

Let us go over to the other side...

Reading:

Mark 4:1-2, 33-5:2

1. Introduction: The story so far...

[Slide 1] Follows on from Tom’s sermon 2 weeks ago (“The New Wor(l)d: Samuel and the Call of God”) and Kristen’s last week (“Take Courage! It is I. Don’t be afraid.”)

Theme: “Let us go over to the other side” (v.35)

Story of Jesus crossing the lake has several different levels...

Background: Year of popularity in Jesus’ ministry (in Mark’s gospel = 1:16-5:43):

- Constantly besieged by people (Mark 1:45)
- No room for people to move (Mark 2:2)
- Large crowds taught beside the lake (Mark 2:13)
- **Used boat as an “escape route”** (Mark 3:7-9: “Because of the crowd he told his disciples to have a small boat ready for him, to keep the people from crowding him”)
- **Used boat to preach from** (Mark 4:1)

Now: “let us go over to the other side” (Mark 4:35)

On the face of it, this appears to be simply a continuation, a **strategy for withdrawal** after long day of teaching:

- v.35 “when evening came” = getting away from the crowds
- v.36: “took him along, **just as he was**, in the boat” – implication was that Jesus was too weary from his extensive teaching (Mark 4:1-34) to even help in sending people away (New Bible Commentary)

- v.38 reinforced by sleeping on the boat during storm = sleep of **exhaustion!** – not even the storm woke him...

But more to this story than meets the eye... (appears to be a deeper significance in Mark’s account)

Series of “turning points” in Mark:

- Beginning of His ministry (Mark 1:14)
- Appointing the 12 apostles (Mark 3:14)
- Increasing opposition (Mark 6:1-6)
- Peter’s confession, leading to Jesus’ prediction of His death (Mark 8:27-30 >>> 31-32)
- Jesus sets his face to go Jerusalem (Mark 10:17, 32-34)
- Triumphal entry (Mark 11:1-11)
- Final Passover (Mark 14:1-2, 12)

2. This passage to the other side a “turning point”... (not a long journey – only 8km across at this point)

- **First time that Jesus is recorded as crossing the lake;** several later crossings of the lake (Mark 5:21; 6:45-53; 8:13)
- **First time that Jesus ministers in Gentile territory** (note the **pigs!**) [had previously had followers **from** Gentile territory (Mark 3:8) “regions across the Jordan” = Gaulonitis – Herod’s territory (Jewish-Gentile population) – more extensive ministry there in Mark 7:31ff.]
- In all 3 Synoptic Gospels, crossing of the lake is **immediately followed by the encounter with Gerasene demoniac**
- Contrasts between Mark 4 and Mark 5:

Mark 4		Mark 5
Crowds (success)	→	One man
Jewish (our kind of people)	→	Gentile? (phrase “most high God” (5:7) only used by Gentiles [Gen.14:18; Isa.14:14; Dan.3:26; Acts 16:17])

People came to Jesus	→	Jesus goes to the man (where he is)
Teaching (parable of sower, etc.)	→	Exorcism (not Jesus' first exorcism; had been a feature of His ministry up to this point)

a. So why do we “go across to the other side”?

Greek phrase “to the other side” = *eis to peran* (*peran* = beyond, farther side) = “let us go **beyond** where we are now...” (**decisive transitions** [crossing the Rubicon] = “**crossing borders**”!);

b. It’s not always “smooth sailing”!

- Three-fold impact on the disciples:
 - ✓ By storm on lake (v.38: “don’t you care if we drown?”); **God doesn’t seem to care...**
 - ✓ By authority of Jesus (v.41: “who *is* this?”); **we thought we knew Jesus...**
 - ✓ Disciples already “frazzled” by trip across the lake; **now encounter with screaming Gerasene demoniac (in the dark!)** (5:2); fear (or courage?)

c. But also a process of growth...

- We “go beyond” **because Jesus commands us to** (assurance of his continuing presence [cp Matt.28:19-20])
- “The other side” is also the **land of promise** (Abraham Ur >>> Canaan [different lifestyle: nomadic >>> settled]; Joshua crossing Jordan to land of promise [different foods: manna/ grain])
- **Illustration:** Celtic monks (*xeneia* = foreignness)

3. Application: what does this mean for us?

Going over to the other side = “seismic shift”: necessitates leaving what is **familiar** and “successful” for new territory; what does this mean:

- For us **personally**? (storms etc., new encounters with a Jesus we never knew, frightening new encounters – in the dark!)
- For **Leith Valley** as a congregation? (What does 2018 hold for us? How do we meet it?)
- For the **Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa-New Zealand**? (loss of buildings due to earthquake-proofing standards >>> change of focus/ministry?)
- For the **Church in general**? Decline in Western Christianity (now a minority in NZ); shamanistic advertising for traditional shamanistic healing retreat (Kapitari Ayahuasca Retreat in Iquitos, Peru) in Roslyn Coffee Culture; UBS religious section >>> implications?

Final story: BK on the West Coast (>>> disorientation) the “other side” = challenge to **visceral, habitual** thinking

Because Jesus commands us: **Let us go over to the other side**