



The All-Victorious Jesus

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Mark 5:1-20

Clint Pressley

5 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 Jesus 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.

(Pastor prays)

There's one man who wrote most of the New Testament. His name is Paul. Paul took all of his missionary journeys and as he went he planted churches. And often, when he was away, he would write to churches. Many of the churches were around Rome and in Turkey. You see them in your Bible: Galatians and Ephesians and Philippians. And one of the letters is to a church in Ephesus called Ephesians. He closes out the letter and as he does, he says in Ephesians 6:10 to the struggling church, ¹⁰ *Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might.* ¹¹ *Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil.* ¹² *For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.* The heavenly places. The forces of evil are in the earthly places as well.

This passage opens it up for us. After a stormy night on the sea, with the disciples coming across the Sea of Galilee where Jesus would stand up and rebuke the storm and they have seen vividly the authority and power that Jesus has over the natural world, now their boat eases up on the shore in the *Gerasenes*. This passage shows us the power and authority Jesus has over the supernatural world. In this passage, this is Jesus invading enemy territory. In this passage, Jesus does what has not been done in thousands of years.

Satan is a fallen angel and those that went with him were a third of the angels. They fell out of Heaven and came into the Earth where they have had for thousands of years free reign. They possess who they want, they do what they want. They live as they want to live. Up until this day right here. On this day, that boat sailed up into the shores of the *Gerasenes*. Everything would change for the powers of evil.

This passage tells us the story of Jesus coming in and showing absolute dominance over the powers of evil. This passage is here for a reason. This is here to encourage you. This is here to strengthen you. This is here to remind

you of the dangerous reality. Let us never forget there is a genuine evil. Do I believe that demon possession is a real? You go to the worst lockdown prison we have in the United States, and there you find the rapists and killers and abusers, molesters. Anywhere you find the destruction of God's good creation, especially the destruction of God's good creation in people, the image of God, anytime you find that destruction, you can guarantee that Satan is close by. Until Jesus shows up. The Devil has got to surrender when Jesus shows up. I want you to read this and drink it and take courage from this passage. I want you to find confidence in the healing, saving, cleansing power of Jesus. I've spent all week thinking about how to best get at this story. How best to get at it so that it makes sense and is useful. So in a broad sense, if I want to encapsulate it, this is what I would say. I want you to see that...

Jesus is a Victorious and Transforming Savior

He didn't just win victory, He transformed the guy who was filled with the demons. Let's just walk through the passage, and as we do, let's make some applications as we go. And when we get to the end of it, we're going to take The Lord's Supper today so that we focus on the cross of Jesus and the power of Jesus. So let's go through it. Here's the first point. Number one. You need to see that...

Jesus is stronger than the worst demons

Join me there in verse one. *5 They came to the other side of the sea, to the country of the Gerasenes.* If you read Luke, it will be called the *Gadarenes*. Think of it like this. Gadera would be a town. The Gerasenes would be a region or a county. It's the same area. It's like saying Charlotte or Mecklenburg County. It's the same place. What's going on with the Gerasenes? The Gerasenes were where the Gentiles lived. It's a Greek-speaking area. You'll find it called the Decapolis later. Alexander the Great came through and established a kind of utopia with 10 Greek cities. He was gone by now and the Romans are there. It retained the name of the Decapolis. They spoke Greek.

They were not Jewish. In verse 2 you find out that something happens when He lands on the shore of the Sea of Galilee. Verse 2 tells us that when Jesus stepped out of the boat, immediately (Mark loves the word “immediately”) there met Him, out of the tombs, a man with an unclean spirit. Why is he unclean? Well, he’s unclean for one because he’s a gentile. And for two, he’s in the tombs. And three, he’s unclean because he is possessed by demons. The fourth reason that he’s unclean is that he’s obviously pretty close to some pigs.

So Mark pauses there before he tells us about this encounter in verses 3-5. Watch his description of this possessed man and feel the wretched end-game of sin. Join me there. What do we know about this man? Verse 3 says he lived among the tombs, he lived in the graveyard. He would prefer to be around dead people than live people. We don’t have these kind of tombs, they were just hills and caves and rocks. You could go in and there would be a dead body. That’s where he wanted to be. He lived among the tombs and the text says, in verse 3, that he had some sort of superhuman strength. Nobody could bind him anymore. Every time they put a chain on him, he would break it. They tried ropes, like Samson; he broke the ropes. So they tried to chain him, but he breaks the chain. Verse 4 says that not only that, they put chains on his ankles on his wrists; they would lock him up and he would break those off. Verse 4 says there is not anybody who could subdue him. Nobody had the strength.

Verse 5 says that night and day you could hear the raving lunatic in the tombs and the mountains. You could hear him up there hollering and screaming and crying out. He has this weird fascination with pain. He’s taking sharp stones, it’s self-mutilation, he’s cutting himself. There’s so much so wrong with his head that he finds some weird satisfaction in it. These demons in him want to destroy the image of God in this man.

This man is in a terrible condition, and in verse 4 Mark says that nobody can help this guy. They don’t know what to do with him. Mark is setting it up for us. He’s showing us what Jesus can do. He’s showing us this man comes as

the Gospel the transforming power of the life, death and resurrection of Jesus. So the first verses, 1 - 5, that's a setup to show us Jesus is greater than our worst demons.

Jesus is Lord

This passage turns weird in verse 6. Join me there. Here comes the encounter. So in verse 2 we're told that Jesus is going to meet a man possessed by a demon. After we got the description of what this guy was like, verse 6 brings us back to the action. Verse 6 says this is how it unfolded. He must have been off in the mountains when he saw Jesus from afar. His eyesight matched his strength. He saw Jesus from afar.

My thought was that demons will run *from* Jesus. That's not what happened here. In verse 6, he saw Jesus from afar, and he ran *to* Jesus. He ran to Jesus and fell. Do you see that? He fell down before Him. That phrase in the King James version would translate it as "worship." It is the same word used in a positive way to talk about worshipping the Lord. Here comes this man, filled with demons, and all he can do is fall at the feet of Jesus. Look, when you read that, think of the passage in Ephesians 2 that says that "every knee will bow in heaven and on Earth and under the Earth and every tongue," even if you don't want to, every tongue will confess that Jesus is Lord. The demons fall there in front of Him. This is forced worship.

Look at the fear of the demons. Look how scared they are in verse 7. So they're there on the ground in front of Jesus and they start crying out verse 7. And this is what they say. *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."*

And notice they know His name. But it's not a messianic title. They know He, is the most high God. You understand that Jesus has now invaded their territory. They had not been messed with, they had free reign for thousands of years. They knew about this one who was coming, and now He is finally here. They know who He is. They know what He can do. But the people are

afraid of this man with demons, and the demons are afraid of Jesus. People feared the man who had the demons, the demons fear Jesus. They know His power. Have you come to destroy? Luke tells us they ask, “don’t throw us in the abyss. We know what you can do. Have you come to torment us?” You know the demons have good theology. They know that Jesus is God. They know if you’re gonna make some sort of oath and do it by God. By the way, just because you have good theology, doesn’t mean you know God. You can be very smart in the scriptures. James says that even the demons believe and shudder. So they say to Jesus, “I adjure you. Swear by God that you won’t torment us. We know you can.”

Well, they know His name, so the conversation begins to pick up speed in verse 9. Jesus wants to know their name. In verse 9 Jesus asked him “what is your name?” Now you have to understand the day and time where we are. This is a Roman-occupied territory. How did it become occupied by Rome? It’s through the legions that came through. The Roman legions knew how to fight. They conquered the known world. Everybody understood what a legion was. It was at least 6,000 Roman soldiers. So they say to Jesus, “*My name is Legion, for we are many.*”

Think of Tiananmen Square and the tanks rolling through, and that one lone man stands there in front of the tank. We are many. There is one Jesus on the seashore, standing there in front of thousands. The conversation continues in verses 10 – 13. This brigade of demons is standing in front of Jesus and they have a request of Jesus. They know He can destroy them. They know that He can torment them. They ask a question and they beg him earnestly. The demons are begging now. 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.”*

And this turns a little bizarre here to me in verse 13. 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.

So get the picture. They're 2,000, not 200. I mean, look, 20 pigs is gonna be too many. 2,000 pigs? So the demons go into those 2,000 pigs and those pigs lift up their heads. They're now possessed by the demons and those devil pigs run down the hill and drown themselves in the Sea of Galilee.

Now what is it? This is what I've been doing this week. You step back from the passage and what do you do with that? I'm standing on the hillside and looking down to Sea of Galilee and there is a whole lot of meat floating down there. So my question is why? Why did they have to ask Jesus permission? Why did He grant them permission? Well, we know it's not a concession to the demons. It's not Jesus going, "OK well, you are right, I'll let you do it."

There's got to be a purpose there and I start to think that there are several. There are several reasons why Jesus allowed the Legion of Demons to come into those 2,000 pigs and run them down the hill. One thing I think it might be is that it is hard to conceptualize thousands of demons. But the people there would have visually seen 2,000 pigs. So when the demons came out of this man, there's now evidence, they have visual, tangible evidence. Sometimes we doubt that evil is real. That could be it. It could be that Jesus wanted to display for the people there who are watching. They needed to see what are the designs of Satan? Where will he take you? And this is shown vividly that the designs of Satan in the pigs is that he ran them down the hill. Now there is swine floating in the Sea of Galilee.

You have a visual. This is where sin takes me. I mean there's a lot of money in that pork. Have you priced bacon lately? It is a lot of money. Could it be that all of that money running down the hill is a reminder of justice. That one possessed man is more valuable than all that. Is this to show us the value of men and women who are made in the image of God? I think it's more along the lines of an exercise of the sovereignty of Jesus. I think when Jesus does that as a display that "I own not only the cattle on a thousand hills, but the

pigs, too.” He owns it all. It’s good for us to be reminded now and then when we lose something that’s it’s not ours. You know what I think? I think that Him doing this reminds us of what sin’s endgame is.

So where does this take me? It’s a good question to ask when you make decisions. If I do this, six or seven steps down the road, what’s going to happen down there? Let me envision where this sort of sin ends. And this here is a display that ends in destruction.

So how do you make application? I’ll give you just two things to think through. One way to apply this beautiful story is as a reminder. There is nothing to fear if Jesus is near. There’s nothing to fear. If you are a Christian, you are inhabited by the Holy Spirit. Your faith is in Jesus, the mediator. There is nothing to fear. That’s one thing. Another thing that would help you is to just be reminded that good and evil are not equal. Or you might say it like this: There’s not a war going on where God and Satan are evenly matched and we’re not sure how this war is going to pan out. This visual is that there are thousands of demons up against one Jesus and all they can do is fall on the ground and beg. It’s good for us to remember they’re not evenly matched. We see in that passage that Jesus is Lord. Let’s press into it a little further. Here’s a third thing to consider, #3.

Jesus always gets a response

When Jesus does something or when He preaches, there is always a response. There will be a response today. You have a response to what you’ve heard this morning here in the text. In verse 13, we find out that the demons respond: they are scared to death of Jesus. They would rather go into some pigs and drown than to be close to Jesus. In verse 14 there’s a response. Can you imagine being one of those herdsmen? They fled. I guess they went to the city and they just start saying, “you’re not going to believe what happened!” This response of creating a stir doesn’t make any sense. Look, when you are changed by the Holy Spirit of God, you put your faith in Jesus, you’re trusting in God as your father, there are going to be people who are not going to

understand that. How do you make it in life? They are not going to understand that! I think the most encouraging thing is in verse 15. Let's go to the man who was possessed by the demons. I'll just say that the response here is a radical change. This is what the Gospel does. Verse 15 is a description of how the Gospel actually works. In verse 15 they came to see Jesus because they heard all that had happened. They came to see Jesus and here's what they saw. It's funny how Mark describes this guy. They came in and saw the demon possessed man and notice what they see about him.

Let's just break all of that down in verse 15. He's just sitting there. He's free of the demons. He's now with Christ. There's peace in his life. The sin is gone. Christ is here. There's peace in his life. The text says that he's just sitting there. What else do we have in verse 15? He's sitting there and if you go and read this story in Luke, Luke tells us that he had lost his mind. He is so insane that he's just taking all of his clothes off. And now, as the contrast, Mark says, this is what Christ has done. He has made it so that he's sitting there, his mind is at peace, he's fully clothed, and he's in his right mind. He's not a raving lunatic anymore. He's sitting here calmly and the people come and see that. And it unnerves the people. Verse 15 says they were afraid. First, they're afraid of the man with demons, and now that Jesus comes and casts the demons out, they are all are afraid of Jesus.

Remember when the boat came across the Sea of Galilee in Chapter 4 and Jesus is with the disciples. They are afraid of the storm. Jesus gets up, He calms the storm and now they are more afraid of Jesus. It's the same thing here. Sometimes your life, especially if you live the life of sin, and when you make this radical change, it's going to unnerve people. There's some rejection here. Verse 17 tells us that the people, they're so afraid, they want Jesus out of there. The text says they begin to beg.

It is interesting, the demons were begging Jesus. Now the people have seen a great miracle. They see this man whose life has changed. They don't understand it. They don't have a background. They're not Jewish, they don't have the Old Testament. They've never seen anything like that. They beg

Jesus to leave. It's absolute rejection. You see, everybody has a response to Jesus, everybody. I mean it's true. Today, everybody has a response.

So when you walk through the Gospel, and when I say Gospel, this is what I mean: That God is our holy Creator who created all of us in His image. You have dignity because you've been created in the image of God. The image of God in you and us all has been disfigured by sin. We are separated from God and under condemnation. It's bad news. The good news is the Gospel. It starts here with Jesus. Jesus comes, lives perfectly as a human. He lives perfectly in a way that we are not able to do. He lives perfectly in our place. The cross is where Jesus goes in our place. The Gospel is Jesus dying in my place. Jesus dies on the cross to take away the wrath of God, so all of your sin is punished on the cross. Resurrection is the guarantee that God the Father has received that sacrifice, and it's offered up and the response is you putting your faith in that! That's what happens when you actually get saved; when you appropriate the Gospel. Jesus always gets a response.

Jesus is what we need

Let me show you where I get that in verse 18. So the people want Jesus to go away. Jesus obliges. OK, I'm getting in the boat. Verse 18 says as He's getting in the boat, the man who had the demons cast out, he's in his right mind, he's clothed, and he's begging. Everybody's begging Jesus today. As He was getting the boat, the man who had had been possessed with demons begged Him: "I want to be with you. I want to be near to you. I want to be with you. I want to be in the boat with you. I want to be in fellowship with you. I want to know you. Please don't leave me here." I mean, isn't that the right desire? Is that your desire? Is that the desire of your heart? I just want to take that into the fifth point.

Jesus is the mission

I didn't understand. Why wouldn't He let this guy go with Him? As He's getting in the boat, the man who had been possessed with demons begged Him that He might be with Him. It's not what I expected. He did not permit

him. But he said to him, “go home to your friends. Go home to your family. Tell them how much the Lord has done for you. Tell them how he has had mercy on you.” Keep the two verses together, 18 and 19. His desire is to be with Jesus, but the sovereign Jesus has another plan for his life, and this may speak to your heart.

Sometimes you have a desire for one thing. Jesus has a sovereign, different plan for your life. He says, “here’s the mission. Look, the mission is to go back to the Gentiles. Go back to that hostile crowd. Go back to the capitalists.” It’s broken-down in verse 19. Look what it says. Can you imagine this? Can you imagine this man walking back into his mama and daddy’s house. He’s been gone so long and was so crazy, they just quit praying for him. Now he’s here. He’s got his mind together and is clothed. And he’s come to tell his family and his friends, “listen, let me just tell you how good God is. Let me tell you how God has provided for me.” And he starts preaching his sermon about the goodness of God and the blessings of God, and the provision of God. And then Jesus says in verse 19, “that’s not all you are to preach about. Tell them how good God has been to you and tell them about the mercy.” You know, mercy is a humbling thing, isn’t it? Mercy is knowing that we deserve punishment. It’s knowing we deserve it and that God is taking it away. Mercy is the word that points us most to the Cross of Jesus. That’s what we’ll do today as we take The Lord’s Supper. We’ll celebrate the mercy of God. I’ll give you one last thing. Number six.

Jesus brings the results

Look and see that Jesus brings the result. So the man starts to preach in verses 19 and 20. Jesus went away. He is going back on the Sea of Galilee, and the man is walking off the shore to the Decapolis. ²⁰ *And he went away and began to proclaim in the Decapolis how much Jesus had done for him, and everyone marveled.* They’re listening to this guy. They knew he was possessed. They’ve heard all about him. Now he’s preaching about somebody that can save him. And this is where the story ends, or is it?

If you keep reading in the book of Mark, you get past Chapter 6 and Chapter 7 and Jesus takes another journey to this place called the Decapolis where this man preached. There in Chapter 7, Jesus starts healing people and this time they are not begging Him to leave, this time they receive Him. He heals a man who's deaf and the people stood on the seashore looking at Jesus and the people would start saying, "He does all things well." Where did they get that message? From this man right here. Because the ground had been softened by this changed man preaching the Gospel. You see, Jesus is a victorious, transforming savior. He does all things well. This morning you can put your faith in Jesus. You can trust in Jesus. If you're a Christian, you have strength because of Jesus. He does all things well.

(Pastor prays)