



Jacob Lawrence  
*The Great Migration*  
1941

# Resources for Dismantling Racism: the Gospel of Mark

St. Columba's Episcopal Church, Washington, DC

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# *Summary*

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- ❖ In Mark 1-3 Jesus—mostly—deconstructs systems of religious and political domination (he is at war with the powers)
- ❖ In Mark 5-8 Jesus—mostly—constructs his new kingdom





## Chapters 5-8

| <i>Events</i>                 | <i>Jewish side</i> | <i>Gentile side</i> |
|-------------------------------|--------------------|---------------------|
| inaugural exorcism, fame      | 1:21-28            | 5:1-20              |
| popular ministry              | 1:29-39            | 6:54-56             |
| symbolic healings             | 5:22-43            | 7:24-37             |
| wilderness feedings           | 6:32-44            | 8:1-10              |
| noncomprehension of<br>loaves | 6:51f.             | 8:14-21             |



## Detail: First boat journey (Mark 4:35-41)

On that day, when evening had come, he said to them, **“Let us go across to the other side.”** And leaving the crowd behind, they took him with them in the boat, just as he was. Other boats were with him. A great windstorm arose, and the waves beat into the boat, so that the boat was already being swamped. **But he was in the stern, asleep on the cushion;** and they woke him up and said to him, “Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing?” He woke up and rebuked the wind, and said to the sea, “Peace! Be still!” Then the wind ceased, and there was a dead calm. He said to them, “Why are you afraid? Have you still no faith?” And they were filled with great awe and said to one another, “Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?”

- ❖ “other side” = gentile territory
- ❖ Cushion (interesting attention to detail — again a realistic narrative)
- ❖ Asleep: calls to memory Jonah, asleep in the “inner part of the ship” (Jonah 1:4ff)



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- ❖ Perishing = dying, profound fear of abandonment
- ❖ Mark retains the Hebrew Bible's use of "sea" to indicate chaos, threat, and danger
- ❖



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- ❖ Be still: similar rebuke as Jesus' rebuke of the demon possessed man in chapter 1 ("Be silent!")
- ❖ Who is this: the same question the crowds ask in chapters 1 & 2 ("What is this? A new teaching—And with authority?")



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- ❖ Jesus and the disciples both begin to wonder how well they understand each other



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Immediately he made his disciples get into the boat and go on ahead to the other side, to Bethsaida, while he dismissed the crowd. After saying farewell to them, he went up on the mountain to pray.

When evening came, the boat was out on the sea, and he was alone on the land. When he saw that they were straining at the oars against an adverse wind, he came towards them early in the morning, walking on the sea. He intended to pass them by. But when they saw him walking on the sea, they thought it was a ghost and cried out; for they all saw him and were terrified. But immediately he spoke to them and said, "Take heart, it is I; do not be afraid." Then he got into the boat with them and the wind ceased. And they were utterly astounded, for they did not understand about the loaves, but their hearts were hardened.



## Chapters 5-8

**1st trip: from ? to “Gerasa”  
(4:35–5:1)**

**He said to them, “Let us go  
across.”**

**And leaving the crowd  
they took him with them.**

**Just as he was  
in the boat . . .**

**a great storm of wind arose.  
The boat was already filling.**

**[disciples plea for help]**

**[Jesus rebukes the storm]**

**And the wind ceased.**

**“Why are you afraid?**

**Have you no faith?”**

**And they were filled with awe.**

**They came to the other side.**

**2nd trip (unsuccessful): from ? to  
Bethsaida (6:45–53)**

**He made his disciples . . . go before  
him**

**while he dismissed the crowd. . . .**

**after he had taken leave of them,**

**he went into the hills to pray**

**. . . get into the boat . . .**

**. . . for the wind was against them.**

**They were distressed in rowing.**

**[disciples cry out in fear]**

**[Jesus joins them in the boat]**

**And the wind ceased.**

**“Take heart, it is I;**

**have no fear.”**

**And they were utterly astounded**

**when they had crossed over.**



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- ❖ After the first journey, the disciples are reluctant to get back into the boat for a journey across "the other side"
- ❖ Jesus sends them on their own (and retires to the mountain to pray)
- ❖ That the disciples are alone is emphasized three different times



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- ❖ Pass by them: Exodus 33:19
  - \* <sup>17</sup> The Lord said to Moses, "I will do the very thing that you have asked; for you have found favor in my sight, and I know you by name." <sup>18</sup> Moses said, "Show me your glory, I pray." <sup>19</sup> And he said, "I will make all my goodness **pass before you**, and will proclaim before you the name, 'The Lord'
- ❖ Like many theophanies in Hebrew Bible, contact with God produces a sense of terror
- ❖ Compare with Mark 16:8 ("for terror and amazement had seized them and they said nothing to anyone for they were afraid")



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- ❖ It is I: same use in the LXX as Yahweh’s “I am” (Ex 3:14)
- ❖ Reassurance of peace: *peace be with you*
- ❖ Human fear, divine peace



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- ❖ The loaves: the disciples do not understand Jesus' ministry of economic relief (more on that next week)
- ❖ Compare with Jesus' story in chapter 2 about David and his companions
- ❖ Hardened hearts: how Jesus had cast outside opponents—now describes his own inner circle
- ❖ Integration (which implies economic relief) is perhaps the greatest challenge for the Christian community (next slide: the sea is stormy!)



## Chapters 5-8

|  |          |                            |
|--|----------|----------------------------|
| <b>first voyage “to the other side”</b>  | <b>→</b> | <b>4:35–5:1 (storm)</b>    |
| <b>return</b>                            | <b>←</b> | <b>5:21 (no storm)</b>     |
| <b>second voyage “to the other side”</b> | <b>→</b> | <b>6:45–53 (storm)</b>     |
| <b>return</b>                            | <b>←</b> | <b>8:13, 22 (no storm)</b> |



## Detail: First healing story (Mark 5:21-43)

When Jesus had crossed again in the boat to the other side, a great crowd gathered around him; and he was by the sea. Then one of the leaders of the synagogue named Jairus came and, when he saw him, fell at his feet and begged him repeatedly, "My little daughter is at the point of death. Come and lay your hands on her, so that she may be made well, and live." So he went with him. And a large crowd followed him and pressed in on him.

Now there was a woman who had been suffering from hemorrhages for twelve years. She had endured much under many physicians, and had spent all that she had; and she was no better, but rather grew worse. She had heard about Jesus, and came up behind him in the crowd and touched his cloak, for she said, "If I but touch his clothes, I will be made well." Immediately her hemorrhage stopped; and she felt in her body that she was healed of her disease. Immediately aware that power had gone forth from him, Jesus turned about in the crowd and said, "Who touched my clothes?" And his disciples said to him, "You see the crowd pressing in on you; how can you say, 'Who touched me?'" He looked all around to see who had done it. But the woman, knowing what had happened to her, came in fear and trembling, fell down before him, and told him the whole truth. He said to her, "Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace, and be healed of your disease."



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While he was still speaking, some people came from the leader's house to say, "Your daughter is dead. Why trouble the teacher any further?" But overhearing what they said, Jesus said to the leader of the synagogue, "Do not fear, only believe." He allowed no one to follow him except Peter, James, and John, the brother of James. When they came to the house of the leader of the synagogue, he saw a commotion, people weeping and wailing loudly. When he had entered, he said to them, "Why do you make a commotion and weep? The child is not dead but sleeping." And they laughed at him. Then he put them all outside, and took the child's father and mother and those who were with him, and went in where the child was. He took her by the hand and said to her, "Talitha cum," which means, "Little girl, get up!" And immediately the girl got up and began to walk about (she was twelve years of age). At this they were overcome with amazement. He strictly ordered them that no one should know this, and told them to give her something to eat.



Detail: Second boat journey (Mark 6:45-53)

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- ❖ Back in the Jewish "side" of the sea



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- ❖ On the Jewish side Mark emphasizes the problematic nature of "honor culture"
- ❖ Jairus is named (few characters are); hemorrhaging woman is not
- ❖ Men are usually striving for honor; women are usually striving to relieve shame
- ❖ Thus women should not be publicly assertive
- ❖ Honor is received passively through birth



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- ❖ Jairus is assertive (head of family and social group — leader of synagogue)
- ❖ Anonymous woman reaches out from cover of crowd; she is without status



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- ❖ She is doubly poor and doubly outcast: a victim of segregation (physically disabled) and of exploitation (physicians took all that she had and yet made her worse)
- ❖ Through faith (not money) Jesus—the true physician—will cure
- ❖ Jesus again both violates and reverses the contagion of the “impure” through his “touching” (compare with the leper in chapter 1)



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- ❖ The woman’s gesture is technically an offense (she touches Jesus, is assertive, and interrupts an “important” mission)
- ❖ Yet it is of the woman that Jesus sees a true faith
- ❖ Daughter = my daughter (whoever does the will of God is my sister, mother...)



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- ❖ Jairus, on the other hand, approaches Jesus from a position of power and yet Jesus exhorts him to have faith
- ❖ Weeping to laughing: not a people of integrity



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- ❖ 12 years of privilege: 12 tribes of Israel — though the people of Israel are privileged of God that does not absolve them of faith
- ❖ Indeed their privilege has lead to their metaphorical sickness seen in this daughter
- ❖ the point of death = near death, or literally "near her last" (perhaps a echo of first/last imagery Jesus will use)



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- ❖ The statuses woman had also suffered for twelve years (at the hands of the privileged); yet she still took initiative in her struggle for liberation (compare with Mt 21:31: "tax collectors and prostitutes are making their way into the kingdom of God before you")
- ❖ But resurrection is still possible even for Israel and its systems of oppression: Jesus ignores the death announcement (just as the women at the cross must ignore the permanence of Jesus' death)



### Detail: Second healing story (Mark 7:24-37)

From there he set out and went away to the region of Tyre. He entered a house and did not want anyone to know he was there. Yet he could not escape notice, but a woman whose little daughter had an unclean spirit immediately heard about him, and she came and bowed down at his feet. Now the woman was a Gentile, of Syrophenician origin. She begged him to cast the demon out of her daughter. He said to her, "Let the children be fed first, for it is not fair to take the children's food and throw it to the dogs." But she answered him, "Sir, even the dogs under the table eat the children's crumbs." Then he said to her, "For saying that, you may go—the demon has left your daughter." So she went home, found the child lying on the bed, and the demon gone.



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- ❖ A Jewish home in a gentile region; again great dishonor for a gentile woman to enter into a stranger's home, uninvited, and assert herself

- ❖



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- ❖ Not because of her faith but because of her boldness?!



Detail: Second healing story (Mark 7:24-37)

Then he returned from the region of Tyre, and went by way of Sidon towards the Sea of Galilee, in the region of the Decapolis. They brought to him a deaf man who had an impediment in his speech; and they begged him to lay his hand on him. He took him aside in private, away from the crowd, and put his fingers into his ears, and he spat and touched his tongue. Then looking up to heaven, he sighed and said to him, "Ephphatha," that is, "Be opened." And immediately his ears were opened, his tongue was released, and he spoke plainly. Then Jesus ordered them to tell no one; but the more he ordered them, the more zealously they proclaimed it. They were astounded beyond measure, saying, "He has done everything well; he even makes the deaf to hear and the mute to speak."



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- ❖ Saliva much akin to human excrement
- ❖ Again, they become true disciples (he appointed them to proclaim, Mark 3)



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