is not even clear whose boats these could be. I would suggest that Mark added the odd details to hint that the disciples are not paying attention to Jesus. Even though he was the one who proposed that they go across the lake, they took him along mostly by accident. Since he was already in the boat, they let him stay even though he could have used another vessel.

Questions for Reflection:
What is faith? Must genuine faith include a willingness to persist in following Jesus despite obstacles and danger? Does it sometimes seem in times of crisis that God does not care? What can we do to perceive more clearly at times of crisis who Jesus is and that he does care?

16. Mark 5:1–20

And they came to the other side of the sea to the district of the Gerasenes. And when he had come out of the boat, at once a person from the tombs who had an unclean spirit met him. He had his dwelling in the tombs, and no one was able any longer to bind him, not even with a chain (because often he had been bound with fetters and shackles, and the shackles were pulled apart by him, and the fetters were shattered), and no one was strong enough to subdue him. And all night and day in the tombs and on the mountains he was shouting and cutting himself up with stones. And when he saw Jesus from a distance, he ran and knelt down before him. And shouting in a loud voice he said, “What have we got to do with each other, Jesus, Son of God Most High? I implore you in God’s name, do not torture me!” (for Jesus was saying to him, “Unclean spirit, come out of the person”). And he asked him, “What is your name?” And he said to him, “‘Legion’ is my name
because we are many.” And he begged him much that he would not send them out of the district (5:1–10).

Now, there toward the hill a big herd of pigs was grazing. And they begged him, “Send us into the pigs that we may enter them.” And he gave them permission. And the unclean spirits came out and entered into the pigs, and the herd, numbering about two thousand, rushed down the slope into the sea and drowned in the sea. And the people who were tending them fled and spread the news in the city and in the countryside, and people came to see what it was that had happened. And they came to Jesus and saw the man who had been possessed seated, clothed, and sane, the one who had the legion, and they became afraid. And the people who had seen told them what happened to the man who was possessed and about the pigs. And they began to beg him to go away from their territory. And as he was getting into the boat, the man who had been possessed begged him that he might be with him. Yet he did not let him but said to him, “Go off to your home and to your relatives and tell them how much the Lord has done for you and had mercy on you.” And he went away and began to proclaim in the Decapolis how much Jesus had done for him, and all marvelled (5:11–20).

Healing stories, especially when passed on orally, tended to follow a set outline in the era when Mark was writing. First, there was a description of the problem. Often this description emphasized the gravity of someone’s condition. Then, there would be an account of the specific actions that the miracle worker took to effect the cure. Finally, we would have a visible sign that the miracle had taken place. Often the recounting of this sign stressed the dramatic suddenness and certainty of the cure and the amazement of the onlookers.

On the whole, Mark’s description of the healing of the man with the legion follows the typical outline well, and we can assume that Mark faithfully passed on the story he heard. Mark presents the man’s desperate condition in moving detail. He then recounts the conversation between Jesus and the demons, which ends with the demons’ departure into the pigs. The pigs’
sudden mass suicide, the hearers' flight, the man's totally altered state, and the resulting fear of the onlookers serve as the undeniable proof of the cure.

In one respect, however, Mark seems to have altered the story. In Mark's account, Jesus' actual words of exorcism are almost an aside. The demons plead with Jesus not to torment them, and then Mark adds almost as an afterthought, "for Jesus was saying, 'Unclean spirit, come out of the person.'" Presumably, in the story Mark heard, Jesus first commanded the demons to depart, and in response, they begged him not to torture them.

By making the actual exorcism an aside, Mark continues the theme that Jesus silences demons who reveal he is God's Son. Thanks to Mark's rearrangement, we read about Jesus commanding the demons to leave immediately after they address him as "Son of the God Most High" and beg him not to torture them. Hence, now the exorcism is simultaneously an attempt to suppress the revelation of who Jesus actually is.

In keeping with what we have seen previously, here Jesus willingly works a public miracle, because it leads to his rejection. In the story, Mark emphasizes that Jesus chooses to make the exorcism a public matter. When the story begins, Jesus and his students appear to be alone with the possessed man, so Jesus could have exorcised him without making a stir. Yet, Jesus explicitly gives the demons permission to enter the pigs and causes a public uproar. Significantly, the uproar makes people confront Jesus and ask him to leave. Of course, he complies.

Also in keeping with what we have seen, Jesus does not try to keep the miracle from being publicized after his departure, because the man who has been healed has faith. Near the conclusion of the narrative, the man wants to follow Jesus. Jesus refuses the request, but invites him to tell about the exorcism.

Like the previous story, this miracle suggests that Jesus is divine. At the end of the account, Jesus commands the man to tell his relatives "how much the 'Lord' [i.e., God] has done for
you." However, Mark then tells us that the man went away and proclaimed "how much Jesus had done for him." Mark invites the reader to equate Jesus with God.

**Questions for Reflection:**

Does a miracle raise fundamental questions about what is real and what is truly important? Can such questions make people anxious? Does it matter whether the person who proclaims that a miracle has taken place has faith?

17. **Mark 5:21–43**

And when Jesus had crossed back over to the other side, a great crowd gathered round him, and he was by the sea. And one of the leaders of the synagogue, Jairus by name, came, and when he saw him, he fell at his feet and begged him much by saying, "My little daughter is dying; so come and lay your hands on her so she may be preserved and live." And he went away with him (5:21–24a).

And a great crowd was following him, and they squeezed against him. Now there was a woman who had had a hemorrhage for twelve years. And she had suffered much with many doctors and had spent all she had and had gotten no benefit but rather had become worse. After she heard about Jesus, she came in the crowd and touched his clothes from behind, for she was saying, "If I touch even his clothes, I will be saved." And at once her bleeding dried up, and she knew from her body that she was cured of the ailment.

And at once Jesus perceiving in himself that power had gone out from him turned in the crowd and said, "Who touched my clothes?" And his students said to him, "You see the crowd squeezing against you and you say, 'Who touched me?'" And he kept looking around to see the person who had done this. And the
woman, although she was afraid and shaking because she knew what had happened to her, came and fell down before him and told him the whole truth. But he said to her, “Daughter, your faith has saved you. Go off in peace and be well from your ailment” (5:24b–34).

While he was still speaking, some people came from the leader of the synagogue’s house and said, “Your daughter has died. Why bother the teacher any longer?” But Jesus, ignoring what had been spoken, said to the leader of the synagogue, “Don’t be afraid; only believe!” And he did not let anyone follow along with him, except for Peter and James and John, James’s brother. And they came into the house of the leader of the synagogue, and he observed an uproar, people weeping and wailing loudly. And when he had gone inside, he said to them, “Why are you in an uproar and weeping? The child has not died but is sleeping.” And they jeered at him. But he threw them all out and took along the child’s father and mother and those who were with him, and he went in where the child was. And grasping the child’s hand, he said to her, “Talitha Koum,” which is translated, “Girl, I say to you, get up!” And at once the girl rose and walked, for she was twelve years old. And they were beside themselves with utter astonishment. And he strictly ordered them that no one should know this, and he told them to give her something to eat (5:35–43).

Mark himself probably sandwiched together the stories of the healing of the woman with a hemorrhage and the raising of Jairus’s daughter and so wanted the reader to compare them. The oral tradition would have had difficulty remembering and repeating such a complicated structure. Instead, early Christians would naturally have told these stories separately. These tales have very different theological emphases; consequently, people would have used them to illustrate different points. By sandwiching these narratives, Mark invites us to look at them together and compare and contrast them.

In the story of the hemorrhaging woman, Jesus insists on publicizing a miracle which otherwise would have remained
secret. The narrative emphasizes that initially none of the bystanders notice that anything has happened. A “great crowd” is squeezing Jesus, and, when the woman manages to elbow her way through and touches him from behind, no one but Jesus notices. Indeed, when Jesus insists someone has touched him, his disciples respond with incredulity. Of course, lots of people have touched him! Since the woman was suffering from hemorrhaging, there is no visible evidence of the healing. Indeed, Mark explicitly tells us that “she knew from her body” she had been cured. Moreover, the narrative suggests that the woman would have kept the matter quiet. Her illness was an embarrassing one. According to biblical law, it rendered both her and whatever she touched unclean (Lev 15:25–27), and perhaps Mark and his readers knew this. Therefore, only with reluctance does she admit what has happened. Yet, Jesus insists on bringing the matter to public attention. He looks around and asks who touched him. He invites the woman to come forward, even though she is “afraid and shaking,” and has her declare before everyone “the whole truth.”

By contrast, in the story of the healing of Jairus’s daughter, Jesus attempts to hush up a miracle which in reality could not possibly escape public notice. In telling the story, Mark emphasizes that the child’s sickness and subsequent death are widely known. When the leader of the synagogue comes to Jesus to ask for help, a “great crowd” is present, and it accompanies Jesus as he starts toward the leader’s home. Fresh news arrives that the girl is now dead. Once Jesus gets to the house, he meets still other people. They, too, know the girl is dead and are weeping. There is no way that the girl’s miraculous raising from the dead could have been kept quiet. Just what are the child’s parents supposed to say when the girl sees her friends again? Yet, in the story, Jesus does everything in his power to keep the miracle secret. When he receives the news that the girl has just died, he does not let anyone accompany him, except Peter, James, and John. When he arrives at the leader’s house, he tells the mourners the girl is not dead but asleep, and when they respond with
derision, he throws them out. He takes with him only the girl's parents and his chosen students. After he raises the girl from the dead, he insists that no one else should know.

The story of the healing of the hemorrhaging woman emphasizes the presence of faith, whereas the surrounding story of the raising of Jairus's daughter emphasizes its absence. In the first story, the woman has absolute confidence in Jesus' ability to heal her. Indeed, she tells herself, "If I touch even his clothes, I will be saved." After she does touch his clothes and is healed, Jesus declares, "Daughter, your faith has saved you." Significantly, the woman also shows her faith by overcoming her fear and confessing what Jesus has done for her. Even though she is "afraid and shaking," she falls down before Jesus and publicly declares the truth. By contrast, in the second story, the friends and relatives of the dead girl have no faith in Jesus' power to raise her from the dead. As soon as the girl dies, they send word to the girl's father that now Jesus should not bother to come. Not surprisingly, Jesus responds by urging him to have faith. Then when Jesus arrives at the house and suggests that the girl will be all right, everyone jeers at him. When Jesus does restore the girl to life, the few witnesses who actually see the miracle are "beside themselves with utter astonishment."

Consequently, in this section, Mark continues the theme that Jesus willingly works public miracles in response to prior faith, but he refuses to work miracles to inspire public support.

By raising Jairus's daughter, Jesus also continues to teach his disciples that they must endure and continues to hint to them who he is. Despite the fact that Jesus tries to keep the miracle from becoming public knowledge, he deliberately works it in the presence of Peter, James, and John. Jesus explicitly lets them come along to the house and go in to "where the child was." Of course, the story teaches the need to trust in Jesus despite disappointment and seeming hopelessness. After the father invites Jesus to heal his daughter, she dies and
everyone despairs. By raising her Jesus reveals that he has divine power for only God can give life to the dead.

Questions for Reflection:

Do small miracles (or even big ones) happen frequently, but people are afraid to disclose them? If so, what is the source of this fear? It is always a good idea to tell people about a miracle?

18. Mark 6:1-6a

And he went away from there and came into his hometown, and his students followed him. And when it was the Sabbath, he began to teach in the synagogue, and many who heard him were astonished and said, “Where did he get this from, and what is the wisdom which has been given to him? And such miracles happen at his hands! Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary and brother of James and Joses and Jude and Simon? And are not his sisters here with us?” And they were scandalized at him. And Jesus said to them, “A prophet is not dishonored, except in his hometown and among his kin and in his house.” And he could not do any miracle there, except that he laid his hands on a few sick and healed them. And he marveled because of their lack of faith (6:1-6a).

This section borders on being inconsistent. Mark first emphasizes that Jesus could not do any miracle. But then he adds that Jesus did in fact heal some sick people.

I suspect this tension arose when Mark edited an earlier tradition. That tradition reported that Jesus went to his hometown, healed some sick people, but nevertheless got a cool