



Sermon Transcript

January 28, 2018

Gospel of Mark: The Good News of Jesus

The Power of Jesus

Mark 4:35-5:43

This message from the Bible was addressed originally to the people of Wethersfield Evangelical Free Church on January 28, 2018 at 511 Maple Street, Wethersfield, CT, 06109 by Dr. Scott W. Solberg. This is a transcription that bears the strength and weaknesses of oral delivery. It is not meant to be a polished essay. An audio version of this sermon can be found on the church website at www.wethefc.com.

Sermon Text: Mark 4:35-5:43

³⁵ On that day, when evening had come, he said to them, "Let us go across to the other side." ³⁶ And leaving the crowd, they took him with them in the boat, just as he was. And other boats were with him. ³⁷ And a great windstorm arose, and the waves were breaking into the boat, so that the boat was already filling. ³⁸ But he was in the stern, asleep on the cushion. And they woke him and said to him, "Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing?" ³⁹ And he awoke and rebuked the wind and said to the sea, "Peace! Be still!" And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm. ⁴⁰ He said to them, "Why are you so afraid? Have you still no faith?" ⁴¹ And they were filled with great fear and said to one another, "Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?"

They came to the other side of the sea, to the country of the Gerasenes. ² And when Jesus had stepped out of the boat, immediately there met him out of the tombs a man with an unclean spirit. ³ He lived among the tombs. And no one could bind him anymore, not even with a chain, ⁴ for he had often been bound with shackles and chains, but he wrenched the chains apart, and he broke the shackles in pieces. No one had the strength to subdue him. ⁵ Night and day among the tombs and on the mountains he was always crying out and cutting himself with stones. ⁶ And when he saw Jesus from afar, he ran and fell down before him. ⁷ And crying out with a loud voice, he said, "What have you to do with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I adjure you by God, do not torment me." ⁸ For he was saying to him, "Come out of the man, you unclean spirit!" ⁹ And Jesus asked him, "What is your name?" He replied, "My name is Legion, for we are many." ¹⁰ And he begged him earnestly not to send them out of the country. ¹¹ Now a great herd of pigs was feeding there on the hillside, ¹² and they begged him, saying, "Send us to the pigs; let us enter them." ¹³ So he gave them permission. And the unclean spirits came out and entered the pigs; and the herd, numbering about two thousand, rushed down the steep bank into the sea and drowned in the sea.

¹⁴ The herdsmen fled and told it in the city and in the country. And people came to see what it was that had happened. ¹⁵ And they came to Jesus and saw the demon-possessed man, the one who had had the legion, sitting there, clothed and in his right mind, and they were afraid. ¹⁶ And those who had seen it described to them what had happened to the demon-possessed man and to the pigs. ¹⁷ And they began to beg Jesus⁴ to depart from their region. ¹⁸ As he was getting into the boat, the man who had been possessed with demons begged him that he might be with him. ¹⁹ And he did not permit him but said to him, "Go home to your friends and tell them how much the Lord has done for you, and how he has had mercy on you." ²⁰ And he went away and began to proclaim in the Decapolis how much Jesus had done for him, and everyone marveled.

²¹ And when Jesus had crossed again in the boat to the other side, a great crowd gathered about him, and he was beside the sea. ²² Then came one of the rulers of the synagogue, Jairus by name, and seeing him, he fell at his feet ²³ and implored him earnestly, saying, "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." ²⁴ And he went with him. And a great crowd followed him and thronged about him. ²⁵ And there was a woman who had had a discharge of blood for twelve years, ²⁶ and who had suffered much under many physicians, and had spent all that she had, and was no better but rather grew worse. ²⁷ She had heard the reports about Jesus and came up behind him in the crowd and touched his garment. ²⁸ For she said, "If I touch even his garments, I will be made well." ²⁹ And immediately the flow of blood dried up, and she felt in her body that she was healed of her disease. ³⁰ And Jesus, perceiving in himself that power had gone out from him, immediately turned about in the crowd and said, "Who touched my garments?" ³¹ And his disciples said to him, "You see the crowd pressing around you, and yet you say, 'Who touched me?'" ³² And he looked around to see who had done it. ³³ But the woman, knowing what had happened to her, came in fear and trembling and fell down before him and told him the whole truth. ³⁴ And he said to her, "Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace, and be healed of your disease."

³⁵ While he was still speaking, there came from the ruler's house some who said, "Your daughter is dead. Why trouble the Teacher any further?" ³⁶ But overhearing what they said, Jesus said to the ruler of the synagogue, "Do not fear, only believe." ³⁷ And he allowed no one to follow him except Peter and James and John the brother of James. ³⁸ They came to the house of the ruler of the synagogue, and Jesus saw a commotion, people weeping and wailing loudly. ³⁹ And when he had entered, he said to them, "Why are you making a commotion and weeping? The child is not dead but sleeping." ⁴⁰ And they laughed at him. But 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. ⁴¹ Taking her by the hand he said to her, "Talitha cumi," which means, "Little girl, I say to you, arise." ⁴² And immediately the girl got up and began walking (for she was twelve years of age), and they were immediately overcome with amazement. ⁴³ And he strictly charged them that no one should know this, and told them to give her something to eat.

Introduction

What a day! It seems to me that the events described in our passage this morning all happened in the span of a day. Last week we heard Jesus teaching the crowd from the boat. Our passage today begins by telling us that when he was finished teaching, "On

that day, when evening had come, he had said to them, 'Let's us go across to the other side.'" It is here where they got caught in a ferocious storm and then saw Jesus quiet the storm. Normally it takes about two hours to cross the lake. In Mark 5:2 we discover that when Jesus and the disciples arrived to the other side of the lake, "*when Jesus had stepped out of the boat, immediately there met him out of the tombs a man with an unclean spirit.*" When people from town saw what Jesus did for this poor man, they begged Jesus to leave. So they crawled back into the boat and went back to the eastern shore of the Sea of Galilee and as soon as they landed, they were again surrounded by a crowd. This time a prominent man by the name of Jairus fought through the crowd to implore Jesus to come to his house because his twelve year old daughter was gravely ill. By the time Jesus arrived at the house, she had died. Taking the parents with him, along with Peter, James and John, Jesus approached this lifeless body and said to her, "*Little girl, I say to you, arise.*" Immediately she sat up and began walking. What a day!

Can you imagine being Peter? Imagine Peter coming home after this day and his wife asking him, "so how was your day?" Imagine Peter, still taking it all in and trying to recount what he just saw, let alone what it all meant. "We were out in a storm and we thought we were 'goners.' But then Jesus stood up and spoke to the storm . . . and it stopped. And then when we landed on the other side of the lake, we were met by this madman that no one could control. He was under demonic influence and he came at us from out of the tombs. But by the time Jesus was done with him, he was sitting there in his right mind. He was like a new man. And then when we crossed back to come home, the next thing you know we were standing in the room of a young girl who had just died. They were already making preparations for her burial when we arrived. But Jesus came in and simply spoke to her and the next thing you know, she is walking around the room. At several points during the day, we looked at each other and wondered with amazement among ourselves about Jesus, "*Who is this?*" "So, how was your day?"

When Mark gave us these three stories, he meant to present them as a unit. They are meant to be taken together. It is not just the time sequence that binds them together. Rather, it is what these miracles tell us about Jesus that binds these stories together. These miracles speak to the sovereign power of Jesus. They tell us that Jesus has power to "vanquish the powers hostile to God."¹ Specifically, these miracles reveal that Jesus has power to overcome the demonic and to overcome death.

What strikes me about the power of Jesus in these passages is that his power is on display through his word. To the storm, he simply said, "*Peace! Be still!*" To the demon he commanded, "*Come out of the man, you unclean spirit.*" And to the girl he said,

“Little girl, I say to you, arise.” It is somewhat reminiscent of what we read in Genesis 1 where we see the creative power of God who spoke this world into existence. *“And God said, ‘Let there be light.’ And there was light.”* I can’t even fathom such power. No doubt, we understand that our words have the power to build up or to tear down. But the words of Jesus have the power to “transform a deadly storm into a great calm, a ferocious brute into a calm and gentle man, death into a calm sleep, and the laughter of scorn into the laughter of joy.”² And furthermore, it is not lost on me that these miracles follow the parables we looked at last week that tell us that the seed that was scattered is the Word of God which is *“breathed out by God.”* It has the power to change your life.

My desire for you this morning is for you to see the power of Jesus. Has Jesus become so familiar to you that you have lost sight of his power? My desire for you this morning is that you would say what John the Baptist said when he bowed before Jesus and said, *“You must increase and I must decrease.”* Why do I want this for us this morning? Well on the one hand, this encounter with the power of Jesus leaves us in awe of Jesus. The disciples sitting in the boat were filled with fear. The townspeople who saw that madman now sitting in their right mind were afraid of Jesus when they saw the sign of his power. And of course, Jairus and his wife, along with Peter, James and John were *“overcome with amazement”* when their daughter sat up. So yes, we want to be more in awe and wonder with Jesus. It leads us to worship him.

But there is something more here. Jesus uses the display of his power as a means to encourage us to trust him and to turn to him and to believe in him. Constantly through these stories he is looking for faith. He chides the disciples in the boat for their lack of faith. The man once possessed by demonic spirits was now a “man of faith” - a follower of Jesus. On the way to the home of Jairus, there was a woman who had heard of the miracles of Jesus and with faith, reached out and touched the hem of his garment believing that he had the power to heal her. Jesus turned and commended her, declaring that her faith made her well and he dismissed her by pronouncing his peace upon her. And then, as they were making their way to the home of Jairus, Jesus was encouraging Jairus with the words, *“Do not fear, only believe.”* Why? Because Jesus has the power to do what we cannot do for ourselves. The power of Jesus leads us to greater faith.

Each of these stories presents an obstacle to faith. In the storm, the disciples turned to Jesus and asked, *“Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing?”* Perhaps the storm causes you to wonder whether or not Jesus cares. It was said of the man possessed by the evil spirits that *“No one had the strength to subdue him.”* Does Jesus really have the strength to restore me and make me whole? When he walked into the house of Jairus

the people laughed at the notion that he could bring this girl back to life. Has Jesus really removed the sting of death? When we encounter the power of Jesus, we discover that he does care, he is able and he has defeated death. May this lead us to great faith!

The Power of Jesus: He Cares

The first encounter with the power of Jesus that day took place out in the boat in the middle of a storm. As we begin looking at this story, let's remind ourselves of a few things. First of all, quite a few of the disciples were fishermen. They were accustomed to being out in the water and no doubt had experienced their fair share of storms. But even for experienced fishermen, this storm seemed to be the one that could do them in. It says in verse 37, *"And a great windstorm arose, and the waves were breaking into the boat, so that the boat was already filling."* Based on the topography around the lake, it was not unusual for a storm to seemingly come out of nowhere. And so here they are, frantically trying to keep themselves from drowning and they look over and there is Jesus fast asleep in the back of the boat.

Rather incredulous that Jesus could be sleeping at a time like this, they wake him up and say to him, *"Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing?"* And so Jesus stands up and it says that he rebuked the wind and said to the sea, *"Peace! Be still!"* And then it says, *"the wind ceased, and there was a great calm."* Can you imagine what it must have been like to witness power like that? Understandably, it says that after he calmed the storm with his words, *"Peace! Be still!"*, it says the disciples *"were filled with great fear and said to one another, 'Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?'"*

On one hand, you could say that this miracle demonstrates that Jesus is the Son of God and that he has power and authority over creation. No doubt, that is true. Paul says of Jesus in Colossians 1:16, *"For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible."* And so to bring an end to a storm is nothing for Jesus to do. But there is something more being communicated here about Jesus that sets us up for the next two big events that happen that day.

In the ancient world the sea was often viewed as the "place of chaos and evil." It was the place where "evil and God clash."³ And so this story serves as an appropriate introduction to the two stories that follow where they encounter the demonic and death. In fact, there are quite a few theologians who believe that Mark is drawing a comparison to the story of Jonah with this story of Jesus. You can see the similarities rather plainly. They were both in a boat caught in a storm. These veteran sailors were filled with fear

and were frantically trying to keep from drowning. Like Jesus, Jonah the prophet was sleeping. And when the storm is miraculously calmed and everyone is spared, there is a sense of fear as they encounter the power of God. Perhaps, there is one difference, you would say. Jonah was thrown overboard into the foreboding sea, that place of evil and death and Jesus was not. Jonah was sacrificed for his sin that caused the storm.

But not so fast. In Matthew 12:41, Jesus draws the parallel between himself and Jonah. He says, *“For just as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three nights in the heart of the earth.”* Tim Keller puts it this way. He says of Jesus, “He was the ultimate Jonah, who was thrown into the ultimate deep—of eternal justice—for us . . . Jonah was thrown overboard for his own sin, but Jesus is thrown into the ultimate storm for our sin.”⁴

So the question, *“Teacher do you not care that we are perishing?”* does not need to be asked. What greater sign can Jesus give us that he does care? The living God has stepped into human history and has intervened on our behalf. Tim Keller says of Jesus, “he was thrown into the ultimate storm for our sin.”⁵ At the cross, he jumped overboard and fell headlong into the sea of death only to conquer it. *“Peace! Be still!”*

This is the passage I preached on when I candidated here fifteen years ago. At the time I made the point that if Jesus is in your boat, you don’t have to worry when the storms come. You can trust him. He is not asleep on you. He has not abandoned you. How do I know? It is because he has already faced the ultimate storm for you by dying on the cross in your place and so he won’t abandon you in these smaller storms that often catch us off guard. You can trust him. He has already calmed the ultimate storm, as we will see in a moment with the other two events that transpire that day.

It is interesting to me that in early Christian art, the Church is depicted as a boat that is caught in the middle of a storm, but in the boat you also find Jesus. For the persecuted church, it became a symbol of Jesus’ saving presence when it seemed like they were being overcome by this hardship. And so, it was a reminder to them that they need not fear. One of Rembrandt’s famous paintings is of this miracle of Jesus calming the storm. As the waves are crashing over the bow of the ship, in the painting it is the faces that are turned towards Jesus that convey peace in the storm. In contrast, the faces that are looking the other way are filled with dread and fear. And so the point Rembrandt is making through his painting is that in the storm of life, we can find peace by trusting in Jesus because Jesus has already faced the ultimate storm and he has endured it for us. You can trust him and you never have to question whether he cares for you.

The Power of Jesus: He Delivers

As the day unfolds, we find that they eventually make it to the other side of the sea and they come ashore in “*the country of the Gerasenes.*” This was a region primarily populated by Gentiles. As they docked their boats and came to shore, Jesus and the disciples were met by a man with an unclean spirit, who lived among the dead in the cavernous tombs along the coast. As his story is told, there are parallels between his story and the story we just saw of the disciples out in the storm. Mark is linking these two events together to tell us something about the power of Jesus over the demonic.

Like the windstorm that they just came from, this man could not be contained. People tried to contain him. It says in verses 3-4, “*for he had often been bound with shackles and chains, but he wrenched the chains apart, and he broke the shackles in pieces. No one had the strength to subdue him.*” It is a sad picture of a tormented man who constantly harmed himself. You are not long into this story and you discover that this man is under demonic influence. In fact, as Jesus makes his way to the shore, this man ran to Jesus and fell down before him and said, “*What have you to do with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I adjure you by God, do not torment me.*”

This is not a confession of faith or a bowing in submission to Jesus. We know from James that the demons are very much aware of who Jesus is and that they even shudder in fear of Jesus. In fact, the commentators suggest that these demons are trying to position themselves and to get the upper hand with Jesus as if they can negotiate with Jesus. In the movie *Pirates of the Caribbean*, when one group of pirates got the upper hand on another group of pirates and were about to overcome them, if someone cried “parlay” it would force the conquering side to negotiate a peaceful settlement. It is as if the demons are crying “parlay.” But there is no negotiating with Jesus. He says to this “legion of demons” who possessed this man, “*Come out of the man.*” And even by honoring their request to enter a herd of swine, Jesus was using this occasion to demonstrate to all who witnessed it and to us who read this account that this is the true intent of the evil one. As Peter says of Satan in 1 Peter 5:8, “*Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.*” Let this man and these pigs be exhibits A and B.

But here is the good news. “*Greater is he who is in us than he who is in the world.*” As a result, the one who once was possessed by the legion, was “*sitting clothed and in his right mind.*” What no one had the strength to do, Jesus was able to do. This man was no longer ruled by the kingdom of darkness. He had passed into the kingdom of God.

This is our story. In Ephesians 2, Paul says that we are all born dead in our trespasses and sins. We all are born dwelling in those cavernous tombs. No one taught us how to sin. We were born in bondage to our sin. Where did that come from? How did that happen? Paul goes on to say, *“in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience—[legion]- among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature objects of God’s wrath.”* Luther called it “the bondage of the will.” Paul said, “I do what I don’t want to do and I don’t do what I want to do.” James said no one can tame the tongue. Like this man, there is no one who has the strength to change the course of man. Paul cries, *“Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from the body of death?”*

This week I read the testimony of Mary Poplin. Once steeped in the New Age movement where Shirley McClain was her hero, her view of human nature was that we are all good and the key to seeking happiness was to find freedom by ridding yourself of all restraint. It was “spirituality” without rules or religion. One day, having spent time with a popular New Age teacher at a restaurant in California Poplin recounts, “Afterward, this woman had gotten into an altercation with the owner of a car she had backed into accidentally. Amid her angry shrieking, the man kept telling her, calmly but firmly, ‘This is who you really are.’ When Mary Poplin heard this, she said, ‘I knew I was just like her. Pretending to be good, yet filled with bile.’”⁶

And yet, we discover through this story that Jesus has power to overcome the bondage we are all born into and naturally follow, just like this man. C. S. Lewis recalls the imagery of this story in describing his life before his conversion as “a zoo of lusts, a bedlam of ambitions, a nursery of fears, a harem of fondled hatreds. My name was legion.”⁷ When giving the answer to the question, “What is my only comfort in life and in death?”, the Heidelberg Catechism begins by saying, “That I am not my own, but belong body and soul to my faithful Savior, Jesus Christ. He has fully paid for all my sin by his precious blood, and he has SET ME FREE FROM THE TYRANNY OF THE DEVIL.” Paul says in Colossians 1:13-14 that when we come to faith in Christ, *“He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.”*

When Mary Poplin finally came to faith in Christ, she said it took her three years to work on her guilt over two abortions in her past. While people told her she needed to forgive herself, what she came to find out was “the more I searched the Scripture the more confident I was that forgiveness could only come as God’s gift.”⁸ Why is that?

Because like in this story, only Jesus has the strength to overcome spiritual darkness and the bondage we are all born into and perpetuate. When you look at that man on the shores of the Gerasenes you are looking in the mirror. And like this man sitting in his right mind, you are to *“Go home to your friends and tell them how much the Lord has done for you, and how he has had mercy on you.”*

The Power of Jesus: Death is Defeated

Quickly, we cross the lake again and are back on the western shores of the lake, only to once again encounter a crowd. Jairus, a ruler in the synagogue, made his way through the crowd and came before Jesus, imploring him to come to his house because his twelve year old daughter was gravely ill. Jairus said, *“My little daughter is at the point of death.”* And so Jesus went with him.

On his way, he gets delayed because of a woman who reaches with faith and touches his garment, believing that if she touched him she would be healed of an ailment she battled for twelve years. Recognizing healing power leaving him he paused and addressed this woman and sent her on her way in peace. But in the meantime, this delay caused Jesus to be “too late” at arriving at the home of Jairus. A messenger came and found them and reported to them that the little girl had died and it was suggested that they no longer bother Jesus. But I think that woman was not an interruption, but rather a lesson for Jairus. Jesus turned to him and said, *“Do not fear, only believe.”*

Arriving at the house of Jairus, Jesus saw that the professional mourners had already arrived and the process of grieving and burial had already begun. And it is here where Jesus made a rather startling statement, *“The child is not dead but sleeping.”* Jesus was not disputing whether or not this child had died. But to Jesus, waking someone from the dead was no harder than waking them from a nap. But the crowd gathered there laughed at him with a scornful laugh. And so he shut them out, like those who do not have ears to hear. Taking with him Jairus and his wife, along with Peter, James and John, he walked into the room where the girl was lying motionless. He took her hand, and with the power of his command, Jesus said, *“Little girl, I say to you, arise.”* Immediately she sat up and started walking. I guess you could say that the family got “the last laugh.” It was a laughter of joy with a mixture of amazement.

Jesus has power over death. This miracle is just a little taste and a little glimpse of what is to come. The book of Mark ends with an empty tomb where Jesus had been placed just three days earlier. An angel said to the women who came to the tomb to tend to his

body, “You seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has risen, he is not here. See the place where they laid him.” This is our ultimate hope. Jesus has power over death. Because he rose from the dead, death cannot hold us. So we are invited to believe.

Hebrews 2:14-15 provides a perfect summary to these three miracles. “*Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same things, that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil, and to deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery.*” Through the power of Jesus, he has calmed the ultimate storm, delivered us from the tyranny of the devil and has freed us from the fear of death. Trust him. Turn to him. Believe in him. That is the appropriate response to such power as this.

Conclusion

What a day! It is a great day when we take time to reflect on the power of Jesus. May the power of God’s Word do its work in us as it did in that boat and on that shore and in the room where that little girl was found. Jesus says to us, “*Peace! Be still! . . . Come out of that man, you unclean spirit . . . Little girl, I say to you, arise.*”

Do you see the ultimate power of Jesus? William Lane says of these three stories, “Jesus is the God who acts . . . Through the expression of his word salvation is accomplished for men.”⁹ Jesus cares for you. How do I know? He calmed the storm. Jesus delivers you. How do I know? Through the cross the devil is defeated and through faith we have the forgiveness of sin. Death has been defeated. How do I know? Jesus rose from the dead. So trust him. Turn to him. Believe in him. He is mighty to save!

¹William L. Lane *The Gospel of Mark* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974) 173

²David E. Garland *Mark: The NIV Application Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996) 222

³Ibid., 192

⁴Tim Keller *Preaching: Communicating Faith in an Age of Skepticism* (New York: Penguin Books, 2015)

⁵Ibid

⁶Mary Poplin “This Is Who You Really Are” *Christianity Today* January/February 2018 p. 95

⁷C. S. Lewis *Surprised by Joy* (New York/London: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1955) 226

⁸Poplin, 95

⁹Lane, 176

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COMMUNITY GROUPS



Getting To Know Me Questions

1. Eagles or Patriots? Predictions? (Sorry, had to ask!!) Eagles 30 - Patriots 24
2. Is there something you would like to do as a group to support the Crossing the Bridge Assignment to assist those displaced from Puerto Rico? Or, is there something else you would like to do to reach out and extend mercy or hospitality?
3. What is one thing you got from the sermon this week?



Diving Into The Word

4. Read Mark 4:35-41. What causes you to wonder whether or not Jesus really cares for you? How does this story help you overcome your doubt and have faith?
5. Read Mark 5:1-20. How is our story reflected in this story? (See Ephesians 2:1-3; Colossians 1:13-14; Hebrews 2:14-15). Ponder the implication of verse 19 and discuss what that might look like in your life.
6. Read Mark 5:21-23 and 35-43. Why does the claim that Jesus has risen from the dead seem “laughable” to people? How is the resurrection of Jesus a fountain of joy for you? (See 1 Peter 1:3-9)
7. Read Mark 5:24-34. What do you learn about Jesus from this passage? What do you learn about faith from this passage?



Taking It Home

8. Which of these stories speaks the most to you about the power of Jesus and why?
9. Where do you need to trust Jesus in your life and how do these passages help you do that?