

## How Should We Respond to the Work of Jesus in Our Lives?

Mark 5:1-20

*They came to the other side of the sea, to the country of the Gerasenes. <sup>2</sup> And when Jesus had stepped out of the boat, immediately there met him out of the tombs a man with an unclean spirit. <sup>3</sup> He lived among the tombs. And no one could bind him anymore, not even with a chain, <sup>4</sup> 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. <sup>5</sup> Night and day among the tombs and on the mountains he was always crying out and cutting himself with stones. <sup>6</sup> And when he saw Jesus from afar, he ran and fell down before him. <sup>7</sup> 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." <sup>8</sup> For he was saying to him, "Come out of the man, you unclean spirit!" <sup>9</sup> And Jesus asked him, "What is your name?" He replied, "My name is Legion, for we are many." <sup>10</sup> And he begged him earnestly not to send them out of the country. <sup>11</sup> Now a great herd of pigs was feeding there on the hillside, <sup>12</sup> and they begged him, saying, "Send us to the pigs; let us enter them." <sup>13</sup> 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.*

*<sup>14</sup> The herdsmen fled and told it in the city and in the country. And people came to see what it was that had happened. <sup>15</sup> 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. <sup>16</sup> And those who had seen it described to them what had happened to the demon-possessed man and to the pigs. <sup>17</sup> And they began to beg Jesus to depart from their region. <sup>18</sup> As he was getting into the boat, the man who had been possessed with demons begged him that he might be with him. <sup>19</sup> 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." <sup>20</sup> And he went away and began to proclaim in the Decapolis how much Jesus had done for him, and everyone marveled.*

- Mark 5:1-20, ESV

Imagine being possessed by a legion of demons! A Roman legion was made up of ten cohorts of about 480 soldiers each, so a legion was 4,800 - 5,000 troops. We don't know exactly how many demons possessed this man, but we do know they were cast out into a herd of around 2,000 pigs. Being possessed by just one demon is a terrifying thought, but being possessed by thousands of them is truly unthinkable.

The fact that Jesus was able to cast out these thousands of demons and set this man free is amazing! And yet, the work of God in delivering you and me from our sin and condemnation and from the power of death is also amazing. Jesus was able to cast out these demons with His authoritative words. The miracle of our deliverance and salvation required the death and resurrection of Jesus to accomplish.

The world's reaction to this man's great deliverance is perhaps unexpected, though it shouldn't be. Instead of having crowds of sick and demon-possessed people line up for healing, as happened elsewhere in Israel, the people of the Gerasenes wanted Jesus to leave. We were given a clue as to their spiritual state by the very fact that this Jewish community had a herd of 2,000 pigs.

The world does not praise the work of Jesus in bringing deliverance for two main reasons:

1. The world does not understand and cannot control the power of Jesus, and so He is a threat. The world understands coercion but not transformation. It's a power greater than their own, so they fear and hate Jesus for it.
2. Jesus threatens the world's standard of living. In this case, 2,000 pigs died. (This was an act of judgment, as this community was disobeying God's law at the time by having pigs.) In the book of Acts, we see a fortune-telling slave girl set free from demons and lose her fortune-telling ability. We also see Demetrius the silversmith leading the mob in Ephesus against Paul because the Gospel threatened his idol-making business. The bottom line: Because sin is a profitable business, the world hates when people are saved from it.

But how should we respond to God's miraculous work of deliverance in our lives? This demon-possessed man is an example for all of us. He wanted to follow Jesus and get away from the place where he had suffered and where people would be bothering him. But Jesus sent him into that difficult place and asked him to testify to the truth of what Jesus had done for him. He obeyed and went.

Jesus sends us into our homes, our places of work, our neighborhoods and our relationships with the good news of what He has done for us. He calls us not to be ashamed but to testify to the truth of our deliverance. Are we amazed at what Jesus has done for us? Will we obey and testify?