**What is your Name?**

March 3, 2013

Mark 5:1-20

Key Verse: 5:9 “Then Jesus asked him, ‘What is your name?’ ‘My name is Legion,’ he replied, ‘for we are many.’”

In today’s passage Jesus heals a crazy demoniac. Jesus restores this man’s true identity as a child of God and sends him as a missionary to ten cities. He demonstrates his power to drive out demons. Let’s learn Jesus’ healing mercy in this passage. Jesus sacrificed 2,000 pigs in order to save this man. Jesus valued one man’s life more valuable than the whole world. May God bless you to learn of Jesus’ compassion for a helpless, seemingly useless person. I pray that we may go and tell what Jesus has done in our lives.

Look at verse 1. “They went across the lake to the region of the Gerasenes.” Finally, the storm training was over. The disciples were happy that they were still alive. They were happy now that they could eat something and get some sleep since they had struggled in the stormy sea all night. But look at verses 2-3. “When Jesus got out of the boat, a man with an evil spirit came from the tombs to meet him. This man lived in the tombs, and no one could bind him any more, not even with a chain.” A crazy man without any clothes came from the tombs and greeted Jesus’ company. According to Luke 8:27, he was naked and acted like an animal. Coming out of the tombs, he made a wild howl and rushed at them. He was ugly and scary. Ordinary people do not live in the tombs because it is the home for the dead people. This indicates that this man ran away from his home and became a homeless man.

Look at verse 4. “For he had often been chained hand and foot, but he tore the chains apart and broke the irons on his feet. No one was strong enough to subdue him.” No one was able to subdue him. The community felt that he was a threat to the society and sent him to many psychiatric doctors who tried to help him but they failed to subdue him. They locked him up in a mental hospital with a chain. But he broke the chains and fled to the open country, the tombs where no one lived. He became a disaster in the society in which he lived. Nobody wanted him to be around. He really wanted to be his own man. So he cut all relationships with others so that nobody would bother him. Now nobody bothered him. But he was not free at all. During the summer hungry mosquitoes bothered his freedom. He could not escape from his sinful reality. When he was alone, he did not like himself. He began to hate himself. With the power of anger, he was torturing himself with stones and blood began to flow from his body. He was very miserable. As we know, sleeping is one of our human joys. But this man was so restless that he could not sleep. He roamed around the tombs and ran up and down the hills, crying out and cutting himself with stones, in order to overcome his restlessness. He felt lonely. He wanted to have fellowship but dead people did not answer his cry. He cried out, “Someone, help me! Help me! I am dying.” But no one heard his desperate cry for help.

How did Jesus help this man? People thought his problem was a behavioral problem or mental disorder problem and tried to correct his human behavior with law and chains. But that did not work. They failed to help this man. Why? His problem was not a behavioral problem. What was this man’s real problem? Verse 2 tells us that he had an evil spirit. Verse 9b reads, “’My name is Legion,’ he replied, ‘for we are many.’” “Legion” refers to a regiment of 6,000 Roman soldiers. Whenever he sinned against God, evil spirits who are also called demons, did not leave him alone. They entered him one by one until there were 6,000. His body became a playground of 6,000 demons. As soon as Jesus saw him, he ordered the demons to come out (8). Jesus was ready to help this man and free him from many demons. We cannot ignore demons. Many Christians have allowed Satan to deceive them into believing one of two major lies: (1) That he and his demons don’t exist; (2) That he and his demons are too powerful for Christian believers.

Christians cannot be demon-possessed because possession implies ownership. We have been bought with the blood of Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit dwells in us. Demon possession involves a demon having direct control over the thoughts and/or actions of a person. However, Christians can be oppressed by demons if they have provided any open doors. Demonic oppression is the work of evil spiritual forces that urge us to sin, to deny God’s word, to feel spiritually dead, and to be in bondage to sinful things. This oppressive work is performed by demons. The first goal of demons is to prevent us from receiving salvation. If that fails, they work at preventing Christian maturity. They try to shut us down and make us ineffective. Their chief strategy is to try to get people to turn away from God. They do this through many forms of temptation, harassment, and also from challenging God and His Word. Demons will interject condemning thoughts into the minds of believers. They particularly like to stir up the past with thoughts of, “You really should have...” or “If only you had done...differently.” They take advantage of our weaknesses and they love times when people are either physically and emotionally weak and vulnerable.

Demonic oppression could be experienced in various ways: (1) Physical ailments such as sleeplessness, nightmares, strong anxiety, self-mutilation, addictions, and physical illness. (2) Spiritual deadness that includes apathy and anger towards God, interest in false religions.

(3) Emotional turmoil such as regular outbursts of anger, high and low emotional levels, self-justification, fear, hopelessness, abnormal fixations on certain things. Of course, we must be very careful not to say that every negative thing we experience is demonic oppression. We Christians have authority in the name of Jesus Christ to resist evil and we are guaranteed the ultimate victory in Christ. But, sometimes God lets things happen to us, even demonic attacks, in order to test our faith and to purify it. In any case, we should not open the door to demons. Judas Iscariot opened his heart to evil—in his case by his greed (John 12:6). We should not open our lives to demons through our habitual sins such as immorality, drug/alcohol abuse, rebelliousness, bitterness, and idol worship. Confession and repentance of sin are necessary to restore fellowship with God, who can then break the power of demonic oppression. 1 John 5:18 says, “We know that anyone born of God does not continue to sin; the one who was born of God keeps him safe, and the evil one cannot harm him.”

Look at verse 9. “Then Jesus asked him, ‘What is your name?’” Why did Jesus ask his name? Jesus wanted to expose the presence of demons and restore his identity. When we meet a new person, the first thing we do is to ask the person’s name. We want to make a relationship. In the same way Jesus asked his name. Since he became a homeless demoniac, nobody asked him, “What is your name?” They did not want to know. They did not care. If we do not know the name, we do not know the person. This man was forgotten, rejected, ignored, and abandoned by people for a long time. This man lost his name in the middle of his sinful life. Probably this man’s real name had been forgotten long ago by others, and even by himself. The most sorrowful thing in the world is to be forgotten by people. This man’s name was forgotten and he was referred as the Gerasene demoniac or that crazy tomb man or “Monster on the hill.” But Jesus came to restore this man. Jesus saw him as human being, created by God in God’s own image. Jesus knew that because of demon-possession, he lost everything--his humanity, his happiness, and his true human freedom. Now Jesus wanted to help him discover who he is, by asking, “What is your name?” At this point Jesus is asking us, “What is your name?’ We need to know who we are before God. Let’s discover our true identity before God. We are holy children of God saved by the grace of Jesus. Let’s say together, “My name is Henry, a holy child of God saved by Jesus’ grace.” Sometimes due to demonic oppression, we suffer due to our sins and old sinful habits. In the course of struggling, we forget our identity. We forget who we are; holy children of God, whom God bought with the precious blood of Jesus Christ, whom Satan cannot harm, whom God is protecting with 12 legions of angels.

Look at 10-12. “And he begged Jesus again and again not to send them out of the area. A large herd of pigs was feeding on the nearby hillside. The demons begged Jesus, ‘Send us among the pigs; allow us to go into them.’” Note that in verse 8, Jesus attempted to drive out demons. But it did not work. In his disordered mind, the demon-possessed man felt that the demons were asking to go into the pigs. Jesus wanted to demonstrate to the man that the demons came out of him. When the demon-possessed man saw the 2,000 pigs committing suicide, it finally convinced him that he was cured of demon-possession. Jesus regarded one man’s life more valuable than 2,000 pigs. Jesus valued one man’s soul more precious than the whole world. (Mk 8:36) Later, Jesus sacrificed his own life in order to save us from our sins. Mark 10:45 says, “For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.” Jesus was willing to give his own life as a ransom sacrifice to free us from the demons. From time to time, due to demons’ lies, we often doubt God’s love, forget our identity, wondering if we are really holy children of God. In that situation, we only need to look at Jesus on the cross. Romans 5:8 says, “But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.” Jesus’ death on the cross is God’s vivid demonstration of his love, and we are holy children of God if we only believe.

Look at verse 14. “Those tending the pigs ran off and reported this in the town and countryside, and the people went out to see what had happened.” The pig shepherds felt responsible and so they ran to their owners and reported the loss of 2,000 pigs. What had happened was indeed terrible to the owner of the pig industry. When the people of the country came to Jesus, they saw the man who had been possessed by the legion of demons sitting there, well-dressed, and in his right mind. Dressing well is a first sign of normal life. They should have celebrated the homecoming of this man. But strangely they were greatly afraid. Why were they afraid? It is because Jesus ruined their pig industry in order to save a demon-possessed man. If one pig cost $500, they lost one million dollars. Yes, it was a lot of money. They were afraid of losing more pigs. They thought that the demon-possessed man should have rushed down the steep bank into the lake and drowned instead of their pigs. They valued money more than a demon-possessed man. Look at verse 17. “Then the people began to plead with Jesus to leave their region.” They could have received Jesus’ spiritual blessings if Jesus stayed longer with them. They were business-minded. They lost spiritual blessings because of their fear of losing money. But Jesus was different. In order to save one apparently useless man Jesus spent a sleepless night in Gerasa. In order to save this man, he was hated, rejected and misunderstood by the townspeople. Finally, he was forced to leave the town. By healing a demon-possessed man, Jesus was rejected and despised.

Look at verse 18. “As Jesus was getting into the boat, the man who had been demon-possessed begged to go with him.” After receiving healing mercy, this man decided to follow Jesus. A desire to become a noble man and a useful man to God arose in his heart. Look at verse 19. “Jesus did not let him, but said, ‘Go home to your family and tell them how much the Lord has done for you, and how he has had mercy on you.” Jesus sent him home to share his personal testimony. Jesus wanted to establish a gospel ministry in the Gentile territory starting from this man. They needed a gospel worker there. When Jesus revisited this area again later (Mark 7:31), the gospel work was growing. This man was fitted to serve this area starting from his family. Maybe the man wanted to run away from all his past messes and he wanted to start fresh in a new place. He wanted to forget all his troubles. But Jesus sent him back where he failed. Now he must declare God’s love through his Son Jesus Christ. He must tell everyone about what Jesus had done for him.

Not only Jesus healed this man from a demon-possession but also he restored his holy mission. Once we were worthless sinners living as the enemies of God. But Jesus sacrificed his own life to save wretched sinners such as us. At this moment, let’s remember what kind of sinners we were and how Jesus had had mercy on us so that we can go and tell Jesus’ amazing love for us. May God bless us to keep our identity as a child of God and serve his mission by his grace.