

JESUS CAN SET ANYONE FREE!

Scripture - Mark 5:1-5

1They came to the other side of the sea, into the region of the Gerasenes. 2When He got out of the boat, immediately a man from the tombs with an unclean spirit met Him. 3He lived among the tombs; and no one was able to bind him anymore, not even with a chain, 4because he had often been bound with shackles and chains, and the chains had been torn apart by him and the shackles broken in pieces; and no one was strong enough to subdue him. 5Constantly, night and day, he was screaming among the tombs and in the mountains and cutting himself with stones.

Introduction: Before I start this sermon, I must thank Jessie, for bringing out some interesting conversation last week! It is a good sign that our children are growing spiritually! I will try to stay close to the Scripture text, and preach this message first, and after that is done, I will address your specific questions in the end. Let us look at the text first.

Mark 5:1. 1They came to the other side of the sea, into the region of the Gerasenes.

Mathew calls this remote region as Gadarenes. (Mat. 8:28). Note. It is east of Jordan, a gentile territory, part of ten cities (Decapolis)!

Context and transitions are very important in this passage.

According to Mathew 8:18, the crowd became unbearable, and therefore, Jesus ordered the disciples to take the boat to the other side of the Sea of Galilee! While they were rowing to the other side of the lake, a strong storm took them by surprise, and they started panicking. But at that time, our Lord was taking a nap. They woke Him up, and when He rebuked the wind, the wind stopped! The disciples were amazed. After this traumatic experience, the disciples walked into another scary experience as soon as they landed! Throughout the New Testament, we come across Jesus or the Apostles casting demons out of people, and such stories may bring little fear in our heart. But I would say, this story tops them all! It is too graphic, and scariest of all!

Mark 5: 2-4. 2When He got out of the boat, immediately a man from the tombs with an unclean spirit met Him. 3He lived among the tombs; and no one was able to bind him anymore, not even with a chain, 4because he had often been bound with shackles and chains, and the chains had been torn apart by him and the shackles broken in pieces; and no one was strong enough to subdue him.

The disciples thought they dodged a bullet by escaping the storm. Now there was another crisis! A dangerous, mad man was running toward Jesus! Who said that we will never run into serious dangers when we walk with Christ daily? Who said that? We are so used to hearing sermons that life will be very beautiful when we are walking with

the Lord? Is that true? I do not think so. Horrors of life can strike us anywhere, anytime, even if we are in the hands of Jesus. Remember that always. If we are attacked by some evil, demonic virus, do not panic! Do not be alarmed! If we stay close to Jesus, He will take care of us. The battle belongs to the Lord! Just trust Him and see the salvation of God!

This demonic person was a scary one! He lived in a graveyard. Basically, he was sitting next to the dead bones and rotting bodies inside the caves. Who knows, he might have eaten the dead flesh too? Also, he may have been scarred from chains and shackles when people tried to bind him. He was so strong, whenever people bound him, he would break those chains.

Before I go any further, I must draw a contrast between demon possession and mental illness! We tend to judge people too quickly, and label them as demon possessed because of their abnormal behavior. But it could be due to mental illness. If they become ok when they take their medication, they are not demon possessed. So be careful with your analysis. Some of our loved ones could be manic depressive, bipolar disorder, suicidal, schizophrenic, personality disorder, obsessive compulsive etc. we should not treat them as demon possessed.

On the other hand, there may be others who may experience demonic attack, and he could become a drug addict, an alcoholic, a criminal, or someone who has just lost his way, and we must reach out to such people, and try to touch them with love. The only hope for these people is Jesus, and we must pray that He comes their way. Many times, we look at certain folks and say that there is just no hope? That is wrong! Every human being has a fair chance if he comes to Jesus!

That is the only commonality we all have! We all came to Jesus and were touched! And what is the commonality all the unsaved people have? They all refuse to come to Jesus! So, what should we do? Try to help them see Jesus! How? Through our nonjudgmental conduct and speech. By inviting them to our house, by inviting them to our church. There is hope for them still, and they can still be touched by Jesus Christ.

This person was probably naked according to Luke 8:27. His body was bearing the marks of cuts he had made on it with sharp stones. He may have been even bleeding as he ran down to meet Jesus.

Self-mutilation and cutting are not just a nervous habit — it is a serious mental illness. Dr. Levenkron, a famous psychiatrist says, *“Self-mutilation is cutting yourself, burning yourself, lacerating your skin, attacking your skin in a variety of ways to perceive the pain and to feel the pain involved, because the pain involved, and the blood distracts such people from their emotional pain. . . . We are not talking about people with healthy, intact relations to people. We are talking about people who feel profoundly lonely and profoundly separate from the rest of the world.”* Maria, who is a 30-year-old pre-med student, also suffered from an eating disorder, anorexia. *Eating disorder is a form of self-infliction.*

It is estimated that up to three million people, mostly women are cutters. The disorder usually begins around puberty and Doctor Levenkron says the psychological symptoms include withdrawal, moodiness, and depression. The obvious physical symptoms are many scratches and nicks on their forearms, chest, or stomach.

Therapy is not easy for cutters like Maria.

Dr. Levenkron says it could take years to help a patient stop cutting themselves because the disorder is a complex web of low self-esteem and a lack of self-respect (my comment here: these things happen due to demonic attacks from within as well as from outside!?). Dr. Levenkron concludes: We can't just take away the razor blade and say, Now you're all right. The razor blade is only the tip of the iceberg."

This man was dwelling in the graveyard howling and screaming due to unbearable inner pain and anguish because there were demons in him that will not let him rest.

This person is too scary for any of us. We may not only want to avoid him in a lonely forest, but in public places also. Only if we have Christ in us, we have a chance of facing him!

This man was a lover of tombs, where the dead bodies lay! This has a parallel message for all of us. People without Christ tend to hang out with spiritually dead people. Those friends may drag them to spiritual tomb of darkness and sinful life. Some of us have been through that kind of lifestyle in the past! Demon possession still exists today. It may have a different form, but they are more deadly, and it destroys more people. Mindless shootings, killing their own babies, throwing the babies out of moving cars, stabbing their own mothers and fathers, and the list goes on.

The worst demon of all is the suicidal demon! It tells the person constantly that he is no good, no one likes him, and there is nothing this life offers for him, and therefore he should end his life. These demons are the ones who create poor self-image in you! God never tells a person to commit suicide, but these demons do. So, if you hear a voice inside of you, and it tells you to go ahead, commit suicide, do not think, it is coming from God. It always comes from these demons! Rebuke, and chase away those thoughts.

Mark 5:5-8 5Constantly, night and day, he was screaming among the tombs and in the mountains and cutting himself with stones. 6Seeing Jesus from a distance, he ran up and bowed down before Him; 7and shouting with a loud voice, he said, "What business do You have with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I implore You by God, do not torment me!" 8For He had already been saying to him, "Come out of the man, you unclean spirit!"

"Screaming demon". Some of us become very agitated if children cry loudly for a long period of time, especially in a flight. Here this person was constantly screaming night and day because he was miserable! This must have been a frightening experience for anyone who heard him screaming constantly, especially in the nights! I wonder, even if the wild animals dared to live near this guy!

Do not think Demon possessed people will always run away from powerful spiritual people. Sometimes they boldly come and confront such people. He came, bowed down and worshipped him and was afraid of Jesus, because Jesus had already commanded the evil spirits to come out of him!

This sick person shouted, "Jesus, Don't torment me!" Demons tremble at the name of Jesus! There was something about the fiery furnace prepared for the demons on the day of Judgement. They tremble over that punishment. But how come we are not afraid of God's judgement. The son of President Reagan boasts in an ad for religious freedom, "I am not afraid to burn in hell".

Mark 5:9 9And He was asking him, "What is your name?" And he said to Him, "My name is Legion, for we are many."

A probing question for anyone! The name of God stands for the identity and the character of God. Likewise, the name of any person should stand for his character and identity. From the name, we can identify whether someone is an Indian or Jewish, or Hindu, or Muslim. If we want to target any race, we can easily pick their names out of any directories. A name tells us a lot about one's identity. Jesus is asking the same question to us, "what is your name?" What will you say? I am an alcoholic? I am a secretive druggee? Or dopee? I am a sex addict? I am an electronic gam(e)aholic? I am a power monger?

Or will you say I am a Christian? What is your name really? Wherever your heart is that is what your name is. Is it music? Is it electronic gaming? Is it business? Or career? Or status? Or material wealth? Where is your heart?

This strange person said, his name was Legion! This person forgot his original name. He totally lost his identity. He was in a desperate need of a total recall of his identity. (In Roman army, 6000 soldiers constitute a legion!) For we are many! Numerous evil spirits sharing the same body? According to modern lingo it is called multiple personality disorder!

We also display multiple personalities sometimes. We cannot see some of our children's faces in the morning when they get up. They get up as though they are possessed! People are sometimes so sweet but other times they scream like demons. (Bipolar disorder?) Some are very nice until they take a drink. Once they take it, they start beating their wives like monsters.

We show one personality when we are with whites. Another kind of personality when we are with Afro Americans, and something else when we are with Indians, with old people our attitude and tolerance level changes, but with the young babies we become so sweet? Is there any consistency in our personality? We cannot have different personalities. Let us be consistent.

Remember! Demons cannot come in if you are born of the Holy Spirit. They may attack us from outside, but not from within. Because He (Holy Spirit) that is within us is

greater than he that is in the world! But nonbelievers are vulnerable to demonic possession. Every vacuum in their life gets filled by some demonic influence. If they become self-righteous, and sweep and try to keep their hearts clean, the demons love such clean heart, and they bring more of their demons to dwell in that person's heart. (Mat.12:43-45). Jesus is the only antidote for these demons! Fill your heart with Jesus alone.

How come these demons are haunting around us on earth? Were they all not the fallen angels? Yes, they are. What are they doing on earth? I can only think of two answers. My first answer is, God has kept them on the earth so that they can be a thorn in the flesh for us until we come running to Jesus for help. My second reason goes back to the story of garden of Eden. There were two trees, tree of life, and tree of knowledge of good and evil! Adam and Eve were told that they will surely die if they eat the fruit of the knowledge of good and evil! But Adam and Eve rebelled and chose evil over life, and these demons are part of the package deal of the evil side! People deliberately seek these demons through idol worship, witchcraft, Ouija board, connecting with the dead people etc. Choose the tree of life, the Lord Jesus. Do not choose the tree of evil.

Mark 5: 10-13 10And he begged Him earnestly not to send them out of the region. 11Now there was a large herd of pigs feeding nearby on the mountain. 12And the demons begged Him, saying, "Send us into the pigs so that we may enter them." 13Jesus gave them permission. And coming out, the unclean spirits entered the pigs; and the herd rushed down the steep bank into the sea, about two thousands of them; and they were drowned in the sea.

These demons liked the Sea of Galilee area, a pristine beauty of God's creation and did not want to leave that area. Even demons love the beauty of God's nature. They also love some human body because they could experience all six senses of smell, taste, vision, hear, touch, and the sixth sense which is interpreted different ways: genetic gene, soul, psyche, spiritual sense, connecting with the spirits etc.! Whatever they are, the spirits love those experiences, which we take it for granted! When we smell a rose, eat a good meal, or touch a person we love, hear a good music, engrossing ourselves in spiritual messages, when we do such things, take a moment to thank God for those senses! They are great daily experiences of life, which we take it for granted! Demons love them too, and they are very jealous of our everyday blessings!

Evil spirits Requested to enter the pigs! Beware before you cast out evil spirit! It would look for another body! Make sure your gates of hearts are closed, and there are no weak persons around before you engage in casting out the demons!

There were about 2000 pigs! That is a lot of pigs and their value may be at least \$200,000 in US dollars! The evil spirits tried to strike a deal!

The demons asked permission to go into the pigs. They did not want to go back from where they came from but wanted to stay in the land of the living and enjoy the sensual pleasures. There are too many angles and nuances to this story. Jesus knew every angle of every decision, and I am sure, He chose the right decision, which is in the

Bible. Jesus at once gave them permission! Go! He knew exactly what was going to happen!

As soon as the evil spirits entered the pigs, the pigs rejected the demons vehemently! They would rather fall off the cliff than sharing their bodies with a bunch of demons! That teaches us a lesson. Evil spirits cannot possess us if we resist them. But some of us invite them through our compulsive, repulsive habits. People with no control in fleshly desires open their gates of their heart to such vulnerability! Resist the devil and he will flee from you! Do not give a comfort zone to these demons! Why should these 2000 innocent pigs should die like this? Jesus is not fair? Please, please, please, do not cry for the pigs! The pigs would have been sent to the slaughterhouse in few days, and they would have been packed as nice ham sandwiches! There is one thing I cannot figure out. Why did Jesus punish the businesspeople this way? They lost over \$200,000 just like that. Before answering this tough question, we must understand the fact that the decision Jesus makes will be precise, and accurate. He will not make any mistake. My take is that probably this pig business owners were Jews, and they were not supposed to have anything to do with the pigs, but they were promoting pork contrary to the law and tempting people. Jesus wanted to expose them and punish them for their sneaky business dealings.

A divine comedy and humor, but it costs the villagers their money! It was two birds with one stone! The pigs were gone from the Jewish neighborhood and the demons were gone too! Looking at this story from the perspective of one soul being saved at the cost of 2000 pigs may not be a correct interpretation. Because Jesus could have easily said "no" to the demons, and they would have been forced to wander around without any body, and the pigs would have been spared. Our God is a fair and just God. He would have offered restitution. But He did not. There must have been something more to this story than these explanations.

Mark 5:14-17 14Their herdsmen ran away and reported it in the city and in the countryside. And the people came to see what it was that had happened. 15And then they came to Jesus and saw the man who had been demon-possessed sitting down, clothed and in his right mind, the very man who had previously had the "legion"; and they became frightened. 16Those who had seen it described to them how it had happened to the demon-possessed man, and all about the pigs. 17And they began to beg Him to leave their region.

The villagers who heard it were frightened and instead of inviting Jesus to worship Him, they unfortunately told Him to leave. These people could live with 2000 pigs, they could put up with a legion every day, but not Jesus!

Some of us we do not want Jesus for the following reasons:

We may say.

Jesus "Don't disturb my comfort."

Jesus "Don't disturb my possessions."

Jesus "Don't disturb my religion."

We hear people say sometimes: I do not want to receive Jesus because,

- I will just have to give up all my fun.

- What will my family think?
- I will lose my job! (Just like these swine herders!)

People may not be possessed of the demons but sadly they are possessed of their self-ambitions and love of money.

I have often wondered why the church does not like to talk about the change that Jesus offers to all who come to Him. Perhaps it is because too many have come to the church for comfort, acceptance, and affirmation, and not for total change. Their own lives have not been changed by Christ. They may have a new lifestyle, but they do not have new hearts. They are not new creatures, created in Christ Jesus. They have only different outward habits, without inward transformation. They are silent about the change Jesus offers because, they have not experienced it. Perhaps they have grown used to it.

The blessings of God can be taken for granted. I believe that if the stars would only come out once a year, the world would all be watching on that night. But since they come out every night, few bothers to take the time to enjoy them at all.

Jesus could have been sued by the villagers, but their own person, the "ex legion" would have witnessed for Jesus and ruined their money scheme!

But the most important point in this story is that the man who was possessed with evil spirits was completely healed and he was sitting and clothed in his right mind!

His transformation was not just emotional, and mental but it was an inside out total change of behavior. Salvation experience that changes our behavior and attitude is a genuine salvation experience. He was anxious to go with Jesus!

Now, even though the town people begged Jesus to leave their presence, this man had a desire to remain with Him.

Mark 5:18. 18And as He was getting into the boat, the man who had been demon-possessed was begging Him that he might [c]accompany Him.

That is the impact that Jesus will have on a life. When He changes you like He changed this man, you will have a desire to be with Jesus! Are we like that? There are people who claim to have been transformed by Jesus Christ, but they have no desire to spend any time with Him! If you are changed by Christ, you would not only want to be with Him, but you would love to serve Him all the days of your life.

Mark 5:19,20. 19And He did not let him, but He said to him, "Go home to your people and report to them [d]what great things the Lord has done for you, and how He had mercy on you." 20And he went away and began to proclaim in Decapolis [e]what great things Jesus had done for him; and everyone was amazed. This man surrendered his life, and obeyed Jesus' commandment. Are we obeying Him? He told us to proclaim His Word, be instant in season, and out of season. Are we? You do not have to preach a long sermon like this. You gave to just share what the Lord has done in your life, and what He is doing now? Is that too hard?

*****Conclusion: When Jesus comes Demons will flee, Lives will be changed, And we will be given new responsibilities of Proclamation!**

Jesus wanted him to share the good news of salvation to all the villagers, especially his own family. Our preaching starts at home which is Jerusalem, then it must move to our neighborhood and city, which is Samaria and then to the utter most part of the earth, which is the foreign missions. Christian Gospel work is always inside out and not outside in!

Sharing what The Lord has done in our life is the greatest preaching of all!

Has The Lord saved you from condemnation of?
sin, death, and hades, and lake of fire?

Has The Lord filled your heart with the oil of Joy the Holy Spirit?

Has He made any change in your life? Is He talking to you? Do you relate to Him every day?

Come to Jesus! Miracles will happen! Jesus can set us all free today if we come to Him and confess who we are.

If we have Jesus, we have nothing to worry about the demons. The demons will flee us. But if we forsake Jesus, we will become a target of those demons.

The demons had to ask special permission to enter the pigs. Do you think they can get into the sheep of His pasture? Not a chance! Stay close to Jesus always! Nothing will touch you!

Jesus can set us free right now! Come, and worship Him! He can cast out all those strange behaviors out of you!

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