

Mark 5 1-20

We are going to be looking at a very unusual event this morning. It leaves us with more questions than it answers. But it also displays some truths that are very radical and very evident. And from it we can learn a lot about our enemy, our society and our Lord. This text is going to require 2 weeks to get through.

I am going to use the account of this story compiled by John MacArthur in the book "One Perfect Life". Ruth bought me this book 2 years ago and it is excellent. Instead of showing all the Gospel accounts side by side, like a harmony of the Gospels, MacArthur compiles the accounts together. He has to make some assumptions and take some liberties, but, all in all, I have a great deal of confidence that he has most accounts correct. In our story this morning, his account is very helpful because each Gospel writer gives different pieces to the puzzle. MacArthur's account pulls them all together.

So- we find that the Disciples and Christ arrive at the eastern shore of the Sea of Galilee. When I see what they do when they land, it leads me to suspect that the storm they encountered on their way here may well have been of Satanic origin. I don't think the devil wanted Christ to ruin the devil's stronghold in this area. What Christ is about to do is to take on what may have been the most consolidated demonic influence within thousands of miles. A legion is about 6000 men. So when the demon gives his name as "Legion" he is probably referring to a number of demons embodying the poor men.

Let's look at the account.

**Then they sailed to the other side of the sea, to the country of the Gadarenes, which is opposite Galilee. And when He had stepped out of the boat on the land, immediately there met Him two demon-possessed men, coming out of the tombs, exceedingly fierce, so that no one could pass that way.**

Ok. Evidently the demons were alert. They instantly knew Christ had arrived on their shore. Maybe their boss informed them. Whatever the case, these demons high tailed it down to the shore to meet Christ as soon as He landed.

These men lived in tombs. Tombs were handy housing. They protected a human from the elements, there were no monthly payments, and there wasn't going to be anyone else trying to move in, except for those who would not do much complaining. From what I read, often those who were insane would live in tombs. Now these were not **two ordinary humans**. They were exceedingly fierce. These are not men you would mess with. You would not allow anyone you cared about to go anywhere near them. We don't know if they actually did harm to other people. But it is very clear that there was a threat that they would.

No one was going to go from point a to point b through their territory. Everyone had learned that it is worth your while to go out of your way to avoid these demoniacs.

So we see here that they were a public nuisance. Can you imagine what would happen in our culture if there were people like this in say, Oakland? It would not be tolerated. But apparently in this place there was little choice.

Now let's take a look at what these men were like.

**One of these, a certain man from the city who had demons a long time, and he wore no clothes, nor did he live in a house but in the tombs. And no one could bind him, not even with chains, because he had often been bound with shackles and chains. And the chains had been pulled apart by him and the shackles broken in pieces, neither could anyone tame him. And always, night and day, he was in the mountains and in the tombs, crying out and cutting himself with stones.**

**For it had often seized him, and he was kept under guard, bound with chains and shackles; and he broke the bonds and was driven by the demon into the wilderness.**

So one of the demoniacs, the most prominent of the two and the only one that some of the biblical narratives address, was from the local city. Many would have known him. And he had been like this for a long time.

Now- let's look at how the Devil treats his servants. What we see in this man is a clear picture of how the devil treats his own. We can see his intentions and his cruelty come through in this story.

First, the man had no clothes. The devil had robbed him of all dignity. He was a disgrace. Any human decency and propriety was lost. This man was not a naturalist. He was a demonist. And the demons got a kick out of making sure that this man was completely exposed all the time. He was the kind of person that no one would want to lay eyes on. He was a complete and utter disgrace. That is what the demons took pleasure in. This is their influence.

Do we really want to play around with sin? Do we really want to allow the devil any influence in our minds?

What else?

Second, he had no house. Along with this, it means he had no fellowship with family or friends. He was isolated and destitute. He was an outcast. All of his needs for human companionship were lost. He had no friends to encourage him or challenge him. He was not going to truly enjoy the fellowship of another human being. I sometimes think I don't really need much from other people. But I find that I need **far more** than I like to acknowledge or admit. We all have degrees, but all of us need human interaction to be healthy. But the devil will do anything to rob us of these blessings of God. He may even whisper in our ears that we would be better off without the fellowship of others. Those are lies. This poor man could have taken us to school on this idea. He knew firsthand what it was to be deprived of human interactions and meaningful human relationships by the devil.

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We also see that the man was financially destitute. Now we cannot say that the devil will always use this tool in his arsenal to destroy a person. Often he gives his own abundant finances to accomplish the same end. But in this case, this poor man had nothing. He didn't even have a stitch of clothing.

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**And no one could bind him, not even with chains, because he had often been bound with shackles and chains. And the chains had been pulled apart by him and the shackles broken in pieces, neither could anyone tame him.**

This man had independence from authorities, but he did not have freedom.

There was no one who was going to tell this man what to do. Isn't that appealing to our fleshly natures? No one could boss him around. No one could tell him to do his chores. No one could tell him to be nice. No one could make him do his fair share. He had no boss to tell him what he needed to do today. No. Several times people had tried to remove this public nuisance. Several times people had tried to control him. We don't know if he had done a crime or was just a pain in the public neck. But he had been shackled with both legs chained together and was chained by his body and hands. And he broke those shackles.

This guy would have made an excellent rock star. He was his own person....sort of. He was not about to bow to convention. But he was chained as much as a person could possibly be. He was independent from human authority. But he was not free. He had no freedom whatsoever. He was a spiritual slave. These demons took this man **wherever** they wanted to and did to him **whatever** they wanted to. We must never allow ourselves to think that rebellion from God's control and God's order is freedom at all. It is only slavery to the will of one who would have you destroyed.

Bob Dylan penned it well when he sang- You gotta serve somebody. You gotta serve somebody. It may be the devil or it may be the Lord but you're gonna have to serve somebody.

No one could tame this man, but oh we so need to be tamed to be happy. We so need to be tamed to have peace. We so need to be tamed to have joy. The word for meek is similar to what we think of as tamed. Being meek is being in tune with the Master's wishes. Only as we submit to the Lordship of Christ will we ever experience life the way that we are intended to. Only as we submit to His training and rulership over us do we have the kind of freedom we really need.

How many times have we seen films about this kind of superhuman strength? But it is so very rare to see the danger that accompanies this super power, or enables this superpower. This demoniac was not better for these powers. They were an enslavement to him that was guaranteed to keep him miserable as long as they continued.

We can apply a common saying here. How do you know when the devil is lying? His lips are moving.

We all have in us a desire for self rule. We all want free of authority. We are all tempted to think that happiness will come with independence from authority. But those are all lies. We will all find, in whatever our sphere, that when we try to evade or oppose the authority that God has put us under, it will do us harm. It will not provide the payoff that the devil promises. Look at this man this morning. He is the epitome of what the devil would do to you if he could. And he is the one who is behind the message that authority is bad.

There are times when we must take difficult measures when our authority does not act as it should. But when we try to evade that authority or rebel against that authority or try to manipulate that authority, we do that to our own peril. Let me ask you, how do you respond to your authority when that person tells you what to do and you do not understand why they would tell you to do that thing? That is where our true attitude toward authority comes out.

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What else?

**And always, night and day, he was in the mountains and in the tombs, crying out and cutting himself with stones.**

Here is Satan's ultimate plan for your life. This is what he wants for everyone. This is what he wants for God's creations. Never make a mistake in believing the devil's lie that **God is holding good stuff back from you and the devil wants you to have the good stuff.** It is always the opposite. Look at what happened to Adam and Eve when the devil was done with them. They had broken fellowship with God, destroyed intimacy with each other. And they were left homeless and in a form of agony.

That is the devil's plan for your life. Are you messing with something of his this morning? Are you believing a lie that is keeping you chained to a current attitude or action? Are you using excuses he has whispered in your ear for not coming clean with God, yourself and others? I beg you to consider the source. I beg you to consider the enemy's plan for your life. He never wants you free. And you **never will be** until you repent.

This poor man with super powers spent his alone time like this. Yelling at the top of his lungs and cutting himself with probably flint knives. He clearly hated his

life. He was living with demons **in him** that **he wanted rid of**. Maybe he was trying to kill himself. Maybe the demons were playing with him. We don't know. But the man was in sheer and utter agony.

Odds are this man, at one time, thought that giving into the master of sin had something to offer him. Maybe there was a pleasure he wanted. But after allowing Satan control, he saw that there was a huge price that came with that pleasure. That is always how the devil deals with his children. He takes pleasure in gaining control of them so he can abuse them. And abuse them he will. He is a destroyer. There is no one more cruel or evil than the devil.

What utter agony we see here. How sad. This man lives in torment every day of his life. And the torment probably had its seed in a single thought, a single temptation. There was an evil thing that appealed to this man. And he had to have it.

Oh how often that is the destroyer of a man. Maybe we want another lover, another social status, another financial benefit, another life situation. And we think that we can best get it **apart from God's sovereign loving hand**. It doesn't take long to find out that when the devil offers something that looks like a gift, it always comes with a devastating hook intended to destroy us.

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Here are a just a couple of scriptures that give a clear picture of who the demon's master is and what work the demons have to do in his service.

**John 10:10 the thief comes to steal and destroy.** In the parable Christ is talking about the devil. We see the thief's intention. And it is always his intention.

Would you want to choose a boss with this resume. He always and only wants to steal and destroy?

**1 Peter 5:8 Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. 9 Resist him, steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same sufferings are experienced by your brotherhood in the world. (NKJV)**

There really is a devil and he really carries a desire for destruction in his heart. He wants to devour you. And that is what comes out of him wherever he has opportunity.

Ok. We have seen what the devil was doing with this human.

Now let's take a look at the limits of what society can do.

**For it had often seized him, and he was kept under guard, bound with chains and shackles; and he broke the bonds and was driven by the demon into the wilderness.**

Many of our politicians, both liberal and conservative, have idealistic goals for our government. They may really want some utopian improvements. The best of them

want to make a very good life for all of their constituents. But there is only one thing standing in their way. And it is a very very big thing. It is the power of the Devil and the power of sin. We see in our story that the local authorities could not control the power of this demon filled man. He could not be controlled. He could not be reined in. There were no social programs that would fix his problem. There was no social convention that would make this person a good citizen. Laws could be made all day, but they could not be enforced. But there was a solution. And it was spiritual.

That is still true today. The problem with the world isn't some outside source. It isn't lack of education. It isn't lack of job training. It isn't lack of jobs. It isn't lack of opportunity. It isn't lack of money. Right now our government is talking about fighting terrorism by trying to provide employment in the hotbeds of terrorism recruitment areas. I guess that they simply forget the fact that Bin Laden came from a filthy rich family. Give a person all those things we discussed and the true problem does not go away.

The problem is also not the evils of rich businessmen or powerful politicians. The Republicans say we need to take off the restraints of business. And the result is wicked businessmen exploiting the poor. The Democrats say, redistribute the wealth, so they take the wealth from people who have resources and they give it to those with few resources. And those with few resources develop a sense of entitlement to other people's property. The thing in common is the evil in a person's heart.

No matter what solution is proposed, the weakness to the solution is always found in the sinful heart.

There will never be a utopia here in our society as long as there is evil in our hearts.

The problem with the world is all of its citizens. We all carry a disease that can only be cured by the blood of Christ. And most of the world, particularly those in charge, have no interest in having their spiritual disease being cured. They don't even believe they have a problem. They think they have answers. They think they can fix spiritual problems with man made methods.

So every attempt of theirs will meet with utter frustration. Even the successes will prove to be disappointing. There will be no utopia created for mankind other than by the hand of Jesus Christ. And ultimately, that utopia will be populated with people who are absolutely sure that they **never ever** want to have anything to do with sin.

Now on with our story.

I don't understand how demons can give a man supernatural power. I don't know how that works. But that is what this man had. He was breaking bonds and

escaping all restraints. And he was a vivid illustration of what the devil wants to do to mankind.

Now we have a clear picture of these men.

Let's see what happens next.

**When he saw Jesus from afar, he ran and worshiped Him, and he cried out, fell down before Him, and with a loud voice said "'What have we to do with You, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? Have You come here to torment us before the time? I implore You by God that You do not torment me." For He had commanded the unclean spirit to come out of the man.**

This is odd. This demon possessed man runs from a long way off. Suppose he saw Christ from a half mile away. He takes off running and when he finally reaches Christ he falls down before Him in worship. It is very likely that it is pretended worship. Now why would he do such a thing?

Suppose Christ were to show up here and the most awful evil person in Maryland was to show up and worship Christ, no repentance, no tears, no change, just pretention of worship. If Christ accepted that, and you were watching, what would you think of Christ? You would think that he and this fellow are on the same team. If Christ had accepted the worship from this demon, this demon could have done more harm **to what people believed about Christ** than almost any other thing that could be done.

So when this demon threw himself at Christ's feet, Christ commanded the unclean spirit to come out of the man. Christ was not going to allow this wicked false display of worship.

Then the true colors come out.

**''What have we to do with You, Jesus, Son of the Most High God?**

Remember we heard this before in Mark 1: **23 Now there was a man in their synagogue with an unclean spirit. And he cried out, 24 saying, "Let us alone! What have we to do with You, Jesus of Nazareth? (NKJV)**

Maybe this means, "What have we done to **you**? What have we done that is so bad that you personally must **deal with it**?"

Or maybe it means, "What do we have in common with you? We live on two different spheres and we are not part of your kingdom."

Or maybe it means, "What are you doing, addressing us demons. Your business is with people, not demons. Why are you concerning yourself with us? What do we have to do with your agenda? We are not people. You cannot save us. You have a completely different mission. So why are you doing this?"

That seems most fitting to me with the rest of the things the demons say.

But look at the gem in the middle of all this.

The demons know who Christ is.

**Jesus, Son of the Most High God**

These are words of deity. The demons are not lost because they do not know the truth. They are lost because they hate God. They rebelled against God, even though they may have had better information about God than we do. Remember the parable of the seed? In the parable, the seed was good. There was nothing wrong with it, even when it fell on the hardest of hearts.

The demons knew that Jesus was the Messiah. They knew that He was the Son of the Father. But what they **might not have known** is that He was free to interfere with them and to end the chaos they were bringing whenever He saw fit.

Notice that Jesus never accuses the demons of being inaccurate. But he normally tells them to shut up, just the same.

Now the demons ask Christ-

**Did You come to destroy us? I know who You are--the Holy One of God!''**.

The demons know where they stand with the Son of God. They know their master has made himself an enemy of God. And they deserve what he deserves, eternal destruction. So it is a very logical question to ask. Did you come to destroy us?

Then the demon explains why he asks that question. I know who you are. I know your roll. I know your origination. I know your destination. I know what you are here to accomplish.

The demons are so well informed and so lost. They know who the Holy One of God is and they still hate Him. Odd that the closest humans who get to this same state of hatred are the **Jewish religious leaders** who sought to put Christ to death. Are you someone who knows who Christ is, who Christ truly is, but you still won't follow him? If you are, take a look at this story and recognize who you are siding with. Is that really what you want? Do you want this in common with the devil and his demons?

Now, normally Christ tells demons to shut up. But this time it is a little different. It is likely different because Christ wanted those looking on, and us as well, to know the spiritual reality that was not visible. So he asked the demon that embodies this man what his name was, knowing full well what he would say.

**Then Jesus asked him, saying, What is your name?'' And he answered saying, My name is "Legion: for we are many" because many demons had entered him.**

A legion was a group of 6000 soldiers. Now the numbers fluctuated due to battle injuries and fatalities. But it normally ranged in multiple thousands. So this demon is telling Christ that there are thousands of demons in this man.

There are a lot of things we don't know. Why would thousands of demons inhabit this man? Was he the only one they had an opportunity to embody? Was there some particular purpose the devil had for this man? Other than raising a ruckus and causing people to fear, it doesn't look like he was accomplishing much. We



just don't know. But we know this was exceptional. There were thousands of demons.

This is as far in this text as we are going to go this morning.

There are a lot of things we don't know about demons inhabiting men. And Jesus was content to leave it that way. We do not need to understand all those things.

There are people who focus on those things in an effort to cast demons out of all kinds of things. I have seen them pray through a sanctuary casting demons out of the chairs. That is bizarre, and not something we ever see anyone in scripture do. No, the focus here is not on the enemy but on the Savior. We do not need to be experts in demonology to minister for Christ. But we do need to know our Savior.

With that said, Jesus did go out of His way, literally, to display to us this event. And if we are wise we will not miss the major points. We covered one of them this morning. And that point is that we can see the devil's plan for our lives in this story. We see his intent. We see his effect. We see where he would leave us if he were only able to do so. Every thought we accept from His hand or from this world system is designed to accomplish this end. He wants to devour us.

We need to examine our lives. We need to shine light on our lives. And if something is a sin, we need to call it that. If something we believe is from the devil's hands, we need to call it that. If we are rebelling or sneaking around or manipulating the authority God has placed over us, we must call it that. Scripture tells us that "No good thing would God withhold from him whose way is blameless". It also tells us that the devil is out to devour us.

Sometimes believing and obeying God is so very difficult. It often looks like and feels like obeying Him will **rob us** of happiness. We have to go against every natural defense we have built up. We have to do things that on the surface will not look smart. Doing them will require an absolute trust in God, because it is only God **who will see us through** when we choose to do things His way.

But look at it.

What fruit is doing it your way providing? Does it provide peace? Does it provide holiness? Does it provide fruitfulness? If you are believing a lie, it will produce the opposite of all those things. Those who know you best will see it. They can tell you, sometimes better than you can see it yourself.

Doing it God's way, obeying God, believing God may seem like the most difficult thing you can imagine in your situation. But if it is from God, it will produce good fruit. It will free you. You will find yourself in a better state, not a worse one.

Your circumstance **may be worse**, but your state **will be better**.

Who will we trust this morning? Will we trust the tempter, who would have his follower destitute, naked, lonely, self destructive and insane. Or will we trust Christ who would have his follower in his right mind at peace with God and his

fellow believers? We will choose. We will have plenty of opportunity this week.  
We will choose. Which will we choose?