

### **Imitating Jesus: Fishing with Navy Seals**

With dozens of fishing shows on television these days, the producers have to come up with some clever ideas to attract viewers. For example, “extreme” fishing is now all the rage. Like the show “Off the Hook,” which features a former Canadian professional wrestler doing things like fishing for shark from a paddleboard. Or what about the show “Hillbilly Fishin” where grown men dive to the bottoms of rivers to catch giant catfish with their bare hands?

As wild as all that sounds, I don’t think it holds a candle to fishing for souls with Jesus Christ! In one 24-hour period, John Mark records that Jesus stopped a violent storm on the Sea of Galilee, performed an exorcism for two men who lived in a graveyard, healed a woman who had been hemorrhaging for 12 years and then, to top it off, brought a young girl who had died back to life. All in 24 hours! If you’re looking for adventure, I think you need Jesus as your tour guide!

Now, before we come to this table, let’s consider what it would be like to go fishing for souls with the spiritual Navy Seal, Jesus Christ. First, we must see that...

#### **I. His Authority Reveals His Identity.**

In our world of licenses and credentials and union rules, it seems like just demonstrating your competence is a thing of the past. It doesn’t matter if you can actually DO what you say you can do; what matters today is if you have the right credentials: “Do you have a license to do that?” When Jesus came into the world, He had no papers. He didn’t have a single note from His Father that said He had “permission” to heal the sick, raise the dead or cast out demons. He PROVED He had the authority by just doing it!

Have you seen the Pepsi commercial featuring Jeff Gordon, the NASCAR champion? He goes into a car dealer disguised as a mild-mannered mini-van driver interested in the new 2013 Camaro. The salesman thinks it would be a great idea to take him out on a little test drive. Watch this...

[ Jeff Gordon Test Drive Commercial – 2:45 to 3:46]

Jeff Gordon’s identity isn’t revealed by his credentials or his trophies. His identity as one of the best race car drivers in the world is revealed by his “authority” behind the wheel. Why did Jesus perform all the miracles that He did? Was He hoping people would pay Him something on the side? Was He hoping to become famous so He could open a restaurant there on the Sea of Galilee with a little sign that read, “Fresh Fish Multiplied Daily.” No, Jesus didn’t make a dime from any of His miracles. Then, why did He perform them? He did them to set people free from their enslavement to disease or Satanic power or sin AND, just as importantly, to show people who He was – the only Son of God. The Pharisees and teachers of the law were constantly asking Jesus, “Who gave you the authority to do this?” (Mk. 11:28) In Matt. 28:18 Jesus said:

**All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.**

The Greek word here is *ezousia*. It doesn't just mean authority like "ruling power." It also means "ability, might, capability." Jesus didn't come with an ID card that He flashed around, expecting people to bow down and worship Him. Jesus came with real ability to put evil and disease and even demonic power in its place. His authority is a demonstrated authority. In a single 24-hour period Jesus stilled a violent storm at sea, removed demons from two men, healed a sick woman and raised a young girl from the dead. Why did Mark tell us about this remarkable day? Because he wanted us to see Jesus' real identity – He was and IS the only Son of God. He has authority over every power and everything or person or being who thinks he has any form of authority over you. Do you understand that? Do you acknowledge His authority?

These four stories represent I think, the four things in this world that we are most afraid of. Do you see that?

Killer storms

Overpowering evil

Debilitating sickness

Death

Aren't those pretty much the "BIG FOUR" that most frighten us? What does this fifth chapter of Mark tell us about those four big fears? It tells us that there is an authority who has greater power than all four of them put together. His name is Jesus Christ and we see the evidence right here of His authority.

Of those four fears, which are you most afraid of? I think for me, it's the fear of evil taking over my life and controlling me. I mean, killer storms and debilitating sickness are frightening because they could lead to death, but for a Christian, death is the ultimate graduation. I'm transferred from a world under the curse of sin to a world where I will never have to worry or even think about sin again. But being overpowered by evil here – that's frightening. So, let me comment on that particular fear.

First, what does it mean to have an "evil spirit"? That's what verse 2 says this man had, an "evil spirit"? This is referring to a person whose will is under the control of a demon, a fallen angel. You must do what that spirit directs you to do. You are literally "overpowered" by the evil spirit.

How does this all begin? First of all, the Bible makes it clear that a Christian cannot be "overpowered" by a demon. Several verses make this clear. In I John 4, the apostle is talking about evil spirits and then he says:

**You, dear children, are from God and have overcome them, because the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world. (1 Jn. 4:4)**

And when Jesus sent out 70 of his followers, He said to them:

**I have given you authority... to overcome all the power of the enemy; nothing will harm you. (Luke 10:19)**

Walter Martin, an expert in what the Bible has to say about demon possession, puts it this way, "Once the Holy Spirit has taken up residence in the apartment of your soul, He will never allow it to be made into a duplex!" So, a true follower of Jesus Christ can never be under the control of a demon. We can be tempted, we can be influenced by demons, but with every temptation, God will

always provide a “way of escape” (I Cor. 10:13). So, if you’re a follower of Jesus Christ, this can’t happen to you!

So, this means that the only people who CAN become demon-possessed are non-Christians. How does that happen? The Bible says that demons, at the direction of Satan, are constantly trying to control people by tempting them to embrace evil. You can be possessed by an evil spirit in the same way a person becomes addicted to a drug – it happens gradually, one sin at a time. Far from being against our will, demons appear to take control by invitation. James gives the classic description of how we invite evil into our lives:

**...each one is tempted when, by his own evil desire, he is dragged away and enticed. Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death. (James 1:14-15)**

Speaking of Satan, Jesus said that he came only to “...steal, kill and destroy.” (John 10:10) By just living as a non-Christian then, you are “open game” for a demon to overpower you.

Matthew also records Jesus’ encounter with the demon-possessed man in the graveyard, but he says there were two men. The man Mark describes is clearly in the worse condition. As Jesus speaks to the man, the demons respond. They tell Jesus that their “...name is legion... for we are many.” A legion of Roman soldiers could be as many as 6,000! Can you imagine the tortured existence this man was leading? He’d lost everything – his health, his family, his home, his dignity – and he had almost lost his life. But then Jesus showed up. And because of Jesus’ authority, which flowed from His identity, when He said, “Get out!” the demons had to leave.

Are people demon-possessed today? Yes. Isn’t it the same thing as mental illness? No, it’s not. It can look like mental illness but it is decidedly different. Matt. 4:24 lists demon possession and mental illness as two different conditions. If you try to treat demon possession as mental illness, it won’t be healed. Only the authority of Jesus can free a person from this cruel slavery.

Many years ago, when Liz and I were on a mission trip in Medellin, Colombia, we met a man who had been delivered from demon possession. It had happened the night before. The Christians who prayed in the name and authority of Jesus for his deliverance said that, when the demon left him, it literally took off like a rocket and blew a hole in the roof. We didn’t witness the exorcism, but we did see the hole in the roof and we met the man who had been delivered. He was now clean, calm and very thankful.

Why did Jesus perform these four miracles here in Mark 4 and 5 and why does He still do them today? He is revealing His true identity by demonstrating His authority. Secondly, we must see that...

## **II. His Authority Reveals His Charity**

In older English translations of the Bible, the Greek word *agape* (which modern versions translate as “love”) is translated by the word “charity.” To be charitable is to “*relieve the needs of someone who would otherwise be helpless.*” Do you understand how appropriate that word is in describing our situation in regards to the four fears Jesus was dealing with in these miracles? Without Christ we all would be helpless against killer storms, overpowering evil, debilitating sickness and death. On our own, we are most helpless against any of those. No wonder we live in

fear of them! But Jesus' authority is more powerful and He proves here in Mark 4 and 5 that He can control or reverse the effects of any and all of them.

Now, we need to jump ahead just a bit because we need to see what Jesus does with His incredibly important and powerful authority. In Mark 6, it says:

**Then Jesus went around teaching from village to village. Calling the Twelve to him, he sent them out two by two and gave them authority over evil spirits. (Mark 6:6-7)**

Would you do that? If God the Father gave you a special ability, a special gift, a special authority, would you share it with others? If God gave you a credit card with His name on it, would you give it to a friend, trusting that he would only use it to help meet the needs of people who were otherwise totally helpless? Would you?

Actually, do you understand that this IS what Jesus has done? In Matt. 28:18 Jesus said:

**All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples... (Matt. 28:18-19a)**

In Luke 10, Jesus says:

**The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field. Go! I am sending you out like lambs among wolves... Heal the sick who are there and tell them, "The kingdom of God is near you." (Lk. 10:2-3, 9)**

How do you respond to that? Yeah, I know, it sounds like someone inviting you to go join the Navy Seals! And, in a way, it is! But there's a difference. The Navy can't put the spirit of a Navy Seal into you, but Jesus can. If you're His follower, He already has!

"But," you might ask, "Pastor, are you saying that Jesus wants me to still the storms and raise the dead?" Here's what I know – He's giving you the opportunity to work in His name, under His authority. He's saying, "Go represent Me to a world of people who right now are being deceived and tricked and tempted by demons. Go find out exactly what they need and then come talk to Me about it." Couldn't we all do that?

And what's the likely outcome? Well, He already gave us a clue, didn't He? He said it'd be war! We're going out like lambs among wolves. So, what chance do we have? Well, we have nothing to fear and everything to gain because Jesus has already demonstrated that His authority can blow the wolves away!

There's a great country song that reminds me how this war should be fought and won. The words go like this:

*Satan knew my grandma well, He could hear her prayers clear down in hell.  
He'd get so mad he'd burn himself, Satan knew my grandma well.  
He tried his best to test her faith, He sent grandpa to his grave.  
And he talked her into blaming herself, Satan knew my grandma well.*

*With a Bible for her sword and shield, She fought him on the battlefield,  
Kneeled down beside her bed.  
For hours on that tear stained floor, 'Till he couldn't take anymore,  
He even prayed to hear her say amen.*

*Satan knew my grandma well, he could hear her prayers clear down in hell.  
She made him wish he'd never fell, Satan knew my grandma well.  
I was 6 years old in Sylvan Park, Satan tried to get me in his car.  
But he sped away when he heard her yell, Satan knew my grandma well.  
With a Bible for her sword and shield, she fought him on the battlefield  
Kneeled down beside her bed.  
For hours on that tear stained floor, 'Til he couldn't take it anymore  
he even prayed to hear her say amen.  
Satan sighed with great relief, the day that grandma got her wings  
And she's somewhere she can finally rest, Satan knew my grandma well –  
But Jesus knows my grandma best!<sup>i</sup>*

When Jesus sent His disciples out He said to them, “Take nothing for the journey except your staff – no bread, no bag, no money...” Just go! I’m sending you with My name, My authority. That’s all you’re gonna need. Go find out what the people need and then tell them, “My protection from the powers of this world is available if you will receive My grace and mercy.” Tell them that if they want My grace, all they need to do is ask for it.

“If you will do this,” Jesus says, “Satan will take notice. He will get to know who you are. But do not be afraid because I will always know you best!”

Let’s pray...

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<sup>i</sup> “Satan Knew My Grandma Well,” lyrics by Monday & Wallin, sung by The Grascals