

MIRACLES

Mark 5

With all the younger children the emphasis in this lesson may well be on the Lord's statement, "The damsel is not dead, but sleepeth." The fact that all our life is from the Lord, that it does not depend on our bodies, but goes on forever, no matter what happens to the body, should be impressed upon a child as early as he is able to think about death at all. In all the miracles of our lesson also it is very clear that the one for whom the miracle was performed had full faith in the Lord's power to heal. In one case it was an outcast, in another a rich and powerful man who had this faith; in the third it was a poor woman. So belief in the Lord is not a matter of outward conditions, and it was not the miracle which produced faith. This applies to all our efforts to overcome our faults. We must believe that with the Lord's help we can overcome them, or we shall not make the necessary effort. Parents find even very young children falling back on "I can't" when they are asked to pick up their toys or do some other orderly or helpful thing.

Doctrinal Points

The Lord is truly "the resurrection and the life."

We cannot now be "possessed" by evil spirits against our will.

Notes for Parents

Have you ever said to one of your children, "I don't know what is the matter with you today; you just seem possessed"? We say it of ourselves, too, sometimes, when we have let temper or resentment get the better of us: "I don't know what possessed me to act that way." We know really what possessed our child, or us: it was the devil, which is just another name for the influence of evil in

our hearts and minds. Have you ever felt that someone you loved very much who had passed into the other life was near you giving you a feeling of comfort and help? The spiritual world is not somewhere far off. It is around us all the time and close to our minds and hearts. But there are both good and bad people there, and both try to influence us. We are free to choose our spiritual companions, sometimes much freer than we are to choose our earthly ones. This is because the Lord, when He was in the world, conquered the hells and set them in order under His control, and He does not let them tempt us beyond our power to resist if we choose to resist. He keeps us free. But at the time when He came into the world, it was possible for evil spirits to possess a person against his will. Part of the lesson the children have for today is about such a person. It is a powerful story which gives us a great deal to think about.

The rest of the lesson tells of two other miracles: of a woman who was healed by just touching the Lord's garments, and of a child—the daughter of one of the rulers of the Jews—whom the Lord raised from the dead. The Lord is life itself, and all life and health are from Him. And none of us ever really dies. He said of the child, "The damsel is not dead, but sleepeth." He woke her again in this world. When we go to sleep for the last time, He wakes us in the other world.

The Lord performed all His miracles to teach us of things He is able to do for our souls if we are willing to believe in Him and obey Him. The choice is ours.

Primary

The older children should be able to take all three stories, although the most time should be spent on the raising of Jairus' daughter. The Lord's power to help and the necessity of faith in it and of going to Him for help will coordinate the lesson. The lesson contained in verse 39 is the most important one.

What were the three parts of the Lord's ministry?

Who were the scribes and Pharisees?

Which disciple was a publican or tax gatherer?

What did the Lord say about new wine?

What did He mean?

What did He say about the sabbath?

Our lesson today is about miracles.

Do you remember what a miracle is? It is a wonderful thing done by the Lord to teach us a lesson. The Lord, when He was in the world, did many miracles, and they were of different kinds. See if you can remember some of them we have read about. Do you remember how the Lord healed the man who had the palsy, and the man whose hand was withered? Besides these, He made blind people see and cured leprosy—a terrible disease that many people had in those times—and he multiplied a few loaves and fishes so that they fed five thousand people, and He calmed a storm at sea.

In our lesson for today He does still more wonderful things.

He cast out evil spirits from a man whom they had possessed.

And He brought back to life a little girl who had died.

Who was the little girl's father?

When they came to the house of Jairus, what did the Lord tell the mourners?

Did they believe Him?

How did He bring her back to life?

This miracle teaches us that all life is from the Lord and He controls it.

And we never really die.

The world we see around us now is just our beginning—a world given us to live in for a few years so that we may learn what is right and get rid of some of our selfish ways in order that we may be happy in heaven.

Junior

In taking up the story of the demoniac, try to impress the children with the fact that the bad thoughts and impulses they have are actually inspired by evil spirits and that they do not need to be slaves as the demoniac was. It takes real courage to say “no.” Relate this thought to their association with playmates. Stress the Lord's courage and our need of His help. One of the temptations which is beginning to be very active at the Juniors' age is the temptation to excuse one's shortcomings on the ground of hindering external

circumstances. It cannot be too often brought home to the children of this age that we are all able to do right with the Lord's help, if we will. A full discussion of the subject of death is also in order with this group.

What is a miracle?

In our lesson for today, where had the Lord gone?

The Gospel of Matthew in telling this story says the Lord went to the country of the Gergesenes. Gergesa is a little village near the shore of the Sea of Galilee and is probably the place where the miracle actually took place, but the people could be called either Gergesenes or Gadarenes because Gadara was the principal city of the region. Find Gergesa and Gadara on a map.

The tombs were places, usually outside of the cities, where the bodies of the dead were brought for burial. According to the Israelitish law, dead bodies were "unclean," and those who had touched one could not enter the tabernacle until they had gone through a process of purification which took seven days (Numbers 19:11-13). The tombs were considered unclean because of the dead bodies in them. So the poor man of our story was an outcast, cut off even from religious worship. Yet he was really a good man. How do we know this? Read Mark 5:6.

What was the matter with the man?

How did this affect him?

How had people tried to control him?

Did you ever hear anyone say, "I don't know what possessed me to do that"? Or did your mother ever say to you when you were being particularly naughty, "You just seem to be possessed today"? There is a real fact behind such statements. Devils are people in the other world who, while they lived on earth, allowed selfishness to rule in their hearts and so came to hate everyone who did not do just what they wanted. They love to stir up our own selfishness and to suggest bad thoughts to our minds. The Lord allows them to do this because we have to see our selfishness and conquer it of our own free will before we can learn to do what the Lord wants us to do. You remember that this was why John the Baptist had to go before the Lord telling people to repent. Even in this world we

sometimes do as the devils do. Did any other child ever try to persuade or to tease you into doing wrong? Perhaps you have even done this yourself to someone else, for we all have such bad tendencies in us.

We know, however, that we can always say “no” to the devils, if we will. This is because the Lord, when He came into the world, overcame all these temptations and showed us how to overcome them with His help. But in the Lord’s day people had lost the way and could really become “possessed with the devil” even when they wanted to be good.

When the Lord asked the devil his name, what did he say?

This is always true, as we know when we think about it. If you are bent on doing something that you know is wrong, you are tempted to do a good many other wrong things in order to get your way, such as lying and cheating and even hurting someone you really love. No temptation ever comes alone. The devil’s name is *Legion*.

When the Lord commanded the devil to come out of the man, what permission did the devil ask?

What do we mean when we say that a person is a pig?

The pig represents our desire to satisfy our bodily appetites without thought of anything else.

What happened to the swine when the devils entered into them?

Perhaps our first thought is to be sorry for the poor pigs, but the Lord allowed this to happen to teach us that selfishness, when it is allowed to have its way, will in the end destroy even our ability to enjoy the good things of this world.

What was the man doing at the end of the story?

The Lord then came back across the Sea of Galilee. Many people were gathered around Him.

Who came to Him for help?

What did he want?

How do we know that he had faith in the Lord?

As the Lord was going with the ruler of the synagogue, another miracle of healing took place.

How was the woman healed?

What did the Lord tell her was the reason for her healing?

The garments which clothe our bodies are a picture of the truths which clothe our affections. The Lord's garments always picture the Word, because the Word is the expression to us of the Lord's love and wisdom. Touching the Lord's garment, and especially the border of His garment (see Luke 8:44) is trying to live according to the commandments. If we will do this, our weaknesses and faults will be overcome. But we must believe that there is this power in the commandments, just as the woman believed the Lord could heal her.

As they went along, people came from the house to Jairus to tell him that his daughter was dead, but the Lord reassured him and went on.

Whom did He take with Him?

When He came to the house, what did He tell the mourners?

Did they believe Him?

How did He raise the little girl?

How old was she?

What did He tell the people to do for her?

We learn from this story not only that the Lord has power over death, but that death is really only a short sleep. The Lord loves to help all people who are in trouble or sorrow, and He was glad to help the people for whom He performed the miracles. But He was really teaching all of us that all life and power come from Him, and that, if we have faith in Him, He can make our souls well and strong and give us eternal life.

Intermediate

The real reason why the Lord performed miracles is the first important lesson in this class. Then call attention to the different kinds of miracles and their spiritual meaning, and spend the rest of the lesson time on the three miracles in our chapter. Be sure to make clear the difference between possession by devils in the Lord's time, and possession today.

The Gospel of Mark contains the account of many of the Lord's

miracles. We have studied some of them—the healing of the man with the palsy, and of the man whose hand was withered. The Lord also opened the eyes of the blind, fed the multitude with five loaves and two fishes, walked on the sea, and stilled the storm. In addition to these, our chapter today teaches of two other types of miracle—the casting out of devils and the raising of the dead to life. All the miracles which the Lord wrought truly happened, but they were done not merely to help a few people in the Lord's time, but to teach us, through their inner meaning, what the Lord can do for our souls, if we believe in Him and obey Him. The condition of each miracle was faith and obedience.

In the beginning of our chapter, the Lord crosses the Sea of Galilee to the eastern side. We know that the Holy Land represents heavenly life, or that part of our life which is lived in acknowledgment of the Lord as a result of learning the truths of the Word. The cross-Jordan country pictures the part of us that has not yet been brought under the Lord's control in this way. So the man in this story is one who has not before been brought into contact with the Lord.

The man was possessed by devils. You remember that when the Lord came into the world, the power of evil had grown so strong and the knowledge of truth from the Word had been so perverted by the scribes and Pharisees, that people were at the mercy of evil. Evil spirits could really possess them against their will. The Lord in His inherited humanity took on all these temptations and overcame them, putting the hells in order under His control. It is possible for us now to be “possessed,” but only with our own consent—that is, only as we choose to let evil desires and false thoughts control us.

The casting out of the devils shows us the Lord's power to drive out evil from our hearts if we go to Him as the man in the story did. The poor man was in terrible condition. So is everyone whom evil controls. He lived in the tombs among the dead bodies, just as an evil person is cut off from everything which is spiritually living. He broke all the chains with which people tried to control him,

just as an evil person breaks the laws which are meant to keep him and other people safe. And this man, who was possessed against his will, was crying night and day and cutting himself with stones, which is a picture of how he suffered and tormented himself because he could not do what he knew was right.

We know that he was a good man at heart because “when he saw Jesus afar off, he ran and worshipped him.” And the Lord healed him. Notice that there were many devils all working together in him. Although we see our evils one at a time, there are many associated with each one—we know, for example, that one sin can quickly lead to another. The swine into which the devils were allowed to go picture our greedy enjoyments. The devils destroyed even these. If we eat too much, we become sick and can no longer enjoy our food.

After this miracle the Lord returned into Galilee, and we have two more miracles. The poor woman was healed by merely touching the Lord’s garment. Garments, as we have seen, picture the truths which clothe our affections, and the Lord’s garments picture the Word. Luke says that the woman touched just the border of the Lord’s garment, which represents the ten commandments in which the divine law is summed up in its lowest or most external form. Our blood is another correspondent of truth—truth as it circulates through our minds and brings strength to every part of us—so you can see that the woman is a picture of one who is constantly being weakened because the truth slips out of his mind. We are all in this state a good deal of the time. And when we are, the miracle says to us: “Keep the commandments.” If we are careful to do that, then truth will not slip away from us.

Finally we have the great miracle of the restoring of life to the little girl who had died. Several times in the Gospel story we read of the Lord’s raising someone from death, and we know that in the end of the story He Himself rose from the dead as the final proof that all life is in and from Him. In the story of the resurrection of Lazarus (John 11:1-44) He says: “I am the resurrection and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet

shall he live: And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die.” He had told His apostles that Lazarus was asleep. In our story He tells the mourners in the home of Jairus, “the damsel is not dead, but sleepeth.” The lesson the Lord is teaching us is that we should understand that dying is just like going to sleep, and we know how welcome sleep is when we are tired. The Lord woke Lazarus and Jairus’ daughter again in this world because He had this lesson to teach us. When we die, He wakes us in the spiritual world, a far more beautiful and happy world than this. When we wake there we shall all realize that that world and not this one is the real, living world where all true happiness is to be found.

Basic Correspondences

the cross-Jordan country = the part of us which has not accepted
the Lord’s authority

swine (pigs) = greedy sense enjoyments

the hem of the Lord’s garment = the ten commandments

Senior

Call attention to the different types of people and different types of affliction dealt with in this chapter. The Seniors need to understand the Lord’s purpose in performing the miracles, and that each miracle is a study in itself, and they need to see that all the afflictions are found in each of us in greater or lesser degree. We are to recognize and fight our evils in the Lord’s strength, believing fully in His power to overcome them in us if we are faithful.

While He was on earth the Lord healed not only the bodies but the minds and souls of men. He does the same for us, if we follow Him wholly.

The first miracle of our lesson is one primarily of the healing of the mind. We need to notice that it took place in the cross-Jordan country, outside the Holy Land proper. So it pictures something in the Lord’s approach to those who have not been “brought up in the church,” and to those things in ourselves which we have not previously brought under the influence of religion.

We need to note also that the man in the story was essentially a good man, since “when he saw Jesus afar off, he ran and wor-

shipped him.” But he was possessed by devils and lived among the tombs; he could not be controlled by men, even with chains, and he went about unhappily, sometimes in the mountains and sometimes in the tombs, “crying, and cutting himself with stones.” What a vivid picture this is of a person who desires to be good and who has his high moments, yet who, because he has not yet been brought into touch with the Lord’s power to save, is a slave to strong passions and, falling into evils, torments himself constantly with the knowledge of his unhappy state. It is also a picture of each one of us in the face of some besetting sin which we are trying to overcome in our own strength and which we have not yet taken to the Lord for help.

We are told in the writings that in the Lord’s day people were actually subject to becoming possessed by devils against their wills because the religious leaders had so perverted the Word that men no longer had access to the truth necessary to the preservation of their spiritual freedom. That was why the Lord came just when He did to take on our finite human nature at its worst, fight and overcome the evils in it, and so to reduce the hells to order and bring them forever under His own rule. People today can still be possessed by devils, but only if they have freely chosen the evils and falsities which are urged upon them.

The fact that the devil’s name was “Legion” reminds us that every evil to which we yield involves us in many other evils. Even a small child can recognize that when he does what he knows to be wrong, he is immediately tempted to conceal it by lies.

Swine picture the affection for satisfying our physical appetites; so it was wholly appropriate that the devils should be allowed to enter into the herd of swine. But then they violently rushed the swine to destruction. When we allow our physical appetites to control us, they finally destroy all satisfaction in physical pleasures; whereas, if we keep our physical appetites under control of our spiritual reason, and exercise them only as the Lord would have us, we maintain not only our physical health but also our keen enjoyment of the good and beautiful things of the physical world.

It is perhaps characteristic of our materialistic society that so many people in reading this story are more concerned over the fate of the swine than over the healing of the demoniac.

After the healing of the demoniac the Lord came back across the Sea of Galilee and we read (verse 21) that “much people gathered unto him.” Back in the Holy Land again, the miracles concern those who have the Word. The two classes of the good among those who have the Word are pictured by the two principal figures in the story, the ruler of the synagogue and the poor woman. They are like the Wise Men and the shepherds in the Christmas story. The ruler represents the learned among the people and the woman the simple good. We know that there were not many among the learned who accepted the Lord, but there were a few, of whom Jairus was one. When he saw that his daughter was at the point of death, he immediately sought the Lord, declaring his sure belief in the Lord’s power to save her. On the way to the home of Jairus—in the process of giving the new truth needed—the Lord healed the woman with the issue of blood who pictures the simple good people who knew that their life blood was ebbing away but did not understand how or why, and had tried all sorts of means of healing without success (see verse 26). Jairus pictures those who knew that their nation had lost its vitality and who watched for the coming of the Messiah to save it. His daughter pictures this spiritual affection.

The woman was healed by touching the Lord’s garment—Luke says the border of His garment. The Lord’s garment is the letter of the Word and its hem the ten commandments. For simple good people, represented by the woman, obedience to the commandments from the recognition that they are from the Lord restores ebbing spiritual life and re-establishes health. The ruler of the synagogue needed something more. He needed the full communion represented by the laying on of the Lord’s hands. He had the Law and presumably had observed it outwardly, but he needed to feel the Lord’s power within it, and once he had felt this power, he needed new nourishment to sustain his new life (verse 43).

In the Scriptures death, paradoxically, usually signifies resurrection. This is because what to us seems to be the end is to the angels the beginning of life. The spiritual world is the real world and the spiritual life is the real life. Those who live only for this world are really dead, for everything living is of the spiritual world. The Lord gave the Word and came into the world Himself to fulfill the Word, just so that we should not spend our lives here in vain. Our lives are given us for the sole purpose of developing heavenly character.

The three steps toward regeneration are clearly pictured in these last two miracles: belief in the Lord, obedience to the commandments, and the effort to receive spiritual life at the Lord's hands.



Adult

Good topics for discussion are the reason why outward miracles were performed by the Lord and why they are not performed today, what "magical miracles" are, the difference between "possession" then and now, and the various statements of the Lord concerning death and resurrection.

This chapter gives us an opportunity to consider three different types of miracles. We know that the Lord performed the miracles primarily for the sake of the Word, that through their spiritual meaning they might reveal His power to heal and restore to spiritual health and life all who look to Him.

In the beginning of our chapter the Lord has crossed the Sea of Galilee to "the country of the Gadarenes." The cross-Jordan country pictures the life which has not been developed under instruction from the Word. Possession by devils was a very real thing in the Lord's day and could happen even to one who wanted to be good. We know that there are always with us both angels and evil spirits. The evil spirits suggest wrong thoughts and stir up our natural, selfish desires; and the angels at the same time recall to our minds and hearts the knowledge of truth which is in our memories and the good desires we have felt in the past. So we are kept in freedom to choose between what is true and what is false, and between what

is good and what is evil, and to do either the right or the wrong. In this way we build our characters by our own free choice. In the Lord's day, however, the truth had been so mixed with falsity by the religious leaders that there was not enough good and truth in the people's minds to balance the falsity and evil. So the evil spirits could get possession of anyone.

We know that the demoniac was essentially a good man because "when he saw Jesus afar off, he ran and worshipped him." The life he had been living is a picture of the life of a good man possessed by evil spirits. He lived sometimes in the mountains and sometimes in the tombs. That is, he had his times of high thought and resolve, but at other times his lowest nature controlled him. Swedenborg says that sepulchres "because of the dead bodies and bones in them, signify things unclean, and thus things infernal." The people of the city had tried to bind him with chains, but he had broken them. Such a man tries hard to control his passions so that he may live an orderly life like that of other men, but the evils always break out again. And so he goes about unhappily, condemning himself by such standards as he has—"cutting himself with stones."

When the demoniac finally recognized the Lord and came to Him for help, the Lord commanded the evil spirits to come out of him and afterward he was found by the people "sitting, and clothed, and in his right mind." The Lord overcame all the temptations from the hells which attacked Him in His assumed human nature, and holds the hells subject; so if we sincerely wish to get rid of our evils and look to Him for help, He will cast them out for us. It is not by accident that the man was afterward found "sitting." Sitting pictures a settled condition, here a state of security and peace. That it may also represent a state of confirmed evil we learn in the first verse of the first Psalm. "Clothed" we recognize as meaning furnished with truth appropriate to his state, and "in his right mind" means restored to the use of his reason and free choice. Whenever we are unwilling to trust in the Lord and accept His guidance, we are for the time being spiritually insane.

Swedenborg tells us that devils are those who have allowed

themselves to believe that the whole of life is in the satisfaction of their physical appetites. So they believe that if this satisfaction is taken away, they will perish utterly, and this was why the devils asked to be allowed to go into the swine, for swine picture just this kind of low, selfish desire. But actually the devils destroyed the swine, for our physical appetites, if indulged as the whole object of life, in the end destroy the very satisfaction they crave. When we overeat, for example, we may become too sick to enjoy food. The picture of the whole herd of swine running “violently down a steep place into the sea” is given us as a warning against allowing any physical appetite to get control of us.

The other two miracles in our lesson took place in Galilee, after the Lord had re-crossed the Sea of Galilee. They are both recorded in the same order in Matthew and Luke also; so we may be sure that there is a very close connection between them in the spiritual sense.

We should first note that Jairus was a “ruler of the synagogue.” We know that very few of the prominent Jews accepted the Lord’s claim to be the Messiah. Besides Jairus, we know of Nicodemus and of Joseph of Arimathea, who after the crucifixion begged the Lord’s body of Pilate and laid it in his own new tomb. It is not easy for those in prominent places to make a radical change in their lives which they know will not prove popular. The state of Jairus is pictured by the type of his need. His daughter—Luke says his only daughter—lay at the point of death, and she was a child of twelve years of age. Daughters picture affections, and the number twelve throughout the Scriptures is the symbol of all good and truth in one complex. So Jairus pictures those of the orthodox and well-instructed who still had concern for genuine goodness and truth and recognized that they were on the point of losing it altogether.

The woman of the multitude who had the issue of blood represents the uninstructed people who were in a like recognition, the loss of blood signifying constant ebbing of truth necessary to a good life.

Both had faith in the Lord's power to heal, and some knowledge of how this healing could be effected. Jairus asked the Lord to come and lay His hands on his daughter. Swedenborg tells us that the laying on of hands signifies the transmission of power through the fullest conjunction. Jairus possessed the knowledge necessary for such conjunction, and the Lord fulfilled his desire. The woman took the simplest and most humble means. She did not even speak to the Lord. We are reminded of the publican in the temple who "would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven." She had such faith that she felt that if she but touched the Lord's garment—Luke says "the border of his garment"—she would be made whole. The Lord's garment of course pictures the letter of the Word and the border or hem the ten commandments in which the law of life is summed up. The power which healed the woman was the power of simple obedience to the commandments with recognition of their divine origin. We recall the Lord's teaching in Matthew 19:17, ". . . there is none good but one, that is God: but if thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments."

The power of the Lord to revive the spiritual life even of the religious leaders is pictured in the simple account of the raising of the little girl. The Lord's words, "The damsel is not dead, but sleepeth," accurately expressed the spiritual state of Jairus, in which the remains of goodness and truth had not been completely destroyed. And the Lord's command after the miracle that something be given the girl to eat, pictures the necessity of feeding the spiritual life once it was awakened.

There is a clear progression in the four miracles of raising from the dead recorded in the Gospels. The first was the son of the widow of Nain, the picture of the restoration of truth to one who has lost it; the second is this of our story today, the reviving of good affections in those who have the truth; the third is the raising of Lazarus, the restoration of one who has had both goodness and knowledge and has apparently lost them; and the final one is the resurrection of the Lord Himself, the full manifestation of divine life and power.

From the Writings of Swedenborg

Doctrine of the Sacred Scripture, n. 17: “It is the same with all the Lord’s miracles which were Divine because they signified the various states of those with whom the church was to be set up anew by the Lord. Thus when the blind received sight, it signified that they who had been in ignorance of truth should receive intelligence; when the deaf received hearing, it signified that they who had previously heard nothing about the Lord and the Word should hearken and obey; when the dead were raised, it signified that they who otherwise would spiritually perish would become living; and so on. . . . Moreover, all the miracles related in the Word contain in them such things as belong to the Lord, to heaven, and to the church. This makes these miracles Divine, and distinguishes them from those which are not Divine. These few examples are given in order to illustrate what the spiritual sense is, and to show that it is in all things of the Word and in every particular of it.”

Suggested Questions on the Lesson

- P. What is a miracle? *a wonderful act of the Lord's to teach us a lesson*
J. What miracles can you remember that we have studied in Mark? *palsied man, man with withered hand*
P. How many miracles are described in our lesson for today? *three*
J. Where was the first one done? *across the Jordan*
J. What was the matter with the man? *possessed by demons*
J. How did he show his faith in the Lord? *ran and worshiped Him*
J. What did the devil say his name was? *Legion (many)*
I. What does this mean? *no temptation ever comes alone*
P. What favor did the devil ask? *to go into herd of swine*
P. What happened to the swine? *ran down deep bank into sea and drowned*
J. After the Lord went back to Galilee, who came to Him for help? *Jairus*
P. What did Jairus want? *healing of his daughter who was near death*
P. What did the messengers from his home tell him? *she is dead*
J. What miracle was performed on the way to the home of Jairus? *woman healed*
J. How was the woman healed? *touched Jesus' garment*
P. At the home of Jairus what did the Lord tell the mourners? *she is sleeping*
P. How did He heal the child? *took hand, said, "Arise!"*
P. What did He tell her parents to do for her? *give her something to eat*
S. Why did the Lord perform miracles? *to teach us what he can do for our souls*