

The Servant Faces The Demonic Legion (TIJ Mark 5:1-20) Pleasant Plains 6-14-2020 Nick Angel

- ***READ Mark 4:37-41*** On a number of occasions over the past couple of weeks, I have seen people ask why it is that there is a need for multiple Gospel accounts. They would see this as not being anything all that wise and even redundant on behalf of God, but I believe that simply shows a misunderstanding of the New Testament Gospel accounts. Though we refer to the Gospels as "The Gospel according to Matthew", "The Gospel according to Mark", etc...we don't need to think that they all tell the story of Jesus in the exact same way.
- This ought to be obvious from the simple fact that all four of the accounts are not the same length. Matthew and Luke are similar in length because they cover the same span of Jesus's life (all of it) and cover it in great detail. Matthew seems to give a simply point by point account of Jesus's life and ministry with as much detail as possible, and Luke gives us the reasoning behind his account in the first few verses by addressing Theophilus and stating this was his investigated account of Jesus's life. John only covers the ministry of Jesus and probably only a few weeks of it at most. He mentions specifically that he could write of so much more, but his focus on the seven miracles, seven "I Am" statements, and other key points of Jesus ministry were sufficient.
- Then we have Mark's gospel account that plainly states what he is endeavoring to do in the first verse. *"The beginning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God."* (Mark 1:1) Mark's goal seems evident, he simply wants to detail the story of Jesus and why He ought to be understood as being the Son of God. He seeks to answer the question, "Who is this man named Jesus?" The picture that Mark paints of Jesus is truly an incredible one, and this is the reason this series of lessons is entitled "The Incredible Jesus." Instead of simply telling the entire story of Jesus in great detail as Matthew and Luke do, Mark simply wants to give strong and methodical supporting evidence to prove that Jesus is in fact the Son of God.
- He begins by showing the prophecies of Malachi and Isaiah being carried out in John the Baptist. He shows the incredible nature of Jesus by telling of John baptizing Him and what took place in that moment. He tells the stories of Jesus's incredible teaching and miraculous healing of those who were stricken in some way. He shows His wisdom in the teaching of the parables, and then last time we look at the incredible power of Jesus in being able to command the raging storm to be still. It is at this point in the story that His disciples ask the all-important question that Mark is seeking to answer, *"Who then is this?"* (Mark 4:41)
- In asking this question, Mark now details a series of events that seeks to answer this question by highlighting the incredible power of Jesus. The first event is this calming of the sea. The disciples' knowledge of the Old Testament Scriptures should have led them to understand that only God has the power to calm the storms with simply a command. This morning, we are going to look at what happens when Jesus comes face to face with a legion of demons, and then next time we will see what happens when Jesus is faced with the death of a little girl and a woman who can find no medical help from men. In all of this, Mark is methodically leading the reader to understand that this man, Jesus of Nazareth is special beyond comparison. He has power over every force that can be found on this earth. Let's read this morning's text of consideration which is **Mark 5:1-20**, we'll then breakdown the text, make some observations, and then conclude with our two application questions. Though Jesus might be outnumbered...we'll see that even a legion of demons stands no chance against the Son of God.

I. Setting The Scene

A. Jesus & His disciples arrive to the other side of the sea.

1. Jesus had previously said in **4:35** that He desired to cross over to the other side of the sea, and after the episode with the calming of the storm on the sea, the disciples and their Lord do arrive on the eastern side of the Sea of Galilee. There is some discrepancy between the Gospel accounts as to where exactly they landed. Matthew refers to it as the area of the Gadarenes and some manuscripts even call it the area of the Gergasenes. Mark and Luke both call it the area of the Gerasenes.
2. Is this a contradiction that should cause us concern and even lead us to doubt these texts? I would answer "no" to those questions because these all seem to be nearby ancient cities and it would not be inaccurate to refer to it in any of the ways we see in the different accounts. In fact, we just read that this man would eventually go throughout the Decapolis (area of ten cities) to tell about Jesus. It seems this was an area where there was a number of nearby towns and cities, so it could be referred to in number of different ways. The skeptics might like to jump on these "inconsistencies", but I don't believe they hold water in the end.

B. Jesus is met by an uncontrollable demon-possessed man.

1. We next read that Jesus has barely made it out of the boat before He is met by a man who is possessed and under the control of an unclean spirit. In fact, we'll see that he is actually possessed by a legion of demons which is how they refer to themselves. If they are using the term "legion" literally then we're talking about this man (and his partner who is also mentioned in the other accounts, but doesn't see to play much of prominent role which is why Mark focuses solely on the outspoken man) being possessed by upwards of 6,000 demons.
2. This type of event probably seems so very foreign to us simply because we don't see supernatural events like this taking place in our day and time. We read of demon possession on a number of different occasions in the New Testament, and while I don't think it was happening on every street corner...it does seem like it was a somewhat common occurrence that people were well aware of. That simply isn't the case today. Satan and his wicked forces don't see to have that same leeway that they had in that time period which we certainly ought to be appreciative for seeing as how this poor soul was confined to a miserable existence while under the power of these demonic forces. Mark tells us that he lived in the tombs, which were often found in caves along large stone faces, and he even harmed himself with the stones that were all around him. He was a terrifying presence to those in nearby towns.

C. The demons recognize Jesus & beg to not be tormented.

1. Though he was in this secluded area, it does not take long for the demons to recognize who Jesus was. This is a bit of an ironic moment considering the men who were Jesus's right hand men had literally just asked among themselves, *"Who then is this"* (**Mark 4:41**) There was no asking of this question on the part of the demons, they knew exactly who Jesus was, and they also knew that He had the power to do whatever He wished with them.
2. In fact, it seems as if it didn't take long for Jesus to command that they come out of the man. However, the demons resist and beg Jesus to not torment them. It is at this point that Jesus asked the demon for its name and they respond with *"Legion...because we are many."* (**5:9**) They further request of Jesus that he allow them to be cast into a herd of pigs that were feeding on a nearby hill instead of being sent out of the region. I honestly can't tell you the meaning behind their request, but we are going to see shortly that Jesus granting them this request will have some very significant results.

D. Jesus gives them permission to go into a herd of pigs which run down into the sea and drown.

1. Jesus does give them permission to go into the herd of pigs (numbering about 2,000), and they promptly run down the steep bank of the hill and all drown in the sea. Yet, again, here is another point of contention for the skeptic. They would argue that Jesus doing this is cruel not only on behalf of the pigs, but also for the farmers whose resources are now gone.
2. To this contention, I would respond with the fact that Jesus, being God, has the right to do as He very well wishes with the creation that He created. If he wants to kill pigs that He created then He has every right to do so. This is simply a time when we have to grant God the right to do as He wishes. We might not like that answer all that much, and the skeptic surely won't, but if Jesus is God and we recognize His superior status then we simply don't have much of a leg to stand on when it comes to criticizing Him in this moment. Yet, that isn't going to stop the people of the land from confronting Jesus on this incident.

E. The people of the land are terrified by what has happened and beg Jesus to leave their land.

1. A theme that will show itself more and more from this point on in Mark's Gospel is that of fear or being afraid of Jesus or based on something that He has done. We've seen that already in **4:40,41**, and it will show up a number of other times from this point on. One of the reasons this theme shows up so often is because fear of Jesus often provides an opportunity to make a decision concerning Jesus.
2. In this moment, the people of the land were terrified of Jesus and decided to allow that fear to move them to ask Him to leave their land. A man that they knew was demon-possessed is now in his right mind and clothed, and a massive herd of pigs are now dead in the sea. They are terrified of this Man who seems to be behind it all...and they simply want Him gone.

F. The previously possessed man begs Jesus to be allowed to go with Him, but he is told to simply go and tell others what the Lord has done for him.

1. However, this man who has been cleansed of his demons (literally) doesn't want Jesus to leave without Him taking him along. The text tells us that the man *"begged Him earnestly that he might remain with Him."* This is the same type of language that is found earlier (**3:13**) when Mark speaks of Jesus calling His disciples to Himself so that they might be with Him. This man's reaction to Jesus was the polar opposite of the rest of the people, and he strongly desired to join Jesus as one of His closest disciples.
2. However, Jesus does not grant this man's request like He does with the demons' request. He tells the man to remain where he was and to simply go home to his own people so that he might tell them all about how much the Lord had done for him. It is interesting to me that this man seems to get exactly what Jesus is putting down. He makes the connection that Jesus is the Lord, and he goes about the Decapolis telling everyone about this incredible Jesus.

With the details of the text considered, let's make some additional observations that stand out to me.

II. Observations Of The Text

A. The people of this man's community had no power to harness or help him.

1. As we consider this text, it becomes abundantly clear that the people of this region had absolutely no power over the demonic forces of Satan that were at work within this man. This text tells us that they had tried to restrain this man, but he simply broke the chains and the shackles off like they were nothing. The people simply were not strong enough to subdue him, and this ought to teach us a strong lesson about trying to fight against the forces of darkness and evil with simply our human strength.

2. This episode of Jesus showing His power over the demonic legion simply reinforces our need to remember that we have no power in and of ourselves to stand against Satan. Our physical strength, knowledge, or wisdom are nothing against him and his supernatural power. If we want to stand against him then we must follow Paul's instructions and put on the spiritual armor that God supplies to us. **(Ephesians 6:10-17)**

B. The demons were well aware of who Jesus was.

1. Remember, Mark is seeking to answer the question of who this Jesus guy is, but this legion of demons was already well aware of who He was. This shouldn't surprise us all that much considering the text of **James 2:19**. The demons are fully aware of God and His power.
2. This sets up as a very interesting contrast with the disciples of Jesus and others who come in contact with Jesus. So many of them simply saw Him as a great teacher or miracle worker, but there was often that misunderstanding that didn't allow them to see Him for who He truly was. Men often looked at Jesus with a simple human/fleshly perspective, but these demons saw beyond the flesh and saw Him for who He plainly was based upon what He was doing. Even in chapter 8 we will see that it even though Peter acknowledged Him as the Son of God, he was still focused on human concerns that kept him from seeing the bigger picture. What a sad state for the disciples to be in that even the demons acknowledge Jesus better for who He was than they did at the moment.

C. Jesus allows these demons to make their request, and He even grants them their request... showing His absolute power over the demonic forces.

1. Yet, for us the reader...we are clearly shown undeniable evidence of Jesus's superiority over all things, first weather related, and now supernatural powers. We might think it strange that Jesus would even allow for these demons to try to defy His orders to come out of the man, but I am convinced that Jesus allowed for this to happen so that His true power of the demonic forces would be even more evident.
2. Let's first recognize that these demons had to ask Jesus to do what they wanted to be done. Just like the demons in **1:23,24**, these demons knew that Jesus could do with them as He pleased. Their only hope of not being tormented through being cast out of the region was for them to be permitted to go into the herd of pigs. Let's also recognize that Jesus allowing these demons to go into these pigs allowed an opportunity for him to really interact with the people of this land.

D. Jesus was compliant with the request of the people for Him to leave their land.

1. By these demons being permitted to enter into these pigs, the people of the land had a very tangible expression of this man being cleansed of his demons. Not only was he cleansed, but now the demons could be seen "being destroyed" in the sense of their new vessels were killed. It is interesting that the text doesn't say what became of the demons in this moment, but we know that the demons and all wicked forces of Satan are destined for eternal torment and destruction because of their rebellion against God. **(Matthew 25:41)**
2. Yet, these people had the opportunity in this moment to recognize Jesus's power of these forces. They had an opportunity to rejoice with this man that he was now cleansed of these tormenting spirits. They could be glad that much good was done on this day, And yet they decided to instead be frightened to the extent that they were driven to ask Jesus to leave their land. They didn't want to investigate Jesus any further. They didn't want to take a deeper dive into this man (much like those who simply rejected Jesus's parables), and they only wanted Him gone. And you know what? Jesus complied with their request. He wasn't going to force Himself upon them. He desires for people who desire Him, and that simply wasn't where these people were at the moment.

E. This man was able to do great work for the Lord where he was within his own land.

1. But such could not be said of the man who had been cleansed of the demonic possession. He so badly desired to follow after the One who had done him such a great service, and yet he was denied that opportunity. How could Jesus does such a thing?
2. Let me suggest that Jesus was simply helping this man recognize that he had so much good that he could accomplish right there where he was. He didn't have to drop everything and come with Jesus to show his appreciation and gratitude. For him, he simply needed to share with those around him the great things the Lord had done for him. In doing this, he not only would show his appreciation, but he would also accomplish great work for the Lord who had shown such great kindness to him.

With these considerations having been brought to our attention, what questions can we ask ourselves that will help us to make personal use of this text?

III. Application Questions

A. Are we able to see Jesus as truly being the only answer to the ills that trouble us?

1. It is very obvious in this text that Satan's power is superior to our own. His supernatural forces and influences will overpower our own strength just as these people were overpowered by the demons. What can this help us to recognize? This is a good question considering the fact that I don't think any of use are going to have to physically restrain a demon possessed man anytime soon.
2. While this might be the case, consider that we will have to wrestle against the influences of the forces of wickedness and darkness in this age. It wont take long for us to look around in this world and see the influence that the evil one's wicked schemes are having upon what is taking place. All of the chaos, violence, and evil almost seems to have the upper hand at the moment. There are many who seem to think that the government or laws of the land will extinguish all of these outburst, but we must recognize that these expressions of evil will never be fully cured by the efforts of men alone. No, this evil will only be fully cured by the power of God that is on display in the Gospel. We must all take up not just the words but also the strong belief of Paul and be willing to confess and believe, *"I am not ashamed of the Gospel because it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, first to the Jews, and also to the Greek."* (Romans 1:16)

B. Are we willing to simply share with others what Jesus has done for us here where we are right now?

1. How can we show that we believe in these words? We might think that this can only be done by doing some grand expression of faith by becoming a foreign missionary or even taking up the mantle of preaching, but let's consider how this man showed his own belief in Jesus...he simply told people in his own city and region about what Jesus had done for him.
2. Let's not be fooled into thinking that we can't be useful for the Lord unless we're doing some sort of official teaching or preaching. That simply isn't the role everyone is to play. Instead, we need to recognize that as disciples of Jesus we simply can and need to share with others what Jesus has done for us! I believe we have a great opportunity before us to show people the better way of faith, trust, and hope in Jesus. So many are hurting and without hope, but we can and ought to tell those very people, who are all around us, that there is hope in Jesus that can bring peace in this difficult life. We can do that right here where we are in Jackson.

Even when outnumbered a legion to one, our Lord continues to show just how special He is to all of those who are around Him. May we do likewise by telling others just how special He is and what He has done for each of us! May we take to heart the example of this man and be determined going forward to follow in his footsteps as we see in this verse. *"So he went out and began to proclaim in the Decapolis how much Jesus had done for him, and they were all amazed."* (Mark 5:20)