

INTRODUCTION

The gospel writers tell us about God's kingdom that Christ is setting up. It is the opposite of what the devil produces. There is love instead of murder; life in place of death; holiness in place of sin; and grace that overcomes guilt.

This incident is an example of it.

A HOPELESS CASE

The man was enslaved by demons. He could no more free himself than someone being trafficked or suffering from an addiction.

It is a picture of the condition we call sin. The sinner is unable to love God, repent, or placate God. The end of that is death.

Worse still it was an "unclean" spirit. The word means the opposite of God. The devil shows malice instead of love, cruelty instead of kindness, and deception instead of truth.

This is a picture of humanity under the devil's influence. He promises freedom for our natural instincts without godly direction. That distorts and destroys human life. "They promise freedom but are the slaves of corruption" (2 Peter 2:19). Jesus said, "The thief only comes to kill, steal and destroy. I have come so they may have life abundant" (John 10:10).

The man felt rejected and beyond help. No remedy worked. We may feel that way about our sin. Our attempts to improve do not work. The only remedy in his case was to restrain him. Even that did not succeed. He must have suffered terribly. Instead of helping him his people rejected him.

He must have felt worthless.

He harmed himself. He lived among the dead in the caves where they were buried. A sense of hopelessness is like a death sentence. The dead were his only company for the living had rejected him. The unclean spirits drove him to that. Job experienced that (Job 7:13-16).

Someone who is convicted of sin may feel like that. It shows in what they allow themselves to do and in the company they keep.

Worst of all he imagined Jesus was his enemy. "What have you to do with me Jesus Son of the Most High God?" He felt they had nothing in common. In part that was the demons speaking, for Jesus had ordered them to leave. It was also the man that spoke. Jesus represented life, holiness and heaven; he represented death, sin and hell.

When people are convicted of sin they think God is against them. They do not know his grace or his saving power. Like the demoniac they cannot imagine being free.

But Jesus fascinates. The demoniac ran to him.

JESUS RESCUED HIM

Shortly before this happened Jesus disciples had failed to cast out a demon. Only Jesus could do that.

He addressed the evil spirits directly. Their rebellion does not do away with his authority; it does not reduce his power. Even the devil has no power in comparison with God. Their defiance cannot last. He has given his people a wonderful promise, "The God of peace will bruise Satan under your feet shortly" (Romans 16:20).

The demons attempted to defy but they also showed fear. That combination is characteristic of sin. At heart sin is denial. It is a refusal to acknowledge the truth. "The carnal mind is enmity

against God" (Romans 8:7). Christ can replace sin with his own Spirit, but sin and Christ can never be reconciled.

The result was the man's complete restoration. The people found him sitting at Jesus' feet clothed and in his right mind. He was free. Wholeness and dignity had returned. He now had all he wanted.

Jesus rescues the lost. He saves sinners. He has power that no one else has. He also shows grace. He pities us. He is ready to forgive. He can change the worst of the men. He did not come to condemn but to save.

THAT IS NOT THE END OF THE STORY

Mark's account finishes with another story of sin and hopelessness.

The demons asked permission to enter a herd of pigs. Then they drove the animals into the sea where they were drowned. When the local people saw that they asked Jesus to leave.

That showed what they were like. They had as little in common with Jesus as the demoniac had before. They had no love for their fellow men and no regard for the works of God. They were only interested in their own material benefit.

Their attitude was misguided and destructive. They did not value God's mercy for themselves or others. They had the same attitude as the demons though not to the same extent.

They seemed respectable, but were as much slaves to their sin as the man had been to the demons. They also needed Jesus but did not want him.

This reminds us that we are all sinners and need Jesus to save us from our sin.

Jesus left the place but he also left a witness in the man he had rescued. Many people want rid of Jesus but they cannot help seeing others whom he has saved.

CONCLUSION

No matter how hopeless a person may be Jesus is able to save him and give him a new life. It does not matter how great the guilt or how long the time, Jesus is able to do this.

What folly it is to follow Satan's ways. He is the father of lies and a murderer from the beginning.

All of us need Christ Jesus. Until he gives us his Spirit we are slaves to sin.

What wonderful grace! He does not deal with us as we deserve. He treats us separately from our sin just as he separated the man from his demons. The mercy of God and the power of God are there for us. Come to Christ Jesus now.