

Marvelous Hope

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[0 : 00] Mark chapter 5, Mark chapter 5, man, we talked about Jesus in the storm and how when we thought! He was just sleeping in the boat not knowing what was going on. He got up and calmed the storm.

! And how every storm that we face in our life, He knows what it is. He's right there in the midst of it. Sometimes He's silent in the midst of it. Sometimes it appears that He's not concerned, but He's always in the midst of it. He can always bring calm. He did and they sailed to the other side of the sea. And chapter 5 picks up on what happens when they come ashore. It is a chapter filled with impossibilities. The place that He sailed to was called the Decapolis. It was 10 cities that Alexander the Great had either developed or redeveloped four centuries earlier. It was Gentile land. It was a change of ministry and pace for Christ. There's first a man that comes to Him that is filled with thousands of demons. And then there's a woman who is very sick and cannot be healed.

And then there's a girl that dies, therefore that cannot live. So one belongs in a mental institution, another in a hospice house, and yet another in a cemetery. It would seem like impossibilities.

However, there are no impossibilities with Jesus. Demons, disease, and death are no match for the deliverer. And so let's look at what evil does and what Jesus does about it. It's in Mark chapter 5, beginning verse 1. It says this, they came to the other side of the sea, to the country of Jereus.

And when Jesus had stepped out of the boat, immediately they met Him out of the tombs, a man with an unclean spirit. He lived among the tombs, and no one could bind Him anymore, not even with a chain. For He had been bound with shackles and chains, and He wrenched the chains apart, and He broke the shackles in pieces. No one had the strength to subdue Him. Night and day among the tombs and on the mountains, He was always crying out and cutting Himself with stones.

[2 : 50] And when He saw Jesus from afar, He ran and fell down before Him. Crying out with a loud voice, He said, what have you to do with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God?

I adhere you by God. Do not torment me. For He was saying to him, come out of him, the man, you unclean spirit. And Jesus asked him, what is your name? And He replied, my name is Legion, for we are many. And He begged Him earnestly not to send Him out of the country. Now a great herd of pigs was feeding there on the hillside, and they begged Him saying, send us to the pigs, let us enter them. So He gave them permission, and the unclean spirits came out and entered the pigs, and the herd, numbering about 2,000, rushed down the steep bank into the sea and drowned in the sea.

The herdsmen fled and told it in the city and in the country, and people came to see what it was that had happened. And they came to Jesus, and they saw the demon-possessed man, the one who had had the Legion sitting there clothed and in his right mind, and they were afraid. And those who had seen it described it to them, what had happened to the demon-possessed man and to the pigs. And they began to beg Jesus to depart from the region. And as he was getting into the boat, the man who had been possessed with demons begged him that he might be with him.

He didn't 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. And he went away and began to proclaim in the Decapolis how much Jesus had done for him. And everyone marveled. Evil is horrible, but it can, and thank God it will, be defeated. I want you to see the havoc of evil.

Jesus gets out of the boat on the other side of the Sea of Galilee. That is Gentile land. It is a different area. It is filled with bare mountains that rise above the sea. It is an area that is called the Golan Heights. The mountains in that region are very poorish, and they are filled with caves. You can stand in one place and can count dozens of cave entrances there.

[5 : 34] And apparently some of those areas were used for tombs. It made for a hillside cemetery. He probably lived in a walk-in grave site that was filled with decomposing bodies and skeletal remains.

A horrific place to live. And it was seen as an unclean area. They had tried to bind him.

He was in shackles. That speaks of ankle chains. He was in chains. That speaks to a handcuff type situation. Because it was believed that if you could chain demons and contain them.

However, both sets of chains were broken by his supernatural strength. Scripture says that he was crying out. He was shrieking. Some even interpreted as howling. He was miserable. It had to be horrifying to others because it never stopped. It was night and day. And in addition to that, he was cutting himself with stones. Now, cutting yourself is a sign of internal agony. It's a sign that people need some type of release of what they're feeling. They're trying to gain a sense of control, of feeling pain because they feel so numb. Luke tells us that he was without clothing and had been run to solitary places by the demons. So what we have is a naked wild man running around the tombs, screaming out, breaking chains, surely a threat to many. How does a man get to such a state?

Well, many may think he's mentally ill. And I, he needs help. And I agree with you. However, scripture is clear that he got to that point because he was demon possessed.

[8 : 07] They had taken him over. That means that he was a part of things that he should not have been in.

There was an entry point here. There was a beginning. He had dabbled in sin until he had become so engrossed in sin that the sin took over.

I've spoken before recently about this mysterious link in our world today between drugs, alcohol, mental illness, and demonic influence.

There's a correlation there. I'm not saying that they're always together. I don't mean that. I mean there's often a correlation there. It blends together. And it's not easy to figure out, is this a demon doing this? Is this, is this mental, mental illness doing this?

Is this an addiction that's causing this? What, what, what's causing these things? But I want you to be clear about something.

[9 : 25] A drug addicted lifestyle today that leads to mental instability will open a door to demon, at least demonic oppression. And if one don't know the Lord, could easily open the door to demonic possession.

If not worse. Suicide's on the rise today. Why is that? That's demonic. That's demonic. I'm not saying that people that do it are all demon possessed.

I'm not, I don't mean that at all. I mean it's a demonic influence to destroy you. He wants to destroy you. The thief comes to steal, kill, and destroy. And he'll do it any way he can. Hollywood tends to ruin lives.

You know, it appears they got everything. It appears they have no need in the world. But it's amazing to me, I'm amazed. And how because of the concoction of drugs and pagan ritual and immorality and a loss of restraint, the devil thrives in those atmospheres.

You want to understand the Epstein situation? It's demonic.

[10 : 47] It's demonic. But it's also right here in Pickens. I mean, it affects too many of our loved ones' lives. So I want to warn you about tampering with drugs, tampering with a flagrant immorality, tampering with cultic practices or alternative lifestyles.

It all leads to a demonically controlled atmosphere. It's what I call the havoc of evil. But I want you to also see the help for evil.

Because when he sees Jesus, he runs to him. Everything he does in response to Jesus shows submission. However, please understand, he was so influenced by demons, so overwhelmed by them and conflicted by them that they were working through him.

And they led him to run to Jesus. That in itself is inappropriate and shows desperate submission. It's like a beggar pleading for a dollar. When he got there, he fell down before him.

Literally, the word there used means to kiss before, as if one was kneeling to kiss the ring of royalty in submission to it. At the least, it is a respectful welcome.

[12 : 09] At the most, it is the inappropriate welcome of a conqueror who has just arrived on shore. The demons knew who he was.

And the demons were admitting defeat. It's the same question that was asked by the demon-filled man in Mark 1, verse 24.

Here he asked, What have you to do with me, Jesus? And then to show the conflict of demonic possession, he starts screaming commands to Jesus as if he was attacked.

In just a few verses, he'll be speaking of a we instead of a me. Watch him plural personal pronouns when only singular is appropriate.

It ain't right. The reality is, it's a convoluted mess.

[13 : 16] And he asked, they asked, not to be tormented. Calling on God to help.

Now, that's weird, isn't it? I mean, it is. It's strange. The whole thing. It's just back and forth. It's beyond this world. And verse 8 tells us that Jesus is commanding the demons to come out.

They're asking not to be tormented. They're asking not to be tortured. They're asking not to be harassed. They're asking not to be punished. In other words, they can dish it out, but they can't take it. They instead cower before the threat and try to bluff their way by screaming loudly, by screaming authoritatively.

And so Jesus asked their name. And we don't catch the significance of that today as much because in that day, to know the name of an opponent in war, it was as if you knew their very essence, as if you could gain control of them and had influence over them.

And he said, they said their name was Legion. Legion is the equivalent to 5,000 to 6,000 soldiers of the Roman army.

[14 : 29] That fellow was possessed by many demons. Was it thousands? Well, consider this. Satan's a liar, by the way. He always blows himself up to be more than he is.

And he's a liar, and he loves to embellish his power and try to intimidate. Remember that. However, it later says in Mark that the man, they identify him as the man with a legion.

So it gives a believability to it. Either way, it's a bunch of demons. And they ask not to be sent away.

And Christ sends the demons into a large herd of pigs. 2,000 head. That's a bunch of pork, folks. It's a bunch. The demons obviously entered them, and either the pigs would rather die than be possessed, or the demons drove them to their death.

So what does all that tell us? The demons left the man, and the swine was destroyed. And so somebody is going to ask me one of two questions, if not both.

[15 : 41] One is, what happened to the demons? Were they destroyed? I don't think so. Demons were thought to be in chaotic places.

It's identified in two different ways. One is uninhibited desert wilderness places. Like where Jesus was tempted. He even told us this about demons in Luke 11, verse 24.

He said, when the unclean spirit has gone out of the person, it passes through waterless places seeking rest. And finding none, it says, I will return to my house from which I came. Looking to possess something, somebody.

When the demon returns, he wreaks more havoc, the scripture goes on to say. The second spot is deep waters. Deep waters. And deep waters were mysterious.

They didn't have the sonar technology that we have today. They didn't know what was under there. They didn't know what would, they didn't know why those storms cropped up. And I mean, look, with all our technology, people, fishermen that fish on Joe Cassie tell me, you don't know when a storm's coming.

[16 : 55] You better brace yourself. There's only a few signs you can get because the water's so deep and the valley's so, all that stuff. You better watch it, you know. It was very more susceptible to that. They just knew sometimes people go on boats and go out and they never come back.

So the mystery and the storms they produced were horrifying. Therefore, the thought would be that the demons would hover there until they could embody someone else.

Now, I want to admit something to you. I've studied this and I've had time. I ain't preaching in a month, so I've had some time to study it again, you know.

There is so very much that we do not know about the underworld of demonic activity. Don't believe everything you read.

I want to give you a warning. Some people write books to sell them. They do. Whether they're true or not, they just want to sell books. So they'll tell you what you want to hear.

[18 : 09] They'll give you answers to mysteries that don't exist. And the reality is there's only so much that we know. Don't believe all you read. You know what you need to believe?

The Word of God. You need to believe the Word of God. And the Word of God says that Jesus cast them out and the man was made whole and the swine were destroyed.

And that didn't go over well. 2,000 head of swine is a bunch of pork. Some even suspect that this swine was being raised to feed the Roman army.

If so, this makes for a mighty unclean mess. I want you to get this. An unclean man living in an unclean land with an unclean home around unclean animals that are provided for an unclean people.

It's hard to get a clean take on all that. But I want you to know what's the real message. The help that Jesus brings is that he steps into unclean places, thank God.

[19 : 28] That he confronts unclean powers. And he leaves a man whole because nothing is stronger than the Lord Jesus. Finally, I want you to see the healing from evil.

Because those who owned the pigs were devastated. They were herdsman. This was their trade. It was gone. Somebody's going to tell me it was an injustice. Why did they have to suffer for that?

Swine herdsman were not well thought of. I will tell you that. These animals were not pinned up. They had a tendency to roam into other people's property.

Plus, they raised swine. Pork was forbidden among the Jews who lived in close proximity to them. The herdsman did not appear to care. They were frowned upon for raising pigs.

If I heard that a wildfire took out a poppy field in Afghanistan, where until very recently, 2023, when it became illegal, most illegal opium was produced.

[20 : 40] 80 to 90% of illegal opium was produced in Afghanistan before that. I'll just be honest with you. If I learned that their fields burned up, I would not feel sorry for the farmers.

They're killing people. And that's how the Jews felt about these pig farmers. These herdsman were wrong. However, as wrong as they were, they became powerful witnesses of the work of God.

God works in mysterious ways. They went and told other people. And I feel sure they described it as a scandal. Marlarkey news showed up and everyone came running. But what did they see?

They saw a formerly possessed man, no longer naked, no longer insane, no longer screaming, no longer running at people, and no longer possessed.

He was in his right mind. His child, if he had one, came in saying, Mama, it's Daddy. And he's got his clothes on. And he's not screaming.

[21 : 53] He's not saying mean things. Mommy, Dad's changed. And that kind of composure and that kind of soundness of mind shows that the power of God is much, much greater than evil powers and principalities of this world.

Do you remember when Jesus stilled the storm, the disciples were afraid? This was after the storm. They were afraid. They were no longer afraid of the storm. They were afraid of the power of God. Verse 15 tells us that the same kind of fear filled the witnesses of this refreshed and changed mind.

They were overwhelmed by their fear. And they asked Jesus to leave. And Jesus got in the boat to leave. And as he did, the healed man begged Jesus to let him go with him.

Instead, Jesus sent him to his own people to make a difference. It says in verse 19, I got a question for you this morning.

Some Bible trivia. Who was the first missionary sent out by the Lord to go to the Gentiles? Was it the Apostle Paul?

[23 : 29] The great leader that bridged the gap between Jews and Gentiles among Christians? No. Was it Peter? Was it Peter? That went to Cornelius' house?

A Gentile by the command of God? No. The first missionary that Christ sent out to the Gentiles was no other than this healed demoniac that wandered naked among the tombs.

Cutting himself and howling like a pack of wolves until Jesus came and saved his life. And scripture says, And he went away and began to proclaim in the ten cities how much Jesus had done for him.

And everyone marveled. He did exactly what Jesus told him to do. And everyone marveled at the difference the Lord makes.

My friend, that is marvelous hope. It's not only hope for a first century demoniac.

[24 : 46] It's hope for me. It's hope for you. It's hope for that one that you have a burden for. I want you to understand that we can be demon, demonically influenced much more than we ever imagined.

And without Christ, Satan is untethered in our life.

The first step to get past the demons, whether metaphorically or real ones in your life, is to give your life to Christ.

And if there's never been a time, I don't care if you've been in this church since you was born. If there's never been a time when you've said, Lord, I am a sinner and I need you to forgive me and to save me and to change me.

I'm telling you, Jesus will radically change your life. He did this man. And that same power has not went away.

[26 : 07] He works in just as powerful ways today in our hearts and lives. If you've never given your life to Christ, today's the day to do it. He will not reject you.

You surrender to him. He'll come into your life. Maybe you're here today and you have done that. But you've never made it public.

You've never told him about it. It's just been a private thing for you. And Jesus says, if you're ashamed of me before people, I'll be ashamed of you before my Father. And the reason why he says that is because private faith is not real faith.

It's just not. And Jesus, by his commission and by his example, show us that the first step of obedience after we give our lives to Christ is to be baptized as a believer.

And if you've never been baptized as a believer, I want you to know that's a hindrance in your walk. Maybe you realize you were baptized and then later you got saved. And so you've never really been baptized as a believer.

[27 : 08] That's a hindrance in your walk. It's a step of disobedience. So if you've never been baptized as a believer, I encourage you to come. Settle that. Why give the devil that stronghold in your life?

He can build on that. Because it's a point of disobedience. Maybe you're here and God's leading you to Pickens First Baptist Church. God's doing wonderful things here and I'm thankful for it.

And maybe God's leading you to be a part of this church. You come. I'd love to guide you in that. Or maybe you're here and you got a burden.

As I preached this earlier this morning, that's what struck out to me so much is that as we listen to me talk about this demon-possessed man, and as I think about this demon-possessed man, I think about people that I know that are too demonically influenced.

Let me put it that way. That person might be looking at you in the mirror. There might be a stronghold in your life that you've let go and you've not been serious enough about it.

[28 : 17] Or maybe there's somebody else in your life that you're burdened for. We're going to stand and sing in just a moment, but let's get hearts right first. Let's make that a priority to us more than singing.

And if there's a burden that you have for someone else, then lay that before the Lord. You can do it at this altar. I'll be happy to pray for you. You can do it where you are. You can just do what God tells you to do. It is only by the power of the Holy Spirit of God that demonic influence is hindered and beaten.

So let's just depend on Him. For everything that you're fighting, for everything that you're struggling with, give it to Him.

It'll change your life. Heavenly Father, I love you. And I thank you that you tell us about a man who ruined his life. By the touch of the Spirit of God, by the words of Christ, he was forever changed for all of eternity.

God, I pray today that His example will be one that will work in our hearts and lives to help us to see the need to do whatever we need to do to make it right, to walk with God correctly.

[29 : 43] Lead us right now to be obedient, Father, I pray. In Jesus' precious name, amen.