



### *Prophecy according to your faith*

"As evening came, Jesus said to his disciples, "Let's cross to the other side of the lake." So they took Jesus in the boat and started out, leaving the crowds behind (although other boats followed). But soon a fierce storm came up. High waves were breaking into the boat, and it began to fill with water. Jesus was sleeping at the back of the boat with his head on a cushion. The disciples woke him up, shouting, "Teacher, don't you care that we're going to drown?" When Jesus woke up, he rebuked the wind and said to the waves, "Silence! Be still!" Suddenly the wind stopped, and there was a great calm. Then he asked them, "Why are you afraid? Do you still have no faith?" The disciples were absolutely terrified. "Who is this man?" they asked each other. "Even the wind and waves obey him!""

**Mark 4:35-41 NLT**

"So they arrived at the other side of the lake, in the region of the Gerasenes. When Jesus climbed out of the boat, a man possessed by an evil spirit came out from the tombs to meet him. This man lived in the burial caves and could no longer be restrained, even with a chain. Whenever he was put into chains and shackles—as he often was—he snapped the chains from his wrists and smashed the shackles. No one was strong enough to subdue him. Day and night he wandered among the burial caves and in the hills, howling and cutting himself with sharp stones. When Jesus was still some distance away, the man saw him, ran to meet him, and bowed low before him. With a shriek, he screamed, "Why are you interfering with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? In the name of God, I beg you, don't torture me!" For Jesus had already said to the spirit, "Come out of the man, you evil spirit." Then Jesus demanded, "What is your name?" And he replied, "My name is Legion, because there are many of us inside this man." Then the evil spirits begged him again and again not to send them to some distant place. There happened to be a large herd of pigs feeding on the hillside nearby. "Send us into those pigs," the spirits begged.

“Let us enter them.” So Jesus gave them permission. The evil spirits came out of the man and entered the pigs, and the entire herd of about 2,000 pigs plunged down the steep hillside into the lake and drowned in the water. The herdsmen fled to the nearby town and the surrounding countryside, spreading the news as they ran. People rushed out to see what had happened. A crowd soon gathered around Jesus, and they saw the man who had been possessed by the legion of demons. He was sitting there fully clothed and perfectly sane, and they were all afraid. Then those who had seen what happened told the others about the demon-possessed man and the pigs. And the crowd began pleading with Jesus to go away and leave them alone. As Jesus was getting into the boat, the man who had been demon possessed begged to go with him. But Jesus said, “No, go home to your family, and tell them everything the Lord has done for you and how merciful he has been.” So the man started off to visit the Ten Towns of that region and began to proclaim the great things Jesus had done for him; and everyone was amazed at what he told them. Jesus got into the boat again and went back to the other side of the lake, where a large crowd gathered around him on the shore.”

**Mark 5:1-21 NLT**

“The church that we see is a church of prophetic voices who will break chains and proclaim freedom over people”

**(Freedom church vision first declaration)**

“If the Holy Spirit was withdrawn from the church today, ninety five percent of what we do would go on and no one would know the difference. If the Holy Spirit had been withdrawn from the New Testament church, ninety five percent of what they did would stop, and everybody would know the difference.”

**A W Tozer**

“We have different gifts, according to the grace given to each of us. If your gift is prophesying, then prophesy in accordance with your faith.

**Romans 12:6 NIVUK**

This morning I want to take us deeper into the power of prophetic declarations and spiritual warfare. Last time I delivered some teaching on prophecy we looked at why it is so important in the life of the church. The Apostle Paul told us to desire the spiritual gifts, especially prophecy because it should build up,

encourage and strengthen the church. We need this not because it gives us a nice feeling or makes us feel good because we hear from God that he is on our side and loves us, which we do need to hear, but because God is getting us ready for battle.

I want to unpack the vision that we feel God has given us a little more and give you a window into what we are preparing for and things to come. I also want to try and help us to understand the path we have chosen, why we have chosen it, and how it will inform and guide our priorities moving forward.

This morning Jesus is taking us to a new level in our prophetic journey. We find ourselves this morning in Mark chapter four. Jesus is about to demonstrate to us how to deal with what is happening in the spiritual realm before we try to deal with what is happening in the earthly realm.

At the beginning of Mark four we find Jesus teaching using parables to invite people in to seek a deeper understanding of the kingdom of God. After he has finished and as evening is approaching Jesus tells his disciples that he wants to travel to the other side of the lake. If we pause here and just think about this for a moment we might want to ask why? It was late. The trip in good conditions would take about two hours but Jesus was clearly tired and his disciples must have wondered why Jesus didn't want to rest and go in the morning, but they obeyed and set off with Jesus. Possibly they just thought Jesus wanted to get away from the crowds for a while. Whatever the reason, they set off.

Jesus fell asleep at the back of the boat. A fierce storm came and high waves lashed over the side. The disciples thought the boat would capsize and woke Jesus.

At this point I want to make an observation that I think makes a clear distinction about what is actually going on and why Jesus responds as he does. Firstly, I want to say that I believe Jesus had a very clear purpose for taking this trip and was fully aware that he and the disciples may face a situation like this. Secondly, I want to contrast the difference between someone who responds to a situation like this without having spiritual insight into what is happening and how Jesus responds as someone who is completely aware of what is going on.

A good leader responding purely from an earthly leadership perspective would probably take their place on the stern of the boat. They would rally the men on

board and organise them into separate groups on each side of the boat. They would then coordinate the timing and rhythm of the oar strokes and beginning shouting encouragement to the men not to lose hope, to stay focussed, to row as hard as they can and to keep relaying the distance to shore to keep the morale and determination high. This is good leadership and if I am honest it seems to me to be the primary focus of so much that is prioritised when it comes to equipping and training church leaders. Jesus does none of this. He stands up and rebukes the storm and the problem is dealt with.

What is the difference between how Jesus deals with this situation and, if we are honest, what might be our first attempt at saving ourselves. Does Jesus do this just because he is the Son of God or is there a deeper story here that will help us see this differently?

Let's jump to the following chapter to see if there is something bigger going on here. In Mark chapter five after Jesus has calmed the storm, they land at the other side of the lake. In verse two it tells us that as they alighted from the boat a man possessed by evil spirits ran out of the tombs and came to Jesus. Let's just pause here for a second and ask the question, 'Is there any connection between Jesus rebuking the storm and his encounter with this man?' Let's look a little further on in the chapter. In verse 21 after Jesus has delivered the man it says that he got back in the boat and went back to the other side. So Jesus made his disciples take him from one side of the lake to the other for the sole and express purpose of dealing with the demons in this man. It seems to me a bigger picture is coming together.

In Mark's gospel there is dialogue between Jesus and the demons possessing this man. Jesus asks the demon its name. 'Legion' is the reply indicating many. A Roman Legion would include 4200 men plus cavalry so this indicates a lot of demons. This is not a literal number and we should say the Bible only says many, but still, Jesus is dealing with a significant demonic presence in this place. Notice also that the demons are expecting Jesus. The man runs to him. They are running to him because of fear of what he will do but the fact that they are expecting him tells us something.

If we look at the story as a whole it is clear that Jesus went here to deal with these demons and then went back. This cannot be for the man only but must have been because there was a 'stronghold' in this place that was affecting the area and probably controlling and dominating the people preventing them from coming to Jesus to be saved and healed. If the demons were expecting

Jesus then is it not too much of a stretch to think that this sudden and unexpected storm was demonic in origin. Also, Jesus clearly went deliberately at this time to this place to deal with this demonic issue. Jesus must have had revelation through prayer of what was happening and the Holy Spirit must have told Jesus where he needed to be and what he needed to do. Jesus knew that this storm was not natural but spiritual in origin and that is why he rebuked it. Jesus slept because he is not afraid of the devil or demons or anything demonic powers can do, especially when we are obedient to the Holy Spirit.

So, for me, this is no longer a story about Jesus power alone and the disciples faith being challenged. It is about the strategy that the Holy Spirit is giving us to begin breaking down strongholds and seeing people set free. It is about stepping into prophetic declaration and seeing demons defeated and cast out. It is about seeking revelation about what is happening in the spiritual realm and first dealing with things there so that we can deal with things here.

This is how God calls us to lead. His kingdom come on earth as it is in heaven. It is a road less travelled as earthly leadership strategies are more in vogue and those who embark on a prophetic journey of spiritual leadership and warfare in the heavenly realms are seen as a bit strange and sidelined in the church.

We have chosen what we believe is the Jesus path. The path of dealing with the spiritual obstacles so we can see the kingdom manifest here. We have chosen to be a praying people. We have chosen to be a prophetic people. We have chosen to be those who take the kingdom by force through prophetic declarations and decrees. We have chosen to be those who no longer ask God for authority he has already given us but use that authority to cast out the demonic. We have chosen to declare Jesus' victory over all powers, dominions and rulers in the heavenly realms. We have chosen to stand in the victory Jesus has won for us.