

Mark 5:1-20
May 13, 2018

You can tell a lot about a person by how he or she treats others. You can tell even more about a person by how they treat those judged by society as unimportant.

Charles Spurgeon—the famous British preacher from the 19th century—says the same thing only MUCH more eloquent,

“I think you may judge of a man’s character by the persons whose affection he seeks. If you find a man seeking only the affection of those who are great, depend upon it he is ambitious and self-seeking; but when you observe that a man seeks the affection of those who can do nothing for him, but for whom he must do everything, you know that he is not seeking himself, but that pure benevolence sways his heart.”
Charles Spurgeon

Today we will see the heart and demeanor of Jesus Christ—he pursues someone who can do nothing for him. He pursues a man who has nothing to offer. He pursues a man who everyone else shuns. He pursues a man who has lost himself and has storm raging internally.

Main idea: Jesus pursues to sinners to renew them.

When last we were with Jesus and his followers in the book of Mark, their boat was being thrashed about by a fearsome Galilean storm. And then the boat docks

on dry land and instead of a respite, Jesus meets a man suffering from a fearsome storm within.

“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. ³ He lived among the tombs. And no one could bind him anymore, not even with a chain, ⁴ 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. ⁵ Night and day among the tombs and on the mountains he was always crying out and cutting himself with stones. 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.” ⁸ For he was saying to him, “Come out of the man, you unclean spirit!” ⁹ And Jesus asked him, “What is your name?” He replied, “My name is Legion, for we are many.” ¹⁰ And he begged him earnestly not to send them out of the country. ¹¹ Now a great herd of pigs was feeding there on the hillside, ¹² and they begged him, saying, “Send us to the pigs; let us enter them.” ¹³ So he gave them permission. And the unclean spirits came out and entered the pigs; and the herd, numbering about two thousand, rushed down the steep bank into the sea and drowned in the sea.

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. ¹⁷ And they began to beg Jesus to depart from their region. ¹⁸ As he was getting into the boat, the man who had been possessed with demons begged him that he might be with him. ¹⁹ 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.” ²⁰ And he went away and began to proclaim in the Decapolis how much Jesus had done for him, and everyone marveled.” Mark 5:1-20

When last we were with Jesus and his merry band, they were convinced that a storm was going to swallow them whole and they were going to die and be buried in a watery grave.

But Jesus spoke—“Peace” and there was peace. The storm was stilled and the water calmed. And his disciples were afraid—wondering aloud—who is this?

I can imagine as they pondered their brush death with and as land came into focus—they were just ready to stand on terra firma and gain their bearings.

Jesus led the boat across the lake and through the storm and landed.

Whew. Safety—right?

Kind of—vs. 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. ³ He lived among the tombs.”

Jesus led the boat to a graveyard that was worse than haunted. They had barely stepped out of the boat and a crazed naked man came yelling at Jesus and the disciples.

If I’m one of the 12—I’m thinking. What the heck? This is no good. Jesus, what are you doing?

You take us through a storm on sea and now we land in a graveyard. C’mon.

We go from thinking we are going to die on the water and to being accosted by a freak. I’m sure they screamed like schoolgirls.

Have you ever said, “I just can’t wait until this storm is over. I’ll be so grateful. I just have to make it.” And you set your eyes so much on just getting through thinking anything is better and then Jesus lands your boat in the graveyard.

Jesus directed the disciples across the sea and was with them in the storm, now he is with them in the land of the dead.

From the storm to the graveyard.

And in the graveyard we meet—

A tortured man
The Legion of demons
The fearful townsfolk

1. A tortured man—

This poor man. You can tell his life is not a good one by his address.

³He lived among the tombs.

He lived in a graveyard. How desperate do you have to be to sleep with the dead. He slept among the tombs with the dead. How many times had his tortured soul wished he could be like them?

We see that he seems more animal than man—

And no one could bind him anymore, not even with a chain, ⁴for 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.

He could not be tamed. He had what seems like preternatural strength.

But despite this great strength—he could not free himself from the storm within.

⁵Night and day among the tombs and on the mountains he was always crying out and cutting himself with stones.

The dead were deaf to his cries, but the town could hear them from afar. And he gave into self-harm.

Do you see that this man was unable to either be helped or to help himself?

He lives with the dead like an animal, howling and crying with no help in sight. No one could help him and he could not help himself. This man was hardly a man anymore. He was a shell, miserable, outcast, hoping to die.

The evil one wants to dehumanize all. To turn people in God's image into animalistic shadows of themselves.

And then Jesus steps off the boat. Look at his response,

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."

This man ran to Jesus and begged not to be tortured.

This is ironic because he could not be tortured any worse than he was being tortured up until that point—but this is what evil does.

Evil always says that good will hurt and be like torture.

This man was miserable, tortured both in body and soul. This man was—

- He was cast out of polite society.
- He was driven out to live in the tombs.
- His cries of misery echoed through the town.
- He was disowned by polite society.
- He was considered out of his mind.
- He begged not to be tortured any further.
- He was completely defiled by evil.

This man is divided. He says don't torment me and then we hear another voice—we hear the voice of a legion of demons.

A Legion of Demons—

⁹ And Jesus asked him, "What is your name?" He replied, "My name is Legion, for we are many."

A Roman legion had about 6000 men, and the demons took legion as their name. There were a legion of demons in this one man.

No wonder he is so troubled.

Do you see the dehumanizing effect of evil on him? This man has lost his identity and become a number. In one moment he is saying—don't torture me and the next he is saying—we are many.

He doesn't know who he is anymore.

Jesus sees the problem.

Now Jesus was saying—Come out of him! meaning that Legion did not come out immediately. Then we have this interesting little conversation—

¹⁰ And he begged him earnestly not to send them out of the country. ¹¹ Now a great herd of pigs was feeding there on the hillside, ¹² and they begged him, saying, “Send us to the pigs; let us enter them.”

We don't know for sure why they wanted to go into the pigs, but with Jesus they knew they couldn't stay in that man.

¹³ So he gave them permission. And the unclean spirits came out and entered the pigs; and the herd, numbering about two thousand, rushed down the steep bank into the sea and drowned in the sea.

Notice his authority. No one up to this point could bind the man. But with a nod of a head or glance, Jesus gives permission to the spirits to depart from him and enter the pigs.

Everyone else was powerless to help this man, but Jesus could restore and renew him.

Legion recognizes Jesus' authority and they ask to go into a nearby herd of pigs. Jesus gives them permission. And the pigs run off into the sea and die by the thousands.

What is that all about?

First of all, pigs have no herd instincts. For them to rush as one off into the sea is highly unusual.

Second of all, losing a herd of pigs like this meant huge financial loss for the town. As the pigs drowned themselves in the Sea of Galilee so did the local economy.

The pig was the town's cash cow.

Was this man's life worth town's livelihood? Jesus said, 'Yes!' The town seemed to say, 'No!'

It seems the town sold pigs to the Roman forces to the soldiers could have ham with their eggs. But it seems there was going to be a lot of meatless Mondays now.

The herdsmen hired to tend the pigs ran off into town and told everyone what happened.

One man is in his right mind and 2000 pigs are dead.

How would the townsfolk respond?

The fearful townsfolk—

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.

They did not rejoice.
They did not celebrate.
They did not applaud.

They did not put Jesus up on their shoulders and sing, “For he is a jolly good fellow.”

They were afraid.

This man who they had heard for years haunting the tombs screaming with no relief, this man who they could not bind, this man who ran about naked and wild, this man was in his right mind—and the people were afraid.

When the disciples were witnesses to Jesus calming the tempest, they were left afraid. The townsfolk were witnesses to Jesus calming a demonized man, they were left afraid.

What would the townsfolks say to Jesus?

17 And they began to beg Jesus to depart from their region.”

They wanted Jesus to leave.

The disciples were frightened but at least they wanted to stay with Jesus. The townsfolk were more frightened by Jesus power than anything that the demonized man had ever done.

You might think—If I saw Jesus perform a great sign or unmistakable wonder, If I witnessed it firsthand—I would believe in him.

Chances are, you would be left with more questions than answers and you would be just be left afraid.

And fear like that doesn't lead to belief—just bewilderment.

He has authority that still the wind and waves.
He has authority to dispatch a legion of demons.

And yet the people of the town do not recognize him—they send him away.

Or put another way,

The wind and waves obey.
The demons obey.

But the townsfolk send him away.

And he goes to get back in the boat. All of the created order responds to his authority but these townsfolk send him away.

And he goes. But before he does,

Verse 18,

¹⁸ As he was getting into the boat, the man who had been possessed with demons begged him that he might be with him. ¹⁹ 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." ²⁰ And he went away and began to proclaim in the Decapolis how much Jesus had done for him, and everyone marveled."

- The demons begged to be sent into the pigs and Jesus obliged.

- The townsfolk begged Jesus to leave and he did.
- The freed man begged to come and he said no.

Isn't that interesting?

Why?

Because Jesus gave him something else to do. He told him to, **"Go home to your friends and tell them how much the Lord has done for you, and how he has had mercy on you."**

Anytime Jesus says, 'No,' it is for something better. Here a man who was formerly known as a carrier of a legion of demons was a carrier of the message of the mercy of the Lord.

What can we take away from our trip to the country of the Gerasenes?

1. Jesus pursues the tortured and troubled—

Do you see this?

Jesus went looking for someone that everyone else would rather have nothing to do with. Jesus crossed a lake at great peril to touch and renew a tortured soul. This man relegated to the tombs—to live like an animal amongst the dead—Jesus pursued him.

He pursued someone everyone ran from.

While crossing the Sea of Galilee (8 miles wide) seems like a lot of trouble, we know Jesus had come from

further away. He pursued mankind over a distance only he could travel.

Instead of just risking a crossing of a hazardous and tempestuous sea, Jesus came from heaven to earth. He is the God who became man to pursue tortured sinners.

See his heart.
See his love.

You can measure the love of God in the actions of Jesus—he comes looking for the troubled.

How does he help the tortured and troubled?

He helped this man by dispatching the demons—but he helped him in a more profound way.

2. Jesus takes the place of the tortured and troubled—

Mark is foreshadowing what would happen to Jesus as he described the plight of this tortured man.

- Jesus would be cast out of polite society.
- Jesus would be driven out to die outside the city.
- Jesus was hung naked.
- Jesus was buried in the tombs.
- Jesus' cries of misery echoed.
- Jesus was disowned by his friends.
- Jesus begged not to be tortured.
- Jesus was defiled by sin.

And here we see that the power of Christ is not just in this authority over unclean spirits but in authority over sin and death.

This man had a problem greater than just being inhabited by legion—he was a sinner too. He had done wrong.

And he is not the only one.

We might not be tortured like this man was, but we have done evil just the same.

Alexander Solzhenitsyn said,

“The line between good and evil goes right down the middle of every human heart.”

That is true. None of us are who we should be—none of us have always done good. Right?

Here is why Jesus matters—he came to destroy all injustice and evil. He came to make all things right. Jesus pursued to save by taking the place of men and women who are broken by sin and death.

To destroy evil means that he has to destroy us—but instead—Jesus came and was destroyed.

He pursued us to take our place.

- Jesus would be cast out—so we could be welcomed in.
- Jesus would be driven out—so we could have a forever home.

- Jesus was buried in the tombs—so we might not taste death.
- Jesus' cries of misery echoed—so our cries of joy might resound.
- Jesus was disowned by his friends—so we might be welcomed by God.
- Jesus begged not to be tortured—so we might rejoice in life.
- Jesus was defiled by sin—so we might be given life.

Who does this? Who is like this?

Only Jesus.

3. Jesus renews any that come to him—

If Jesus can renew someone as broken as the man we met among the tombs today—no one is too far gone. You may feel:

- Broken by circumstances.
- Disowned by friends.
- Wracked by loneliness.
- Stuck in empty religion.
- Smashed about by anxiety.
- Owned by sadness.

You might feel rejected by all—but see this Jesus who loves all without exception. See the distance he has come to reach you.

If you are a Christian—

Recognize what he gave up to renew you.

Everything.

Not just the glory and majesty he had for eternity past—but he gave up his life.

The author of life died so that sinners might live.

If you aren't a Christian—

Who loves like this Jesus?

The best thing I can recommend for you is to get to know this Jesus. The reason the NT has four complimentary accounts of his life is so you can get to know him.

He loves without exception.

Jesus came for this man that no one else wanted.

Where do you find yourself?

Do you want to go with Jesus or do you want Jesus to go?

4. Go tell of his mercy—

We have a message. A very personal message. We can tell our friends of how the Lord has had mercy on us.

It can be easy to forget all that Jesus has done for us—especially if you have been a Christian for a long time. But remember his mercy.

He came looking for you when you had nothing to offer.

He came to renew you though you did not deserve it.
He came to give mercy when you didn't deserve it.

Why?

Because he loves you. He was not merely contractually obligated, he loved you for all time. He has given you mercy.

Think about how—

