

## Mark 5:1-20 - Has Mercy for the Lost

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**Introduction** - Last week, we listened to parables and truths about the Kingdom of God. We've seen how Jesus has power over creation as the King of the Kingdom. Now we see He has deep care for man and power over demonic forces. But how will the crowds respond? Will they accept Him, or reject Him? Jesus rescues a demonized man, gets rejected by crowds, then sends him out to testify of God's mercy. We should embrace God's mercy for us through Jesus and eagerly testify of His rescue to our neighbors.

In this story, we see Jesus encounter different groups. They have a response to Jesus and we see Jesus react to their response. The only one Jesus does not oblige is the man He rescued. Why is that? It relates to what the mission is and how willing we are to accept Jesus no matter the cost.

**v1-5 - The State of the Demonized Man** - Matt 8:28-34 and Luke 8:26-39 are parallel passages. Matthew records the region as "Gadara" instead of "Gerasa." "Gergasa may represent the village of Khersa, the ruins of which have been found near the only hill close to the eastern shore of the Lake of Galilee. Gadara was the nearest large city, about 6 miles away. Gerasa (modern Jarash), the most prominent city in that whole region, was about 30 miles southeast of the lake."<sup>1</sup> "Reliable evidence favors the name Gerasenes which probably referred to the small town Gersa (modern Khersa) located on the lake's eastern shore. Most of its inhabitants were Gentiles."<sup>2</sup>

Mark and Luke only mention one demonized man, Matthew mentions two. Mark and Luke focus their narrative on the one who is most prominent. He has no home. His living place is among the dead in the tombs - a series of holes carved into the side of mountains and hills. Matt 8:28 says no one could pass by that way because of them. Luke 8:27 points out right away the man is naked, our text shows this too (Mark 5:15). He was demonically empowered with unusual strength. No one could "subdue" him - "from damazo, 'to tame a wild animal.'"<sup>2</sup> Luke 8:29 says he would be driven into the deserts. He cut himself in demonic activity marring the image of God. Satan wants to belittle and destroy the image of God, people made in His image. How can Christians demonstrate the opposite, a love for image bearers?

**v6-13 - The Response of the Demons: "Send us to the pigs!" - Jesus: "Go"** - Picture the disciples in that instant. How were they feeling? What did they think as this demonized man came running out directly toward Jesus? Did Peter grab his sword? The demonized man "Fell down before Him." This is recognition of power and authority. The demons don't try to get into a wrestling match with God. "What have you to do with me?" - We have nothing in common, why are you here? Lit: "What to me and to you" - a Hebrew idiom. The demons verbally understand that Jesus is the Son of God as they address Him. Several commentators point out that using someone's true name was supposed to be a way to gain some mastery over them, but clearly, the demon is still subject to Christ even though they know His true identity. The demon implores Jesus, "Do not torment me." Torment - *basanos* - "the demons were afraid that Jesus would immediately 'torture' (NIV) them in Gehenna."<sup>3</sup> All the demons know that the price of their rebellion will be torture. Legion - "a body of soldiers whose number differed at different times, and in the time of Augustus seems to have consisted of 6,826 men (i. e. 6,100 foot soldiers, and 726 horsemen)."<sup>4</sup> The idea is that there are a lot of demons upon this man.

What's their response to Jesus' arrival? They fall down and beg. The demons know they have no influence over Christ. Nearby is a herd of pigs - unclean animals. They were not permitted to be kept by Jews (Lev 11:7, Deu 14:8). "By this very permission then, our Lord not only set the man free from demon possession, but cleansed a people from an unholy traffic."<sup>5</sup> Commentators hold this was a mostly Gentile area at the time. In addressing concerns why Christ would permit this, Wiersbe states it shows a real deliverance occurred, Satan is a destroyer, to Satan pigs are as good as people, and it shows the true heart of the townspeople.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *Word Meanings in the New Testament*. Earle. Pg. 37.

<sup>2</sup> *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: New Testament*. Walvoord and Zuck. Pg. 122.

<sup>3</sup> *Word Meanings in the New Testament*. Earle. Pg. 37.

<sup>4</sup> Thayer's Greek Lexicon.

<sup>5</sup> *The Great Physician: The Method of Jesus with Individuals*. G. Campbell Morgan. Pg 159.

<sup>6</sup> *Wiersbe's Expository Outlines on the New Testament*. Warren W. Wiersbe. Pg. 114-115.

**v14-17 - The Response of the People: “Leave!” - Jesus: Departs** - The herdsmen go out and share what happened, then people come back to see. Matt 8:33 - “they told everything, especially what had happened to the demon-possessed men.” The demonized man was now clothed and restored with Jesus. What is their response? Please leave, Jesus! Why did they beg Jesus to leave? What were the people afraid of? Wasn't the demonized man a nuisance? Why don't they thank Him? It came at a cost - materially and spiritually. What more will Jesus cost them? The demons lost something, but they knew it wasn't theirs to have. The people lost something, but they won't accept the value of the man over their swine. What else will Jesus take from them to help others? “Jesus is inconvenient.” How can we end up with that same wretched heart?

**v18-20 - The Response of the Man: “Let me stay with you!” - Jesus: “Go and tell”** - He wanted to be a disciple and follow the Lamb wherever He went. There's nothing wrong with the desire of the man to be with his Savior, but he was saved for a purpose. “He did not permit him” All the characters Jesus meets in this story beg Him: The demons beg him, the Garasenes beg him, the healed man begs him. Only the healed man's request is denied. Jesus instead tells him to “Go home” to “Your friends” “sos; from G4771; thine:—thine (own), thy (friend).”<sup>7</sup> To your own people, your own friends, your own family. There could be some restoration the man needs to make with his old relationships. In contrast to others Jesus healed, he tells the man to tell what happened since this region has less Jewish influence.

In contrast to the disciples, Jesus sends this man on a different preaching mission. The change in his life is miraculous and self-evident. Now this man's people need to see it. That there will be a time to be with Jesus, but now He wants the man to be on mission and carry the gospel forth (Phl 1:21-26). It's our mission to go forth and share the good news which will be abundantly clear in our own lives. There's risk as this man goes - his message can be refuted, belittled, and people may not see past his past. Paul had a hard time joining the local church after he was saved. Barnabas had to come alongside him and convince the brethren Paul's life was really changed (Act 9:26-27). We might need to be a Barnabas in someone else's life.

The man proclaims what happened in Decapolis (*Deca* - ten, *polis* - city) “a track of land so called from the ten cities that were in it.”<sup>7</sup> Jesus later travels to this area and they bring the sick to Him (Mark 7:31). “He has done all things well” (7:37). While it looks like some people came from Decapolis to witness Jesus' ministry earlier (Matt 4:25), undoubtedly this man had some role in preparing the people's hearts to receive Jesus when He comes in the future. It isn't just “what” Jesus did for him, it was “how much.” Everyone marveled, everyone was amazed at his testimony!

### **So, what? Now, what?**

Jesus took His disciples across the sea on a trip to rescue someone who was lost and needed mercy. Even though He delivered a man from demonic influence, the people rejected Christ and asked that He leave. Jesus used the opportunity to send a perfect representative even if the people wouldn't accept Him: the man who was saved. This man is charged to go back home to his people and proclaim the mercy that God showed Him and who Jesus was. He participates in Jesus' mission and prepares people to hear the Gospel.

In the same way, Jesus has offered us all redemption, and Christians have accepted Christ as their savior and have been charged to go and share the message of Jesus just like this man. It may come at great personal cost, but how could we keep silent about the mercy we've received from the Lord?

For reflection:

- Where is my heart in response to Jesus in this story? Do I oppose Him, yet fear Him? Do I try to drive Him away when I hear the gospel or sense Him trying to rescue my soul at the expense of the desires of my flesh?
- Am I struggling with being “left behind” to give a testimony of God's mercy when I just want to be with Him? Do I have a heart that realizes that to live on in the flesh is better to serve the Lord (Phl 1:21-26)?
- Who is God calling me to go across the sea to rescue? Are there people in my life now I intentionally avoid? Am I fulfilling God's call on my life right here, right now as a witness for Him? Am I to go somewhere else?
- Am I ready to share my testimony if an opportunity presents itself? Consider formulating a 15 second testimony: <https://youtu.be/hkprfINySS8> or a way to explain the gospel using 3 Circles: <https://youtu.be/nSOKry3F3bc>

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<sup>7</sup> Strong's Definitions.