I can look back and see in my life that often I have feared failure, not measuring up to the standards others or I have set. I have feared being dependent upon others, for I want to be my own person. I have feared poverty not having enough to live on. I fear losing my memory and not knowing what is really going on around me.

Slide 4

When you think about it there is a lot in our world that we can fear. Especially at the moment with so much uncertainty around with the corona virus. And so it is helpful, really helpful that in the next section of Mark’s gospel Jesus faces four things that fear us. Danger, Demons, Disease and Death. And as he does this he will talk to us about faith. The sort of faith that can help us face our fears. Any fears. It is this faith that is available to us this morning. **But** it might look a little different to what you expect. Let’s see what I mean

Slide 5

1. **Danger (4:35-41)**

It’s been a long and exhausting day for Jesus. A day that started in Mark 3 with him being accused by the Pharisees of being controlled by Beelzebul the chief of demons. It went from bad to worse when his family came to collect him and bring him home because they thought he had gone made. He then went down to the sea where he taught the crowds in parables and now completely exhausted, physically, emotionally, socially he withdraws by boat.

***35 “****That day when evening came, he said to his disciples, “Let us go over to the other side.”****36****Leaving the crowd behind, they took him along, just as he was, in the boat. There were also other boats with him.****37****A furious squall came up, and the waves broke over the boat, so that it was nearly swamped.****38****Jesus was in the stern, sleeping on a cushion”.*

Finally Jesus gets some shut eye, some time to himself. But not for long. For he is abruptly

woken up by his fishermen friends with fear written across their faces.

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*“Teacher, don’t you care if we drown?”*  Teacher! He had just been teaching them a lesson with the parables. But they didn’t now realise that the material he had taught was about to be examined. They didn’t realise that Jesus knew that the boat was going to hit a storm. They didn’t realise that he was going to use this storm to teach them something more about who he is. And how they should react to the things that fear them.

*Teacher, don’t you care if we drown?* ***39****He (Jesus) got up, rebuked the wind and said to the waves, “Quiet! Be still!” Then the wind died down and it was completely calm.* ***40****He said to his disciples, “Why are you so afraid? Do you still have no faith?”* ***41****They were terrified and asked each other, “Who is this? Even the wind and the waves obey him!”*

Slide 7

Jesus calms the storm with just a word. **Quiet.** He gets the wind to stop with just a word. **Be still**. He hushes the storm like a parent reprimands a toddler throwing a tantrum. Unlike the rebellious child, however the wind and waves obeyed, immediately. Immediately.

The peace that let Jesus sleep so soundly, so calmly flows from Him and brings calm to the troubled waters of the sea. Here is creation raging in chaos and disorder, threatening and malicious, and here is the Creator made flesh. And when He merely speaks the Word, He simply speaks the Word and the storm does exactly what its creator tells it to do.

Slide 8

And that means the disciples now have something new to fear. Not the storm anymore. Not the danger of being in this world. But being in the presence of Jesus. Being in the presence of the one who can still the storm. Wait a second only God Himself can do that, can’t He? They are in the presence of greatness. And that terrifies them. And exposes them.

For Jesus questions them, why are you so afraid? Where is your faith? Do you really think there is a safer place in all the universe than in this boat in the middle of this storm if I am here with you? Don’t you trust me? Don’t you understand who I am? Don’t you have faith?

For it seems they don’t! Not yet anyway. They don’t yet understand that Jesus has power over danger. They don’t realise that he has authority over nature. That wind, waves, drought, volcanoes, floods, heat and cold are all under his control. Because Jesus is God. And God made the world. And it is God who continues to uphold the world.

So what does it mean to have faith in this God? To have faith in Jesus? Well funnily enough it will mean that you fear God more than fear nature. You will allow him to take centre stage not your troubles. Look who is before you this morning. It is not gentle Jesus meek and mild. It is the one with complete power in his hands. Power over the world, power over the sun, power over the whole universe. And faith is fearing Him. Fearing his power. Aware of his authority over your life and mind. And wanting to live rightly before the king of the world.

And funnily enough that sort of fear will drive away the fear of the storm. The fear of danger. The fear of the natural creation taking you some place that God doesn’t want to take you. And that is the sort of faith that Jesus is looking for in us. For that is the sort of faith that help us when the storms of life come crashing in all around us. So who do you fear? The natural elements or the God who made those elements? The storm or the one who rides upon the storm? But that is not the end of the story. For the disciples now come across something even more fearful:

Slide 9

1. **Demons (5:1-20)**

They get to see evil at its worst, staring them all in the face. ***5 “****They went across the lake to the region of the Gerasenes.****2****When Jesus got out of the boat, a man with an impure spirit came from the tombs to meet him.****3****This man lived in the tombs, and no one could bind him anymore, not even with a chain.****4****For he had often been chained hand & foot but he tore the chains apart & broke the irons on his feet. No one was strong enough to subdue him.****5****Night and day among the tombs and in the hills he would cry out and cut himself with stones”.*

Slide 10

Every once in a while you get to see evil in the flesh. And it is chilling. How could they possibly do that, you ask? How can humanity that reaches such heights, stoop so low? And here in our story we see someone overcome by evil, filled completely with the evil one. And it is not a pretty sight.

Slide 11

He lives among the dead. He has a strength that can’t be controlled. He is in torment. He is in pain. He is all alone. Because somewhere along the way this man opened himself up to the evil one and the Evil One decides to stay and wreak absolute havoc with his life. But there is something about the coming of Jesus that is attractive to this man. He sees Jesus. He runs to Jesus. He falls on his knees and he pleads with him not to torture him.

And we see that Jesus reaches out to this poor soul. Jesus has authority over the evil spirits within him. Actually he has authority over all evil, including the evil one himself. And with a word, there again is the power of Jesus word, **with a word**, “Come Out,” the ties that have bound him for so long are not just loosened but destroyed. For that is the power of Jesus. The natural world is not wild enough to stop him and the wildest of human nature must obey him as well.

Yet what Jesus does next seems strange. The demons ask him not to destroy them, not to send them to the Abyss as they know one day they will be going there. Instead send us into a herd of pigs. And Jesus listens to what they say. Amazing. The end of evil has not yet come. Yet Jesus wants to show everyone the destructive nature of both evil & the evil one so he gives them what they want. And we see they still want to bring about death and destruction and so they drive the herd of pigs into the sea. They do what they wish with the animals & they show us humans what they would do in us if they were given half a chance.

They would lead us to death. And that leads to a new type of fear amongst the people of this region. They fear the loss of their income. They fear the power of having a man like Jesus in their midst. They fear the change it might bring about. And so they ask Jesus to leave, which he does. For Jesus doesn’t force himself upon anyone.

Slide 12

Which leaves this ex demoniac. Now clothed. Now in his right man. Now filled with peace not pain. And he pleads with Jesus, let me go with you. Let me become one of your disciples. Let me learn from you as my teacher and follow you as my Lord and again strangely this Jesus who listens to the demons and does what they ask, who also listens to the people in the region and does what they ask, this Jesus, doesn’t do what this man asks.

Jesus is going to leave but this man is set to stay. To talk to others about the power of Jesus. To share with others the mercy of Jesus. To witness to the power of a changed life. And so we get to see the next piece of the puzzle about faith. It is not just fearing God it is following God’s word. It is doing what one is told to do by Jesus. And as this man does that others are amazed and the scene is set when Jesus goes back to this region later on in his ministry.

Slide 13

Friends we don’t need to fear evil. We don’t need to fear what others can do to you or what life can throw at you. We have one who is stronger than evil, more powerful than Satan. And if we fear him, we will follow him. We will go where he calls us to go not do what we are calling ourselves to do. That too is a part of faith. That is what discipleship is all about. Obeying, witnessing, sharing your story. It takes faith to do that. Real faith. Radical faith. So don’t fear the consequences. Don’t worry about what is around the corner. The one you serve has power over danger, demons and thirdly

Slide 14

1. **Disease (5:21-34)**

Because in our next episode we come across another thing that really scares us. Sickness. Disease. Pain. Isolation. Loneliness. For ***21 “****When Jesus had again crossed over by boat to the other side of the lake, a large crowd gathered around him while he was by the lake.****22****Then one of the synagogue leaders, named Jairus, came, and when he saw Jesus, he fell at his feet.****23****He pleaded earnestly with him, “My little daughter is dying. Please come and put your hands on her so that she will be healed and live.”****24****So Jesus went with him”.*

There is nothing worse than one of your kids getting sick, really sick. I have sat in hospital waiting rooms and then in beds looking at the life drain out of the ones that you love so much. Who are so precious and yet so weak and vulnerable. And here is a rich man, an important man, a religious man with fear in his eyes because his daughter, his precious and only daughter, just 12 years old is only just holding onto life.

Jairus is desperate and in faith and with a huge mixture of fear as well, he comes to Jesus and Jesus agrees to go with him. Now finally there is some hope, even if it is just a little light at the end of the tunnel, Jairus thinks. But they don’t get very far when another desperate person decides they will jump the queue.

Slide 15

*“A large crowd followed and pressed around him.****25****And a woman was there who had been subject to bleeding for twelve years.****26****She had suffered a great deal under the care of many doctors and had spent all she had, yet instead of getting better she grew worse.****27****When she heard about Jesus, she came up behind him in the crowd and touched his cloak,****28****because she thought, “If I just touch his clothes, I will be healed.”*

*Slide 16*

At the same time that Jesus meets a desperate rich man he also meets a desperate poor woman. The rich man had a daughter that he had enjoyed for the last 12 years and the poor woman had been subject to bleeding for 12 years. The man was a synagogue leader, always there at worship, the woman was unclean because of her bleeding which means she was never able to attend worship. She would have ostracised by her family and friends. A leper of sorts because her uncleanness was contagious. So no one wanted to come near her, ever.

Two desperate people, who are at their wits end. And so as Jesus goes with Jairus the woman believes, has faith that if she could just touch Jesus cloak, she would be healed. Now that sounds a bit superstitious to me. A bit far fetched. A bit hocus pocus. But she had lost faith in the doctors and the passage says that she was now showing her faith in Jesus.

Slide 17

***29 “****Immediately her bleeding stopped and she felt in her body that she was freed from her suffering.* ***30****At once Jesus realized that power had gone out from him. He turned around in the crowd and asked, “Who touched my clothes?”* ***31****“You see the people crowding against you,” his disciples answered, “and yet you can ask, ‘Who touched me?’ ”* ***32****But Jesus kept looking around to see who had done it”.*

Slide 18

You only need a little faith in something that is worthy of your faith and that faith works. Jesus felt power going out of him. The woman was healed in an instant. She knew. It was crystal clear to her. There were people that were touching Jesus right, left & centre but they weren’t being healed. Because they didn’t have faith. They didn’t believe that Jesus could heal in that sort of a way. But this woman did & Jesus does have the power over her disease

*Slide 19*

***33****Then the woman, knowing what had happened to her, came and fell at his feet and, trembling with fear, told him the whole truth”.****34****He said to her, “Daughter,* ***your faith*** *has healed you. Go in peace and be freed from your suffering.”*

Slide 20

What healed her? Her faith. Her trust in Jesus. Her faith meant that she reached out to the one who could heal her illness. Her faith meant she didn’t just sit back and say God’s will be done. Her faith might have been imperfect. Her theology was certainly a bit skewith. But it was her faith that healed her, Jesus said. You don’t need much faith. You don’t need pure faith. You just need faith in Jesus. Faith in the one who has more power than the doctors. Faith in the one who has authority over all diseases. Bleeding. Cancer. Coronavirus. AIDS.

This woman now has peace in her life. Not fear. Not worry. Not stress but peace, God’s peace. God is in control. He is worthy of her trust. It is not all up to her. She can be hopeless, helpless, desperate even but Jesus is greater than her fear, more powerful than any situation. And that gives someone peace doesn’t it? Faith allows you to see the rainbow through the rain, the rose not just the thorn. We’re not in control, God is. But that’s all very well for Jesus to be in control of disease, demons and danger but now we get to the big one.

Slide 21

1. **Death (5:35-43)**

For while Jesus is dealing with this woman, the time is ticking away for Jairus. “Jesus” he is thinking, “time is critical. And I got here first.” And then a message arrives and his world completely falls apart. ***35 “****While Jesus was still speaking, some people came from the house of Jairus, the synagogue leader. “Your daughter is dead,” they said. “Why bother the teacher anymore?”* ***36****Over hearing what they said, Jesus told him, “Don’t be afraid; just believe.”*

Slide 22

Don’t be afraid Jesus says. What is Jairus afraid of? Death. The ending of a loved one’s life.

The breaking of a relationship that means so much to him. Jairus is afraid of death. And to be honest he has every right to be afraid because death is such a horrible, horrible thing.

But Jesus says to him, do not afraid. Don’t fear. Believe. Have faith. You gotta have faith. Yes you had your own timeframe and Jesus seems to be operating on another timeframe. Island time, Vanuatu time. But God’s timing is always right. Believe in me. Trust in Me. Not just for healing but for resurrection. Yes you had faith but keep on having faith. Grow in faith.

Slide 23

***37****He did not let anyone follow him except Peter, James and John the brother of James.* ***38****When they came to the home of the synagogue leader, Jesus saw a commotion, with people crying and wailing loudly.****39****He went in and said to them, “Why all this commotion and wailing? The child is not dead but asleep.”****40****But they laughed at him. Slide 24*

*After he put them all out, he took the child’s father, mother and the disciples who were with him, and went in where the child was.****41****He took her by the hand and said to her, “Talitha koum!” (which means “Little girl, I say to you, get up!”).****42****Immediately the girl stood up and began to walk around (she was twelve years old). At this they were completely astonished.*

Slide 25

Jesus has power over death. Jesus has authority over the time and place where we die. And it is such an incredible miracle because when you think about it, the girl, this little girl has no power to do anything at all. She's dead and yet Jesus still acts. It's not that she's doing anything, saying anything, acting in any way. It's all Him. All His intervention, His initiative. He gives new life by His grace. That's what He does. He loves to break in and make the dead alive, the blind see, the deaf hear. He loves to shower His grace upon us, freely and sovereignly. So that story emphasizes the sovereignty of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Slide 26

And it shows that faith is the open hand that allows Jesus to do his work. Faith is not faith in oneself. Faith is not one half of the equation and God’s work is the other half. Faith is being open to God doing everything. And even that faith is a gift of God. The bible says **8*“****For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—****9****not by works, so that no one can boast”.*

Slide 27

Faith is believing in Jesus even when surrounded by death. Faith is fearing Jesus more than fearing the things in front of us. Faith is following Jesus even when our head tells us to do something else. And faith is trusting Him not matter. And so you don’t need a big amount of faith, you just need a little faith in a big Saviour. You don’t need perfect faith, you just need the faith to come to Jesus. And there will be time that our faith is mixed with doubts, when our faith is filled with fear, don’t worry. Put out your open hand and ask Jesus come & fill it.

Slide 28

Friends in this life we will constantly face scary things. We will regularly be confronting by an unknown future. The next tragedy. The next phone call. The next financial scare. The next medical test. The next family problem. We are not like SM where we cannot or ever will not fear the things around us. But if we lack faith, God will give you the faith you need. If you are full of fear, takes those fears to Jesus. Trust him. Follow him. Believe in him. Fear him. Will your fears go? No. But the one with you is stronger than those things you fear. He made the world. He controls the wind & the waves, death & disease, demons and all evil. He proves that in Mark 5 & he proves it fully at the cross. Where he defeats, death & the devil fatally. He will prove it time and time again in your life. If you just open your hand & come

to him in faith.

**Mark 4:35-5:43**

***35****That day when evening came, he said to his disciples, “Let us go over to the other side.”****36****Leaving the crowd behind, they took him along, just as he was, in the boat. There were also other boats with him.****37****A furious squall came up, and the waves broke over the boat, so that it was nearly swamped.****38****Jesus was in the stern, sleeping on a cushion. The disciples woke him and said to him, “Teacher, don’t you care if we drown?”* ***39****He got up, rebuked the wind and said to the waves, “Quiet! Be still!” Then the wind died down and it was completely calm.* ***40****He said to his disciples, “Why are you so afraid? Do you still have no faith?”* ***41****They were terrified and asked each other, “Who is this? Even the wind and the waves obey him!”*

***5****They went across the lake to the region of the Gerasenes.****2****When Jesus got out of the boat, a man with an impure spirit came from the tombs to meet him.****3****This man lived in the tombs, and no one could bind him anymore, not even with a chain.****4****For he had often been chained hand and foot, but he tore the chains apart and broke the irons on his feet. No one was strong enough to subdue him.****5****Night and day among the tombs and in the hills he would cry out and cut himself with stones.* ***6****When he saw Jesus from a distance, he ran and fell on his knees in front of him.****7****He shouted at the top of his voice, “What do you want with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? In God’s name don’t torture me!”****8****For Jesus had said to him, “Come out of this man, you impure spirit!”* ***9****Then Jesus asked him, “What is your name?” “My name is Legion,” he replied, “for we are many.”****10****And he begged Jesus again & again not to send them out of the area.* ***11****A large herd of pigs was feeding on the nearby hillside.****12****The demons begged Jesus, “Send us among the pigs; allow us to go into them.”* ***13****He gave them permission, and the impure spirits came out and went into the pigs. The herd, about two thousand in number, rushed down the steep bank into the lake and were drowned.* ***14****Those tending the pigs ran off and reported this in the town and countryside, and the people went out to see what had happened.****15****When they came to Jesus, they saw the man who had been possessed by the legion of demons, sitting there, dressed and in his right mind; and they were afraid.****16****Those who had seen it told the people what had happened to the demon-possessed man—and told about the pigs as well.****17****Then the people began to plead with Jesus to leave their region.* ***18****As Jesus was getting into the boat, the man who had been demon-possessed begged to go with him.****19****Jesus did not let him, but said, “Go home to your own people and tell them how much the Lord has done for you, and how he has had mercy on you.”****20****So the man went away and began to tell in the Decapolis how much Jesus had done for him. And all the people were amazed.*

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