Session Two

Jesus shows us God’s new world

1. You are in charge of the world for one day. You have time to make three changes. What three things about the world would you change?

Last session we saw how God promised to transform the world into a place of joy and peace by putting his son at the centre of things. That promise is at the heart of the Christian gospel (= good news).

The world we all long for: it might seem too good to be true. But there was a time when we got a taste of it. Let’s take a look at these snapshots from the life of Jesus. They were written down by Mark, one of Jesus’ first followers.

BIBLE READING: Mark, chapter 4, verses 35-41

That day when evening came, Jesus said to his disciples, “Let’s go over to the other side of the lake.” Leaving the crowd behind, they took him along, just as he was, in the boat. There were also other boats with him. A furious wind came up, and the waves broke over the boat so that it was nearly swamped. Jesus was in the stern, sleeping on a cushion. The disciples woke him up and said, “Teacher, don’t you care if we drown?

Jesus got up, told off the wind and said to the waves, “Silence! Be quiet!!” Then the wind died down and it was completely calm.

He said to his disciples, “Why are you so afraid? Do you still have no faith?”

They were terrified and asked each other, “Who is this man? Even the wind and the waves obey him!”

2. Why do you think Jesus’ disciples were more afraid after the storm stopped?

BIBLE READING: Mark chapter 5, verses 1-20

Jesus and his disciples went across the lake to the region of the Gerasenes. When Jesus got out of the boat, a man possessed by an evil spirit came from the tombs towards him. This man lived in the tombs, and no one could tie him up anymore, not even with a chain. For he had often been chained hand and foot, but he tore the chains apart and broke the irons on his feet. No one was strong enough to control him. Night and day, among the tombs and in the hills, he would cry out and cut himself with stones.

When he saw Jesus from a distance, the man ran and fell on his knees in front of him. He shouted at the top of his voice, “What do you want with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? In God’s name don’t torture me!” For Jesus had said to him, “Come out of this man, you evil spirit!”

Then Jesus asked him, “What is your name?”

“My name is Legion,” he replied, “for we are many.” And he begged Jesus again and again not to send them out of the area. A large herd of pigs was feeding on the nearby hills. The demons begged Jesus, “Send us into the pigs, and we will enter
them.” He gave them permission, and the evil spirits came out and went into the pigs. The herd, about two thousand pigs, rushed down the steep bank into the lake and were drowned. Those tending the pigs ran off and reported this in the town and countryside, and the people went out to see what had happened. When they came to Jesus, they saw the man who had been possessed by the legion of demons, sitting there, dressed and in his right mind; and they were afraid. Those who had witnessed the event told the people what had happened to the demon-possessed man—and told about the pigs as well. Then the people began to plead with Jesus to leave their region.

As Jesus was getting into the boat, the man who had been demon-possessed begged to go with him. But Jesus did not let him. He said, “Go home to your own people and tell them how much the Lord has done for you, and how he has had mercy on you.” So the man went away and began to tell in the Decapolis region how much Jesus had done for him. And all the people were amazed.

3. Why do you think this man begged to go with Jesus?

BIBLE READING: Mark, chapter 5, verses 21-43

When Jesus had again crossed over by boat to the other side of the lake, a large crowd gathered around him while he was by the lake. Then one of the synagogue leaders named Jairus came up, and seeing Jesus he fell at his feet. Jairus pleaded earnestly with him, “My little daughter is dying. Please come and put your hands on her so that she will be healed and live.” So Jesus went with him.

A large crowd followed and pressed around him. And a woman was there who had been afflicted with bleeding for twelve years. She had suffered a great deal under the treatment of many doctors, and had spent all she had. Yet instead of getting better she grew worse.

When she heard about Jesus, she came up behind him in the crowd and touched his cloak. She was thinking, “If I just touch his clothes, I will be healed.” Immediately her bleeding stopped and she felt in her body that she was freed from her suffering.

At once Jesus realized that power had gone out from him. He turned around in the crowd and asked, “Who touched my clothes?” “You see the people crowding against you,” his disciples answered, “How can you ask, ‘Who touched me?’” But Jesus kept looking around to see who had done it. Then the woman, realising what had happened to her, came and fell at his feet. Trembling with fear, she told Jesus the whole story. He said to her, “Daughter, your faith has healed you. Go in peace and be freed from your suffering.”

While Jesus was still speaking, some people came from the house of Jairus, the synagogue leader. “Your daughter is dead,” they said. “Why bother the teacher anymore?”

Overhearing what they said, Jesus told him, “Don’t be afraid; just believe.”

He did not let anyone follow him except Peter, James and John the brother of James. When they came to the home of the synagogue leader, Jesus saw a commotion, with people crying and wailing loudly. He went in and said to them, “Why all this commotion and wailing? The child is not dead but asleep.” But they laughed at him.

After he put them all out, he took the child’s father and mother and the disciples who were with him, and went in where the child was. He took her by the hand and said to her, “Talitha koum!” (which means “Little girl, I say to you, get up!”). Immediately the girl stood up and began to walk around. Her parents were completely astonished. He gave strict orders not to let anyone know about this, and told them to give her something to eat.
4. Jesus told the girl’s father, ‘Don’t be afraid, just believe.’ What do you think he meant?

In the Bible you can also read how Jesus fed thousands of hungry people with a kid’s lunch (Mark 6:33-44). And how he defeated death itself when he came alive again out of the grave (Luke 24:1-6). There is a power in Jesus that brings radical change, reversing the troubles of our world.

Last session we saw how God promised a new world with his son at the centre. Now in Jesus’ life we’ve had a taste of it. It’s as though a curtain was pulled back and we were given a glimpse of that world.

The message of the gospel is that Jesus is God’s son – the one he promised to send us. Only Jesus can make the world new. Where he is, there is the world we all want.

Next week: Can’t we make a better world ourselves?

Further reading:
You might like to read some more stories of the changes Jesus brought into people’s lives:

Mark chapter 1, verses 40-45
Mark chapter 2, verses 1-17
Mark chapter 6, verses 30-46