

Journey's End

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Preacher: Ian MacRae

[0 : 0 0] to turn back to the portion that we read in the gospel of mark and i would like to think about some of the elements that we find there but as a focal point we'd like to take verse 35 of mark chapter 4. mark chapter 4 verse 35 on the same day when evening had come he said to them let us cross over to the other side let us cross over to the other side well we all know because of where we live what it's like to have to cross the sea to cross water to get somewhere and particularly here in scotland also you have lived here for a long time before the bridge that was always the case and while he was on earth jesus was also very familiar with traveling in this way he crossed the sea of galilee on numerous occasions and here we have one of these times recorded for us and it comes at the end of a busy intense day because jesus has spent the day on the western shore of the sea of galilee and he's been teaching a huge crowd mark tells us in chapter 4 a part we didn't read that this is when he used the parable of the sower and mark mentions three other parables in that chapter that christ used that day but he also tells us in verse 33 that with many such parables he spoke the word to them see mark has told us everything that jesus said in this sermon he's just given us a brief selection and not only has jesus been teaching the crowd in that way he's also spent time with his disciples explaining the meaning of the parables that they've heard and he's explaining it to them in a special in an individualized way and this i'm sure would have been a long lesson because mark tells us that he explained everything to his disciples and when evening comes jesus tells the disciples to get into a boat and that they're going to cross the sea of galilee and go to the other side of course whilst they're on the sea that evening the storm comes up the disciples are terrified jesus is asleep as a result of his exertions that day and he's woken up by the disciples he calms the storm he challenges them for their lack of faith and then the next day the next morning he's here in the land of the gatherings of the gerasenes and he meets legion and he heals him from his demon possession this is part of christ's ministry that i'm sure most of you are very familiar with i want to think about this pivotal statement at the end of verse 35 let us cross over to the other side and try to see how it's relevant to the lord's work how it was relevant to his work when he was on earth 2000 years ago and how it's relevant to his ongoing work today so here we have a journey and it's a journey from the western shore of the sea of galilee to the eastern shore and although it's a relatively short journey geographically it's an epic journey culturally and spiritually the jews at the time and i think still even to this day refer to the eastern shore of the sea of galilee as the other side and the reason for that is because it's where the gentiles lived and of course the jews and the gentiles had little or no dealings with each other one side of galilee is jewish the other side it was greek or roman depending on what was going on in history and notice as well

verse 20 of chapter 5 the last uh the last verse that we read legion goes into uh decapolis now uh the av and the new king james both say decapolis other versions like the esv if anyone's using that it says the decapolis and the decapolis is a much clearer translation and the reason for that is because of the meaning of the meaning of decapolis decapolis means 10 cities deca like we have a decade or decathlon paulus for cities for city and when we read it in the av or anything james it sounds like one place but it actually means 10 cities and it refers to 10 cities that were on the eastern side of the sea of galilee from the city of damascus in the north down to the city of philadelphia in the south and most of these cities are in what's now the country of jordan so the decapolis these 10 cities they are on the other side in many ways they're literally on the other side of the sea of galilee from the jews it's a place where the god of the jews isn't recognized or worshiped it's a place that isn't being oppressed by the romans at this time like the jews well it has different languages and cultures and political statuses to israel it is a very different life to the life that the jews knew on their side of the sea of galilee so let's try things to look at jesus's journey to the other side in three ways firstly in the literal sense that we have here in the gospel of matt and then in two metaphorical ways so firstly we have the journey from galilee to gather the journey from galilee to gather well why is it significant that jesus goes to the other side from galilee to gather at this time the jews have said live on one shore the gentiles on the other the jews see it very much as on them never the twin shall meet situation and they even believe that just going to the other side just setting foot on gentile land is going to cause them to be unclean according to the according to the law so jesus making this journey will have been scandalous amongst the pharisees especially you can almost imagine them hearing about it and gossiping to each other can you believe what's going on here this man he says he's a rabbi he says he's a teacher and he's gone voluntarily he's gone to the gentiles how could this how could this happen but jesus has work to do among the gentiles and surely friends this is him paving the way for the gospel going out to everybody not just being limited to the jews as it had been till now yes as paul wrote later on the gospel was to the jew first but it was also to the greek to the gentile to the foreigner so here is christ establishing this principle of the gospel being for everyone but more than that we see that jesus has work to do in gather up and the work he has to do his work that shows him for who he really is because as soon as he steps off the boat on the eastern shore of the sea of galilee he's met by this man legion and this is no ordinary meeting between two ordinary men this is a meeting between a man who is also god on the one hand and a man who is so much under the control of satan that he's not just possessed by adamon he's possessed by so many that they even define his name and his character now a roman legion at the time

would have had something like four thousand soldiers in their ranks and we know that around two thousand of the pigs were driven off the cliff by the demons so it's possible that this man was possessed by that sort of number of demons isn't that a horrific thought to think of being possessed by so many that they're pretty much a legion like a legion in the roman army well these demons they are destroying this man's life he's an outcast his neighbors are afraid of him he's living like an animal amongst the tombs nothing can be done to control him even when they've managed to get him hold him and chain him up he's been given the supernatural strength to smash the chains to pieces and he must have been an awful sight he must have looked wild with his hair and his his clothes no doubt dirty and torn shredded his his nails would have been long his he would have been bruised he would have been cut because he was harming himself he would have looked a terrible fright a terrible sight for anyone and he's been living this way for years on his own without anyone coming close to him because they're too scared but here this morning he's face to face with jesus now we often picture jesus as this soft timid man almost somebody that you would feel sorry for if you saw him and i think that's one of the great problems with religious art one of the reasons i think that we shouldn't make images of christ because we have no idea what he looks like but when you see these images whether they're in maybe in stained glass windows in church or whatever it might be they always portray this man who looks soft and weak well friends i don't believe for a second that that's the kind of person that jesus was because he certainly wasn't timid when he chased the traders out of the temple when all they wanted to do was make money he certainly wasn't soft when he was being scourged and beaten by the roman soldiers and there's nothing puttieable about him here as he meets this demon-possessed man this man who is a terror to the people in his town and the villages right about the people who have known him all his life the people who won't go anywhere near him and jesus is standing face to face with this man on the shore of the sea of galilee but even more than that while he stands face to face with this man region he's also standing face to face with hundreds or thousands of demons lined up against him demons who hate him demons who want to destroy him demons who want to stop him from completing his mission and as he stands there that morning facing legion and facing these demons the lord jesus christ destroys them all defeats them all and by the end of the story they have nothing they have no control they have no power they have no influence they're thrown out of this man the man is returned to his senses and then the strangest thing happens the people have gathered here what's happened and they gather together and they come to the shore and they come to meet jesus and what do they say my goodness jesus this is incredible how does anyone have the power to throw out these demons and to heal this man no well jesus you've shown you're powerful these are my needs can you help me with my problems today

will you stay no will you stay with us will you try to explain what this power is all about will you try to explain what has just happened to legion and where these demons have gone no what do they say they come to him and say we don't know who you are we don't know anything about you but please leave our country please just leave us alone and go back where you came from you know people often say and maybe you've said it yourself well i'm not a christian but you know if i met jesus that would change everything if jesus walked in the door this day of course i'd believe of course i'd give my life to them that's not the case friends these gatherings had him faced to put face to face with them they saw his power firsthand and they said go away we don't want anything to do with you here is the savior of the world the great miracle worker visiting gather up against all logic against all jewish protocol and tradition and they can't wait to get rid of them can you believe that it's a tragic situation but you know there's a more tragic situation than that here in scarpe today because if you aren't a christian today you're just the same as them you're telling him he's not welcome in your life you're telling him you want nothing to do with him and you're telling him just leave me alone and go back where you came from and it's even worse because you don't have an excuse that they had you see they knew nothing of this jesus all they knew of him was that legion was healed they couldn't control him even with chains they lived their lives in fear of him no doubt they grew up with stories about this wild man in the truums and don't go near him and now all of a sudden he's sitting here saying and healed and in his right mind and they can't understand what is going on they're used to him they're used to him they've been used to him all their lives in his normal state of possession and they can kind of understand that they can't understand this but friends you know all about this jesus you know all about what he does you know all about how he heals people and how he forgives people and how he deals with people's sins you've seen it in action in your own community in your own congregation probably in your own families and you're still telling him to go back where he came from and leave you alone well you might not have a legion of demons controlling your life but sin controls your life and here here in the gospel is the only one who can free you from that group and not control well don't reject them like these pure ignorant gatherings accept him like legion well despite their rejection of him jesus doesn't reject the gatherings what does he do legion asks for permission to follow jesus back to galilee but the lord has a greater calling forum he says go home to your friends and tell them how much the lord has done for you

and how he has had mercy on you well we mentioned a few minutes ago that christ's journey across the sea of galilee was establishing the principle of reaching the gentiles with the gospel and here he is immediately building on that foundation here he is sending legion out as a missionary amongst his own people and he is to spread the word of the great things that jesus has done for him and he has to tell them about the mercy that jesus showed him and we can be sure that his work was blessed by god and that it led to sinners of the decapolis in these 10 gentile cities being saved what doesn't this principle still apply to you and me christian friend shouldn't you and i be telling our friends and our family and our colleagues whether it's with our words or with our actions the way we live our lives shouldn't we be telling them about what god has done for us should we be showing that we are different because of what he's done for us has he done great things in your life has he shown you mercy well share it follow legion's lead well one more thing to mention about jesus's journey from one side of the sea to the other and that's that nothing is going to stop him from getting to the other side do you think it's a coincidence that this storm this violent storm rises up on the sea of galilee where jesus is making his way from the jews to the gentiles well of course it's not people ask if the devil has power over the elements even over the wind and the sea now i was told recently about this uh an old minister i think it was angus smith said at one point that he believed that the storm was from the devil because if it had been from god jesus would not have rebuked it but one thing's for sure that storm was something which could have stopped him from getting across the sea but of course he's not going to let anything stop him and although jesus is in control right throughout the storm surely the storm represents the opposition that those who spread the gospel face in their work satan would have been delighted if jesus hadn't got across the sea he'd have been delighted if the gospel hadn't reached gather up but jesus is determined to do it to bring his good news of salvation to gather up and beyond and praise the lord friend for that well this is a real journey that takes place but i think it represents two other journeys as well so we have the journey from galilee to gather up and secondly we've got the journey from glory to god now it's sometimes hard for us to think of god as being eternal as not having a beginning or an end in a sense i think it's easier to think of him never having an end but thinking of god never having a beginning is very difficult to get our heads around because we can't understand something not having a beginning we had a beginning and everything we know had a beginning so in a way the greatest journey that was ever undertaken was the journey that the son of god took which began in heaven and ended at god god now it didn't really end but you know what i mean by that i think this is the strangest of journeys but it is the most important of journeys and it is the ultimate example of crossing to the other side how well christ's journey from glory to golgotha meant that he left the riches of heaven that that

[20 : 26] is by eternal life for the poverty of a soon-filled woman imagine this now a king or a queen leaving a palace someone who's lived in a palace or a castle with luxury and riches and wealth and comfort all their lives and they choose to leave that castle that palace leave it all behind and they go to live in a slum and you've all seen on the tv these images of slums and some of the great huge cities of the world places like delhi or mumbai or rio the shanty towns these places where people live in shacks and there's no running water and there's no electricity and there's no sanitation and there's a constant risk of disease and of danger and there would be a complete understatement to say that this would be a culture shock for this king or queen to go from the palace to the slum the extremes are massive the friends the extremes that jesus experienced are even further apart than that because he's always existed he's always reigned on the throne of heaven he's always had complete power and authority as the creator of the universe but when he came to earth he gave all that and the one who was eternal no beginning and no end he took a body that would die and the omnipotent god who had the power to do to do anything that was within his will became a helpless baby depending on others to look after him and care for him and the one who was perfect in and of himself suffered and died on earth can you think of greater extremes and circumstance why they don't exist surely they don't exist but you know this journey is a journey that didn't have to take place do you think that the son of god had to come into the world or that god felt that he had to give humanity a second chance after adam sinned or that god had to provide a way of salvation to increase his own happiness even well the answer to all these questions is no god was not obliged to provide a way of salvation he's always been totally satisfied totally glorified in and of himself and in a sense nothing can add to his happiness or his glory and god is righteous or just use another word and his justice must be satisfied and friends that means that if every man woman and child sins and is condemned to hell for eternity as a result of their sin god's justice would be satisfied because that is the penalty for sitting against god we often hear that there's nothing god cannot do that's not true one of the things that god can't do is he can't forgive sin in a vacuum now what i mean by that is that he can't simply decide well i think i'm going to pardon such and such a person just because because if he did that the principles of his justice would be violated his justice wouldn't be satisfied and he would cease to be god so what's the solution if he can't simply pardon sin because his justice gets in the way as it were how can anyone be saved well the answer friends is a glorious one that although god is righteous he is also merciful his justice demands punishment it demands satisfaction and must and it will have it

but god chose to show mercy not because he had to but because he wanted to and the way in which he showed mercy was by sending his own son into the world to suffer and die instead of his own son of sinners to pay the penalty so that his justice would be satisfied his justice is satisfied and it allows him to show mercy someone put it something like this god is righteous and he is a savior but these things are mutually exclusive god's justice will not allow him to save without something happening we have to see calvary between god's justice and god's salvation john piper says this god the father makes an agreement with god the son that the son will demonstrate to all the world the infinite worth of the father's glory by taking the punishment and suffering that our sin desire what did that punishment and suffering involve well of course it ultimately involved the cross and everything immediately leading up to the cross but it involved more than that it involved putting aside his divine attributes whilst he was on earth it involved being hated by the religious and political leaders of his day it involved being forsaken by his father he left behind everything that he knew everything that was his by right everything that he enjoyed in heaven this idea had always been on to come to our side it is incredible to think of god coming here as a man for our sakes not his own yet that's what happened and just as jesus here in mark crosses the sea of galilee so he crosses the great gulf between god and us the impassable chasm caused by sin so that we can have a relationship with him and although it was for our benefit for yours and mine if we believe that he made this journey we're not the only ones satisfied as a result isaiah tells us in these well-known words of isaiah 53 that it pleased the lord to prove him and that christ shall see of the travel of his soul and shall be satisfied god the father god the son and god the holy spirit they look at this great journey from glory to golgotha and they're praised piper tells this story he says once there was a land ruled by a wicked prince he'd come from a foreign country and he enslaved all the people of the land and made them miserable with hard labor in his mines across the deep canyon he built a massive bridge for the trains that carried the slaves across the canyon to the mines each morning and it was heavily guarded two men were still free in this kingdom one world and the other young they lived on an inaccessible cliff where we're looking the bridge and they hated this bridge for what it represented at last they resolved together to blow it up and to destroy the slave labor of the enemy prince they planned and they prayed and the night came when the deed would be done their hearts were pounding with joy it was a hard plan but it would be possible to tie the track of the guard so that the explosive could be carried quickly to the vulnerable spot in the middle of the bridge but there would be no time for the carrier of the explosives to return it was certain that he would be seen that he tried and the plan would be foiled so to make sure the bridge blew up the two men agreed that the young men

would detonate it by hand in the middle of the bridge and he would blow up with it but they believed in heaven and they loved the people of the land and so the honor of the sacrifice made their hearts leap with joy they ever came they folded up the map of their plan they stood from the table and they embraced each other and when the young man got to the door he turned with the explosives strapped to his back he looked at the old man and he said i love you father and the old man took a deep breath with joy and said i love you too sacrifice sacrifice and pleasure brought about from love but the journey from glory to Golgotha was a long a hard journey to the other side but it was a journey that was made with love and joy on the part of the father on the part of the son a journey that was made for your sake and for mine now the journey from galilee to gather the journey from glory to Golgotha and finally and briefly the journey from galilee to scape and galilee to scape when we see that jesus goes into the land of the galileans he sends legion into the cities of his own land with the gospel of course this is a rare trip into gentile territory throughout the old testament and the early part of the new it's fairly rare to find a believer who isn't a miscreant or a jew they were god's chosen people they were particularly blessed by god and cared for by god and they were given a unique insight about the coming messiah they knew or they should have known at least through the sacrifices and the temple worship that a savior was coming and that he was coming to them but although the good news was generally restricted to this small nation that wasn't always to be the case there was another going across to the other side to come and that is jesus and the gospel coming to the entire world jesus tells legion to spread the good news of the gospel in the decapolis later on in chapter 5 he didn't read this but he tells jesus and his family and others as well to say nothing about what they've seen about his miraculous works in galilee and judea but we should be so grateful friends that his final message to the disciples is more like what he said to legion than what he said to jesus go therefore and make disciples of all nations baptizing them in the name of the father and of the son and of the holy spirit teach them to observe all that i have commanded you well god in his mercy devised a way of salvation a way for you and i to be saved that's something that he didn't have to do christ in whose love and mercy came from heaven to earth as a man something he didn't have to do and whilst he was on earth he crossed the sea of galilee he went to gadara he healed the demon-possessed man he sent him to his hometown his hometowns as a missionary things he didn't have to do but things that came about as a result of his mercy and over the past two thousand odd years he has been doing what he didn't have to do sending the good news of the gospel out right across the world and the disciples took on the work of spreading the gospel to the gentiles the apostles carried it on after them and it's been carried on through the centuries in various ways

god's used great events like the reformation to further his cause and friends he even saw food to bring the gospel to our own highlands to our tiny specks of rock in the ocean to our own homes isn't that incredible but we've left out what i think is the most important part of the lord's instruction to the disciples it's not just that he tells them to preach the gospel in every nation but he promises i am with you always to the end of the age you see he's not just here promising to be with the eleven disciples who heard him say this he's promising to be with whoever preachers whoever spreads the gospel wherever they are and whoever they do it whether it's somebody standing in a pulpit here or whether it's somebody sharing their faith by the way that they live in their own home in their own family in their own community he's promising to be with the gospel wherever it is preached because of course friends he is the gospel he is the good news without christ even the gospel would be worthless well that journey that began in galilee has seen the lord jesus arrive in this community he's here in the gospel not because he has to be but because he wants to be why does he want to be here in the gospel here and with us in scotland today so that you and i friend can believe on him so that we can have our sins forgiven so that we can enjoy that endless eternity in heaven with him it's a well-used cliché that life is a journey but it's true life is a journey and there are only two possible destinations and this one final leg of the journey to make at the very end of life when you have to cross over to the other side of death we never know when we're going to be called to make that final journey and we've seen in our islands over the last few days the amount of sudden deaths we're going to be called to make that journey i don't think so but what if you are called to make that journey today what if you were brought to the point where you stood on the banks of the river of death what's on the other side for you what's waiting for you is it hell is it the place that was prepared for the devil and his demons including those thousands that christ cast out of region what is it heaven is christ himself waiting to greet you and to take you into his kingdom that glorious kingdom that he voluntarily left behind for a while to come to earth and suffer and die so that you could join in there forever more

which is it christ made all these journeys whether real or metaphorical for you and me for everyone in their communities for everyone around the world he didn't have to do that but you have to make a choice for yourself you have to make a choice do you accept what he's offering or do you carry on saying not interested go back to where you came from and when it comes to that last journey i'll just take my chances but friend don't do that accept him in the same amazing way that he heals legion he can heal you from your thumbs and every other element and then you will be ready for that journey whenever the call comes next day again and do you