

Jesus Sets the Captives Free

Text: Mark 5:1-20

Introduction:

1. The context: Christ and the disciples have just crossed the Sea of Galilee over the past night. They came through a terrific storm and Christ demonstrated His power over the forces of nature.
2. This chapter: Christ demonstrates his power in three realms:
 - Over Devils – healing of the Gadarene demoniac
 - Over Disease – healing of the woman with the issue of blood
 - Over Death – healing of Jairus' daughter
 - “He delivered in turn, a man, a woman, and a child.” (Phillips)
3. This account is one of the most powerful demonstrations of the power of God over the forces of darkness, surpassed only by the casting of Satan & the demonic host out of heaven in the past, and their consignment to the lake of fire in the future. This man was no ordinary demon-possessed man. He was “Satan’s prize exhibit” (Phillips). It is a powerful example of the life transforming power of Christ and the Gospel.
4. One of the purposes for which Christ came was to destroy the works of Satan – 1 John 3:8 *“For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, **that he might destroy the works of the devil.**”*

I. His Condition (Vs. 1-5)

He was...

A. An Unclean Man (Vs.1-3a)

1. Dominated by an Unclean Prince – “a man with an unclean spirit”.
 - a. Luke says “which had devils long time” (Lk. 8:27) and Matthew says “possessed with devils” (Mt. 8:28).
 - b. **Satan** is the spirit that “now worketh in the children of disobedience.” (Eph. 2:2) He holds us in bondage through the fear of death (Heb. 2:14-15).
1. Dwelling in an Unclean Place
 - a. “country of the Gadarenes” = on the Southeast shore of the Sea of Galilee, in the vicinity of what we know today as the Golan Heights.
 - b. “out of the tombs...dwelling among the tombs” = driven there by the demons (Luke 8:29). There is a connection between the occult and obsession with death and darkness.
2. Defiled in an Unclean Practice – “and ware no clothes” (Lk. 8:27). The demonic hosts are ‘unclean’ and lead their subjects to live and act in an ‘unclean’ way both morally and physically. After the fall, God clothed Adam and Eve to cover their nakedness and Satan

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has been working overtime to get men and women undressed ever since!

3. Challenge: Sin makes us unclean in the presence of God. *“But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags...”* (Is. 64:6) Romans 3:10-18, 23 “As it is written...”

B. An Unrestrainable Man (Vs. 3b-4a)

1. His binding with the chains
 - a. ‘fettters’ = for the binding the feet
 - b. ‘chains’ = for binding the hands and other parts of the body
2. His breaking of the chains
 - a. Revealing his superhuman, demonic strength
 - b. As a result, no one would attempt to “pass by that way” (Mt. 8:28)

C. An Untameable Man (Vs. 4b)

1. ‘tame’ = word used of the subjugation of animals
2. Note: The two failed attempts of men to solve the situation – **Restraint** (fettters & chains) and **Reform** (tame). Each of these 3 accounts in Mark 5 highlight the weakness/inability of man and the power of God as the ONLY solution to the problem.

D. An Uncontrolled Man (Vs. 5)

1. There was Sorrow
 - a. ‘crying’ = a loud scream or shriek; “an unearthly yell or scream under strong emotional excitement.” (Hiebert)
 - b. Life without Christ is a life described in the words of Ephesians 2:12 as “having no hope and, without God in the world.”
2. There was Scars
 - a. This man would cut and lacerate himself with sharp stones
 - b. Note: Self-harm is demonic. Satan delights in the mutilation of the human body which was created to reflect the glory of the Creator.

II. His Conversion (Vs. 6-13)

A. The Demoniac’s Encounter with Jesus (Vs. 6-10)

1. The Cry of the Demon (Vs. 6-7)
 - a. They believed in the Most High God (Vs. 7a) (James 2:19)
 - i. Title often used of God in the Old Testament.
 - ii. Title refers to the true God as distinguished from all false gods (Hiebert).
 - b. They believed in the Son of God (Vs. 7b)
 - i. They were prostrating themselves before him (Vs. 6).
 - ii. ‘worshipped’ = to prostrate oneself, to fall upon the knees & touch the ground with the forehead as an expression of profound reverence.

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- iii. Note: While Satan, as an angel of light, deceives millions into either denying the Person of Jesus or believing falsehoods about Jesus, he is not at all in doubt as to who Jesus is!
- c. They believed in the coming judgment (Vs. 7c)
 - i. Luke records that the demons requested not to be sent into the 'deep' (Lk. 8:31). This is the same word for the "bottomless pit" a place of judgment for demonic spirits (Rev. 9:1,2,11; 11:7, 17:8, 20:1-3)
 - ii. Matthew's account – "art thou come hither to torment us before the time?" (8:29)
- 2. The Command to the Demon (Vs. 8)
- 3. The Count of the Demons (Vs. 9)
 - a. 'legion' = a Roman military unit consisting of about 6,000 infantrymen, a common sight in these regions. Christ used the same term in Matthew 26:53 where he said, "Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels?" This is over 72,000 angels! The number of the swine (2,000) indicate that there were at least 2,000 demons.
 - b. Vs. 15 – Indicates that this man was possessed with about this number of demons
 - c. In Matthew 12:43-45, Jesus revealed that demons actively seek residence in human bodies and encourage others to join them once they have found a victim. *"When an unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walketh through dry places, seeking rest, and findeth none. Then he saith, I will return into my house from whence I came out; and when he is come, he findeth it empty, swept, and garnished. Then goeth he, and taketh with himself seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter in and dwell there: and the last state of that man is worse than the first."*

B. The Demoniac's Entreaty to Jesus (Vs. 10-12)

The demons beseech Christ concerning:

- 1. Their place (Vs. 10). They did not want to give up their strong hold upon the area where they had held this man and those who feared him in bondage for so long.
- 2. Their possession (Vs. 11-12). Now the whole host of demons possessing this man all cry out in a chorus of ugly voices.

C. The Demoniac's Exorcism by Jesus (Vs. 13)

- 1. The compassion of the deliverance – 'compassion' (Vs. 19). This was unmerited favour.
- 2. The command of the deliverance - Jesus gives them leave, again demonstrating His absolute sovereignty and power over them.

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Christ issues a one-word command to these demons – ‘go’ (Matt. 8:32). What power in just one word from the lips of the Son of God!

III. His Change (Vs. 14-17)

A. The Areas of Change (Vs. 15)

1. Seated – no longer restless
2. Clothed – no longer naked
3. Sober – no longer insane. “right mind” has the basic idea of ‘self-controlled’. He was in control of his mental faculties.
4. 2 Cor. 5:17 *“Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a **new creature**: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.”*

B. The Antagonism to the Change (Vs. 14, 16-17)

1. Their Reporting (Vs. 14)
2. Their Reaction – ‘fear’ (15)
 - a. What a strange fear! They were terrified of the demoniac but now they were afraid of Christ, the one who had solved the problem they could never solve.
 - b. These people had the awesome privilege of seeing firsthand the miracle working power of Christ and yet they did not respond in saving faith. This dispels the commonly held belief that all men need to convince them to turn to Christ is to see a miracle.
3. Their Request – ‘depart’ (Vs. 17)
 - a. “they began to pray him” = ‘pray’ implies that they ‘requested’ or ‘appealed’ with the fervency of an earnest prayer (Hiebert).
 - b. It seems they were more interested in material gain than the deliverance of a precious soul. “They were more concerned to protect their financial interests than to rejoice in the deliverance of the neighbourhood demoniac.” (Hiebert)
 - c. This is similar to the demon possessed damsel delivered through Paul’s ministry in Acts 16:16

IV. His Commission (Vs. 18-20)

A. His Desire (Vs. 18)

1. His desire to be with Christ another sign of the new birth. Of the 3 requests made of Jesus in this story, only this man’s request was denied!
2. We also desire to be with our Saviour away from the scene of our past life but Christ has a work for us to do for Him in His absence.

B. His Duty (Vs. 19-20)

1. The particulars of the command (Vs. 19)
 - a. Go & Tell!

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- i. What? He was to share the following: 1. The Lord's work in his life. 2. The Lord's compassion in his life.
- ii. Where? Starting at home with friends and family. "Around the world, across the street"
- b. God's methods haven't changed!
 - i. The command of Christ: Mark 16:15 *"And he said unto them, **Go** ye into all the world, and **preach** the gospel to every creature."*
 - ii. The command to the Apostles: Acts 5:20 *"**Go, stand and speak** in the temple to the people all the words of this life."*
 - iii. Note: It is of interest to note that even in our day of digital communication, secular organisations (e.g. political parties & activists) still resort to one on one contact with people in the streets and on the door step. They are simply borrowing a biblical method that works and yet many Christians today sneer at old-fashioned evangelism!
- 2. The performance of the command (Vs. 20)
 - a. 'publish' = this word commonly translated 'preach' in the N.T. (e.g. "preach the Word")
 - b. 'Decapolis' = group of 10 cities east of Galilee. Gadara was one of those ten cities. He became a missionary to his home area.
 - c. Note: The salvation of special cases like this can have a profound and powerful impact on a particular people group or locality.
 - d. Seems his witness had a profound effect on the area as the response to Jesus' next visit was profoundly different (Mark 7)

Conclusion:

- 1. To the unsaved: Have you experienced the salvation Christ offers?
- 2. To the saved: Are we being faithful witnesses of what Christ has done in our lives? Do we share our testimony? How serious are we about the Great Commission?