

Jesus Christ: God Over All

From the Gospel of Mark

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Bible Text: Mark 5:2-20

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I would like to read the first 20 verses of Mark chapter five.

Hear God's Word.

And they came to the other side of the sea, into the country of the Gerasenes. And when He had come out of the boat, immediately a man from the tombs with an unclean spirit met Him, and he had his dwelling among the tombs. And no one was able to bind him anymore, even with a chain; because he had often been bound with shackles and chains, and the chains had been torn apart by him, and the shackles broken in pieces, and no one was strong enough to subdue him. And constantly night and day, among the tombs and in the mountains, he was crying out and gashing himself with stones.

And seeing Jesus from a distance, he ran up and bowed down before Him; and crying out with a loud voice, he said, "What do I have to do with You, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I implore You by God, do not torment me!" For He had been saying to him, "Come out of the man, you unclean spirit!" And He was asking him, "What is your name?" And he said to Him, "My name is Legion; for we are many." And he began to entreat Him earnestly not to send them out of the country.

Now there was a big herd of swine feeding there on the mountain. And the demons entreated Him, saying, "Send us into the swine so that we may enter them." And He gave them permission. And coming out, the unclean spirits entered the swine; and the herd rushed down the steep bank into the sea, about two thousand of them; and they were drowned in the sea.

And their herdsmen ran away and reported it in the city and out in the country. And the people came to see what it was that had happened. And they came to Jesus and observed the man who had been demon-possessed sitting down, clothed and in his right mind, the very man who had had the "legion"; and they became frightened. And those who had seen it

described to them how it had happened to the demon-possessed man, and all about the swine.

And they began to entreat Him to depart from their region. And as He was getting into the boat, the man who had been demon-possessed was entreating Him that he might accompany Him. And He did not let him, but He said to him, "Go home to your people and report to them what great things the Lord has done for you, and how He had mercy on you." And he went away and began to proclaim in Decapolis what great things Jesus had done for him; and everyone marveled.¹

Let's pray together.

Father, thank you for your Word and thank you for your grace. Thank you for the great love and power of Jesus Christ. Grant that we might understand him better, know him more deeply, serve him more fervently. Grant us your grace and apply your Word to our hearts, we pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

In a little book called *Flatland* a mathematician describes a country which is two dimensional. It would be like this sheet of paper. Can you imagine anyone living inside the plane of this sheet of paper? The people who live there are called Mr. Dot and Mr. Line and Mr. Square and Mr. Circle. And an astounding thing would happen in this strange place called Flatland. Mr. and Mrs. Dot would disappear. And Mr. Circle and Mrs. Circle would disappear. Where did they go? They went into the third dimension. They entered the third dimension, a dimension about which the Flatlanders knew nothing. You see, the author of *Flatland*, was giving an apologetic for and a reason for believing in another dimension.

Many of the people around us in our culture and in our society know nothing of the spiritual dimension, the unseen spiritual world. And in the end, when each of us passes from this life, we will enter what we may call another dimension, that unseen spiritual world. And the Bible tells us that Jesus Christ is Lord and King, not only in this world which we can see, but in the unseen world, the invisible world, the spiritual world. And our text also shows us that Jesus Christ is, in fact, Lord and King of this unseen spiritual world. And so, I submit to you this morning that since Jesus Christ is Lord, not only of this world which we can see, but of an unseen spiritual world, you must trust him as your guide. You must trust him to lead you out of this world into that unseen spiritual world. Jesus Christ is Lord over the unseen spirit world you will enter; trust Him as your guide.

Let's explore how this is worked out in our text today. I am going to begin in the middle of the story rather than at the beginning of the story. Now that may seem a little strange to you, but I want you to catch the emphasis in a couple of verses. Let's read, if we could, please, verses 11 through 13. "Now there was a large herd of swine feeding nearby on the mountain. The demons implored Him, saying, 'Send us into the swine so

¹ Mark 5:1-20.

that we may enter them.’ Jesus gave them permission.”² Do you catch those words? Listen to the text. “Jesus gave them permission. And coming out, the unclean spirits entered the swine; and the herd rushed down the steep bank into the sea, about two thousand of them; and they were drowned in the sea.”³ This must have been quite a sight, 2000 swine, pigs, rushing over a hillside and plunging into the water.

And why did they do that? Well, the text tells us. These unclean spirits implored and begged Jesus, “Send us into the swine so that we may enter them.”⁴ And the next words are, “Jesus gave them permission.”⁵ Now the permission which Jesus gave was not a mere, “Ok, you can go.” Rather, it carried the force of a command. It is like a messenger who comes to his king or master and says, “I am ready to go.” What does the king say? “All right, you can go.” No. More likely the king commands, “Go!” And he sends the messenger on his way. This is the force of the language which is before us and this is why the unclean spirits implore Jesus, “Send us in order that we may go.” And so the force of the language and the idea in the story is very simple. Jesus is Lord over the unseen world occupied by these unclean spirits.

Now I should mention that the beginning of the book of Mark has to do with showing who Jesus is, that he is God. And the latter part of the book of Mark shows us what Jesus came to do. And so what we are saying fits in with the purpose of the beginning of the book of Mark. Our text shows us who Jesus is. It shows us that he is Lord and he is God.

The little section that comes before our story is the narrative about Jesus stilling the storm. Jesus is in the boat with his disciples when the storm arises. What does He do? He speaks to the wind. “Hush, be still.”⁶ He is Lord over this physical world. Then there is the story that comes after our text for this morning. It has to do with a couple of healings. There was a little girl who was very sick and she died. She was the twelve year old daughter of a Synagogue official who sought out Jesus. “My little daughter is at the point of death; *please* come and lay Your hands on her, so that she will get well and live.” And what did Jesus do? He went with the Synagogue official. On their way, with a large crowd following, a woman with a hemorrhage pressed through the crowd. “If I can just touch his robe I will get well.” Jesus felt her touch and the healing virtue go out from him. “Who touched me? Woman, your faith has made you well.” Arriving at the Synagogue official’s home, they found the little girl was dead. Jesus took her by the hand and says, “Little girl, get up!” Yes, Jesus is Lord of the physical world. And now we see he is also Lord and King of the unseen, the spiritual world.

And, interestingly enough, the unclean spirits, the devils know who Jesus is. Look with me at verses seven, eight and nine.

² Mark 5:11-13.

³ Mark 5:13.

⁴ Mark 5:12.

⁵ Mark 5:13.

⁶ Mark 4:39.

And shouting with a loud voice, he said, [That is, the man coming out of the tomb] “What business do we have with each other, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I implore You by God, do not torment me!” For He had been saying to him, “Come out of the man, you unclean spirit!” And He was asking him, “What is your name?” And he said to Him, “My name is Legion; for we are many.” And he began to implore Him earnestly not to send them out of the country.⁷

Yes, these unclean spirits knew who Jesus was. They called him, “Jesus, Son of the Most High God.”⁸ This is in startling contrast to the understanding of the disciples. Look at the end of chapter four, verse 39.

And He got up and rebuked the wind and said to the sea, “Hush, be still.” And the wind died down and it became perfectly calm. And He said to them, “Why are you afraid? How is it that you have no faith?” And they became very much afraid and said to one another, “Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey Him?”⁹

“Who is this man?” exclaim the disciples. They didn’t yet get who Jesus was. But the devils knew. What a contrast.

And the demons cried out to Jesus, “Do not torment us. Do not send us out of the country.” These unclean spirits knew full well that Jesus Christ the Lord of all, the Lord of their unseen world was perfectly capable of sending them out of the country in which they were living into perdition and to eternal torment. They knew this full well. And they were begging Jesus not send them to that awful place. They understood the unseen world much better than the disciples. And I suspect they also understood the unseen world, the unseen spiritual world, better than we do.

The implication in the text is that there is a place of eternal torment *and* there is a place of eternal bliss. There is a place of life and rest and hope and there is a place of wrath and punishment and death. And the unclean spirits were begging Jesus not to sent them to that awful place of punishing wrath..

Dear friends, there is an unseen world, an unseen spiritual world. One day you will enter and I will enter that world and see it more perfectly. And when you pass from this life and your body rests in the grave, as surely it will, and as surely mine will, your spirit and your soul will pass into this now unseen world. This is a reality. And you must be mindful of the fact that Jesus Christ is the Lord of that unseen world as well as Lord of this present world.

Well, let’s go to the beginning of the story now, shall we? Because it seems that Jesus purposely went into this particular area in order to display the fact that he is Lord of the

⁷ Mark 5:7-10.

⁸ Mark 5:7.

⁹ Mark 4:39-41.

unseen world. And we get that flavor first of all in chapter four and verse 35. Jesus had been teaching in the area of Capernaum and now he determines to go across the Sea of Galilee to the southeastern regions into this land of the Gerasenes. Look at verse 35. “On that day, when evening came, He said to them, ‘Let us go over to the other side.’”¹⁰ “I have got a plan,” Jesus says. “I am going to execute that plan. Let us go over to the other side.” And so now in the boat we see Jesus quelling the storm and then he reaches the other shore on the southeastern rim of that little lake of Galilee. Verse one says, “They came to the other side of the sea, into the country of the Gerasenes.”¹¹

And then our story actually begins.

When He got out of the boat, immediately a man from the tombs with an unclean spirit met Him, and he had his dwelling among the tombs. And no one was able to bind him anymore, even with a chain; because he had often been bound with shackles and chains, and the chains had been torn apart by him and the shackles broken in pieces, and no one was strong enough to subdue him. Constantly, night and day, he was screaming among the tombs and in the mountains, and gashing himself with stones. Seeing Jesus from a distance, he ran up and bowed down before Him.¹²

Here was this unfortunate human being living in a dreary and unkept graveyard. And people tried to put chains on him and shackles on him. Have you been to Office Depot or Lowes lately and gone down the aisle where there are ropes and chains and wires and cables? There are all these spools with chains on them, little chains, half inch links, inch links, inch and a half links, two inch links. Now, they used heavy chains on this demoniac. I cannot imagine that they fashioned these ancient chains of iron with very small links. They used large links and heavy shackles, that is, iron bracelets fashioned around his wrists and around his ankles. And this man would take the chains in his hands and pull apart the links. Can any of you could do that? I don’t think I could come close, not even with a small chain. But he would pry apart those links. And he would beat the shackles off of his wrists with rocks. There was no human agency that could subdue him or hold him captive. We may think he is like the master of the universe or the incredible hulk or some action hero. Not so! I think that is probably the wrong picture. He is probably like Gollum in *Lord of the Rings*, an ugly creature eaten by sin and depravity. And we don’t want to even look at him. But he has superhuman strength. No one can subdue him.

But look at what verse two says, “When he [that is, Jesus] got out of the boat, immediately a man from the tombs with an unclean spirit met Him.”¹³ And verse six, “Seeing Jesus from a distance, he ran up and bowed down before Him.”¹⁴ Now, you have to capture the scene here. Jesus pulls up in the boat with his disciples on the

¹⁰ Mark 4:35.

¹¹ Mark 5:1.

¹² Mark 5:2-6.

¹³ Mark 5:2.

¹⁴ Mark 5:6.

seashore. There are steep cliffs. And up on the cliffs in the hills are the tombs and this man is up on the cliffs. He sees Jesus down on the beach. From up high on the cliffs he sees Jesus down on the beach and what does he do? He runs. He runs out of the hills. From a distance he runs to Jesus.

And verse two says he met Jesus. This wasn't a cordial meeting. This was a meeting that has the flavor of combat. And we see some of the combat. "Jesus, Son of God, why have you come to torment us?" But when the man runs down out of the hills, he is constrained by the force and the power and the authority of the very Son of God who has come up on that beach. He is constrained to fall on his face. There is no human agency that can restrain this man because of the unclean spirits. And yet when he sees Jesus from a distance he runs and he falls on his face before Jesus.

Who is this man? He is the very Son of God. He is the second person of the trinity. He is God incarnate. He is the Lord of all. He is the one who is the majestic Savior and he is King of all. And this demoniac and these unclean spirits have no choice but to pay homage to the king. Do you hear what is happening? Do you see how striking this scene really is?

Jesus Christ is the Lord of all. He Lord of the unseen world where the spirits dwell. And you are going to enter that world and I am going to enter that world. It is incumbent upon you to listen to this Jesus. It is incumbent upon you to follow this Jesus. It is incumbent upon you to have him as your guide, as your only guide.

Now let's see the outcome now of this encounter. Look at verses 14, 15 and 16.

"Their herdsmen ran away and reported it in the city and in the country. And the people came to see what it was that had happened."¹⁵ You can imagine this herd of 2000 animals plunging into the sea. This causes no little stir in the countryside. And so the herdsmen beat it into the city and on to the countryside. They tell others what is happening. Verse 15, "They came to Jesus,"¹⁶ those of the city and in the countryside.

They came to Jesus and observed the man who had been demon-possessed sitting down, clothed and in his right mind, the very man who had had the "legion"; and they became frightened. Those who had seen it described to them how it had happened to the demon-possessed man, and all about the swine.¹⁷

They come out of the city and out of the countryside, and there is the man. "We recognize him. Look at him there sitting right next to Jesus." He had been running around naked and now he is clothed. And was he in his right mind before? Well, no one who runs around naked and gashes himself with rocks and has a self destructive spirit....

¹⁵ Mark 5:14.

¹⁶ Mark 5:15.

¹⁷ Ibid.

Such a person is not in his right mind. You know this is the case. But there he is sitting next to Jesus. He has clothes on. He seems perfectly rational.

The word that is translated “right mind” here means more than moving from insanity to sanity. It carries with it the idea of a change of heart and a change of character and a change in the inclination of the mind. This man had been in opposition to Jesus. He had been at enmity with Christ. And now he is perfectly content in his heart and in his mind to sit next to Jesus and to embrace Jesus. There is now love in his heart for Jesus Christ. This was the change that had occurred.

And clothing always has meaning. You know that clothing has meaning. Some people wear uniforms. Nurses wear uniforms and policemen wear uniforms and there are other types of uniforms. In fact, I am in uniform. The preacher has to be in uniform. And clothing often displays who we are. The young people in the hip hop community wear clothing which identifies them as part of their culture. God originally gave Adam and Eve clothing to cover their shame. God gave them clothing to cover their sin. Now you see this formerly demon possessed man fully clothed. And he is not only clothed externally. He is clothed by Jesus Christ who has given him the robes of righteousness. This man embraces Jesus Christ, and he is clothed, and he is in his right mind.

What a wonderful thing it is when you embrace Jesus Christ. God puts you in our right mind. Some of you may wonder at times, but he does do that. To be in your right mind is to love Christ. To be properly clothed is to be clothed with the robes of the righteousness of Jesus Christ. He works a wonderful transformation in you as you trust him. And when you trust him like this you can be assured that when you pass from this life and go into the life to come, you will be with him.

I think it is an unfortunate thing in our culture and in our society that most people really believe that the way you get to heaven is to die. Oh, you hear it all the time, don't you? We heard it at the funeral of our former president, “He has gone to a better place.” We trust that he has. But dying does not ensure we go to heaven. That unseen world has a place of torment as we have already seen. And at the last great day when we stand before Jesus Christ who is Lord of all he will say to some, “Well done, good and faithful servant. Enter now into the blessings of your Lord.” And to others he will say, “Depart from me, you who practice wickedness.” Jesus Christ is the King of that unseen world and the disposition of your soul is in his hands and you must flee to Christ as the proper guide into that unseen world.

Let's finish the story. The people came and it says in verse 17:

And they began to implore Him to leave their region. As He was getting into the boat, the man who had been demon-possessed was imploring Him that he might accompany Him. And He did not let him, but He said to him, “Go home to your people and report to them what great things the Lord has done for you and *how* He had mercy on you.” And he went

away and began to proclaim in Decapolis what great things Jesus had done for him; and everyone was amazed.¹⁸

You see here that there are two responses to Jesus. Some of the people came, and what was their response to Jesus? “We don’t want you in our country anymore. Please leave our country. We can’t control you any more than we could control the demoniac. You are greater than we are and your power is greater. We don’t want you here.” This was one response. And the other response is epitomized in the man who is delivered. “Lord Jesus, may I come with you and be with you?” And Jesus response may startle us. “No, not now. Later perhaps, not now. You go and talk about me.”

Dear friends, what is your response to Jesus Christ? He is King and Lord of all. The basic Christian confession is, “Jesus is Lord.” He is the King and Lord of the unseen spiritual world we will enter. Do you trust in the saving work of Jesus Christ? By faith in him, has Jesus Christ put you in your right mind? Do you love him? Has he clothed you with his righteousness? Are you happy to sit with Jesus? Give thanks to God if this is the case.

If this is not the case, examine your position more thoroughly. Consider the story of the demoniac. Understand that Jesus Christ is Lord of the unseen world you will enter one day. Trust him to be your guide. Jesus Christ is Lord over the unseen spirit world you will enter; trust Him as your guide.

You do not live in Flatland with one dimensional Mrs. Dot and two dimensional Mr. Square watching Sally Circle disappear into the unseen third dimension. You live in the real three dimensional world. But there is an unseen fourth dimension all around you. It is the unseen spiritual world. And one day you will enter that unseen world. Jesus Christ is Lord over the unseen spirit world you will enter; trust Him as your guide

Let’s pray together.

Father in heaven, we thank you for your grace and we thank you for your love of us in Christ Jesus. We thank you that through faith in him and his great power over us that when we pass from this life into the life to come, we will be in your hands and in your care. Be pleased to bless us and be pleased to bless this congregation and this group of people with a greater understanding of who Jesus is and what he has come to do. We give you the praise because we know that Jesus Christ is Lord of all and he is Lord of the unseen world. And we thank you that through faith in him, he is our guide. Grant us your grace in a continuing way we pray in his great name. Amen.

¹⁸ Mark 5:17-20.