

The Cross Shaped Life: Shaped by the Mercy of God (Mark 5.1-20)

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February 8, 2026

Dominant Thought: Jesus amazes those who hear your story.

Objectives:

I want my listeners to understand the importance of telling about God's mercy in our lives.

I want my listeners to feel amazed by the power of Jesus.

I want my listeners to tell a friend or family member this week how God has worked in their life.

Jesus amazes those who hear your story. In our time today, we will explore a powerful encounter Jesus has with a man possessed by an unclean spirit. I'd like to read through the text and make some comments along the way and then draw some summaries to equip us in our walk with Jesus this week.

In [Mark 5](#), Jesus steps out of a boat on the eastern shore of the Sea of Galilee, the sea He had calmed in [Mark 4.39](#), with the words, "Peace! Be still!" His disciples were filled with great fear and said to one another, "Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey Him?" ([Mark 4.40](#)). Jesus has the power over nature and the chaos of the sea.

It doesn't take long for Jesus to walk on the shore of Sea of Galilee in the area of the Gerasenes where He will be met with another chaos.

Immediately, a man runs from the tombs and falls down before Jesus. This man lived in the graveyard. He had the habit of harming himself and possibly others. They tried to bind him, even with chains and shackles. He broke through the chains and shackles. No one had the power to subdue him.

Night and day, among the tombs and on the mountains, he was always crying out and cutting himself with stones. Do you know anyone who struggles with self-harm? Do they wear long sleeves to cover the cuts on their arms? Do they prefer isolation instead of participating with your family or friend group? They may be able to relate to this man. You may be able to relate to this man.

Why was he living among the tombs?

He comes and falls down before Jesus. This is the first of three people in [Mark 5](#) who will fall down before Jesus. The other two are the synagogue ruler Jairus ([Mark 5.22](#)) and a bleeding woman ([Mark 5.33](#)).

This man with the unclean spirit falls down before Jesus and cries out in a loud voice, “What have you to do with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God?” ([Mark 5.7](#)). The man with the unclean spirit seems to understand who Jesus is. In fact, in the early chapters of Mark, it appears the unclean spirits understand who Jesus is better than His own disciples.

The man requests Jesus not to torment him. Jesus has said to him, “Come out of the man, you unclean spirit!” ([Mark 5.8](#)).

Then, Jesus asks the man, “What is your name?” Do you think Jesus didn’t know the man’s name? He replies, “My name is Legion, for we are many.” Legion is the name for a group of Roman soldiers. At full strength, it could comprise about 5,000 soldiers. Legion could be a nod to the Roman oppression over God’s people. It sounds like this man has many unclean spirits capable of superhuman strength—breaking shackles and chains.

Next, the man begged Jesus not to send them out of the country, but instead into a herd of pigs that was feeding on the nearby hillside.

So, Jesus gives them permission to go into the pigs. It still puzzles me why Jesus granted the man or the unclean spirits’ request. Later, someone else will beg and plead with Jesus and He will deny that request.

In [Mark 5.13](#), the unclean spirits enter the 2,000 pigs and they rush down the steep bank and are drowning in the sea. Can you picture all those pigs in the sea? Can you hear the squeals? Can you hear the splashes? With that many pigs, if you are down wind, can you smell what it would have smelled like?

How do you think the owners of the pigs responded? Mark tells us in [Mark 5.14](#). They herdsman run into the city and tell the folks in the city and in the country. The people must have been from Missouri. They said, “We have to see this for ourselves.”

And coming to Jesus they see the man. The one who lived in the tombs. The one who broke the chains. The one they excluded from the families and neighborhoods. They see him clothed and in his right

mind. Where did he get the clothes? Did Peter or James have an extra set? The people see the formerly possessed man sitting, clothed and in his right mind...And they're afraid.

What are they afraid of? Are they afraid of the truth? Are they afraid of the power Jesus has over unclean spirits? Is it an eerie silence? He's no longer a threat. Can we trust that he's cured? Is he safe?

The people talk about the healing and the pigs. They beg Jesus to leave their region. Jesus, do you realize the price of lean and feeder hogs? Do you realize you drowned our livelihoods? Jesus has a special way to identify your allegiance and challenge your thinking and your idols.

He honors their request. Jesus puzzles us once again. He honors the request of the unclean spirits—Send us into the pigs. He honors the request of the people—Jesus, please leave. “As He was getting into the boat,” the man who was healed has a request of Jesus. He begged Jesus that he might be with Him ([Mark 5.18](#)). It sounds quite similar to when Jesus called the first twelve “that they might be with Him” ([Mark 3.14](#)).

The man may have looked at Jesus who healed him and looked at the people who were begging Jesus to leave. The man probably thought, “My chances are better with this guy. I’m with Jesus.” I know how these people treated me—chained up living in the cemetery.

Jesus denied this man’s request. All through the gospels, people are following Jesus. Here in this exchange Jesus denies the request and commissions him to tell his story. “Go home to your friends and tell them how much the Lord has done for you, and how he has had mercy on you” ([Mark 5.29](#)).

Guess what? He follows Jesus' command to go. “He went away and began to proclaim in the Decapolis how much Jesus had done for him” ([Mark 5.20](#)). To proclaim is a word for preach. It is the word to announce on behalf of the King. He told his story. And Mark concludes this portion of the story, “And everyone marveled” ([Mark 5.20](#)). Everyone was amazed.

Jesus amazes those who hear your story.

First, Jesus amazes people through your story with His care for the hurting. The man was lonely, oppressed, self-destructive. He's cutting himself. Let's face it all of us battle evil in this world. Jesus cares for you in your struggles and addictions.

As you tell your story of how Jesus delivers you from your habits and hang ups, people respond with awe.

Second, Jesus amazes people through your story with His compassion for the nations. What is sometimes missed is this miracle happens on the other side of the Sea of Galilee. It is called the Decapolis or the Ten Cities. It is in the region of the Golan Heights today. This is Gentile territory. Hence, all the unclean animals with the pigs. In fact, everything is unclean about this story: unclean spirits, unclean cemetery—a place of death, and unclean animals. Jesus didn't come only for those who looked and talked like Him. He came for all nations and tribes and languages.

From Genesis to Revelation, we see God's heart for all the nations.

The next time Jesus returns to this area of the Ten Cities is in [Mark 7.31](#), the people bring a deaf man to Jesus. He heals him. They were “astonished beyond measure” saying, “He has done all things well” ([Mark 7.37](#)). What caused the change of heart? Maybe it was this man's testimony. God changed this community to receive Jesus through the preaching of this healed man.

What has God done for you? How has He had mercy on you?

Who needs to hear your story this week?

Jesus amazes those who hear your story.