**Jesus’ Power Over Impure Spirits**

March 8, 2020

Mark 5:1-20

Key Verse 5:7-8 “He shouted at the top of his voice, ‘What do you want with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? In God’s name don’t torture me!’ For Jesus had said to him, ‘Come out of this man, you impure spirit!’”

It is important to point out that Satan and demons are not just symbols, but actual living beings. There are two extremes that we must avoid when it comes to demons, namely impure spirits. On one hand, there are those who deny their existence. At the other end of the spectrum are those who give way too much credit to Satan by blaming everything bad in their lives on demons. So if they have a weight problem, they try to address it by casting out the “demon of gluttony” rather than just cutting back on what they eat and getting some exercise. While it is true that Satan may take advantage of our fleshly weaknesses, those weaknesses are not caused by Satan or his demons. The Bible is clear that we are all responsible for our own sin and that there is no demonic force that can take control of us and make us sin unless we allow it. C.S. Lewis gives some good advice regarding this matter: “There are two equal and opposite errors into which our race can fall about the devils. One is to disbelieve in their existence. The other is to believe, and to feel an excessive and unhealthy interest in them.” In this passage we are going to look at Jesus’ remarkable power over demons. Jesus and the disciples had just come through the storm. When they finally reached the Eastern shore of the lake, it was probably early morning. That’s where they encountered another storm; and this storm was raging inside a disturbed man.

Look at verse 2. “When Jesus got out of the boat, a man with an impure spirit came from the tombs to meet him.” There are a lot of confusion about the devil and demons, so let me clarify three truths about this subject.

**First**, demons are fallen angels who carry out the will of Satan. Some Christians have a Star Wars theology. They think Satan is the dark side of the force and almost as powerful as God. But it is not correct. He is not omnipresent—only God is. We read about Lucifer’s fall in Isaiah 14. Lucifer was a shining angel, but his sin was ambition. He loved himself. His favorite television show is “I Love Lucifer.” He tried to ascend and be like God, but God kicked him out of his lofty position and became Satan. Other rebellious angels chose to join him and they became his minions, namely, demons.

**Second**, the term “demon possession” is not found in the original language of the New Testament. One question I have been asked often is: “Pastor, can a Christian be demon-possessed?” “Demon possession” is a translation of daimonizomai which should just be translated as “demonized.” Every one of us, including believers, is the target of some kind of demonic influence. Dr. Ray Stedman wrote: “The New Testament never actually uses the term ‘demon possession.’ It is a term, which has been invented, but it may not be very accurate. The word in Scripture is always ‘demonized.’ Whether it means possession or control or influence, this is the word which is used. We have read into it the idea of ‘demon possession.’ But I do not think it wise to use it, because it is not used in Scripture. It is evident there are various stages and degrees to which demons, evil spirits, can affect or control human beings.” So there is no such thing as demons possessing a person and controlling them. We allow the demons to come in through our sinful actions.

**Third**, what are some signs of destructive demonic control? Some say that all sickness, including mental illness, is produced by the devil. But Jesus made a distinction. The Bible says he healed those with diseases and cast out impure spirits. So it is a mistake to see a demon behind every illness or dysfunctional behavior. When we look at this demon-controlled man, the Bible mentions several symptoms. These symptoms aren’t exhaustive, there are many others, but these are the ones we recognize in this man, and we still see these behaviors today.

Firstly, sexual perversion. In Luke’s account we are told that this man ran around naked. Nakedness is a sign of sexual perversion. Sexual addiction, sexually deviant behavior, and pornography are some of the deadliest traps Satan sets for people. God gave everyone a powerful sex drive. But that sex drive should be fulfilled only within the bonds of marriage between a husband and wife. Hebrews 13:4 says, “Marriage should be honored by all, and the marriage bed kept pure, for God will judge the adulterer and all the sexually immoral.” Satan wants to take any normal God-given desire and pervert it. Any sexual conduct outside of marriage is sinful and driven by satanic temptation.

Secondly, obsession with death. Verse 3 says, “This man lived in the tombs.” He felt more at home in the tombs than he did with living people. Sometimes an obsession with death and dying can be evidence of demonic control. There are some troubled people who believe they can contact the dead and communicate with them.

Thirdly, self-abuse. Verse 5 says, “Night and day among the tombs and in the hills he would cry out and cut himself with stones.” There is an epidemic among teenagers and young adults, and it’s called self-injuring or cutting. According to ABC News, one in twelve teenagers have cut or burned themselves. This phenomenon isn’t new; this disturbed man was a cutter. Some cutters say that they are hurting inside and they can’t really find the source of their pain. So in a strange way, they feel better by cutting themselves because they know the source of the pain. This man too suffered from some trauma. Perhaps he watched a Roman soldier killing his father and mother. Since then, he suffered under the cruel image of them screaming and blood dripping. Many demons came to him and tortured him.

The devil and his demons want to kill, steal, and destroy, but Jesus said he has come to give you life, so that you can live it to the fullest. There is hope in Jesus Christ. Jesus can deliver you even from demonic control. 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 chains. But that did not work. Look at verse 9. “Then Jesus asked him, ‘What is your name?’ ‘My name is Legion,’ he replied, ‘for we are many.’” “Legion” refers to a regiment of 6,000 Roman soldiers. Why did Jesus ask for his name? We can interpret it in two ways. First, Jesus asks the demonized man for his name. In the Bible, a person’s name represents his character, his whole man. Probably this man’s real name had been forgotten long ago by others, and even by himself. People called him Monster on the hill. But Jesus saw him as a human being, created by God in God’s own image. Jesus saw God’s life in him. He was a person loved and pursued by God. But he was oppressed by so many demons. Because of demonic control, he lost everything—his humanity, his happiness and his freedom. So Jesus asked him, “What is your name?” It was to bring him back to himself.

Second, Jesus asks the demon for his name. Naming has a power and naming something is the beginning of controlling it. In Genesis God gave Adam dominion over all creatures by granting Adam the right to name them. One cannot control that which has no name. This is true for everything that give us trouble in our lives. If we cannot name that which trouble us, we are powerless to overcome that trouble. Jesus’ asking for the name of the thing that was controlling the man was the first step in casting out demons. We are all demonized in different ways. Any obsession, addiction, or impure habit is a demonic influence that must be addressed. And before you can find healing, you must admit that you have a problem—you have to name the demons in order to be set free.

When Jesus began to help this man, the demons in him felt the danger of losing their prisoner. They demanded the 2,000 pigs as the ransom price in exchange for their prisoner. Jesus accepted their demand without reservation. To Jesus, one seemingly useless man was more valuable than 2,000 pigs. To Jesus, one sick human being was more valuable than any amount of material possessions. In order to save one helpless man, Jesus did not hesitate to use the pigs that belonged to other people. And he didn’t even bother to ask permission from the owner. But he gave permission to the demons to go into the pigs. Look at verse 13. “He gave them permission, and the impure spirits came out and went into the pigs. The herd, about two thousand in number, rushed down the steep bank into the lake and were drowned.” When demons went into the pigs, the pigs lost their joy of life: eating. They were miserable when possessed by demons. Pigs never do anything wicked; they only eat day and night. They really enjoy their lives. But even pigs don’t like to be tormented by impure spirits. So the pigs rushed down the steep bank and all fell into the lake and were drowned. It is indeed a tragic story. Two thousand pigs committed mass suicide by drowning. What Jesus did was to give a living demonstration of the deliverance of the man that no one would ever forget since demons are invisible. It was a living proof that those demons came out of him.

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. 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 demonized man. If one pig cost $500, they lost one million dollars. Yes, it was a lot of money. The price of pork chops and bacons went up. They were afraid of losing more pigs. They thought that the demonized man should have rushed down the steep bank into the lake and drowned instead of their pigs. They valued money more than a demonized man. What a surprising reaction!

Look at verse 17. “Then the people began to plead with Jesus to leave their region.” They could have brought the sick and received Jesus’ healing. But they lost spiritual blessings because of their fear of losing money. 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.

When Jesus got in the boat to leave, the man who had been demonized begged to go with him. He was ready to join Jesus and become the 13th disciple. But Jesus had a different idea. Look at verses 19-20. “Go home to your own people and tell them how much the Lord has done for you, and how he has had mercy on you.” So the man went away and began to tell in the Decapolis how much Jesus had done for him.” The word “home” Jesus used doesn’t mean hometown; it means “household.” It indicates this man had a wife and children. They had probably been tormented and abused by this man. Although he had left to live in the tombs, there was an empty place at the dinner table each night. But one afternoon there was a knock on the door and the wife answered it only to cringe in fear when she saw her husband at the door. Can you picture the children huddling in fear behind their mother? They could only recall the terrible, troubled man who had caused so much pain and turmoil in their home. But this changed man walks in and smiles. She immediately notices there’s something different about him. He takes his wife’s hand and says, “Honey, today I met Jesus and he has changed me. He had given you back your husband.” Then he gathers his frightened children into his arms, and says, “Children, forgive me for how I’ve behaved. But now Jesus has given you your daddy back.”

Your testimony of how Jesus has changed you can be the greatest tool in helping someone else. At this point, some of you are struggling because you have problems, addictions, and desires you think are beyond help. You really don’t think Jesus can do for you what he did for that man 2,000 years ago. But Jesus has power over all your problems. If you are suffering from a trauma, Jesus will help you to forget just as he did to Joseph in Genesis, and heal you. Even if you remember the event, it will not cause you pain and trauma.

After Jesus cast out the demons, he didn’t do anything else there. He got back in the boat and sailed back to Galilee on the other side of the lake. The ONLY reason he crossed the lake was to deliver this demonized man. If Jesus was willing to cross a dangerous, stormy body of water just to help one troubled man, you need to know that he cares for you in the same way. He crossed the great gulf between heaven and earth to bring hope, healing and forgiveness to you. If you had been the only one who needed help, he would have made the trip just for you. Jesus is here right now. Will you cry out to him? Will you name your problem? Then after being healed, will you go out and tell people the difference Jesus has made in your life?

Big Idea: Jesus has power over impure spirits