

***The Startling Person & Work Of Jesus Christ:
Power Over The Darkness of Depravity
Mark 5:1-20
Sermon Manuscript***

Introduction

If you are walking down the street in Warsaw (Poland) there is a certain place where you can stop and peer through a small opening in a gate and see kneeling down, facing an open courtyard, a statue of a young schoolboy praying. Many of us might dream of a quiet place of rest where we can spend time in prayer, so we are intrigued by this statue and walk around the gate to get a better view of this statue. As you approach the statue you may have nostalgic thoughts of how sweet young prayers are when they are offered up in childlike faith and begin remembering the days of your childhood. As you walk around the front of the statue, you begin to make out a familiar face from history; the sculpture that had once conjured up sweet images in your mind is now filling you with horror and disgust as you look upon the likeness of a young Adolf Hitler. The statue is entitled "HIM" and is meant to portray the hidden nature of man's depravity even in seeming innocence. Warsaw, for those historically disinclined, is where thousands of Jews were forced to live in inhumane conditions during Hitler's reign of terror during World War II where over 300,000 Jews died because of disease, hunger, or after being sent to concentration camps where many were murdered. It is easy to discern the dark depravity present in Adolf Hitler's life as we look back through history, as there is ample evidence of his atrocious acts. While it is easy to gawk at another's depravity, it is far easier to miss or dismiss our own. The truth is that it doesn't matter at what stage of life you are in, there are times when you are struck not by the horror of the depraved desires and actions of another but by the one that is looking back at you in the bathroom mirror in the morning. You have no control over them, they flood your mind or overwhelm your good senses and spill over into deeds that shame and embarrass you, especially if they happen to take place in public. You may identify with this statement from the Apostle Paul in Romans 7:21-24,

"I find...that when I want to do right, evil lies close at hand. 22 For I delight in the law of God, in my inner being, 23 but I see in my members another law waging war against the law of my mind and making me captive to the law of sin that dwells in my members. 24 Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?"

These harsh moments of reality leave men and women (Christians or not) feeling hopeless to change the condition of their hearts on their own, but in Christ we find One who has power over the darkness of our hearts, who can in an instant, change what we cannot. This morning, dear friend, you may find yourself hopelessly swimming in a torrential sea of drug/alcohol dependency, abusive behavior, sexual addiction, or some other enslaving sin; I beseech you by the mercies of God this morning to listen intently to what we will discover this morning from God's Word.

I. The Utter Hopelessness of Despair (vv. 1-6)

"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.”

i. The Hope Of The Nations Will Find You

For God, everything is about timing, though he may not be running his clock according to your schedule. Earlier in 4:35 Jesus had announced to the disciples after a period of teaching that it was time for a change of direction, saying, *“Let us go across to the other side.”* For the disciples this meant two fearful encounters: (1) was the sudden tempest that stirred across the Sea of Galilee and threatened their lives and (2) was an unholy terror that lived across the sea in the *country of the Gerasenes*. Upon arriving to the *other side of the sea*, just as Jesus was stepping foot on dry land, this unholy terror met him and his tired bunch of disciples. Verse 2 informs us that this man came from the *tombs* and had an *unclean spirit*; which informs us that the man was demonically possessed. We do not know how long this man lived in this condition but I think we can rest assured that it was for an unpleasant length of time. As we will see, the man is in a miserable situation that he can do nothing about; his own personal well-being has been wrenched far beyond his control and no one has successfully come to his aid, that is until now. That’s what I mean by God’s timing, this man would have desired that God came a long time ago; but the truth is that it is a mercy of God that Jesus arrived while the man was still alive despite his horrendous condition, and he came to deliver him from the clenches of sin. That’s what it means in Romans 5:6 that, *“For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly.”* The Bible’s description of man here is that he is *ungodly*, meaning he is undeserving of God’s grace and deserves the judgment of God’s wrath rather than the mercy of Jesus coming while we were still weak (that is, living in our sin). Your circumstances may certainly be dire this morning, you may desperately want to exercise self-control over some wicked thing that you desire but it just seems beyond your ability to do. If you want hope, just look down at this passage laying in your lap; the Gaderene demoniac was hopeless and without God, he had no prospects or joyful expectation for his life until a man showed up upon the shoreline that he haunted. The Hope of the Nations found out this demoniac and he will find you out too, no matter the depth of your depravity.

ii. Jesus Isn’t Afraid To Wade Into Your Sin

The first thing that we observe about this man is that his residence, if you can call it that, is among the tombs. The land of the Gerasenes was most likely a pagan land, meaning they didn’t worship the God of Abraham and wouldn’t have recognized in Jesus anything special with regard to him being God’s Son or Messiah (Witherington, pg. 178). Even for a pagan society it must have been strange for a man to live among the tombs and that was probably the point, the city in which he lived chased this man out of town to live among the tombs to keep him out of polite society. His people didn’t want him and they certainly wouldn’t have anything to do with him, so they sent him to a place that they just didn’t go to and that was the tombs. That is what is strange about this situation, if the pagan society of the Gerasenes would have nothing to do with the tombs than that is doubly true of anyone in Jewish society. Isaiah 65:4 makes it very clear that God has no pleasure in those who *“sit in tombs, and spend the night in secret places”* and Numbers 19:13 declared that one who touches a dead body and fails to cleanse himself ceremonially was to be cut off from Israel. The Gaderene demoniac not only lived and slept

among the tombs but also came into contact with the dead, yet Jesus in his infinite love waded right into the thick of this man's sinful condition. Not only was the man ceremonially unclean which would be enough to keep any regular Jewish man away from him, but also the demoniac was incredibly dangerous. Not knowing what else to do with what they believed was a crazed maniac, the citizens of the Gerasenes attempted to bind him with *shackles and chains* to no avail because he would wrench the chains apart and shatter the shackles...*no one had the strength to subdue him*. Brave men have already approached this man and had attempted to bring him under control and they no doubt were injured and scared off by this demonically empowered man of the tombs. Earthly remedies had been tried and they failed this man; there was no friend to lend him aid, only a mob of the Gerasenes that stood ready to run him back out of town if he dared again to enter. The demoniac experienced the utter hopelessness of despair; there was nowhere to turn for a sure sign of help and he roamed the tombs and mountains *night and day...crying out and cutting himself with stones*. To add to his misery, he looked down the steep hill leading away from the tombs into the Sea of Galilee only to see his worst fears realized...*he saw Jesus from afar*. This may come as a shock to you at first, but the sight of Jesus was not good news to this man or the Legion of demons that possessed him. You say, "Surely he sees hope in Christ!" The answer is no, dear friend, when you see yourself for who you really are, as this man did in all of his depravity, Jesus is seen clearly as one who is to be feared. His understanding of who Christ is was magnified by the demonic presence that had possessed his entire being, they saw Christ not as a regular man sent from God but as God himself, as the Rider of the White Horse who is called Faithful and True, Revelation 19:12-16,

"His eyes are like a flame of fire, and on his head are many diadems, and he has a name written that no one knows but himself. He is clothed in a robe dipped in blood, and the name by which he is called is The Word of God. And the armies of heaven, arrayed in fine linen, white and pure, were following him on white horses. From his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations, and he will rule them with a rod of iron. He will tread the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God the Almighty. On his robe and on his thigh he has a name written, King of kings and Lord of lords."

If the man feared the demons that resided in him, then you can believe he feared what they themselves feared. When he saw Jesus approaching the shoreline, he saw judgment coming his way. He came tearing out of the tombs to throw himself before Christ, not because he was seeking mercy but because when you see Christ for who he really is and see the depravity of your transgressions against God you are humbled and experience for better or worse Philippians 2:10-12,

"10 so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, 11 and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."

You may be opposed to God this morning as this man and his demonic procession was; realize dear friend that your knee will bow before Christ the same as the demoniac did and it will either be done in worship or as the recipient of God's wrath. There is hope yet for those that count themselves as the enemy of God because, "God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him," (John 3:17).

II. In Opposition Hope Can Be Found (vv. 7-13)

“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.”

i. Sinners Resist The Call of Christ

As far as I can see in the biblical record there is no evidence to suggest that it is possible for a believer, a child of God, to be possessed by Satan or one of his minions. Every instance of exorcism is of that of one who seems to have very little knowledge of God and much less, knowledge of Jesus Christ. What we see here with the demoniac is similar to what I believe every non-Christian experiences with regard to God, they are opposed to his authority and see him as one who is seeking to take their freedom away; though in the case of demonic possession the ferocity and antagonism is certainly more magnified than how it would be in a non-Christian without an unclean spirit. We know the demoniac is not bowing down in worship of Christ because of the defensive posture he takes in his speech towards Jesus in crying out in a loud voice, *“What have you to do with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God?”* The demoniac knows who Jesus is without having to be introduced, since he has the knowledge of the legion of demons possessing him and he clearly sees himself on the losing side of the spiritual conflict between God and the powers of darkness when he implores Jesus to not torment him. The demoniac’s understanding of Christ is that he has come before the time of the final judgment to torment him and his only desire is that Jesus would go away from him and leave him in peace. How often is that true of non-Christians; their only desire is that God would leave them alone in their sin and allow them to continue their way of life, though it be a miserable one. For them, it is far more miserable to think of living under God’s authority than it is to continue in their sin. It is always a curious thing to me that many desire to go to heaven where they will experience the constant presence of God for all eternity but simultaneously reject the idea that they are to live holy lives before him now; if you don’t enjoy his presence now to the point where it drives you to live obediently before him, what makes you think you will enjoy it in heaven? Whatever the case, Jesus makes clear to the demoniac that the matter is not up for debate; he will become a child of God this very day when he commands him, *“Come out of the man, you unclean spirit!”*

ii. Satan Will Not Surrender His Domain Easily

Not only is this man a sinner but we also discover that Satan is deeply entrenched in this man through a *legion* of demons. He has been declared the property of Satan and their desire is to further mar the image of God in his creation of man by further harming this poor soul. When Jesus makes it clear that the demons were to be exorcised in order that he might save the demoniac from their terror, they beg to remain in the country of the Gerasenes. This possibly indicates that the area in and around the Gerasenes was occupied heavily by a demonic presence that has perhaps been chiefly dominated in this one man living in the tombs (Edwards, pg. 157). The legion desires to continue their reign of terror in this pagan country and the closest thing that they can possess besides this man are a herd of swine nearby. Jesus allows their request and they rush upon the 2,000 pigs and send them into such frenzy that the swine rush down the hill and

drown in the Sea of Galilee. Whether this destroys the demons or not is not recorded but it reveals to those present what the Legion of demons would have eventually done to this man formerly known as the Gerasene demoniac (Lane, pg. 186). Opposition towards Christ in the hearts of men is strong and it is even stronger when complicated by demonic presence and influence. You may be opposed to Jesus or know someone that is and what you need to take away from this is that even in the midst of such powerful opposition there is hope to be found in Christ in that he doesn't stop pressing until he has accomplished the will of his father, John 6:35-40,

“35 Jesus said to them, “I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst. 36 But I said to you that you have seen me and yet do not believe. 37 All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never cast out. 38 For I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will but the will of him who sent me. 39 And this is the will of him who sent me, that I should lose nothing of all that he has given me, but raise it up on the last day. 40 For this is the will of my Father, that everyone who looks on the Son and believes in him should have eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day.”

Those that look on the Son of God with faith not only will receive eternal life but a changed life that will cause quite a stir among their peers.

III. The Dismay Of Conversion (vv. 14-20)

“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.”

i. The Awesome Power Of Salvation Strikes Fear In The Hearts Of Men

For the herdsmen who kept watch over the pigs the entire ordeal of the demoniac's exorcism must have been quite the sight. The whole countryside was aware of this strangely oppressed man who had supernatural strength, a freakish howl that could be heard at all hours of the day, and we know from Luke's Gospel that the man did not have a stitch of clothing on as he dwelt among the tombs. These herdsmen witnessed the salvation of the demoniac, saw sanity wash over his entire being, these things coupled with the terrible site of 2,000 swine drowning at sea sent these men running into the city and out into the countryside to strike up the mob once more to bring this freakish matter concerning the demoniac under control. As the large group of concerned citizens and country folk arrive on the scene they see the man that once frightened them with amazing feats of strength and uncontrollable behavior *sitting there, clothed and in his right mind*. 2 Corinthians 5:17 was personified on this day in this man once known as the terror of the land, *“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.”* The amazing transformation of this man's life struck fear in the

hearts of those men and women who knew him because they had themselves attempted to change this man's behavior with powerful tools such as chains and brute force and failed, but one Man changed the demoniac without as much as laying one violent hand upon him. Jesus didn't speak any incantations over the man; the Word of Life simply spoke new life into this man as simply as He spoke the world into existence. When we speak of salvation in Christ, we are speaking of nothing less than the powerful love of God speaking creation into existence! This was a new man but not everyone was excited about it.

ii. The Consequences of Salvation May Come At Great Public Cost

I phrase this point negatively specifically to reveal how the greater public often feels about men and women coming to Christ, they often feel it is not worth the good of their friend that it costs them (society) personally. This is illustrated for us here by the citizens *beg[ging] [for] Jesus to depart from their region*. There are two reasons why I believe they do this: (1) they are fearful what else Jesus might do if he has the power to drastically change one man whose power they feared. It's not that they may not find some peace in the fact that this man is no longer a raging maniac but they fear the power of Christ, what might he do to them? (2) Part of what they fear Jesus might further do in their country has much to do with what happened concerning the 2,000 swine that are now sinking in the Sea of Galilee. The herdsmen of the Gerasenes were raising pigs most likely for the Roman Army that occupied their region and that of Jerusalem (Edwards, pg. 155). They certainly weren't raising them for Jewish consumption, as they were unclean and would never eat it. The pigs represented a tremendous source of livelihood and Jesus had singlehandedly caused more destruction in saving one man than the demoniac ever did in his time of torment (Edwards, pg. 158-159). This speaks to the wickedness of people, of you and I as well, they would have rather this man remained possessed, tormented, and eventually dead than lose a substantial sum of financial gain. The world hates this about salvation. If a man, woman, or child comes to Christ they are a new creation, no longer given to the things they once were. That might mean a drug dealer no longer deals in what is a precious commodity to his "customers." It may mean that a young teenager no longer gives her body sexually to her boyfriend. It may mean that an adulterer leaves behind his mistress because God has saved and convicted him of his sin, confesses his sin to his wife, perhaps even ending his marriage because the wife can't stand to be around him (in this case he loses not only his wife but his mistress). Personally, I would pray against such things but they have happened when men and women come to Christ and are radically changed. I had a friend that was a top notch medical salesman who when he came to Christ saw a reduction in his sales because he was no longer willing to lie, cheat, and break the law to make sales anymore. Salvation comes at a cost and it is a cost that true believers gladly pay, no matter the price that must be paid.

iii. True Salvation Will Produce A Faithful Witness

Jesus honored the request of the townsfolk in departing from their region, sort of. As he was getting into the boat the *man who had been possessed with demons begged him that he might be with him*. That's the natural reaction for one who has had their heart marvelously converted from that of a sinner to the redeemed. Your desire as a believer ought to be to go and sit at the feet of Jesus. Like Paul, you say in Philippians 1:21-26,

"21 For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. 22 If I am to live in the flesh, that means fruitful labor for me. Yet which I shall choose I cannot tell. 23 I am hard pressed between the two. My desire is to depart and be with Christ, for that

is far better. 24 But to remain in the flesh is more necessary on your account. 25 Convinced of this, I know that I will remain and continue with you all, for your progress and joy in the faith, 26 so that in me you may have ample cause to glory in Christ Jesus...”

Jesus turns this new convert away from following him like the rest of the disciples. He will not share in the apostolic authority or see the things they will see and it is no fault of his own. The design of Christ is that he would stay and do the work of an evangelist, “*Go home to your friends and tell them how much the Lord has done for you, and how he had had mercy on you*” (vs. 19). Dear friend, Jesus may not be calling you to some marvelous ministry that has you gallivanting around the metroplex or the world doing amazing things like the 12 apostles did. He may simply send you to your own that you might *proclaim...how much Jesus [has] done for [you]*. Will you be faithful to bear witness about Christ...causing those around you to marvel at the magnificent change of your character and person?

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