

Miracles with a Message

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Date: 24 February 2013

Preacher: Bob Akroyd

[0 : 0 0] chapter that we read and we'll read again the words of Jesus in verse 36. This is on page 1008 and Jesus is now speaking to Jairus the synagogue ruler having just learned that his daughter was dead. Jesus says these words don't be afraid just believe. A few years ago Matthew's a Mark's Gospel the shortest of the four Gospels was republished in a evangelistic booklet so you had the message of the Gospel written out and then you had Mark's Gospel at the end and the title of the booklet was a journey to life and that captures something significant about Mark's Gospel because what we have here is the journey of Jesus to the cross. We pick up his life story when he's 30 years old his preaching and teaching ministry begins when he's 30 and his crucifixion takes place when he's 33 so Mark's Gospel takes us through key events in those final three years of Jesus's life his journey to the cross and his journey to the empty tomb but there's a second journey here it's not just the journey of Jesus but it's our own individual life journeys because this morning we are here together in the same building at the same time doing the same things and we are encountering Jesus on the page of Mark's Gospel we're encountering his journey but we're also intersecting our journey with his. Now I'm not sure what your journey is today whether it's a journey of joy and happiness whether it's a journey of sadness and sorrow but at least consider this that this morning your life and his life have crisscrossed have intersected. If you were to visit my country where I'm from if you were to visit New York City which isn't too far from where I grew up one of the great landmarks one the great tourists are probably the greatest tourist attraction in that city is found at the corner of two streets found at the corner of Fifth Avenue and 34th

Street and if you get to that intersection all you need to do is look up and you'll see the Empire State Building you can't miss it you walk down Fifth Avenue you turn at 34th Street and you look up everywhere it just is obvious that you're now in front of this iconic building the biggest well now the second biggest building in New York City but the key is you need to know where the intersection is and you need to look up don't be like me a few years ago when I was in the city and I spoke to New York City policeman I said look I'm looking for the Empire State Building looking for the Empire State Building buddy you're right in front of it look up and there it was I was I was looking at ground level but I didn't look up because when you read Marx Gospel or any of the four Gospels you can't miss Jesus you can't miss who he is you can't miss what he has come to do you can't miss the power the compassion you can't miss this story but you can I was in New York City I was right there and

I miss the Empire State Building I'm standing right in front of it and people can read the Gospel and miss the main point you can miss the main story of who Jesus is and what Jesus has come to do and I'd like you to notice as we go through this chapter we encounter three different people with three different problems and Jesus meets each and every one of them at their very point of need and he meets you this morning whatever your situation might be Jesus doesn't pretend that we're identical he recognizes that our life stories are unique challenges trials difficulties joys triumphs all different and yet he has something to say to each one of us and as you read through Mark Gospel you'll read you'll realize that Jesus is moving there's an immediacy there's an urgency about Jesus he's going he's doing he's speaking and he's always on the move as you read through the Gospel Mark uses words like immediately and then and then takes you through this journey that Jesus is moving so this morning your life story and his life story connect but he's moving on the question is are you moving with him because you can have this intersection this morning and if your life remains unchanged if your life remains the same as it ever was then your encounter with Jesus is not a life-changing encounter it was just an event just an occasion on one particular Sunday morning you were in a place you read a chapter you heard us a message about Jesus but it didn't change your fundamental meaning of life or your purpose for life but this morning we encounter three people that they're meeting with Jesus change them and change them forever we read of a man known to us now as Legion possessed by evil spirits we read of a synagogue ruler named Jairus with a sick daughter and we read of a woman who had a persistent and debilitating issue of blood of an illness that caused her to be weak and each of these incidents is not just described but Jesus explains or rather Jesus instructs he not only heals because these are miracles but these are miracles that each have a message he in gives us a word of instruction to go along with the miracle because otherwise we don't understand these events you see the cross where Jesus was crucified the cross requires some explanation what happened there the empty tomb requires an explanation what happened there remember the disciples the women and the disciples early in the morning on

Sunday morning they went to the tomb and they met an angel and the angel says he is not here he is risen why are you looking for the living among the dead they couldn't put two and two together the empty tomb the stone that was rolled back they couldn't figure out what had happened and you see if the Bible was just a series of events we couldn't understand we couldn't figure it out but Jesus punctuates each of these miracles with a message with an instruction and with you this morning let's just look very simply at each of these individuals we'll look first at Legion the man possessed by evil spirits and Jesus makes it quite clear that there is evil in this world the reality of evil this world isn't all sweetness and light this world isn't all about kindness and compassion you don't need to look far if you're reading the daily newspaper listening to the radio news or watching on television in humanity cruelty evil darkness lies corruption it's there on every page it's there in every news report and we see the heightened power of evil brought to bear in this life of this man and Jesus encounters this man and what do we know about the man we know that this man was a danger we know that this man was a danger to himself and a danger to others I was visiting Bethany house Bethany is a homeless shelter in Leith and one of the workers there who's been working there for many many years he was originally a resident of Bethany he had a long-term drug drug addiction problem in and out of prison and he by his own estimation would have described himself you know as a hard tough man and he said if you had met me before I was a Christian you'd be frightened but what you see now is a different man a man whose life has been changed a man whose heart has been changed a man whose direction has been changed and when he describes the old life it's hard to imagine this man being a tough guy this man being you know somebody that you'd be afraid of because here's some guy that do you that you want to see every Monday night I'm delighted when I see him because there's a word of welcome a word of encouragement a warm invitation to Bethany and to everyone who's visiting there and we see the power of evil the danger that this man is to others the danger that this man is to himself and Jesus encounters him but notice in verse 7 that this man possessed by evil that somehow some way these evil spirits know who Jesus is what do you want with me Jesus son of the most high God swear to God that you won't torture me it's interesting in the

Bible that those who were opposed to Jesus they were the ones that more readily figured out what Jesus had come to do they more quickly realized what Jesus was saying the disciples were often slow to figure these things out but the demons are under no illusion who Jesus is and later in the story when Jesus is arrested and tried his enemies are quite clear that he's making claims to be none other than God's one and only son Jesus encounters this man and Jesus says in verse 8 come out of this man you evil spirit power authority he speaks with power and the demons obey him I don't know if you've seen the new movie Lincoln or it's not that new anymore but there's a scene in Lincoln where the president needs something to be done he needs a certain vote to be won and he says to one of the congressmen he says I am the president of the United States clothed with immense power you will do this for me and they did it they recognized his power they recognize his authority and they did what he told them to do the demons recognize who Jesus is recognize his power recognize his authority and they do what he tells them to do the demons begged begged to be sent into the water not to be sent out of the area they begged to go into the pigs Jesus sends them into the pigs but notice Jesus's interaction with the man he speaks authoritatively to the demons but he speaks compassionately to the man he asks the man his name now if you're going to have a friendship or a relationship I would dare say that you need to know a person's name you're very unlikely to be friends with somebody that you don't know their name you're very unlikely to have a close relationship with somebody and kind of say well you know what's her name or what's his name or you know names are important Jesus's name is important your name is important and Jesus wants to know this man's name my name is Legion he said for for we are many so you notice that this powerful Jesus has compassion has concern has concern has interest so he can speak authoritatively to the demons and they obey him and he can speak compassionately to the man and you'll see at the very end of the story when the pigs ran off into the water they were drowned there were two requests that were made of Jesus in verse 16 those who had seen it the pigs running into the water and told what had happened to the demon-possessed man and the pigs then the people began to plead with Jesus to leave their region we don't really want you here anymore Jesus we're kind of a we're kind of frightened by what you've just done we're kind of uneasy about who you are and we would really prefer if you would move on to somewhere else now Jesus respects you he respects your choice he respects your decision you have choices to make and decisions to make and the decisions that you make he will honor those who say no to Jesus ultimately he will accept that decision but when the end comes and you're standing before him he will confirm that choice that you've made so you see that he began to get into the boat he was getting into the boat he was leaving that region he honored their request they didn't want him anymore and it's a solemn thing when you say to Jesus I'd ask I'd really prefer if you leave your words disturb me your actions unsettle me your your claims upset me and I

[13 : 29] really prefer if you wouldn't have anything more to do with me and and this area but notice that there was a second response and this is interesting that the man who had been demon-possessed that this man who was now in his right mind he was dressed he was back to his senses and he says I want to go with you wherever you go I want to go now wouldn't you think this would be a request that Jesus would say yes to and sometimes we have ideas and plans and we say God this is what I want this is where I want to go I want to serve you I want to be with you I want to do your work and we sort of say to God I want to do this this and that and it sounds good and it looks good but we're told here that Jesus did not let him he said no you're not to come with me but he did do this he says go home to your family and tell them how much the Lord has done for you and how he has had mercy on you so you see Jesus isn't explaining the miracle he's not explaining what he did but he is instructing Legion now he says I want you to go to your people and I want you to tell them I want you to tell them a message of mercy that God has done this for you and thereby God can do this for them he's helped you he's healed you he's restored you to your sound mind and body and he can do that for your people so he sends this man to the people who knew him best and sometimes that's the most challenging response of Jesus go and tell your family go and tell your friends oh by all means we need to send people to the remotest parts of the world but if you want to go to the remotest parts of the world to serve Jesus somebody could easily ask okay but what are you doing here you're in Edinburgh right now how are you serving him here you're in a family how are you serving him in your family you have a group of friends what about them these are the people that know you best by all means have aspirations to serve Jesus but never lose sight of what you can do here and what you can do now so the first miracle is the power of Jesus over evil you see this is not a fair fight and you might think a man possessed by a legion of demons a legion I think was six thousand you the Roman legion with six thousand soldiers and you think a legion of demons and Jesus six thousand to one that's not a fair fight well you're right it's not a fair fight because the power of Jesus was such that no matter how many demons that we're possessing this man that when he commanded they obeyed so the fight between Jesus and Satan between good and evil is not a fair fight Jesus is far more powerful than any evil force Jesus is far more powerful far more able to do what anyone else or anything else can accomplish miracle number two and miracle number three are kind of intertwined and this is something that's quite interesting with Mark is that

Mark often tells a story and there's another story in between some of Shakespeare's plays are like this where you have a play within a play that mid summer night's dream you start off with a with a play and then all of a sudden you've got another play in the middle of it well here's a miracle within a miracle the first miracle of this pair is Jairus here's the powerful man now by enlarge the the synagogue rulers the leaders didn't have much to do with Jesus there were exceptions of course Nicodemus and John 3 was an exception Jairus here in Mark 5 is an exception and notice that it was not his own problem Legion was possessed by the evil spirits but Jairus came to Jesus because of someone he loved his daughter his daughter was sick his daughter was dying and no matter what he might have thought about Jesus he came to Jesus on behalf of someone else and maybe you can identify with Jairus maybe your life is going well maybe there's nothing that you could ask for more but you're concerned about someone else a member of your family a friend and you realize that you can't help them as much as you would like to help them the problems are too great the difficulties are too too many the challenges are too complex and maybe that is your connection today with Jesus you realize that you need help for someone else there's nowhere else to go there's nowhere else to turn and just like Jairus you come to Jesus on behalf of someone else but in the midst of this healing in the midst of this second miracle that Jesus is going to perform we see a third person and this is a story that would have been that we kind of read and it seems a bit awkward seems have been embarrassing you know what's going on here but this was more than awkward and more than embarrassing for the person because here's a woman who is physically weakened over 12 years here's a woman who is financially impoverished because she spent all she had to get better and yet she grew worse and here's a woman who would have been very much isolated ostracized separated couldn't take part in the religious life of the day couldn't be involved as others could be involved I mean if we could try to bring this up to date this woman would not be allowed to come here to church at 11 o'clock on a Sunday morning not welcome not invited I'm sorry we'd love you to come and if you get better you can come but she wasn't and she couldn't and she didn't but she had one thing that set her apart and that is hope and maybe this morning that's something you would desperately love to have hope hope for today hope for tomorrow hope in the midst of life and all of its complexities and all of its problems because she tried here here was a woman who tried in verse 26 she suffered a great deal under the care of many doctors and it spent all she had yet instead of getting better she grew worse there are some problems that doctors can't fix that was true 2000 years ago it's true today when she heard about Jesus she came up behind him in the crowd and touched his cloak because she thought if I just touch his clothes I will be healed now if you look throughout the Bible for a promise or an invitation that Jesus gives saying that if you touch my clothes you will be healed you won't find it it's not there yet somehow some way she reasoned even if I just touch this man even just touch the very hem of his clothing somehow some way he can make me better that's hope and that hope moved her to reach

out she reached out to Jesus for herself she had tried all the doctors 12 years she got poorer and she got weaker there was nowhere else to go and there was no where else to turn maybe you've come to that point in your life you've tried the doctors you've tried the counselors you've tried your friends your family you've read the self-help books there's a fellow today who's from the southeast London he's now worshiping at a church up here in Nidry his name is Paul and I met him a few months ago and he said to me said for 20 years I tried 12-step programs you know 12-step programs alcoholics anonymous narcotics anonymous and these programs are good in so far as they help people address the problems of their lives and he says you know after 20 years I realized they don't work they don't work they they don't solve my drug habit they don't enable me to be released from this addiction he said two weeks ago I was born again I came to believe in Jesus and he said you know what that works that changes the way he lives that changes his his lifestyle it changes his attitude 20 years trying all the different programs that were offered and he came to hear about Jesus and he came to believe in Jesus and his life was changed by trusting in Jesus that's the power that's the power that Jesus has to make the hopeless and the helpless he healed and whole she reached out and immediately this word immediately is a key word in Mark's gospel immediately her bleeding stopped and she felt in her body that she was freed from her suffering Jesus doesn't let her go Jesus doesn't allow this healing to take place in silence or in secret and maybe this morning maybe you are a secret follower of Jesus you believe you trust you follow but you're silent nobody else knows and you know why nobody else knows because you've never told them here was a woman who was healed here was a woman who reached out in faith and here was a woman who was made whole and Jesus stops and says who touched my clothes now the disciples don't get it as they often didn't get it you know you're crowded around with people how do you ask who touched me and Jesus kept looking around to see who had done it and the woman knowing what had happened to her came and fell at his feet and trembling with fear told him the whole truth he said to her daughter your faith has healed you go in peace and be freed from your suffering he explains what just happened it was faith it wasn't the physical touching of garments it was reaching out in faith how much faith did she have she had enough faith to reach out to Jesus how much knowledge did she have she had enough knowledge to trust in Jesus so this morning if you feel that you don't know enough if you feel that you don't understand enough maybe this woman's experience can encourage you she knew that she needed help and she knew that there was no where else and no one else who could help and somehow some way she thought this man Jesus can help and she reaches out and that's the illustration that Jesus uses your faith faith is relying on him faith is trusting in him faith is reaching out to him your faith has healed you and then he gives a word of benediction a word of blessing he says go in peace and be freed from your suffering 12 years she suffered 12 years no peace 20 years Paul tried the 12-step programs no peace no release a relationship with Jesus brings release a relationship with Jesus brings freedom a relationship with Jesus brings peace but

the story isn't over remember Jesus was on a mission of mercy already and doesn't this remind us that Jesus has time if you were going to help somebody in desperate need and somebody comes into your path and says I need your help just now I would answer I can't help you now because I'm busy I'm doing something important can't you see there's a daughter there's a what there's a girl who's dying I don't have time for you now in fact you've been suffering for 12 years another day or two won't matter much but Jesus is time for the woman in the midst of his journey to Jairus' daughter so you might think this morning there's a lot of people here and there's a lot of people who represent a lot of families and who may have a lot of problems why would Jesus be interested in me he's got a lot of other responsibilities he's got a lot of other things on his mind the story of the woman reminds us that no matter what he has time again you could look through scripture and find trying to find a situation where Jesus said I'm sorry I'm busy I don't have time now I don't have time to help you I don't have time to heal you I don't have time for you just now you will not find that in the Bible because it's not there and you will not find that in your own experience if you trust in Jesus he always has time but the story of the synagogue ruler when they finally get to the house we're told that the story is over your daughter is dead why bother the teacher anymore this is the difference between the other two miracles Legion was in trouble Legion was cutting himself Legion was in danger but at least Legion was alive the woman was poor and was weak but at least she was alive now

Jairus's daughter was sick was dying and was now dead so if you think of these three great opponents evil disease and now death well surely Jesus has met his match now he may be able to cast out demons and he may be able to heal the sick but there's nothing that he can do in the face of death because death of course has the final word or does it does Jesus have the power over death does he have the power to say to the dead live does he have the power to conquer this greatest of all enemies this enemy this reality that each one of us will one day face can he say to the dead live the natural responses don't bother him there's nothing more he can do here we've moved from a sick bed we've moved now to a funeral situation we don't need a healer we need an undertaker ignoring what they said Jesus told the synagogue ruler don't be afraid just believe don't be afraid don't be afraid of evil legion don't be afraid of disease woman with the issue of blood don't be afraid Jairus of death just believe now this phrase just believe is something that modern people can sometimes identify with we're told you've got to believe or you have to have faith but the question is in what my favorite team growing up I like baseball my favorite team was the New York Mets they very rarely ever won but there was a time in 1969 I wasn't I don't remember that I was alive but I don't remember that the 1969 Mets won the World Series it's considered one of the miracles of modern baseball that this team that was hopeless somehow got it together and won the series but the tagline or the phrase that captured the 69 Mets was was this phrase you got to believe now I guess in that situation you've got to believe in this team of nine players that goes on to the field you've got to believe in the pitcher you've got to believe in the batter but this idea that you got to believe kind of resonates but faith is not abstract we aren't saved or we aren't entering into relationship with Jesus by some vague belief or some vague faith because when Jesus says you've got to believe you have to ask yourself believe what what's he talking about well if you go back to Mark chapter one we kind of work our way back for a moment you go back to Mark chapter one and we get a clue mark one at verse 15 Jesus his first sermon the time has come he said the kingdom of God is near repent and believe the good news so Jesus is saying we've got to believe and belief is rooted in something called the good news we've got to repent meaning turning from our path we're going the wrong direction we've got to believe and we're told that we need to believe the good news what's the good news we'll go back to the very beginning of Mark's gospel mark one one and we read there the beginning of the gospel which is that word good news in one word about Jesus Christ the Son of God so if you work your way back when Jesus says don't be afraid just believe what he is saying to gyros is what is required here is a personal trust in Jesus who is Jesus he's the Son of God what has Jesus come to do he's come to set people free he's come to heal the sick he's come to restore sight to the blind he's come to cast out the demons he's come to give life to dead people don't be afraid gyros just believe and then Jesus restores this dead girl to life notice

[30 : 39] how the weepers and whalers soon become laffers the emotions of this world can quickly fluctuate remember when Jesus was welcomed into the city on Palm Sunday everybody was shouting hosanna everybody was welcoming Jesus five days later they were saying crucify Jesus comes into a scene of weeping and wailing he then says the child is not dead but asleep and they begin to laugh but Jesus raises this girl back to life spiritually speaking you and I are dead we are physically alive we are breathing we are respiring our brains are working our hearts are pumping blood but spiritually speaking the Bible tells us that we are dead dead in sins dead in transgressions we need that life-giving message of salvation we need that life-giving command that Jesus and Jesus only can provide there are many things that can cause us fear many things that can cause us upset we can be afraid of sickness we can be afraid of dying we can be afraid of evil we can be afraid of tomorrow and what it may or may not hold but Jesus is calling you and me today into a relationship based on faith and based on trust he is demonstrating his power to heal but in each of these examples he is reminding us of who he is of who we are and how we can enter into a living and a permanent relationship with him so whether it's Legion or whether it's the woman with this issue of blood or whether it's Jairus and his daughter maybe this morning there's a point of contact where you say I understand exactly what they are going through I understand exactly what Jesus is talking about and maybe just maybe he can help me to trust him believe in him place your faith in this

Jesus because of who he is because of what he has done that he is clothed with immense power and he is clothed with immense compassion and for those of us who do trust he encourages us to keep trusting to keep following to make him known to others to reveal this great message of good news to those today who are very much under the power of evil to those today who are without hope and without God to those today who need light and who need love and who need meaning and who need purpose if we don't share that message if we don't point them in the way of Jesus how will they ever find out mark a young man who followed Jesus mark a young man who traveled with Paul and with Barnabas he wrote this gospel message for our benefit and for the benefit of countless people who have read the story of Jesus and found themselves placing their faith and their trust in him don't be afraid just believe let us pray father hear us oh Lord and answer us enable us to trust in Jesus for ourselves remind us that it's not about who we are remind us it's not about what we have done remind us it's not about anything that we might be able to do in the future but enable us to hear that voice speaking to us here speaking to us now personally and powerfully enable us to follow him and trust him enable us to make him known to others and may we recognize that he deserves a praise he deserves the glory and he deserves the honor we ask all these things now in Jesus name and for his sake Amen