

Harris Creek Baptist Church  
Jonathan Pokluda  
Series: Unseen Battle  
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The Right Response to Evil

Mark 4:35 – Mark 5:20

**<sup>35</sup> That day when evening came, he said to his disciples, “Let us go over to the other side.” <sup>36</sup> Leaving the crowd behind, they took him along, just as he was, in the boat. There were also other boats with him. <sup>37</sup> A furious squall came up, and the waves broke over the boat, so that it was nearly swamped. <sup>38</sup> Jesus was in the stern, sleeping on a cushion. The disciples woke him and said to him, “Teacher, don’t you care if we drown?”**

**<sup>39</sup> He got up, rebuked the wind and said to the waves, “Quiet! Be still!” Then the wind died down and it was completely calm.**

**<sup>40</sup> He said to his disciples, “Why are you so afraid? Do you still have no faith?”**

**<sup>41</sup> They were terrified and asked each other, “Who is this? Even the wind and the waves obey him!”**

**5 They went across the lake to the region of the Gerasenes.<sup>[a]</sup> <sup>2</sup> When Jesus got out of the boat, a man with an impure spirit came from the tombs to meet him. <sup>3</sup> This man lived in the tombs, and no one could bind him anymore, not even with a chain. <sup>4</sup> 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. <sup>5</sup> Night and day among the tombs and in the hills he would cry out and cut himself with stones.**

**<sup>6</sup> When he saw Jesus from a distance, he ran and fell on his knees in front of him. <sup>7</sup> 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!” <sup>8</sup> For Jesus had said to him, “Come out of this man, you impure spirit!”**

**<sup>9</sup> Then Jesus asked him, “What is your name?”**

**“My name is Legion,” he replied, “for we are many.” <sup>10</sup> And he begged Jesus again and again not to send them out of the area.**

**<sup>11</sup> A large herd of pigs was feeding on the nearby hillside. <sup>12</sup> The demons begged Jesus, “Send us among the pigs; allow us to go into them.” <sup>13</sup> 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.**

**<sup>14</sup> Those tending the pigs ran off and reported this in the town and countryside, and the people went out to see what had happened. <sup>15</sup> When they came to Jesus, they saw the man who had been possessed by the legion of demons, sitting there, dressed and in his right**

mind; and they were afraid. <sup>16</sup> Those who had seen it told the people what had happened to the demon-possessed man—and told about the pigs as well. <sup>17</sup> Then the people began to plead with Jesus to leave their region.

<sup>18</sup> As Jesus was getting into the boat, the man who had been demon-possessed begged to go with him. <sup>19</sup> Jesus did not let him, but said, “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.” <sup>20</sup> So the man went away and began to tell in the Decapolis<sup>[b]</sup> how much Jesus had done for him. And all the people were amazed.

Harris Creek, good morning! If we haven't met, my name is JP, or Jonathan Pokluda, and I have the privilege of taking us into God's Word today as we begin Holy Week.

I'm reminded of an Easter where we went to hunt Easter eggs at my sister's house. My oldest, Presley, was about four years old. My sister lives on two acres, and it's a pretty perfect place to do an Easter egg hunt: lots of flower pots, and change in elevation, and trees, and bushes, and shrubbery. You've seen this scene. Presley's there in her white Easter dress, and we're there. We're about to do some family Easter pictures. We gather the kids around the garage, and we say, “One, two, three, go!” There are eggs all spread out throughout the yard, and I'm standing in front of the garage. I'm about from me to Tanner (indicating the front row) to Presley. So, Presley's right over there, and she sees a flower pot. She reaches in the flower pot and she picks up a colored plastic egg, like some purple plastic egg. She puts it in her basket, but then something grabs her attention, so she looks back in the flower pot. Then she says, “Oh, Daddy, look! A cute little snake!” And then she reaches back in the flower pot, and I yell, “STOP! Freeze! Don't move!” And I run over there, and I move her back. And I look in the flower pot, and there, in this terra cotta orange flower pot, at the bottom, is a coiled-up copperhead. Good luck next week hunting eggs. It has scarred us. This is the story we re-tell year after year. “Hey, remember, Presley, when you were gonna pick ...” She had this weird affinity for reptiles at the time, and she said, “But it's a cute little snake, Daddy!” But I'm saying, “That thing will kill you! It would at least wound you. Get back! You don't want anything to do with that.” So, here you have this weird dynamic. You have this four-year-old who says, “Oh, but it's cute and sweet!” Then you have this older person (JP indicates himself) with greater wisdom saying, “No. It's dangerous. You don't know how to handle it, and I know how to handle it. We're gonna go get a shovel, and we're gonna turn that into two snakes. Maybe even three snakes. We're gonna multiply the snake this morning!”

And this is the dichotomy that we sit in, I think, as we're talking about evil. What do we do with it? It's kind of been depressing. “Satan's so powerful! He's so big and mighty! He's an angel so much stronger than us! He's come to the earth.” Week One, we talked about who he is: he's a fallen angel; where he is: he's on this earth; what he's up to: he's telling lies. Then last week we expounded on the *what he's up to*. As he moves throughout this place, the power and the authority that he has to bring destruction to our lives, to try to pull us out of a right relationship with Jesus, to hurt us, to inflict pain upon us, and that we're to stand firm.

But as we move toward Easter, this week we're going to lift up. I want to give you hope. I want to expound on this idea that greater is He who is in you than he who is in the world.

How do we defeat the enemy? What do we do? Some of you are like Presley.

“It’s cute! It’s fine.”

“Watch a horror movie? No big deal. It’s fine. Put on *Saw 3* or *The Purge* or whatever. It’s not gonna mess with my heart or my head. It’s okay. It’s just entertainment.”

“Let’s go to Target and buy a Ouija board. It’s just a board game.”

“Get some crystals! Get some crystals! They’re just rocks.”

“Manifest something. Maybe that’s what we can do. We’ll just manifest it into being.”

“It’s just a cute, little snake!”

What do we do with evil? What is a right response to evil? That’s what I want to talk about with you this morning. A right response to evil.

I’m going to be in Mark chapter 4. I’m really going to in Mark chapter 5, but I want to start at the end of chapter 4, verse 35. I want to show you something as we look at a familiar story. This morning at Harris Creek, I’m going to show you an exorcism ... on stage. No, I’m kidding! Not on stage, in the Bible, in the Word! It’s honestly one of the most well-documented exorcisms that we have. It shows up in three gospels, the synoptic gospels: Matthew, Mark, and Luke. We have tremendous detail. It’s going to be done by Jesus Himself when He was on this earth, and we’re going to look at the details that we have. I think as we come face-to-face with evil, even Christians, even some of you who’ve been in church your whole life, we’re like, “Well, do I cast out demons? Is that still a thing? Is that mental illness? What does demonic possession look like? Is that oppression? Should I rebuke the enemy? Do I talk to the enemy? Is that weird? Is that me praying to Satan?” These are all questions I’ve heard throughout the years, that I’m going to effort to answer from the Scriptures today. What do we do when we come face-to-face with something evil? How do we identify it?

This is different than Week One, where it was a different snake story. I’ve got lots of snake stories, unfortunately. Week One we said, “But I don’t know what kind of snake it is, so we don’t know what it’s capable of.” We’ve learned what he’s capable of. We’ve identified that it is venomous, that it can hurt you, and we’re going to talk about how to take care of it.

As we move through the end of one chapter and into the other, we’re going to look at the objective of the enemy, and Jesus’s power over the enemy, and before you leave here, the objective of Jesus. Mark 4, verse 35, **“That day, when evening came, he said to his disciples, “Let us go over to the other side.” Leaving the crowd behind, they took him along, just as he was, in the boat.”** The Sea of Galilea is like a highway at this time. It’s a thoroughfare. It’s the way that you could get from village to village, city to city, place to place. So, they set out on the boat to go to the other side. **“A furious squall came up, and the waves broke over the boat, so that it was nearly swamped. Jesus was in the stern, sleeping on a cushion. The disciples woke him and said to him, “Teacher, don’t you care if we drown?” He got up, rebuked the wind and said to the waves, “Quiet! Be still!” Then the wind died down and it was completely calm. He said to his disciples, “Why are you so afraid? Do you still have no faith?” They were terrified and asked each other, “Who is this? Even the wind and the waves obey him!”**

Some of these guys are professional fishermen. They’ve been on this lake many times. They’re seeing something, they’re encountering something that is different than they’ve encountered

before, potentially a greater storm that the waves are crashing over the boat, and it says they're terrified. What were they afraid of? (JP looks to the audience to answer the question.) What were they afraid of? I heard drowning, death, dying. What else? What were they afraid of in that moment? What were they afraid of in the storm? These are great answers. "Wind." What else? "Control." This text tells you specifically what their greatest fear was in this moment. You may have looked at it. You may have read this. You may have heard this a bunch of times and missed this. Let me read it to you. **"They were terrified and asked each other, "Who is this? Even the wind and the waves obey him!"**

Something just shifted. "Oh, this Rabbi that we're following, that we wanted Him to teach us the Torah, all of a sudden, in the midst of a great storm, potentially the greatest storm we've ever seen, He wakes up from a nap and says, 'Quiet!' and it's like 'WHOOSH!' What just happened? Who are you? Do we want to be in a boat with you? What are you doing? That's different!"

There's about to be a shift in the gospel. Jesus has been, in a sense, hiding His power, or, maybe to say more accurately, revealing it to specific people. But something is about to burst forth.

What was this storm? Why did this storm occur? Do you know what happens next in the Scripture? In all three synoptic gospels, Jesus is going to save a guy. He's going after someone. I believe this storm was satanic. I don't think Jesus rebuked the wind. I don't think Jesus personifies the wind. I think Jesus rebuked the Enemy behind the wind. Adam Clark wrote a commentary and says Satan is just being opportunistic. He sees Jesus and his closest followers in one vessel. Here's his chance to take Him out. Even Matthew Henry says this, "Perhaps the devil knew Jesus was coming over the lake now on purpose to cast that legion of devils out of the poor man on the other side, and therefore, poured this storm upon this ship He was in, trying to sink Him and prevent that victory." There is a satanic attack, and how did the disciples respond? "Do you even care?" And how do we respond today, 2022, in the midst of an attack when the Enemy comes after us? We turn to God and say, "God, do you see me down here? Do you even care?" Which is different than how Job responded last week. He didn't curse God. "The Lord gives and takes away. Blessed be the name of the Lord."

Give praise to God. The devil comes after me, like a thief, only to steal, kill, and destroy, but Jesus came so that I might have life and have it to the fullest. Greater is He who is in me than he who is in the world.

So, Mark, now we're in Chapter 5, and he's going to show you the power of the Gospel as it bursts forth into Gentile territory. Jesus is going to a place where there's lots of pigs. This is Gentile territory. He's been in Jewish Hebrew territory. He's going across the lake to a different place. They worship different gods over there. They have a different belief system over there, and this is what happens. **"They went across the lake to the region of the Gerasenes. When Jesus got out of the boat, a man with an impure spirit came from the tombs to meet him."** Now Mark is going to tell us about this man, and he's going to go to great lengths to show you how powerful this man is. Listen to this. **"This man lived in the tombs, and no one could bind him anymore, not even with a chain. 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. Night and day among the tombs and in the hills he would cry out and cut himself with**

**stones.”** This is a terror in this community. He’s the strongest person in that area. No one in that area is stronger than him. There’s tremendous detail to tell you that no human being is a match for this man. Verses 3-5 repeat this idea, and he paints the picture that he’s a slave; that he is abandoned, he’s naked, he’s bound, he’s bleeding, he’s crying out and living among the tombs. He’s a slave. He has a master. He’s abandoned, he’s naked, he’s bound, he’s bleeding, he’s crying out, and he’s living among the tombs. My first point this morning is that

### 1. *Satan Seeks to Keep You a Slave*

We’re expounding on his agenda. You need to know: in the art of war, how does the enemy work? He seeks to keep you a slave. A slave is someone who is not free; they can only do what their master allows, and Satan wants to keep you *his* slave. He wants you to do what *he* receives as worship. He wants you to do what most glorifies him. He wants to keep you away from glorifying God. He has one objective: to make you a slave to anything other than Christ, like sin, addiction, the world. This man is abandoned, naked, bound, bleeding, crying out, and living among the tombs. In verse 3 it says, “... **no one could bind him anymore,**” which was to say that once they could. This man is getting stronger.

And this is how the power of the Enemy works in your life. When you feed something, it grows. When you feed pride, it grows. When you feed anger, it grows. When you feed jealousy, it grows. It gets bigger, and bigger, and bigger. We talked about last week, when that stray cat comes around and you feed that stray cat, you now have a pet cat. That cat has found a home. He’s going to stay with you. That Enemy that prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour just found lunch, and he’s not going anywhere else. When you feed something, it grows. Friends, this is the lie of *one last time*.

“I’m going to look at that *one last time*.”

“I’m going to put it back on my phone *one last time*.”

“I’m going to go shopping *one last time*.”

“I’m going to give myself to that *one last time*.”

“I’m going to go party *one last time*.”

“*One last time* on the credit card.”

Because that *last time* is one more bite, one more meal, and then it’s harder the next time. It’s more difficult to stop the next time. You feed something; it grows. It’s just a simple idea that is absolutely true. They couldn’t bind him anymore because he’s stronger, and in his sin, or in his giving himself over to the Enemy, there’s benefits. This guy has what a lot of you want. He’s the biggest dude in the gym. He is the strongest guy. You put more plates on under the bench press for this guy than anybody else. He’s got strength: super-human strength.

Sometimes sin has a real tangible benefit in this world.

- Vanity – “You look the cutest. You’re so pretty. Your makeup game is so strong.”
- Materialism – “You have style. How do you always have the coolest things, the coolest gadgets? I go over to your house and it’s no different than when you were little and that kid that always had the best toys. You’re just an adult now with the best toys. You’ve got the coolest things.”
- Pornography – “I can enjoy any kind of pleasure I want, any time I want. There’s a real benefit to this. There’s an offering to it.”

But sin leaves you lonely and hurting. Here's what I want you to know. Sin is an invitation to worship something other than Jesus. That's it. Plain and simple. It's an invitation to worship something other than Jesus. And when you do that, you invite the possibility of becoming a slave to something other than Jesus. Whenever you sin, you invite the possibility of becoming a slave to something other than Jesus. "I want the freedom to do what I want, whenever I want, and now I don't have the freedom to stop, because I've become a slave."

We were talking about gambling this week with the Final Four, and Vegas came up, and I made this strange statement from a pastor, "I love Vegas." I really do. Some of my memorable vacations with Monica have been there. The food is amazing, the shows are amazing. You're in a great proximity to the Grand Canyon. Great hotels, incredible swimming pools, and buffets. What's not to love? Other than the dark side of Vegas. Gambling is not my ditch. If it's not your ditch, it's kind of weird, and you're like, "I don't understand. People give their lives to it!" But let me tell you something, people give their lives to it. I know there was one guy, a pastor, who was bi-vocational in a sense. He was a very successful real estate person but gave all of his extra time to the church. He put on a suit every day, successful guy. People wanted to be him. Family, three kids. All the things. And this gambling thing, going online or on his phone playing online poker, the Enemy got his hooks in him. Nobody knew. He spent all of their life savings on just trying to get ahead of the game. He refinanced the house trying to get ahead of the game. Lost everything. He lost his wife, he lost his children, he lost his home, he lost his automobile. He lost everything because this *thing* that just gripped him that he didn't bring into the light. He ended up getting arrested because he was stealing from Walmart to feed the addiction, and I sat back here and I watched. How does that happen? There is nothing new under the sun. The same way that it could happen to you, the same way that it could happen to me. And if it's not gambling, it might be pornography, it might be adultery, it might be materialism, it might be debt, it might be some other thing that creeps in where you just get obsessed with the way you look. Or you get obsessed with needing the attention of others, needing the attention of the opposite sex. All of those things the Enemy can sink his hooks in you.

In James chapter 1, Jesus's brother says, "... **but each person is tempted when they are dragged away by their own evil desire and enticed. Then, after desire is conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full grown, gives birth to death.**" James 1:14-15

The enemy wants to keep you a slave. This text has gone out of its way to show you how strong this man is because he's given himself over to the Enemy. But look at this, verse 6: "**When he saw Jesus from a distance, ...**" Here he is, this man, possessed by all of these demons, he's galloping towards Jesus. This strong man, that no one can bind, is just coming after Jesus. It seems, right now, that there's going to be this face-off, this showdown, this match, this cage fight, if you will. "**... he ran and fell on his knees in front of him. 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!"**" No light sabers, no duel, no fight. Just some groveling. What happens when you think of an exorcism? This demon is just appealing to God: "Please!" Very different than dualism, two equal opposing forces, the great match. This is not KU versus UNC (the two teams playing for the National Championship in basketball earlier in the week). That's not what's happening. This isn't a game. "Hey, get the popcorn!" This is Baylor versus South Bosque Pee Wee League. "**For Jesus had said to him, "Come out of this man, you impure spirit!" Then**

Jesus asked him, “What is your name?” “My name is Legion,” he replied, “for we are many.” Legion is a Roman military term that means 2,000 soldiers. So, the text is consistent, because you’re about to see 2,000 pigs. “**And he begged Jesus again and again not to send them out of the area.**” Which is interesting. “Please don’t send us out of the area!” Because I believe areas have strongholds. There are specific demonic strongholds in territories. And you should ask the question: what is the stronghold here? I’m going to give you, at least, my answer. It’s religiosity and inauthenticity. “Play the church game!” The enemy’s rooting. “Keep playing the church game! Keep going on Sunday and keep it shallow! Don’t let them in! Confess sin? No way! Don’t do that! It’s weird!” Even though it’s biblical and in the Scriptures. “It’s not what I’m used to.” Hold fast to tradition, so he can keep you a slave. Let him keep you a slave. It’s what he’s cheering for. “**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.” He gave them permission, I love that word, 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.**” How many of you, when you see this, you see the pigs running to a cliff, doing a ‘swine’ dive, just rushing. I’ve been there, and what’s interesting—I was on the Sea of Galilee and I asked our amazing, brilliant tour guide, because there is a cliff, “Oh, is that the Gerasene area? Is that where the pigs happened?” He said, “No, no, no, no. That’s over there” (pointing in a different direction). There’s no cliff, and it changed everything for me in this story, because it’s even more amazing 2,000 pigs ran down a bank. They get in the water and they just swim out to sea. What did *that* look like? That’s crazy!

So, this man, under the influence of 2,000 demons, all of a sudden, he’s so strong and everybody is scared, and all of a sudden everything turns in a moment. He’s groveling, “Please, please, give me the pigs!” It shifted. Man, Jesus! Wow!

Why the pigs? That’s weird. Have you ever asked that? Why the pigs? Why did they want to go in the pigs? Why do Mark and Luke and Matthew tell us that the demons went into the pigs? Tim Keller read twenty commentaries trying to answer this question, and I read Tim Keller because it was more efficient. Better use of time! And I love this. He said the reason it says the demons went into the pigs is because that’s what happened. That’s what they observed. No creative writer is sitting in their English class saying, “What do we do next? Oh, man, let’s have them go into the pigs! That’ll really get them! That’ll be a really good story.” No, no. They’re there, and they’re observing what happened, and they’re like, “This is crazy! Two thousand pigs just ran down a bank and swam out to sea! That was wild! Matt, did you see that? Did you see what I just saw? John, you good? James, am I okay? That was wild!” My second point:

## 2. *Satan is No Struggle for the Savior*

It’s what this text is showing you. He is no struggle for the Savior. You have to know this. Jesus isn’t really thrown for a loop here. He knows exactly what to do. “Get the shovel!” A friend of mine is named Brandon Slay. What’s interesting about Brandon is that he won an Olympic gold medal in wrestling, which means at the time—this was 14 years ago—we had an opportunity to do some ministry together. At that moment, he is *the* best wrestler in the world.

He's one-in-eight-billion-good. He's the single best wrestler in the world. I would go with him, and he's a humble guy in the midst of being so gifted. People would say, "Hey, man, let's go!" And he would say, "Nah, no, no. It's fine." And they'd say, "Just show me something! Teach me!" And when you're that good, you don't really have a 50%. "Just take it easy on me!" He doesn't really know how to do that. He doesn't have *that* skill. He just knows how to win. I remember we were at a camp, and one guy said, "Hey, man, let's go! Just teach me!" and Brandon said, "No." And the guy kept saying, "Just show me a takedown. I wrestled. I wrestled in high school, too. It's fine." And I remember, Brandon finally agreed. "Okay, why don't you try to resist me?" He was being humble. He went down and he popped up, and when he hit the guy he took him down, broke four of his ribs and punctured his lung. And then we were going to the hospital. So, you have to be an idiot to want to wrestle this guy. So, I said, "We should wrestle. I'm taking this Jujitsu class, Brandon. Maybe I'll show you some submission." So, we went to this place, and I just remember thinking, "Oh, wow. He can do anything he wants to with me at will." With all my strength—and I was stronger at the time—I'm trying to resist him, fight him, and he was just, "I'm going to do this, okay, pin. Shoulders. Feel that? All right, choke you out real quick. All right, how about an arm bar?" And I said, "Oh gosh. Okay. Wow. Do you have a 50%?" So, this week, now 14 years later, I went to the chiropractor, this week, just in memory of that moment with Brandon Slay. Truly, the first moment he touched me, some vertebra moved out of place, and we've never quite been able to get it back. So, I always think about him, and I say that to tell you this is even greater than that. Jesus can do anything he wants to the Enemy at will. It's not even a struggle. There's no struggle. This text is absent of any kind of struggle. He doesn't lift a finger; he just says some stuff. There's no wand, there's no special thing with his hand, there's no spell. He says, "Come out!" "Can we please go to the pigs?" "Fine." That's what happened.

What's happening here is Jesus is setting someone free that's so much more enslaved than you've ever been or you've ever seen. Sometimes I talk to somebody who says, "Jesus can't help me." How prideful and arrogant do you possibly have to be to be in this place where you think Jesus can't help you? Jesus can't help your prodigal child. Jesus can't help your marriage. Jesus can't free you from your addiction. I mean, how prideful and arrogant must you be to be in that place where you think, "Nope. I'm no hope for God. I know He brings the dead to life. I know at will, he can set a man free of 2,000 demons, but I just really think my situation is going to throw Him for a loop. It's something He's never seen before. It's bigger than Him."

So, what you're seeing here is a miracle, just like every conversion is a miracle. We have to ask the question: should we call out demons like Jesus did? "Come out of there! In the name of Jesus, I rebuke you!" Is that what we should do? I will tell you He gives us a better practice in Mark chapter 9. This is some sort of a bigger, stronger spirit. There's a boy that's possessed. I'll read it to you. **"The spirit shrieked, convulsed him violently and came out. The boy looked so much like a corpse that many said, 'He's dead.' But Jesus took him by the hand and lifted him to his feet, and he stood up. After Jesus had gone indoors, his disciples asked him privately, 'Why couldn't we drive it out?' He replied, 'This kind can come out only by prayer'" Mark 9:26-29.** So, what happens is Jesus elevates, in this moment, the spiritual disciplines, which doesn't feel very sexy to us. I think there's a part of us that says, "No, I want to be like, 'In the name of Jesus Christ come out!'" That's not even what Jesus did, by the way. It seems like He's just having this casual conversation. He's not elevating. He's not saying,

“Well, if I hit *this* decibel, that’s when the Enemy can hear me.” We get weird with this stuff. And Jesus says, on this really, really difficult one, that one you pray, that one you fast. In fact, when we see Jesus at the height of His temptation, He’s face-to-face with the Enemy, He responds with the Word of God, and all of a sudden you see the importance of spiritual disciplines. In the other height of His temptation, when He’s in the garden. He’s about to go to the cross. This is Holy Week. He’s about to go to the cross. He’s about to die for our sins. He’s praying to the point of sweating blood. He’s in anguish, it says. He’s experiencing a greater anxiety than you’ve ever experienced. He’s literally perspiring blood, and He prays. And He prays. What this means is your “quiet time” is not this sweet little moment for you to impress your friends with a memory verse or story you learned. It is a strategic session to overcome Satan. It’s the war room. It’s, “God, I’m going to face all these things today. The Enemy is eating my lunch! I keep, like a dog to his vomit, going back to what’s destroying me, and I need a battle plan! I need some ‘art of war’ stuff. Holy Spirit, we’ve got to partner in this world because it’s getting dark out there! People are doing crazy stuff! Help me fight.” So, you can go on a battle with Satan or you can turn to the One who can effortlessly defeat 2,000 demons.

Here’s what I’m trying to say. If you’re going to fight someone stronger than you, you have to find Someone stronger than it. If you’re going to fight something stronger than you, you have to turn to Someone stronger than them. That’s what we do in that battle. You turn to Jesus and say, “Okay, I’ve come across another one, Jesus. Remember when you faced 2,000 and effortlessly, do your thing, Jesus!” And that’s called prayer. You pray. You’re not Jesus, and sometimes we say, “What would Jesus do?” It’s really, “What would Jesus have *me* do?” There’s times Jesus would have you turn to *Him*. I’m just telling you; the Enemy is strong. That’s why we spent two weeks talking about, “Hey, *this* guy is *bad!*” In Acts 19, there was another “exorcism,” sort of. **“Some Jews who went around driving out evil spirits tried to invoke the name of the Lord Jesus over those who were demon-possessed. They would say, ‘In the name of the Jesus whom Paul preaches, I command you to come out.’ Seven sons of Sceva, a Jewish chief priest, were doing this. One day the evil spirit answered them, ‘Jesus I know, and Paul I know about, but who are you?’ Then the man who had the evil spirit jumped on them and overpowered them all. He gave them such a beating that they ran out of the house naked and bleeding” Acts 19:13-16.** I lost to Brandon Slay. He whipped me, but I still had my clothes on. (Pointing to the Scripture.) That’s a different kind of beating! That’s next level. So, proceed with caution. Proceed with caution. I would recommend you first pray, maybe fast. You grab hold of Truth. Here’s what CARM says, Christian Apologetic Resource Ministries: “Demonic forces are powerful and we should never underestimate them. Our ability to rebuke them rests in Christ. If you encounter one directly, I recommend seeking Christ first, praying to Him and not to anything else or anyone else. If, on the other hand, there is an actual demonic manifestation where it is right there in front of you, then as is the case in Scripture, the forces can be addressed directly and rebuked in the name of Jesus.” I don’t know that I could say it better than that. So, I’ll just read that to you. That comes from CARM.org.

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. When they came to Jesus, they saw the man who had been possessed by the legion of demons, sitting there, dressed and in his right mind; and they were afraid. Those who had seen it told the people what had happened to the demon-possessed man—and told about the pigs as well. Then the people began to plead**

**with Jesus to leave their region.”** Which is weird. “Hey, man, you’ve got to get out of here!” It’s like the disciples on the boat. They’re scared, not now of the storm, but of *this* guy. Why? Why did they want Him to leave? Because He messed up their economy. Two thousand of their material possessions just went to sea. This is a big deal! Somebody is broke. **“As Jesus was getting into the boat, the man who had been demon-possessed begged to go with him.”** Jesus was always saying, “Follow me. Follow me. Follow me.” But not this time. Something shifts right here. And Jesus is always saying, “Hey, don’t tell anyone what I did. Hey, go and keep this to yourself.” Something is about to shift. **“Jesus did not let him, but said, ‘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. And all the people were amazed.”** Jesus says, “Hey, I want you to stay here, and I want you to tell the people.” And you’re about to see the Gospel burst forth. Let me ask you a question this morning. About a thousand people in this room. How many of you are Jewish? (JP searches the room for hands.) One. Anybody else? (JP points to the one.) Welcome! We’re glad you’re here. The rest of you: you probably received the Gospel from someone this demon-possessed guy told, who told somebody, who told somebody, who told somebody, who told somebody, who told somebody, who told somebody, who told somebody, who told somebody, who told *you!* Super thankful for *this* guy! This just burst forth into Gentile territory. The Gospel, a torch, moved across the Sea of Galilee, touched the ground and spread like wildfire. And you have this guy, Jesus takes the one most enslaved to sin and sets him free. He says, “Go tell them what happened!” And everybody says, “That guy?” And here’s my point.

### 3. *Jesus Simply Saves the Enslaved*

Jesus simply saves the enslaved. What I mean by “simply” is “easily,” “without much effort.” He sets him free! Everyone says, “Wait! We went to high school together. You’re the dude that cut yourself, right? The guy that got on steroids and got real strong, and you were there living in the tomb and no one could mess with you. You were filled with evil! What are you doing?” He says, “I met this guy. He set me free. It’s crazy. Sit down, let me tell you. You’re not going to believe it!” “But you seem so normal now.” “He changed me. He changed me.”

This is what God does. He takes your mess and makes it your message. First thing, a young woman comes up here. “I’m terrified. I just had an abortion. I feel like I’m not welcome here.” “Hang on. Let me find someone who’s made that same decision and has found freedom and forgiveness. They’re going to minister to you, so that you can then minister to someone else, so they can minister to someone else.”

“Hey, I’m so enslaved to porn, I just don’t know what to do! I can’t stop!” I used to be enslaved to pornography. “Why do you tell your story all the time, JP? You’re always up there talking about pornography and alcohol and the party scene and this and that. Why do you do that?” Because you’re supposed to. Maybe you say, “But I didn’t do that. I grew up in the church. I was saved at an early age.” Awesome! Is it self-righteousness? Is it pride? What’s the struggle that you’re tempted to be gripped in by the Enemy that you can turn into a story that God will use to set someone free? This is it! It’s what He did with Saul of Tarsus. He saved him on the road to Damascus: “Now, go and tell them.” It’s what He did with Saint Patrick: “Go back to Ireland and

tell them.” Saint Augustine: “Go back and tell them.” He saves someone to save everyone, or save everyone in that area. That’s what He did here. He saved you and set you in that classroom to save others, or in that teacher’s lounge to save others, or in that bank to save others, or that coffee shop to save others, or that real estate firm to save others, or that law firm to save others, or in that university! He put you in that university to save others! He gave you a story, and your story has power, and you start sharing your story! You’re *there* to share your story! Did you waste last week? Did you waste last week? You’re *there* to share your story! “Can I tell you about a man who set me free?” “Hey, can I tell you about someone who set me free?” “There’s a guy who set me free! Come here! Hey, sit down! I’ve gotta tell you about this guy who set me free!” Because people will trust a Christian, most of the time, before they trust in Christ. Most of the time, people will trust a Christian long before they trust in Christ. God has strategically put you in places, and He’s given you a story. And here’s the tactic of the Enemy in Waco: “You can’t tell them that. No, man, don’t bring *that* to light. Don’t bring *that* to light. They’ll think you’re crazy.” We’ll give you a trophy. I’m kidding, but I’m just telling you, we won’t think you’re crazy. We won’t. We’re not scared of your sin. That’s what’s consistent about all of you, and everyone watching at home, and everyone in the lobby right now. You’ve got some crazy sin. You all came from crazy families, I know. I know. You’ve all done some crazy stuff and the thing you thought you’d never tell anybody. Or you’re tempted to think that it’s actually up to you; that God did the world a favor by saving you. And it’s all equally evil. The Enemy will use all of it to trash our church and trash our city and trash our ministry.

I talked to Brandon yesterday. When he wrestled at the University of Pennsylvania, he wasn’t a believer. He was a terror, and he did all sorts of crazy things that non-believers do, as one of the greatest wrestlers in the world at the time. He went to the Olympic Training Center in Colorado, someone invited him to church, and he surrendered his life to Jesus. Then he’s thinking about occupations, thinks, “Hey, I might go be a pastor.” They just made him, now 18 years later, head coach at the University of Pennsylvania, over their Olympic Training Center. He says, “I’m not here just to train up wrestlers. I’m here to be a light to teach them about Jesus.” Because he gets it. He gets it.

When I was in Waco, I was a terror. I was running after my own desires. God says, “Hey, I’m going to send you back to Waco.” “That’s interesting, God. Tell me more.” Here we are. Where has God sent you, and what is the ministry He wants to do through you there? You have to be asking this question.

Let me just show you something: Jesus mercifully traded places with this man. We’re in Holy Week, and Jesus is about to be abandoned, naked, bound, bleeding, in pain, crying out, and living among the dead. Satan is about to think that he has victory, but Jesus says, “No. No.” It’s the great exchange. He got what you deserve, and if you trust in that, you get what He deserves. He died for your sins. He died to set you free.

In summary:

1. *Satan Seeks to Keep You a Slave*
2. *Satan is No Struggle for the Savior*
3. *Jesus Simply Saves the Enslaved*

I don't like snakes, especially the venomous kind. If I come across a venomous snake, I know how to handle it. "Get the shovel." I don't like Satan. All he does is lie. He's the father of lies. He destroys. If I come across Satan, I get the Savior. I know what to do. In Genesis 3:15, it's where we first see the Gospel. God says to Satan, **"And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel."** This is where we see the beginning of the solution to the sin that has just entered the world. Jesus, in His greatest temptation, He prayed. Watch this. (Video clip from the movie *The Passion of Christ* appears on the screen. Jesus is praying before going to be crucified as a snake slithers up onto His arm. He stomps on its head.)

I don't like snakes, especially not the venomous kind. If I see one, I get the shovel. I don't like Satan. If I see him, I get the Savior. He's not hard, it's not difficult, He's not a struggle for the Savior. You lean into your salvation. You press in. 1 John 4 verse 4: **"Greater is He who is in you, than he who is in the world."** Greater is He who is in you than he who is in the world. You strengthen that relationship with the Savior. Today, Palm Sunday, Jesus rides into Jerusalem on a donkey, and everyone said, "Save us! Hosannah! Hosannah in the highest! Save us!" A week later, the same people yelled, "Crucify him!" Don't do that here. Don't say that He's the Waymaker only to go out there and make your own way. Don't come in here and raise your hands, saying, "He's the Waymaker!" then walk through that door and keep making your own way. The Enemy is going to have his way with you.

Father, protect us, bless us and keep us, let your face shine on us. When we come face-to-face with any demonic force, any evil of any kind, program our hearts, God, to turn to our Savior, the One who is greater than any evil force of any kind. The One who has set us free. Strengthen us. Lead us not into temptation, Lord, but deliver us from evil. Strengthen us. Lead us not into temptation, Lord, but deliver us from evil. Thank you for saving a man we now know as the Gerasene demoniac. Thank you for a story that you've given him, and thank you that he was faithful to tell it. Help us to be faithful to tell ours. In the name of your Son, Jesus Christ. Amen.