

A Most Unlikely Convert | Mark 5:1-20

Jesus demonstrates authority over evil by healing a man and shows him mercy, then sends him to tell others what he has done.

Automatic Shownotes

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Long Summary

Jesus' Authority over Evil | Mark 5:1–20 Main Point: Jesus Christ, the Son of God, has power and authority over the forces of evil and shows concern for those who are suffering. Outline: Context, control, concerns, commission, and application. 1. Context | Mark 4–5 The account follows Jesus calming a storm and comes before his healing of a woman and raising of a girl. Together, these events show Jesus' authority over nature, sickness, death, and evil. 2. Control | Mark 5:1–13 Jesus meets a man living among the tombs who is tormented by many unclean spirits. The spirits identify Jesus as the Son of the Most High God, but Jesus commands them to leave. They enter a herd of pigs, which rushes into the sea. The episode shows that Jesus has authority over the spirits, despite their number and destructive power. 3. Concerns | Mark 5:14–18 The townspeople find the man clothed and in his right mind, but they are afraid and ask Jesus to leave. The sermon contrasts their response with Jesus' concern for the man's restoration. The healed man asks to go with Jesus, but Jesus gives him a different task. 4. Commission | Mark 5:19–20 Jesus tells the man to return home and tell others what the Lord has done for him and how he has shown mercy. The man proclaims Jesus' work throughout

the Decapolis, and people marvel. The sermon applies the passage to human need for spiritual renewal, warning against keeping Jesus at a distance or relying only on attempts to manage sin. It calls listeners to seek Christ's grace, submit to his rule, and share what he has done.

Brief Summary

Jesus' Authority over Evil | Mark 5:1–20 Main Point: Jesus has authority over evil and shows mercy. He sends the healed man to tell others what he has done.

Tags

Jesus, authority over evil, mercy, Mark 5:1–20, healing, healed man, testimony, sharing, deliverance, compassion

Transcript

[0:31] Good morning. Today's scripture reading is found in Mark 5 verses 1 through 20 and can be found on the page 840 of the Pew Bible.

Jesus' Power Over Evil

[0:41] Mark 5, 1 through 20.

[0:46] They came to the other side of the sea, to the country of the Gerasenes. And when Jesus had stepped out of the boat, immediately there 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 often been bound with shackles and chains, but he wrenched the trains 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. And when he saw Jesus from afar, he ran and fell down before him. 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. For he was saying to him, Come out of the man, you unclean spirit. And Jesus asked him, What is your name? He replied, My name is Legion, for we are many. And he begged him earnestly not to send them 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 where they drowned in the sea.

[2:06] 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 saw the demon-possessed man, the one who had the legion, sitting there, clothed and in his right mind, and they were afraid. And those who had seen it

described to them what had happened to the demon-possessed man and to the pigs. And they began to beg Jesus to depart from their region. As he was getting into the boat, the man who had been possessed with demons begged him that he might be with him. And he did not 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. This is the reading of God's Word.

Mark's Message and the Passage's Context

[2:59] The street where we live, since October 2nd has been decorated with tombstones and gravestones and ghosts and skeletons and ghouls and goblins. And this, of course, reminds me of our passage this morning, in the Gospel of Mark. Mark's Gospel answers this question, who is Jesus? What does it mean that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God? And in chapter 5, we read about a most unlikely convert. And I hope this passage expands our understanding about who Jesus is and what he came to do.

[3:56] The text shows us that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, has power and authority over the forces of evil. So this morning, our outline is in the bulletin. So we'll start by looking at the context of the passage. Then we'll look at our verses to consider who's in control and what are the concerns of the characters and what have they been commissioned to do? Context, control, concerns, commission, and then some concluding thoughts. It would be helpful if you have your Bibles open to look at and you had the outline. I'll pray before I begin.

[4:45] Our Father, help us this morning to stay awake, to hear your word, these words of everlasting life, to heed and take in these words, to cherish your word that we would delight in your son and learn more about him. Show us your tenderness and your love for us. As we contemplate your word, we pray in the powerful name of Jesus. Amen. Let's start with a context. Just before our verses this morning, in chapter 4, Jesus and the disciples are in the boat. And Jesus takes this opportunity to take a nap. And then a massive storm develops. And the disciples, the boat, they're being tossed to and fro. And they're in a panic. They're helpless. They're hopeless. And then they wake Jesus up from his nap, and he stills the storm.

[5:55] Be still. Jesus shows his power and authority over nature, over creation, over the physical realm. In the verses after our text, we read of a helpless, hopeless woman, sick. She spent all of her money on doctors. And yet she's been bleeding for 12 years. And Jesus shows his power and authority over disease and sickness by healing her.

[6:30] Then we read of a helpless, hopeless father whose daughter has died. And people said, look, she's dead. Don't bother the rabbi.

[6:43] And Jesus said, little girl arise. And the girl was healed. And Jesus showed his power and authority even over death. In our text this morning, we see a helpless, hopeless man controlled by evil

spirits, by demons. And Jesus Christ, the Son of God, shows his power and authority over the forces of evil, over the powers of darkness. Jesus is more powerful than the supernatural spiritual realm that affects us. Let's look at the characters in this account. There's Jesus, the very wise teacher and preacher, miracle worker. There's the homeless man. He lived in the tombs. There's the evil spirits. There's the pig herders. And there's the townspeople. What does this story teach us about these individuals? And what does this story teach us about Jesus? We've seen the context and the characters. Now we'll see who's in control. This is verses 1 through 13. Who's in control?

Jesus Confronts the Legion

[8:12] Look again at your Bibles with me. It says, verse 1, Jesus and the disciples, they came to the other side of the sea, to the country of the Gerasenes. And when Jesus had stepped out of the boat, immediately there met him out of the tombs, a man with an unclean spirit. He lived among the tombs. No one could bind him anymore, not even with a chain. For he had often been bound with shackles and chains, but he wrenched the chains apart and he broke the shackles in pieces. No one had the strength to subdue him. Jesus and the disciples in the boat, they arrive at this Gentile area of the Sea of Galilee. These Jews enter into this ceremonially unclean land. And it's curious in verse 2, did only Jesus step out of the boat?

[9:18] Were the disciples too afraid? Because Jesus met a man, a man who was controlled by unclean spirits. He lived among the tombs, among the dead. This is an unclean man in an unclean place. And it seems like his, probably his family and his friends, well-meaning.

[9:45] Frightened people, had tried to control him. Man, get a control of yourself. Maybe these chains will help. Maybe some shackles, manacles, but they were useless. He could break them apart. The people couldn't control him. Can you imagine his life? Everyone was probably very afraid of him. He was ostracized and avoid it. Alienated from his family, alienated from God, he found a home among the dead. He was naked, like a beast of the field. All human dignity removed, the image of God marred. So, of course, he was in constant agony. Look at verse 5. Night and day among the tombs and on the mountains, he was always crying out and cutting himself with stones. Evidently, there was pain in his soul. Was he trying to create an exit wound to let the pain out? Let the demons out? Maybe he was trying to cause pain to match the pain that was on the inside. He was physically strong.

[11:15] But I'm sure he was sad. He was self-hating and suffering. It says he was always crying out in agony. Family and friends couldn't control him. The chains couldn't control him. He couldn't control himself. He was helpless and hopeless because he was controlled by evil spirits. I think of the Apostle Paul writing in 2 Timothy about those who were trapped by the snare of the devil being captured by him to do his will, the devil wants to steal, kill, and destroy the devil wanted this man to destroy himself, it doesn't say how long this man lived among the tombs it doesn't say how long the evil spirits have been controlling him does say that the demons were able to speak through him. So actually in our text, it's hard to know who's speaking. Sometimes Mark, it says he, and sometimes it says they.

[12:23] Interestingly, the demons knew who Jesus was. Look at verses 6 and 7. When he saw Jesus from afar, he ran and fell down before him, 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. Imagine this man running towards you.

[12:54] The man ran because he wanted relief from the demonic torments. The unclean spirits didn't want to be tormented in punishments of future judgment. In 1 John 3.8, it says, Jesus had come to destroy the work of the devil. This surely would include freeing this man from demonic possession and oppression.

[13:25] Okay, back to our text. Verse 8, For he, Jesus, was saying to him, Come out of the man, you unclean spirit. And Jesus asked him, What is your name? He replied, My name is Legion, for we are many. And he begged him earnestly not to send them 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.

[14:01] 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. A legion was a troop of about 6,000 soldiers. Imagine 6,000 unclean spirits against one Jesus. That doesn't seem fair. But just like Jesus, standing on the boat, confronting the overwhelming, overpowering force of a storm, he said, be still. Jesus stands before this powerful multitude of unclean spirits and says, come out of the man. And here we see that Jesus is in control. Jesus the Christ, the Son of God, has power and authority over the forces of evil. He's so powerful that this man, these unclean spirits, come running to fall at his feet, begging not to be tormented yet, And the demons beg and have a request for Jesus.

[15:29] Request, don't send us into the country. Send us into the pigs. Let us enter them. Request, granted. So these unclean spirits, three per pig, enter the unclean animals. And these destructive spirits enter the 2,000 pigs. They rush down the bank and drown themselves.

Why the Pigs Matter

[15:55] Many questions arise here. Why the pigs? Why not be sent into the country? Why did Jesus allow these innocent pigs to die? What purpose did this serve?

[16:13] This was a visual picture for the sake of the onlookers, for the sake of the disciples, for the sake of the demon-oppressed man, to show them how terrible this oppression was. And we see just how many unclean spirits there were. This became a physical manifestation of the spiritual reality of deliverance. This reminds me of a trip my family took to New Hampshire. And we stayed in a cabin. and the cabin had a TV, big screen, and the TV was set sort of by default to a certain channel. The TV seemed to have about 6,000 channels. But by default, it would turn onto a show where a doctor would, cut open and extract tumors and fatty lipomas and unknown growths out of people.

[17:27] And we were glued to that TV. And every time after the extraction, the doctor would say, Oh, we've cut out your lipoma. Would you like to see it? Of course you want to see it. And so the doctor would take out this tray of steaming goo and say, This was inside of you. And we're going to send it to the lab to see whether or not it was malignant. or malevolent. Do you feel better? In verse 13, as if to show us and prove just how harmful, and destructive these spirits were, when the evil spirits control the pigs, they go rushing down the Sea of Galilee to drown themselves.

[18:24] We've seen who's in control in verse 1 through 13. That's Jesus. Point two brings us to concerns in verses 14 through 18. What are the concerns of the characters in our text? Look with me at verse 14. The herdsmen fled and told it in the city and in the country. The people came to see what it was that happened. The pig herders fled. They walked. They may have run.

The Characters' Concerns

[19:03] And they go to the city to tell people what had happened, what they saw. And I wonder, I don't know how long it took to get to where they're going to tell the other people in their family. Could have been a day, all day. Could have been an hour or many hours. But it's interesting to think, while they're gone, this man was with Jesus. Spending time with Jesus. Was Jesus comforting him? Did he feed him? Thankfully, he clothed him. Was he teaching him about the kingdom of God? The herdsmen and the townspeople return because they want to see, did this really happen? You got to see this. And they wanted to see the change in this famously deranged, disturbed, dangerous man. Look at verse 15. 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.

[20:32] Imagine the man. Imagine just a few moments ago, inside the man, inside his mind and emotions like entangled thorns. Imagine the intense storm of oppression by malevolent spirits, now calmed and quieted. Sitting with Jesus, clothed in his right mind, whole again.

[21:03] And remember, when Jesus calmed the storm, the disciples in the boat were sore afraid of Jesus. Who is this that the wind and the waves obey? What manner of man is this? Here it says the townspeople were afraid, as if they were thinking, Who then is this that even a legion of unclean spirits obey him? What were they afraid of? Why were they so concerned? Was it the raw power of one greater than a legion of spirits? Was it his authority or just the fear of the unknown? Or that guy was spooky. And now look at him. Were they afraid of the holy? Or were they afraid of upsetting the status quo? Don't challenge the normal. Maybe they were just concerned about the value, the financial value of 2,000 pigs. Now gone.

[22:15] Look at verse 16. Those who had seen it described to them what had happened to the demon-possessed man and to the pigs. And they began to beg Jesus to depart from their region. Imagine these people have come upon the scene. They come to the person of Jesus, the physical manifestation of God on earth, the savior of the world. And they have a request of the redeemer of mankind request depart.

[22:58] It says they begged and they had a request. Go, Jesus, leave. Get out of here. Request granted. Jesus agrees to leave. And in doing so, Jesus shows his concern. Because that means that in chapter 4, he crossed the river in the boat to deliver one man. He was concerned about the value of the soul of one man, one most unlikely convert. Jesus came to set the captives free. Reminds me of the messianic promise of Isaiah 9, often.

[23:48] Quoted, Beyond the Jordan, in the Galilee of the Gentiles, the people dwelling in darkness have seen a great light. Listen to this. Those dwelling in the region and shadow of death, on them a light has dawned. The light of the world has come to this man they want him to depart but the physician comes for the sick, and that's Jesus's concern to rescue a people and to make them whole to seek and to save the lost to destroy the works of the devil that's Jesus's concern, But what about the disciple formerly known as Legion?

The Delivered Man's Desire

[24:37] What was he concerned with? His number one concern. Look at verse 18. And he, Jesus, was getting into the boat. And the man who had been possessed with demons begged him that he might be with him. He wants to be with Jesus. He probably had burned every bridge with his friends, with his family. Everyone, I'm sure, had given up on him.

[25:14] Could have been they were afraid of being attacked. Anyone who cared for him. This was one difficult guy. And this man delivered from demonic oppression begs Jesus. And he has a request. I want to be with you. This is his concern. Wherever you will go, I will go. Your people will be my people. Maybe he was scared that the devils would come back and haunt him more. I want spiritual protection. I want to be close to you physically so you can do the same thing you just did. What a request. This request?

[26:06] Denied. Permission not granted. Look at verse 19. And he, Jesus, did not 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.

Commissioned to Proclaim

[26:28] We've seen control and concerns. Here we are. We see the commission. Jesus sends this delivered man on an important mission. He will be an ambassador for God's kingdom.

[26:48] Go, tell them of the Lord's work and of his mercy. And who better than this man to convincingly tell the world that Jesus, the Christ, the Son of God, has power and authority over the forces of evil, over the supernatural realm. And Jesus wanted this shining example of gospel transformation to tell the world and his family, and his friends that Jesus saves. Because if Jesus can change this man, he can change anybody. This most unlikely convert is now an ambassador for Jesus. He went from having a legion of unclean spirits within him to having the Holy Spirit within him. What a picture of

darkness to light. This man was commissioned, go home, tell your friends, let gospel transformation become gospel proclamation. Look at verse 20. And he, the man who had been possessed with demons, he went away and began to proclaim in the Decapolis how much Jesus had done for him, and everyone marveled.

[28:17] I love to imagine this guy who was such a menace, so much that people tried to chain him up, walking towards people. Hi! No longer crying out. No longer cutting himself.

[28:36] In his right mind, speaking the wonderful words and works of Jesus, everyone marveled. This is marvelous. This man went home to make Jesus famous. Because the next time in the gospel of Mark, we read of the Decapolis, it's in Mark chapter 7, where crowds have gathered to be healed by Jesus. People were zealously proclaiming the healing power of Jesus. It says they were astonished beyond measure, saying Jesus has done all things well, even making the deaf hear and the mute speak and casting out demons. Gospel transformation becomes gospel proclamation, which becomes gospel transformation. So, readers of Mark that are wondering, who is Jesus, would see here Jesus' superiority and see Jesus' power over evil and see Jesus' power over evil.

[29:58] Jesus's pure, holy, sinlessness, his cleansing power to enter an unclean territory, in the unclean tombs to bring wholeness and health to an unclean man. We see that Jesus had great concern for one individual, one hurting, disturbed, self-destructive mess of a man.

When People Reject Jesus

[30:33] But where are we in this story? I don't know who here can break chain shackles. I don't know if any of you have ever had a demon speak out of you. Maybe, probably, you've never slept in a tomb.

[30:50] So how does this scripture speak to us? This man is a perfect picture of lost, fallen humanity apart from God, alienated from God, at enmity with God, not living as His beloved creatures as they were designed so fearfully and wonderfully made, not acknowledging God as loving Father, not thanking God, just ignoring God. So the idea of living in the tombs and devil speaking through humans, that's scary. But the most frightening part of this passage is, it's not the demoniac, It's not the suicidal pigs. It's this. The people of the surrounding area come to see Jesus. Come to see what happened. They see the formerly demon-possessed man calmly seated in his right mind. It says they began to beg Jesus to depart from their region. Go away. Just go away. We don't need you. We don't understand you It would be better if you just depart.

[32:20] That's horrifying. And maybe some of us formerly, or maybe even now, want to set up a Jesus-free zone. Please, don't, no, no. Jesus will let you know when we need you. Keep your distance. Depart from me, Jesus. I'll go to church when I need you.

Jesus Draws Near to Sinners

[32:48] Also speaks to us because some of us want to set up a life where we don't experience people with problems. Keep your distance. But aren't you glad that Jesus didn't have that attitude about you while you were his enemy? Instead, Jesus drew near to us While we were yet sinners, Christ died for us Even as slaves to sin Controlled by evil and addiction, And he has the power to renew our mind Those dead and their transgressions can be made alive in Christ drawn near, no longer enemies, reconciled, redeemed.".

From Sin Management to Transformation

[33:44] Maybe some of us are really good at chaining and shackling our sinful nature, in some sort of sin management program. Externally, sin is managed. And our words can be muzzled. But inwardly or secretly, you have rotten, infected wounds or hateful infestations of anger and unforgiveness that you have not brought to the Lord. And occasionally, the anger and unforgiveness is unshackled, unleashed. Perhaps possibly like many on my street they underestimate the power of evil and think it's cute, but please know the spiritual world is real and evil exists, and even for believers there's a legion of sins and temptations and in a culture that wants to control our mind and hearts. It is a spiritual battle.

[35:10] The devil would love to trip us up and ruin our testimony. And we think, oh, if only I could try harder, if only I could make greater rules for myself, if only I could chain that one thing down. No, what we need is a complete transformation, a regime change, where Jesus would control, our affections with a new mind and a new heart. We come to Christ who is Lord. We welcome his tender grace and his love. And we submit to his rule and reign, his power and authority over forces of darkness. And we want to be with Jesus and with his people.

[36:06] But imagine if this delivered man said, okay, thank you, Jesus, for delivering me from the devils. I'll take it from here. I'm just going to stay here in the tombs because that's what I'm used to. No thank you on the clothes. I don't want to be too extreme.

A New Life and Mission

[36:32] No, this man wanted to be obedient to Jesus, and Jesus put him on a mission. Hello, new life. Goodbye, tombs. Goodbye, unclean spirits. Goodbye, pigs, goodbye devils, chains, goodbye sins, hello new life. It's time to let Jesus take control, especially in areas of our life where we, don't seem to have control.

[37:08] He is concerned with your soul. He wants a soul cleansing. He wants hearts that are changed from the inside, not just on the outside. That we would be concerned with the things of God. And that in that transformation, we would delight in gospel proclamation and share what the Lord had done. That's our commission. Let's pray.

Prayer for Deliverance and Grace

[37:52] Our Father, we are so glad you have not left fallen humanity, alone, but you've raised up, delivered in Jesus Christ to reverse the curse, to take our punishment, to bring healing and wholeness. We praise you, that although we cannot be with you physically, we can abide with Jesus by faith through the Holy Spirit and enjoy his victory over the evil one. Teach us Lord help us to put away the deeds of darkness help us to put off sin and put off the old man and to put on Christ.

[38:50] Help us Lord as we look to you we pray that we would look to you in our weakness, in our sin in our lack of control help us ever to look to you for grace to help and time of need. We pray in the powerful, authoritative name of Jesus. Amen.