

Mark: The Mysterious Messiah

Week 9: Mark 4:35–5:15

Introductory Exercise. Should the U.S. government release photographs of the dead Osama bin Laden? Why or why not?

When this week's episode starts, the time and the location are significant. What things come across to a reader or a hearer in terms strictly of setting in Mark 6:35–36?

What is Jesus doing when the storm approaches? What verb does the text use to name his response, and what is odd about that verb? (Hint: look at Mark 1:25 for another instance, and keep your eyes open for future uses.)

What does Jesus's pair of rhetorical questions have to do with the disciples' reaction? Which other story that we've encountered involves that “faith” word, and how did it operate when it operated? What does Jesus seem to be implying about the way that the encounter with the angry sea went down?

What variations on the place-name do our translations feature in Mark 5:1? What does this man have in common with the first synagogue into which Jesus enters (1:21–23) in Mark? What do Mark 5:2–3 tell an attentive reader about the character of Gentiles in this particular version of the Jesus story? What Biblical echo would the first-century hearer have noticed in 5:6?

What does the unclean spirit's name have to do with what the people of Israel expect of their messiah, and what moves is Mark making to turn those expectations towards other realities? What does the spirit beg of Jesus, and how is that connected with popular ideas about the Christ? What is the magnitude of the demonic power that Jesus “allows” to enter the herd of swine? What big ideas happen symbolically in today's reading and an attentive first-century listener would have picked up on?