

# Jesus Is Scary!

Message for Sunday, August 12, 2018  
by Bruce Fraser

**Scripture:** Mark 4:35 – 5:20

## Part 1, from Mark 4:35-41

Jesus and the disciples are crossing the Sea of Galilee in a boat. While Jesus catches up on some badly needed sleep, a fierce storm comes up. Remember that several of the disciples were fishers, and they were used to bad weather. But when the waves started filling the boat with water, even they were scared for their lives.

They woke Jesus—not expecting him to do anything, but just in sheer panic. To their amazement, Jesus spoke to the storm, “Hush, be still.” And to their astonishment, the storm obeyed him, as if it were a pet dog obeying its master.

Before they had been merely scared. Now they were completely terrified, and with eyes bulging out they asked one another, “Who is this man? Even the wind and the waves obey him!”

Jesus is scary!

They weren't afraid that Jesus was going to hurt them; he had just saved their lives. It was the kind of fear that leads to awe, reverence and worship.

**Question around the table:** Picture yourself being there. Hear the wind howling. Feel the panic as the waves start coming in over the sides of the boat. Then Jesus tells the storm to be still, and it is! How do you feel?

## Part 2, from Mark 5:1-20

Hi, my name is Ahmed. Those are my pigs over there. That's right, I'm a pig farmer. There are wolves in the hills; we hear them howling at night. So when we let the pigs out to roam around, all us pig farmers put them together. It's safer that way.

The Jews who live on the other side of the Sea of Galilee think we're creepy, raising what they consider to be filthy animals. We think they're silly, with all their rules about you can't eat this and you can't eat that. But aside from that, we get along all right.

This is my new herd. I lost my entire herd in a freak accident. No, that's not right: it wasn't an accident, but it certainly was freaky! Let me tell you about it.

Our village is called Gerasa. There was a man living there who became, well, weird. Crazy. No, worse than that. He was like a wild animal. Except wild animals don't go around cutting themselves, like he did. It took six of us to hold him down. We held him in place by putting chains on his ankles and wrists, so that he couldn't hurt himself. Ha! He snapped those chains like they were spaghetti. Where he got that power from, no one knew. Some said that he was possessed by demons, evil spirits that tormented him. That would explain his incredible strength.

Even though he never attacked anyone—he only hurt himself—it got to the point that everyone was frightened of him, so we drove him out of town. Some people would leave food for him at the edge of town, so at least he wouldn't starve. As long as he stayed out there, we were satisfied.

Then one day this travelling magician came by. Rumours and gossip about him was everywhere, saying he could do amazing tricks. Of course, we knew it was all a bunch of lies; no one cure leprosy, or take a man who has been paralyzed and make him walk again. Those so-called “miracles” were just stooges who acted out being sick.

Now I wasn't there when it happened, but my hired man told me all about it. That wild man I told you about, he came up to this magician—his name is Jesus—and started screaming at him. This Jesus said something to the wild man, and the next thing all our pigs went running full tilt down the hill and into the water. It was a stampede; there was nothing my man could do to stop them. They all drowned there, about two thousand head. What a mess that was to clean up! We ended up having to bury most of the carcasses; there were just too many to butcher all at once. We lost a huge amount of money over this.

The hired man ran to town to tell us what happened. We came out to see for ourselves. Now get this: the wild man was sitting with Jesus. His hair was combed, he had clean clothes on, and they were having a conversation just like normal people. We were gobsmacked. Clearly this was no ordinary

magician. If he has power over demons, he must be the head of the demons. I went up to him and I said, “Listen, we live a quiet and peaceful life here. We don’t want any trouble. You’ve already caused us a heap of trouble, and it’s time for you and your gang to hit the road.”

Jesus looked at me, his eyebrows raised, a puzzled look on his face. He saw the other men standing behind me and saw that we meant business. Not saying a word, he just motioned to his followers, and they walked away.

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Isn’t that interesting! Those people are afraid of Jesus. They would rather live with a wild man who is possessed by demons, than have someone who can heal people who are desperately sick. They don’t care that Jesus cares; they just want him gone. Instead of giving him the key to the city, they give him a cold shoulder. The demons had begged Jesus to let them stay in the region; the townspeople now beg Jesus to leave the region.

They are more comfortable with the evil forces that take captive and destroy human beings than they are with the one who can heal and restore a person.

Jesus is scary!

**Question for table groups:** Many of us picture Jesus as friendly, caring, helpful, and so on—the very opposite of scary. Have we created a tame Jesus, the way we take a wild barn cat and make it a pleasant pet?

### Part 3, Fear of God is good

Proverbs 9:10

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and knowledge of the Holy One is understanding.

This is just one of many places in the Bible, particularly in the Old Testament, where we are told to “fear God.” For the average person, that kind of talk evokes an image of God like a mean and nasty person who wants us to cower in fear, and obey him because we are terrified of the consequences. That’s the very kind of thinking which has turned countless people away from God. I don’t blame them. I wouldn’t want to serve that kind of God, either.

So what does it mean, then, to “fear God”? It is the natural and normal response of a human in the presence of God, who is holy, mighty, wise, eternal, beyond anything we can describe.

**The remarkable thing about fearing God is that when you fear God you fear nothing else, whereas if you do not fear God you fear everything else.**

- Oswald Chambers

Stop for a moment. Think about that. If you fear God, then you don’t need to worry about what others might say about you or do to you. If you fear God, you can laugh at all those phobias—they can’t touch you. If you fear God, then death has no power over you.

There’s an old story of an invading army sacking a village. The residents were fleeing for their lives, while the soldiers looted the homes. To his surprise, one soldier found a monk calmly standing inside his cottage. “Don’t you realize who I am?” demanded the soldier. “I can run you through with my sword and think nothing of it!” The monk replied, “Don’t you realize who I am? I can be run through with your sword and think nothing of it.”

There’s another phrase found even more often throughout the Bible: it’s God telling people, “Fear not.” Because of Jesus’ victory over death, and his promise to those who put their faith in him, we truly have nothing to fear.

**Question for table groups:** What are you afraid of? Can you give that fear to God?

### Next Steps:

- Have a healthy fear of God: the kind that leads to awe and reverence, rather than intimidation.
- Jesus is scary... until you get to know him. Would you like to know him better? Spend time together.
- With a healthy fear of God, other fears diminish in their power over you.