**WHO IS THIS MAN?**

**A STORY IN FOUR ACTS**

At the end of Mark 4 the disciples ask if Jesus cares whether they die. Jesus rebukes them for their lack of faith and for their fear, and they, in even greater fear, ask who Jesus is?

At the end of Mark 5 we will see a complete reversal. Here, there is no question about whether Jesus cares. In fact, people are trying to actively discourage Jairus, the synagogue ruler, from “bothering” Jesus! The disciples ask if Jesus cares; Jairus’ friends tell them that Jesus shouldn’t be forced to care! The disciples are in danger of dying; Jairus’ daughter is already dead. The disciples are afraid and lack faith. Jesus encourages Jairus to not be afraid and to have faith. The disciples lives are spared, Jairus’ daughter’s life is restored.

Now, normally, we would presume that these stories should be right next to eachother since they are so similar. The use a lot of the same keywords: fear; faith; leave/permit/forgive; great.

But between the calming of the sea and the raising of Jairus’ daughter are 2 stories that Mark does not want us to ignore. In fact, Mark places them between the calming of the sea and the raising of Jairus’ daughter so that we see them as a cluster of stories that need to be read and understood and interpreted together. Whenever a story has “book-ends” or an “*inclusio*” we need to recognize that what’s in the middle matters. Think of it like a sandwich. You know it’s a sandwich when it has 2 pieces of bread. But two pieces of bread ain’t a sandwich. It’s what’s in the middle that makes it a sandwich!

So the ironic reversal from the disciples doubtfully fearing and questioning to Jairus refusing to be discouraged and being made brave and faithful by Jesus are the two pieces of bread. But what kinda sandwich do we have?

We have an unclean-demon possessed man living in an unclean place whose demons are cast into unclean animals. And the result of the cleansing of this frightening man, who terrorized their village, is that the villagers are afraid of Jesus.

Then we have a woman made unclean by 12 years of constant (or near constant) menstruation. This poor, unclean woman has spent every penny and only gotten worse. But she comes to Jesus in faith. Indeed, Jesus says her faith saved her. But she was still afraid when Jesus called attention to what she did.

Under Jewish law that woman made everyone she touched unclean. *But she didn’t make Jesus unclean.* **He made her clean.** She was afraid of the consequences of being found out because she’d defiled everyone. But instead, because she came in faith, Jesus healed her and made her clean.

Notice that in the calming of the sea, the cleansing of the demoniac, and the healing of the woman, the people are said to be afraid AFTER Jesus demonstrates his power. The very power of Jesus terrifies people.

What do you do with Jesus? Who is this man who commands the sea? Who casts out unclean spirits? Who heals unclean women? What do you do with such a man? Jesus tells us what to do: don’t be afraid, only believe.

The ONLY keyword that appears in all 4 pericopes is the verb for “be afraid”. Jesus gives us the response we’re supposed to have: don’t be afraid, only believe.

The NATURAL response to Jesus’ power is to be afraid. But this sandwich tells us not to be afraid, and instead to believe.

**LOOKING AHEAD**

**SNEAK PEEK**

As we look ahead into Mark’s gospel we want to take particular notice of some words that were introduced in today’s reading which will recur only a few more times.

The word “daughter” shows up here, in Chapter 6 about Herodias and Salome, and in Chapter 7 about the Syrophoenician woman and her demon-possessed daughter. All 3 of these sections have a woman and a daughter. Mark uses these women and girls to give unity to these sections between Chapter 4’s question and Chapter 8’s answer.