

The Real Jesus, Mark 5:1-20, “Hi My Name is Legion” 3/20/22

Mark 5:1 They went across the lake... This is a continuation of the story where we left off last week. Jesus and the disciples are traveling from North to East on Lake Galilee in the boat when the storm comes out of nowhere. We see Jesus display his absolute power and control over the storm, leaving the disciples asking the question, “Who is this?” Well, in the story today we are going to see not only does Jesus have absolute power and control over the natural realm, but he also has absolute power and control over the supernatural realm. In this story we read the longest and most vivid account in the entire Bible of an exorcism. This story immediately confronts our modern, western naturalist education. Most secular, educated people will roll their eyes and say “You don’t really believe in demons, do you?” Spirits, angels, the Devil,... aren’t these just leftover superstitions from a bygone age? Many Christians are even intimidated to talk about the spiritual world, they don’t want to be seen as some backwater, holy roller. But I think in this sense, Christians are the fall more open-minded people who recognize that the universe is far more complex than what you can see with a microscope or a telescope. Isn’t it possible that there are dimensions of reality even if you haven’t personally experienced them? Isn’t it narrow to look down on those who are open to the supernatural, unseen world?

One respected scholar said “The objection to the supernatural comes from a rigid application of our modern worldview’s definition of reality, which is but only one of a large number of humanly constructed maps of reality. But it is no more an absolute map of reality than any of the previous maps. **A person who rules out even asking questions about divine activity is not neutral.**”¹ People rule out the supernatural because of a cultural narrative that they have bought into. **[Blank Slide]** Denying the supernatural world not only makes one narrow-minded but it also makes one naïve. Because if you don’t have a supernatural worldview like the one in the Bible you can’t call anything good or evil. In the world of moral relativity all is conditioned, grey and a matter of opinion...enter Vladimir Putin and the war on Ukraine. Suddenly the word evil is back in vogue. The secularists have tried so hard to eliminate ideas like good and evil, to say that if we just educate people and give them financial empowerment, we can eliminate war. People are waking up to the reality that there is no better word, and indeed no more accurate word to describe what we all know to be true: evil is real, and evil is being perpetrated by some of the most educated people on the planet. So as we are confronted with the supernatural world today, be skeptical of your skepticism.

Mark 5:1 They went across the lake to the region of the Gerasenes. ² When Jesus got out of the boat, a man with an impure spirit came from the tombs to meet him. To help bring you into the setting of this moment, this takes place in a location called Kursi. In the 5th century they built a **Byzantine Church [Picture]** here to mark this story, the ruins of which you can see here. And just up the hill in the corner you can see caves, often used as tombs in Jesus’ day, which cover this hillside and it is very likely that this demon-possessed man would have roamed in these caves. Here’s a **picture of me** standing at the site of one of those caves, and behind me you see

¹ Marcus Borg, as Quoted by Pastor Mark Clark in sermon on Mark 5:1-20

the ruins of that church, but also cliffs that run into the sea of Galilee, which will become part of the geography of this story.

³ *This man lived in the tombs, and no one could bind him anymore, not even with a chain.*

⁴ *For he had often been chained hand and foot, but he tore the chains apart and broke the irons on his feet. No one was strong enough to subdue him.*

⁵ *Night and day among the tombs and in the hills he would cry out and cut himself with stones.*

⁶ *When he saw Jesus from a distance, he ran and fell on his knees in front of him.*

⁷ *He shouted at the top of his voice, "What do you want with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God?"*

What a disturbing state this tortured soul was in. We aren't told how this man got this way. Maybe he thought opening himself up to the demonic world would give him power and life. But what we do know is that Satan, who is a thief had stolen everything from this man. Listen to how one author says it, "He lost his home and the fellowship of his family and friends. He lost his decency as he ran around in the tombs naked. He lost his self-control and lived like a wild animal, screaming, cutting himself, and frightening his community. He lost his peace and purpose for living, and he would have remained in that plight had Jesus not come through a storm to rescue him."²

Notice, no human could tame this man, no chains could contain him, but he fell at the feet of Jesus. Interesting what the demons say to Jesus, the church father from 11th century, Theophilac, "While the men in the boat were wondering what kind of man this Jesus is, the demons came to give them the answer. He is the son of the most high God."³ Ironic that the demons proclaim the truth before the disciples. As strong and powerful as this demonic influence appeared to be, we find them begging and whimpering like scared puppies at the feet of Jesus.

In God's name don't torture me!"⁸ For Jesus had said to him, "Come out of this man, you impure spirit!"

⁹ *Then Jesus asked him, "What is your name?" "My name is Legion," he replied, "for we are many."* A roman legion was 6000 soldiers, so this man must have had a whole host of demons manipulating him. Unlike, the movies when we see a long, drawn-out battle with the priest and the demons, Jesus speaks simply- "Get out". Whether it's a 60 mile an hour winds, or 6000 demons- A word is all it takes for our Lord.

² Warren W. Wiersbe, [The Bible Exposition Commentary](#), paraphrased.

³ As Quoted by Lon Solomon in "People Jesus Met: Legion" sermon.

¹⁰ And he begged Jesus again and again not to send them out of the area. ¹¹ A large herd of pigs was feeding on the nearby hillside.

¹² The demons begged Jesus, "Send us among the pigs; allow us to go into them."

¹³ He gave them permission, and the impure spirits came out and went into the pigs. The herd, about two thousand in number, rushed down the steep bank into the lake and were drowned.

Now if you are an animal lover...you may be horrified at this story and might not like Jesus very much here. What is going on here with the pigs? First you may wonder, "What are these Jewish people doing with pigs?" You say, "I don't know much about the Jewish people, but I'm pretty sure pork is a big no-no." That's true, but these people East of the Sea of Galilee weren't Jewish. This side was under Roman occupation, gentile cities throughout this area called the Decapolis. Also, we see this story through our modern lens of Charlotte's Web. We attach moral and relational feelings to animals in a way that wasn't part of this society, especially with pigs which were seen as unclean to the Jewish people. But I believe Jesus is after something deeper and more intentional in this bizarre scene of 2000 demon-possessed pigs running to their death. Certainly Jesus could have done anything he wanted with them, but he permitted the pigs...Why? We get a hint of this in the response to this event.

¹⁴ Those tending the pigs ran off and reported this in the town and countryside, and the people went out to see what had happened.

¹⁵ When they came to Jesus, they saw the man who had been possessed by the legion of demons, sitting there, dressed and in his right mind; and they were afraid.

¹⁶ Those who had seen it told the people what had happened to the demon-possessed man—and told about the pigs as well. ¹⁷ Then the people began to plead with Jesus to leave their region.

Does that seem to be a strange, inhospitable reaction to this miraculous healing? Certainly, there were sick people in their town, people in need of all kinds of help and healing in their families and here is a miracle worker! Wouldn't the realization that Jesus healed Legion, the man that everyone was afraid of, wouldn't that have resulted in wanting more of Jesus? Instead they want less. **Blank Slide** Why? We must look to the pigs. The pigs were a money-making business for the citizens in this town. The Romans ate well. I thank God for pork. Jim Gaffigan says, "A pig is an amazing creature. You feed it an apple which is basically garbage and it turns it into bacon. That's like the greatest recycling program ever!" The loss of 2000 pigs would have hit the pockets of the businessmen in this community. So on one side you have a man healed from his torment, and on the other you have the loss of financial resources. And the community said, we want the pigs more than the people.

I believe Jesus, in a way that only He can, was awakening the disciples and us as disciples today to the seen and unseen methods of spiritual warfare. Jesus says in John 10 that Satan came to steal, kill and destroy humanity. We tend to hear this story and assume Legion was the only one

who was being influenced by the demonic world, that he was the one who really needed supernatural and spiritual freedom from bondage...it's obvious. Meanwhile an entire village rejects Jesus, experiences no freedom because they were in bondage to financial prosperity. This man called Legion knew he needed deliverance, but this community was blinded by money to their true spiritual bondage. Could it be that Satan and his demonic hoards are just as engaged in subtle, hidden ways to keep us in bondage? To keep us from true freedom and life in Jesus? In the same way that Jesus used the physical storm to draw out the hidden unbelief in our hearts, Jesus was using a financial storm to draw out **the hidden masters of our hearts.**

The Bible tells us that we can open up pathways to demonic influences not only through overt ways like the occult, witchcraft, mind-altering drugs, but also through hidden masters of the heart. **Romans 6: ¹² Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires.** Sin is personified as a master that controls our hearts just like the demons controlled Legion's body. We can be open to demonic influence through everyday sins, even celebrated sins in our culture. Let me give you some biblical examples: **The Demonic Master of Selfish Ambition.** Matthew 16 Jesus tells his disciples that he's going to suffer and die. ²² **Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. "Never, Lord!" he said. "This shall never happen to you!"** ²³ **Jesus turned and said to Peter, "Get behind me, Satan!"**

You are a stumbling block to me; you do not have in mind the concerns of God, but merely human concerns." Jesus called Peter Satan. That's a bad day.⁴ Peter's selfish ambition was being influenced by the whispers of the enemy and he didn't even know it. We can be a disciple of Jesus and yet be influenced by the whispers of the enemy, co-opting our own ambitions. The whisper that sounds like **"I must have _____ in order to be happy, successful, accepted."** The enemy whispers, "Nothing is as important as success. You must do whatever it takes and out-hustle everyone else to make partner in order to be accepted." He whispers, "If your kids don't get into the best schools and have great jobs then you will be a failure." Demonic influence can look like a séance in the basement, but it can also come in the form of a tiger mom endlessly drilling her kids on the periodic table on the weekend or the guy grinding at his computer each night after everyone has gone to bed.

The Demonic Master of Envy

James 4:1-2 What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don't they come from your desires that battle within you? ² You desire but do not have, so you kill. You covet but you cannot get what you want, so you quarrel and fight...

⁷ Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. James attaches the sin of envy, to spiritual warfare and the influence of the devil. Be careful when you say "I deserve..." because it may be whispered by the demonic world. I deserve that life, that wife, their kids, that car, that house, that job, that popularity, same happiness, that vacation.

The Demonic Master of Anger.

⁴ Thanks to Mark Clark for this.

Ephesians 4: ²⁶ *“In your anger do not sin”*: *Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry,* ²⁷ *and do not give the devil a foothold.* Have you ever said, I was so angry it was like someone else in me? You felt out of control? It’s like giving the demonic world access to your house.

Blank Slide These are just a few examples from Scripture but all unchecked, unconfessed sin is a gateway to demonic influence. Some of you are being controlled by a sin stronghold that, if you don’t deal with now, it will become Hell on earth, it’s working on destroying you even if it hasn’t worked itself out in obvious ways yet.

[For 10:30am Service] *There are men, husbands and fathers here in this room that are under the influence of Porn. You are the man of your house. And you as the leader have allowed this demonic influence into your home. Your job is to protect your wife, protect your kids in the midst of a war and you are allowing the enemy a pathway through your door and into your home. It’s like giving your keys, your alarm code, and your passwords to your bank accounts to a thief. But there is hope.*

The townspeople were still trapped by their own greed and they missed out on true freedom and life in Jesus. Here’s the challenge for us today- Jesus may be addressing your bondage to demonic masters. Don’t respond like the townspeople and say “Please leave.” Respond like the man formerly known as Legion, who fell at Jesus’ feet and was set free. You can live this room free just like him. **1 John 3:8 *Jesus came to defeat the works of the enemy.*** No one can free you but Jesus. But it will take more than just information. The demons know more theology than you...it’s not just knowledge. It’s allowing Jesus access to cast out the masters of your heart, and allowing Him to take the reign in full surrender and obedience to whatever he tells you to do.

Time of reflection. Use connection Card. **Jesus, I need freedom from the Master of _____.**

Here’s what I know- one of Satan’s names is accuser. Some of you are under the influence of the accuser. You are listening to a voice that is telling you- you are worthless, too ugly, too dumb, too messed up, no one likes you, no one cares about you, you will never amount to anything, know one will ever be proud of you or rely on you, know one would miss you if you are gone, everyone would be better off if you just left. Don’t you believe a single word.

Hear the voice of **Jesus that you are beloved.** And I proved it to you. Jesus traded places with Legion. At the cross, He was stripped naked, he was abused, he was bound and cried out, he was abandoned, he was assigned to the tomb. At the cross, Jesus absorbed all the evil of the world, far more than Legion. So that somehow, he could wipe out evil without wiping out you and me.⁵

⁵ Thanks to Tim Keller for that phrase.