

## The Bible 20/20 Week 36: “Of Pigs and Men” (9-13-20)

**Reading this week:** The Gospel of Mark

**Introduction:**

**Opening:** Read the story found in Mark 5:1-20

**Let’s talk about Power today:** 1) The Power of Evil      2) The Power of Grace      3) The Power of Fear

### 1) The Power of Evil

#### a) Don’t minimize the presence of evil

- This story, and the gospels in general, challenge us by putting a clear focus on the presence of evil, and the reality of the supernatural.

**7 examples in Mark:** **Specific** - 1:23, 5:1 (this story), 7:25, 9:14      **General** - 1:32, 3:11, 6:12

- This is unusual to many present day readers - we are uncomfortable or unfamiliar with the supernatural.

**Michael Scott** - “I’m not superstitious, I’m just a little-stitious”

- Don’t let misguided superstitions cause us to doubt the reality of supernatural, spiritual forces!

**Our Present Reality:** The presence of evil & the grip of spiritual struggles & bondage is just as real today . . .

- **Addictions** (Alcohol, Drugs, Pornography) - Alcohol is even referred to as “spirits”
- **Mental Health crisis** (Bi-polar, schizophrenia, suicidal depression)
- **Abusive Behavior** (In-human behavior towards one another - often repeated later by the victims)
- **Identity Crisis** (We aren’t at peace with ourselves and comfortable in our own skin)
  - In the story notice the confusion - “he” and “they” speak with interchangeable voices

#### b) Don’t minimize the power of evil

The story is very clear of the serious and destructive nature of these evil spiritual forces . . .

- Lived in the wildness & naked (Luke says it outright, and it’s hinted at in Mark)
- Was kept under guard (Luke) & could no longer be contained (Mark)
- No one could subdue his strength
- He caused great trouble, but he was in great distress . . .
- Cutting himself with stones & Crying out day and night
- Lived among the tombs (he was literally living among the dead)
- Overwhelmed by trouble - **“Legion”** (most likely 2,000 demons)

If there was any question about their destructive power - look at the result: **The pigs were destroyed!**

Why did Jesus allow the demons to enter the pigs? At the least it was to make clear their ultimate intent . . .

**Dr. David McKenna** - “The devil is never content until he has destroyed the last vestige of the image of God in the human personality.”

**Jesus put it this way . . .**

**John 10:10a (ESV)** - “The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy.”

The presence and power of evil is real - the problem must be addresses, but our “modern” solutions leave much to be desired, because . . .

**In all of our progress we still fail for the same basic reason as the people in this story!**

**c) Don't trust in natural solutions to super-natural problems**

- The other people present in this story had a total inability to address the ROOT problem!
- If we aren't honest with ourselves about the real problem, then the solution will always evade us!

Acknowledging the **Real Problem** can help us to look for the **Real Solution**, because there is more than one power at work in this story . . .

## **2) The Power of Grace**

**a) The power of Grace**

**In this story** - The power of evil is clear, and it's presence is tangible

**But who is in control in this story?**

- Everyone is “begging” Jesus for something
- Everyone bends to His will & His authority!

**This Jesus fills up the pages of Mark, and his power is on full display . . .**

- **Physical Healing** - Blind see, the lame walk, the leper's cleansed
- **Power over Nature** - fish fill nets, trees wither and die, the sea, wind, & storms are calmed
- **Power over Death** - he raises dead girl, Lazarus (John), even himself!
- **Casts out Demons** - (see list from earlier)
- **Forgives Sins**

**Jesus has power to set captives free** - from our own mistakes, and the damage done by the sins of others, and the troubles caused by this broken world.

**b) The promise of Grace**

If the Power of Grace is real and available, then the question is will we experience the promise of Grace?

**Mark 5:6-7 (ESV)**

(6) And when he saw Jesus from afar, he ran and fell down before him. (7) 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."

**Note:** He is drawn to Jesus, but he is uncertain of what Jesus will do.

**"Do not torment me"** - Is this the demons? What if it is actually the man himself speaking?

**I think many of us set our sights too low** - we are worried that the promise of Grace is just a tease.

**Of Mice & Men** (John Steinbeck): grapples with loneliness, hope and hopelessness, and loss.

Throughout the story a dream is held up as the ideal, while the reality of that dream is never met.

The devastating closing sequences leads to an illusion of hope, while death is actually what comes.

**Steinbeck** - Honest look at the **"harsh reality"** of life, but ultimately leads us to settle for a **"hopeless lie"**

**This world lies to us, the promise of success in this world is ever elusive:**

- We never get our hands on it (the have nots)
- Or it provides no real satisfaction when we do (the haves)

**In our present context** - Hoping in the promise of God's Grace seems like just another illusion.

**In our story today** - this man's situation seems similarly hopeless. **He literally had no hope . . . until he did!**

**Mark 5:2 (ESV)**

And when Jesus had stepped out of the boat, immediately there met him out of the tombs a man with an unclean spirit.

**Note:** Jesus met this man and was immediately invested in helping him!

**And the results speak for themselves . . .**

**Mark 5:15 (ESV)**

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.

**Note:** sitting, clothed, and right mind. "Right Mind" is the same greek work that Paul uses . . .

**2 Timothy 1:7 (NKJV)** - For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind.

**Note:** God can set us free - God will set us free - and the peace he offers is no illusion!

**John 8:36 (ESV)** - "So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed."

**3) The Power of Fear** - One more thing we need to grapple with from this story, is the power of fear . . .

**Mark 5:14-15 (ESV)**

(14) The herdsmen fled and told it in the city and in the country. And people came to see what it was that had happened. (15) 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**. (16) And those who had seen it described to them what had happened to the demon-possessed man and to the pigs.

**a) Fear of Change**

- The people didn't respond with joy or relief when they saw this man healed
- They were afraid of what this might mean, a power they couldn't understand or control
- How many people remain stuck in bondage, because they can't face the unknown of change?

We'd rather live with the demons we are comfortable with, then grapple with what change may bring!

**b) Fear of Loss**

- More concerned about the loss of pigs (income), then the healing of people!
- How many more pigs are we gonna have to lose before everyone is healed?

We are too afraid of what we might lose, that we lose sight of what we might gain!

**c) Fear of God** - Not the healthy kind of fear, but the kind of fear that pushes God away . . .

**Mark 5:17 (ESV)** - "And they began to **beg Jesus to depart from their region.**"

Even followers of Jesus can struggle with this . . .

**Mark 4:41 (ESV)**

And they were filled with great fear and said to one another, "Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?"

**Conclusion:** Consider - We only know for sure that one person in this story was able to overcome the power of evil & fear, in order to experience the power of Grace . . .

**When did this man overcome evil & fear? The answer is when did he see Jesus?**

**Mark 5:1-2, 6 (ESV)**

(1) They came to the other side of the sea, to the country of the Gerasenes. (2) And when Jesus had stepped out of the boat, immediately there met him out of the tombs a man with an unclean spirit. (6) And when he saw Jesus from afar, he ran and fell down before him.

**Note:** I believe He saw Jesus calm the storm - and the same power that scared the disciples, looked an awful lot like hope to this man!

**If this story (and the Jesus of the gospels) seems distant to you . . . Look Again!**

Run towards hope, because the power and presence of Grace is near, & Jesus is standing on your shore!

**Let's Pray!**

**Discussion Questions:**

- What encouraged you the most from this story? What challenged you the most? Do you agree that there are still modern day forms of spiritual bondage that we face?
- Why do you think that people at times minimize or ignore the existence of the spiritual world? Why is it important to recognize the presence and power of this kind of evil?
- When facing a struggle in your life with some form of bondage - have you experienced being held back by any of the fears addressed in this message? (fear of change, fear of loss, fear of God) If yes, which one?
- Why do you think that particular fear is a challenge for you? How can you face and overcome that fear? What role does Jesus play in helping us with our fear?
- What did you learn from this story about the power of grace? What are some of the obstacles that keep us from experiencing God's grace in the midst of our struggles? What can we do about that? What can Jesus do about that for us?