

Session 5

Who Then Is This?

Mark 4:35-5:43 | A Ransom for Many: A Catholic Journey Through the Gospel of Mark

Part 1: Leader Preparation Guide

Session Overview

Discovery Aim: Participants discover four scenes of escalating impossibility, a storm, a legion, an incurable flow of blood, and death itself, and find that each one is territory the Old Testament reserves for God alone. The disciples' terrified question in the boat, "Who then is this?", is the session title because it is the question Mark wants burning in every reader by the end of chapter 5.

Catholic Touchstone: Grace through contact. Power goes out from Jesus' body through a touched garment; a girl is raised by a grasped hand. The Catechism teaches that the sacraments are "powers that come forth" from the Body of Christ, ever-living and life-giving (CCC 1116), and this session is where that language comes from.

What You Need to Know

Mark 4:35-5:43 is a deliberate tour of the four things no one can control: chaos in nature, evil in persons, chronic disease, and death. Jesus walks through all four and is obeyed. The unit answers the question it plants: "Who then is this, that even wind and sea obey him?" (4:41).

The storm scene runs on Old Testament rails. In the Scriptures, the raging sea is the emblem of chaos, and taming it is God's signature move: he shut in the sea with doors at creation (Job 38:8-11), and Psalm 107 describes sailors in a storm crying to the LORD, who "made the storm be still, and the waves of the sea were hushed." Mark stages Psalm 107 in a fishing boat. Notice also the word Jesus uses: "Be still" (*pephimoso*) is a cognate form of the muzzling word he used on the demon in 1:25 (*phimotheti*). He silences the sea with a cognate of the muzzling word he used on the demon, an echo many hear as deliberate: behind chaos, the same enemy. And do not miss the two-natures theology sleeping on the cushion: exhausted, truly human, he sleeps; awakened, he commands creation with a word. Both are fully real (see St. Gregory Nazianzen below).

The Gerasene demoniac takes Jesus into Gentile territory, the Decapolis (the pigs strongly signal it; swineherding marks Gentile country). "Legion" is a Roman military term for thousands of soldiers; this man is occupied territory in a land occupied by Rome. Watch the aftermath closely: the townspeople, faced with their tormented neighbor "sitting there, clothed and in his right mind," are afraid and beg Jesus to leave. People can prefer a manageable misery to an uncontrollable holiness. And then the thunderbolt for our study: the healed man begs to come with Jesus, and Jesus refuses, "Go home to your friends, and tell them how much the Lord has done for you." After four chapters of "tell no one," Jesus commands proclamation. Why here? Because in Gentile country there are no messianic political expectations to ignite, which suggests the Secret is strategic, not absolute. This man becomes a uniquely commissioned herald, an early witness to the Decapolis, and, leader's eyes only, when Jesus returns to the Decapolis in chapter 8 and finds a crowd of four thousand waiting, you may quietly wonder who prepared that soil.

The chapter closes with Mark's most famous sandwich: the story of Jairus's dying daughter wrapped around the story of the hemorrhaging woman. Mark intercalates stories so each interprets the other, and the numbers invite it: the woman has bled for twelve years; the girl is twelve years old. The woman's condition made her ritually unclean and made her bed, her seat, and what she touched carriers of impurity (Leviticus 15:19-27), a state whose social cost we can cautiously infer, and left her impoverished by physicians besides. She touches his

garment, and once again the contagion runs backward: instead of her uncleanness passing to him, his power passes to her, "perceiving in himself that power had gone forth from him." Jesus' insistence on finding her is not embarrassment-theater; it converts an anonymous transaction into a face-to-face relationship: "Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace." She is the only person in the Gospels Jesus addresses as "Daughter." Many commentators, ancient and modern, also hear the two twelves as a quiet parable of Israel, the daughter of Zion bleeding and dying, restored by the Messiah's touch; the Church has not defined the reading, so offer it as an insight, not a doctrine.

Old Testament Roots and Fulfillment

- **Psalm 107:23-30 and Job 38:8-11.** Stilling the sea is the LORD's prerogative: sailors cry to him and he hushes the waves; he alone shut in the sea when it burst from the womb. The disciples' question "Who then is this?" points where only the LORD stands.
- **Jonah 1:4-6.** The one other biblical scene with a prophet asleep in a storm-tossed boat while pagan sailors panic. The parallels are deliberate and so is the difference: Jonah must be thrown into the sea to still it; Jesus stills it with a word. Something greater than Jonah is here.
- **Leviticus 15:19-27.** The legal architecture of the woman's isolation: a chronic discharge rendered her, her bed, her chair, and everyone she touched unclean. Leviticus governs the transmission of impurity rather than forbidding contact outright, so her reaching out to touch a rabbi in a crowd was an act of desperate courage that risked spreading her uncleanness to him, and Jesus' response rewrites her world.
- **Daniel 12:2 with 2 Kings 4:32-37.** Raising the dead belongs to God and to the age to come; Elisha raising the Shunammite's son is the closest precedent, and he must stretch himself over the child and pray at length. Jesus takes a hand and speaks two words in Aramaic. The contrast is the theology.

Voices of the Church

Voices of the Church: St. Gregory Nazianzen (Third Theological Oration)

Defending the full deity and full humanity of Christ, St. Gregory piles up the Gospel's paradoxes: he hungered, yet he fed thousands; he was wearied, yet he is the rest of the weary; he was heavy with sleep, yet he treads the waves and stills the wind and sea. Gregory's point is that we must not choose between the sleeping man and the sea-commanding Lord: the one Christ is both, true God and true man, and scenes like Mark 4 are where the Church learned to say so.

Voices of the Church: St. Peter Chrysologus (Sermons on the Gospel)

Preaching on the woman with the flow of blood, St. Peter Chrysologus marvels that she drew from the hem of a garment what twelve years of physicians could not supply: faith touched him whom the crowd only jostled. Many press against Christ, he observes, and receive nothing; one touches him in faith and power goes out. It is not proximity to holy things that heals, but the faith that reaches through them to the Lord himself.

Voices of the Church: St. Bede the Venerable (Commentary on Mark, on the raising of Jairus's daughter)

St. Bede lingers on the tenderness of the scene: the Lord takes the child by the hand, speaks to her in her own tongue, and then commands that she be given something to eat, proving the resurrection was no phantom and providing for her weakness. So, Bede teaches, Christ deals with every soul he raises from the death of sin: he takes it by the hand through his ministers, restores it with his word, and does not leave it without food, the nourishment of the Word and of the Sacrament, lest it faint on the way.

Catechism Connection

- **CCC 1116:** The sacraments are "powers that come forth" from the Body of Christ, ever-living and life-giving, language drawn directly from this scene and its parallels.
- **CCC 1503-1504:** Christ the physician: the sick try to touch him, "for power came forth from him and healed them all," and in the sacraments he continues to touch us.
- **CCC 994:** Jesus gives a sign and pledge of the resurrection by restoring some of the dead to life, announcing his own Resurrection, which is of another order.
- **CCC 1670-1673:** Sacramentals and the Church's ministry of blessing and deliverance; the Church continues to confront evil with Christ's authority.

Thread Watch

Thread Watch (leader only)

The Messianic Secret: MAJOR DEVELOPMENT: in Gentile Decapolis, Jesus commands proclamation (5:19-20), while back in Jewish territory he orders silence about the raising (5:43). The group should be allowed to catch this contrast; it strongly suggests the Secret is strategic, tied to Israel's political messianic expectations, not to shame or uncertainty. Sealed-guess watch: still no human confession of "Son of God"; the demoniac's "Son of the Most High God" (5:7) is another demonic near-spoiler, silenced by the narrative itself.

The Bread: Plants NEXT session. Note privately that Jesus tells them to give the raised girl something to eat (5:43); feeding follows raising in this Gospel's grammar.

Torn / The Way: Dormant this session.

Session Goals

1. Participants discover Psalm 107 and Job 38 themselves and can state why the storm-calming forces a divine identity question.
2. Participants can explain the Decapolis commission and what it reveals about the logic of the Secret.
3. Participants can articulate how the scene illumines embodied mediation, faith reaching through matter, and answer the superstition objection with the Church's fuller distinctions in view.
4. Participants can read Mark's sandwich technique and the two twelves.
5. Each participant identifies one "storm question" they will bring to Christ in prayer this week.

Time Note (90 Minutes)

Win 15 min | Build 55 min | Send 15 min | Closing prayer 5 min. **Pre-chosen cuts if running long:** compress question 2 (Jonah comparison) to a leader sentence and drop question 5 (the townspeople's fear), covering its point in one line. Do not cut the hemorrhaging woman sequence or the steelman.

Part 2: Discussion Guide

Opening Prayer

Leader: Lord Jesus, you are in the boat with us, even when you seem to be sleeping. Tonight, speak your peace to whatever is raging in us, and give us the courage of the woman who reached out, believing one touch would be enough. Amen.

Win (15 minutes)

1. Describe a moment when you were genuinely not in control, weather, illness, an accident, a diagnosis. What did it expose in you?
2. Is there a difference between being near someone and actually being in contact with them? When have you felt that difference?

Leader bridge: Tonight Mark lines up the four things nobody can control, chaos, evil, sickness, and death, and walks Jesus straight through all four. Keep asking the disciples' question with them: who then is this?

Build (55 minutes)

Read Mark 4:35-41 aloud.

1. **The storm (4:35-41). DISCOVERY: half the group look up Psalm 107:23-30, half look up Job 38:8-11. Read both aloud. In Israel's Scriptures, who stills seas, and what does that make of the disciples' question, "Who then is this, that even wind and sea obey him?"**

ANSWER (share after the discussion)

The sea in Scripture is chaos itself, and mastering it is God's signature: he shut it behind doors at creation, and in Psalm 107 storm-tossed sailors cry to the LORD, who "made the storm be still, and the waves of the sea were hushed." Mark has staged Psalm 107 in a Galilean fishing boat, and the disciples' question points where only the LORD stands, which none of them dares say out loud. Two details to savor: Jesus is asleep "on the cushion," a detail tradition delights to hear as an eyewitness's memory, truly human, truly exhausted; and his command "Be still" (*pephimoso*) is a cognate of the muzzling word he used on the demon in 1:25. He silences the sea the way he silences demons, an echo many hear as deliberate: behind the weather, the same war.

2. **There is one other Bible story with a prophet asleep in a storm while sailors panic. DISCOVERY: someone look up Jonah 1:4-6. Line up the parallels, then name the one great difference.**

ANSWER (share after the discussion)

Same staging: storm, boat, terrified sailors, a sleeping prophet awakened with a reproach. The difference is everything: Jonah must be thrown into the sea, a life given to still the waters, while Jesus stills them with a word of command. He is greater than Jonah, and yet, hold this thought gently, the day is coming in this Gospel when this Lord of the sea will also be the life handed over so that others survive the storm. Mark loves to let his echoes travel forward.

Read Mark 5:1-20 aloud.

3. **The Gerasene demoniac (5:1-20). Take inventory of verses 3-5: what has this man's existence become? And what does the name "Legion" tell a reader living under Rome?**

ANSWER (share after the discussion)

He lives among the tombs, already housed with the dead; no one can bind him; night and day he cries out and bruises himself with stones. This is what the enemy does with a human being when given room: isolation, self-destruction, a living death. "Legion" is a Roman military word, thousands of soldiers under one standard, so the man is occupied territory inside occupied territory. And notice the demons' posture before Jesus: they see him from afar, run, fall down, and beg. There is no battle scene; there is a surrender scene. The strong man of 3:27 is being bound and his house plundered, one captive at a time.

4. **The aftermath (5:14-17): the townspeople find their neighbor "sitting there, clothed and in his right mind, and they were afraid," and they beg Jesus to depart. Why would a healing frighten people more than a demoniac did?**

ANSWER (share after the discussion)

Because they had learned to live with the misery; it was horrifying but predictable, and it stayed out among the tombs. A power that can undo it is a power outside their control, and it just cost them a herd of pigs, holiness has economic consequences. People still make this trade: better a familiar dysfunction than a Lord who might rearrange everything. The gentle, searching question for the room: has there ever been a corner of your life where, honestly, you would rather Jesus stayed on the boat?

5. **Now the shock (5:18-20): the healed man begs to come with Jesus, and Jesus says no: "Go home to your friends, and tell them how much the Lord has done for you." After four chapters of "tell no one," why is THIS man commanded to proclaim, and what happens because he does?**

ANSWER (share after the discussion)

Location, location, location: this is the Decapolis, Gentile country, where there are no expectations of a political warrior-Messiah to ignite. Most interpreters read the silence commands as crowd-control rather than embarrassment or indecision: a truth Israel would misread until the cross reinterpreted it. Mark never spells out the reason, so hold this as the strongest available reading, not as defined teaching. Here the truth can run free, so Jesus commissions the Gospel's unlikely herald, a man with no theological training and a one-sentence testimony: what the Lord has done for me. "And all men marveled." Notice also what Jesus does with the man's request: he refuses the man's plan (come with you) and gives him a harder, better mission (go home, to the people who knew you at your worst). Sometimes "no" is the commissioning.

Read Mark 5:21-43 aloud.

6. **Mark wraps one story inside another: Jairus's dying daughter around the hemorrhaging woman, and he plants matching numbers: twelve years of bleeding, a twelve-year-old girl. First, DISCOVERY: someone look up Leviticus 15:19, 25-27. What has this woman's life been for twelve years, and what is she risking by touching him?**

ANSWER (share after the discussion)

Under the Law her chronic flow made her perpetually unclean, and everything she touched, bed, chair, person, carried the impurity (Leviticus 15:19-27). The social cost can be cautiously inferred: years without ordinary touch, exclusion from the sanctuary's worship, and Mark adds the

economic ruin: she "had spent all that she had" on physicians "and was no better but rather grew worse." Touching a rabbi in a crowd was therefore an act of desperate courage. She risks the last thing she owns, her anonymity, on the conviction that one touch would be enough. And Mark's twelves are winking at us: many wise readers, ancient and modern, hear in these two daughters a picture of Israel herself, the daughter of Zion, bleeding and dying, restored by the Messiah's touch. Hold that reading lightly, the Church has not defined it, but do not miss it.

7. **Verses 30-34: "perceiving in himself that power had gone forth from him," Jesus stops a life-and-death journey to ask "Who touched my garments?" He knows. Why does he insist on finding her, and what do his final words to her change?**

ANSWER (share after the discussion)

Because he refuses to let it end as an anonymous transaction. She sought a cure and a clean getaway; he insists on an encounter. Trembling, she tells him "the whole truth," and he gives her three things no garment could: a name, "Daughter," the only person in the Gospels he addresses that way, a public restoration, the whole crowd now knows she is clean and touchable, and a verdict: "your faith has made you well; go in peace." Grace came through the touch, but he will not let her believe the hem was magic; the power belongs to a Person who wanted her face, not just her healing. That is the difference between superstition and sacrament, and it sets up our steelman.

8. **STEELMAN, build it strong before you answer it. A Protestant friend watches Catholics touch relics, wear medals, and bring home holy water, and says: "This is exactly the superstition this woman started with, power in objects. Notice Jesus corrects her: YOUR FAITH has made you well, not my hem. God is spirit; grace does not travel through cloth and bones and water. That is magic thinking. And do not answer me with Paul's handkerchiefs or Elisha's bones. I grant those. They are sovereign acts of God recorded in Scripture, not a system anyone was authorized to reproduce. My question is the next one: who instituted this medal, this water, this bone as a channel of grace, and what actually keeps the woman lighting a candle for a lottery ticket from believing precisely what your own Catechism calls superstition?" Build the case honestly, then answer it from this scene plus three texts: Acts 19:11-12, Acts 5:15-16, and 2 Kings 13:21.**

ANSWER (share after the discussion)

Grant what is true: faith is essential, Jesus says so here; objects have no power of their own; and superstition, treating things as automatic grace-dispensers detached from God, is a real sin Catholics are warned against by their own Catechism (CCC 2111). Grant the second half too: the biblical cases are God's free acts, not a franchise, and the Church distinguishes sharply between the sacraments, which Christ instituted and which act by his power, and sacramentals, which the Church institutes and which dispose us to grace through the Church's intercession rather than by any power in the object. That distinction, not a denial of matter, is the actual Catholic answer to the charge of magic. Now look at what the text actually says: "power had gone forth from him", Mark states flatly that power passed through the garment; Jesus confirms the healing rather than correcting the means; and he attributes it to her faith, faith and material contact together, not faith instead of contact. Then watch the pattern refuse to die: God works "extraordinary miracles" through handkerchiefs and aprons that had touched Paul (Acts 19:11-12); the sick are laid out in the hope that even Peter's shadow might fall on them (Acts 5:15); a dead man revives on contact with Elisha's bones (2 Kings 13:21), relics, in the Old Testament. Why does God keep doing this? Because he made us embodied, and ever since the Word became flesh, matter has been his chosen delivery

system: water that regenerates, oil that heals, bread that becomes his Body. The sacraments, says the Catechism in language taken from this very scene, are "powers that come forth from the Body of Christ" (CCC 1116). So the Catholic answer is not "objects instead of faith" but exactly what the woman had: faith that reaches for the Lord through the material means he provides. The crowd pressed against him and received nothing; she touched him in faith and was healed. Proximity is not faith, and matter is not magic; but faith through matter is simply how the incarnate God likes to work.

9. **Back to Jairus (5:35-43). The message arrives: "Your daughter is dead. Why trouble the Teacher any further?" Jesus' response is the memory verse: "Do not fear, only believe." Walk the scene to the end: the laughter, the small circle, the Aramaic words, and the two commands afterward. What is Mark preserving for us?**

ANSWER (share after the discussion)

First, the interruption itself preaches: Jairus had to stand and wait, watching Jesus give his dying daughter's minutes to a nobody from the crowd, and in the delay the worst happened. Every believer eventually stands where Jairus stood, when God's pace feels like God's absence. "Do not fear, only believe" is spoken into exactly that moment. Second, the raising: professional mourners laugh at "the child is not dead but sleeping," and Jesus puts them all out; resurrection is not performed for scoffers. Then the Aramaic itself, preserved untranslated, a detail tradition loves to hear as Peter's ear-memory: *Talitha cumi*, "Little girl, I say to you, arise", so gentle it is barely a miracle-formula at all, a father waking his daughter for school. Compare Elisha, who had to stretch himself over the Shunammite's boy and pray at length (2 Kings 4): Jesus takes a hand and speaks. And then two utterly characteristic commands: tell no one (we are back in Jewish territory; the Secret resumes, notice the contrast with the Decapolis an hour ago), and "give her something to eat", the Lord of life worrying about a twelve-year-old's lunch. He raises; then he feeds. Keep that sequence in mind for next week.

Dig Deeper

Raising the dead is the outer edge of the impossible, and Mark will not let it become routine: this Gospel records exactly one raising, done in near-secrecy before five witnesses. The Catechism reads such miracles precisely: they are signs and pledges, real restorations to ordinary mortal life, announcing something of a different order entirely, the Resurrection, in which Christ does not return to this life but passes beyond death's reach and opens the way for us (CCC 994). Jairus's daughter would one day face death again; her raising was a promissory note. The empty tomb is the payment.

Send (15 minutes)

1. Name your storm question honestly: the situation where you have been asking, "Teacher, do you not care?" What would it mean this week to let him be in the boat, even asleep?
2. The woman touched him deliberately while the crowd jostled him accidentally. In your week, where are you jostling Christ, near him but not in contact, and what would one deliberate touch look like: a sacrament, a confession, real prayer?

Live It This Week

- Bring one storm to him deliberately: write your "do you not care?" question on paper, take it to a church, and pray Psalm 107:23-30 over it.
- Touch, do not jostle: get to Mass early enough to make one act of deliberate faith at Communion, the woman's prayer works: "If I touch even his garments, I shall be made well."
- Be the Decapolis man once this week: tell one person, plainly and briefly, one thing the Lord has done for you. No training required; that was the point.

Closing Prayer

Leader: Lord Jesus, wind and sea obey you, demons beg before you, disease dries up at your hem, and death itself lets go of a child's hand when you take it. Do not fear, only believe: speak that word into each of us now, and give us the faith that touches instead of the crowd that presses. Through Christ our Lord. Amen. (Together: one Our Father.)

Scripture Memory Verse

"Do not fear, only believe." (Mark 5:36, RSV2CE)

Part 3: Leader Reference Card

Primary text: Mark 4:35-5:43

Every passage used this session, in order:

- Mark 4:35-41 (the storm)
- Psalm 107:23-30 (the LORD stills the storm)
- Job 38:8-11 (God shuts in the sea)
- Jonah 1:4-6 (the sleeping prophet)
- Mark 1:25 (phimotheti, "be muzzled," leader background)
- Mark 5:1-20 (Legion; the Decapolis commission)
- Mark 3:27 (the strong man bound, leader background)
- Mark 5:21-34 (the hemorrhaging woman)
- Leviticus 15:25-27 (the woman's uncleanness)
- Acts 19:11-12; Acts 5:15-16; 2 Kings 13:21 (steelman chain: grace through material means)
- Mark 5:35-43 (Jairus's daughter raised)
- 2 Kings 4:32-37 (Elisha and the Shunammite's son)
- Daniel 12:2 (resurrection hope, leader background)
- CCC 994, 1116, 1503-1504, 1670-1673, 2111
- Memory verse: Mark 5:36