

Free From Evil

Mark 5:1-20

Central Idea: Jesus proves His power by expelling demonic forces and reigning in our lives!

Introduction

The scientific mind has been trained by the very nature of processes like the scientific method to reject anything that is not objective or can be repeated with the same results. Many have become closed minded to the very idea of spirituality or a spiritual plane of existence. So it's no surprise that the subject of today's message is something that most do not even talk about, let alone teach on.

I want to talk in our series on the miracles of Jesus in the Gospels about the final category of miracles, that is spiritual or deliverance miracles. Throughout the Gospels, Jesus is constantly coming into contact with demons and delivering people of them. Deliverance is included in Jesus' ministry not just in the Gospels, but today as well! Let's talk about one of the most informative of the passages about demons in Mark 5 today.

Text – Mark 5:1-20

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. 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.

I. Demons possess real power over welcoming persons (vv. 1-5).

A. Demons can force humans to do destructive things.

- i. There is so much debate today about demons and demonic activity inside and outside the church. Hollywood is running with these ideas of the paranormal and spiritual images.
- ii. Within the church, even, there can be debate about these things, and everyone seems to approach demonic activity with skepticism or an overly active imagination.
- iii. As we approach this subject today, I want to first say that we do not talk about demons very often around here for a simple reason. We’re not here for them. They are the losers in the battle. We concentrate on Jesus because He is the Victor!
- iv. But it is important for us to talk about demons from time to time not to give them credence or their due, but because the Bible talks about them in smaller portions.
- v. So we come today to an interesting passage, the only one in all the gospels where Jesus actually has a long, drawn out conversation with demons. As we go through this historical account, I will be clear on some helps for us in spiritual warfare.
- vi. The first thing that we notice is that these spiritual entities can affect physical beings, in this case, the man living among the tombs. There are a couple of cultural cues we need to see because we are not Israelites in the first century.
- vii. First, the tombs themselves would have been considered unclean by the Jews. This is a Gentile region that Jesus is visiting, which is unusual. The Decapolis was a predominantly Gentile area that encompassed about ten major cities.
- viii. Second, many Gentiles believed in the spirits of the dead coming back to haunt them, and would often offer gifts at the tombs to appease them, which is most likely how this man has survived this long.
- ix. Demons can inhabit someone who is willing. I want to be very clear. If someone has a demon possessing them, it came in because it was welcome. There are several ways to open oneself up to demons and welcome them.

- x. **Application:** But we as believers have the power of the Holy Spirit in us, and they cannot inhabit us! We are free from demons because we belong to Christ. He has already freed us from demonic power by His saving power. And we should not be afraid to deal with demons as believers!

B. Demons can display incredible strength.

- i. So Jesus approaches this area of the Gentiles and this man comes running up to Him. It is apparent from verse 8 that Jesus was already casting the demon out as the man came to Him.
- ii. As with many accounts of demonic activity, there are a couple of hallmark signs that this man demonstrates. We are immediately told of his great strength.
- iii. This man has been bound before, but always gotten out of his bindings. Worse than that, they have even tried chains and shackles, but to no avail. This demon has shown itself to be quite strong by shattering the shackles.
- iv. This is indeed a superhuman strength. And it is important to read and reread the part that tells us that no one could subdue this man who has this demon. The demon was too strong.
- v. Now there are other cases of this superhuman strength. There is a demon that is throwing a boy into fires and on the ground all the time and trying to drown him in another place in the Gospels. There is another episode from Acts where a demon-possessed person beats up seven men at once!
- vi. There is another sign of demon-possession for this man that we should take note of, that day and night he would cut himself and cry out. This man was in a lot of pain from this demon.
- vii. We have seen people cutting themselves before, like with the prophets of Baal at Mount Carmel, cutting themselves with great dedication so that Baal would heed their cries.
- viii. Today we have people who will cut themselves on purpose in self-mutilation. I am not saying that this is always connected to demonic activity. Some of the cutters I have talked to simply have no feelings and are numb to almost all stimulus. They could be in a crowd of people and feel completely alone. Sometimes they cut themselves just to feel something, but it is pain instead of the things God wants us to feel, like joy and security and love.
- ix. Demons have evil, wicked and destructive means to their possession. They don't possess you to make you feel good or to take care of you. They abuse their captives.
- x. Demons use their power for destructive purposes, outwardly and inwardly. They manipulate and deceive. They are evil by nature, and that evil flows out of the person they are possessing.

- xi. **Application:** Demons have a dangerous and violent power. We must not suppose that we can defeat a demon, especially a strong one like this one, on our own. We need the power of God as we address the kingdom of darkness. We should not be arrogant but approach demonic activity with prayer and the power of God, not ourselves. No one could subdue this man because of the demon's strength. Don't walk into a situation thinking you don't need backup from God, and maybe from other Christians as well! Don't fear demons, but don't play around with demons either!
- II. Jesus has greater power than any demonic force (vv. 6-13).
- A. All demons are subject to the authority of Jesus!
 - i. When Jesus comes on the scene and begins to cast the demon out, something incredible happens. You might notice that when Jesus, the spiritual authority and powerhouse shows up, this demon-possessed man comes to Him, not Jesus to the man.
 - ii. This demon, like all demons knows its place. I want to point back to the verse that told us that no one could subdue this man. And yet, the man is bowing at the feet of Jesus begging Him to not cast it out.
 - iii. The demon's conversation with Jesus is actually rare in the New Testament. Demons are not usually given any time to talk much. Jesus does not have long conversations with any of them.
 - iv. In today's world, there is a lot of discussion about how to address demons and what to say and do when conversing with them. But there is no need to do any of that!
 - v. Jesus is the Lord of Heaven and Earth. He can talk to a demon however much He wants, and He only does that here, and nowhere else. This should be seen as a special circumstance, rather than a normal paradigm or method.
 - vi. When you come into contact with demons the only thing that need be spoken is a command by the Holy Spirit for the demon to leave! That's it. Don't mess around or give the demon its due. Just cast it out and move on. It cannot stay in the power of the Spirit!
 - vii. But Jesus does talk to this demon in particular for one reason. It has not completely left the man as He commanded it to. I think that this conversation Jesus has is more for our benefit and for us to understand the spiritual world better than it is an actual problem for Jesus to cast out the demon.
 - viii. The demon in this part of our account is totally subservient to Jesus. It must be truthful in its responses, which is not usually the case. Satan is the Father of lies, and no demon is under any compulsion to be truthful.

- ix. But in the presence of Jesus, this demon is the one giving deference. Although no one else could subdue the demon-possessed man, he is willfully at the feet of Jesus, the greatest spiritual power in the area.
 - x. **Application:** We must never be afraid of demons because we walk with Jesus and His Holy Spirit dwells in us. We need not go looking for demons to cast them out either. But if we run into them, greater is He that is in us than he that is in the world. We need to have a confidence that the Holy Spirit will both protect us from demons, and use us to set people free from their power by His greater power.
- B. Jesus shows great mercy in all situations.
- i. The conversation that ensues teaches us that more than one demon can inhabit a person. This person happens to have an entire legion of demons inhabiting him.
 - ii. A Roman legion was anywhere from 4,000 to 6,000 soldiers. There are 2,000 pigs that the demons go into. One would either imagine that legion was not an exact term, or that more than one demon went into each pig.
 - iii. We must understand that this demonic hoard attempts to take control of Jesus. In common mystic paganism, to use the name of a god or spiritual entity was to take control of it for your own purposes. In using Jesus' name and position, the demon was seeking to take power over Jesus.
 - iv. But there's just one problem with that. It doesn't work. Jesus is all-powerful, and the demons, no matter how many there are, are not nearly as strong and authoritative as He is.
 - v. Jesus does not take the name of the demon for the same mystic reason that the demon calls Him out, but so that it can be a teaching moment for His disciples and us.
 - vi. Adjuring Jesus by God's name was essentially a power grab, for it was common for lower spirits to seek the power of higher spirits over a middle spirit that is casting them out. So in this case, the idea was that the demon would call on the Most High God, who is greater than Jesus. But the problem is that the Most High God and Jesus are one and the same, so it does not work.
 - vii. None of the power grabs work, so the demons are resorting to begging, and Jesus allows it. He sends them into the pigs, which were unclean animals in Jewish society.
 - viii. We are not told anything more about these demons. Jews held that demons can die. This is not something that is explained by the Bible, but it is clear that they can be detained by God's power.

- ix. Verse 13 cannot be stressed enough. Jesus gives them permission, for they cannot act in any way without His express authority and permission! Jesus is more powerful than any other spiritual entity!
- x. **Application:** Jesus single-handedly deals with a legion of demons numbering at least 2,000. This shows us His great power, but it also makes us feel secure. There is never anything that you will come up against that is too powerful for God to handle! They cannot win in the presence of God, and you walk with God. You are on the winning side. While we must not get arrogant or be unprepared to deal with demonic and wicked forces, we need not fear but trust in the power of God!

III. Jesus' power should humble us and cause us to be in awe of Him (vv. 14-20).

A. People sometimes react to Jesus' power out of total fear.

- i. We see that the herdsmen react to Jesus and His great power with fear. They run away and tell the whole city about what Jesus had done. They tell everyone they run into throughout the countryside.
- ii. It is most likely that many would have known about this man in the tombs and his great strength and just stayed away from him, but Jesus created a situation of curiosity of what had happened.
- iii. The herdsmen might have not wanted Jesus to stick around out of fear, and also out of financial loss. Two thousand pigs lost in the sea is quite the downer for a pig farmer.
- iv. We have seen this financial connection elsewhere, as Paul exorcised a demon out of a girl that used to be able to tell fortunes, and her masters made money off of her ability, but could not after the demon left her.
- v. But the people also wanted Jesus to leave their region. The Word tells us in verse 15 that they want Him to leave out of fear for what He could do. No one else could free this man from demons, and Jesus did it with power and authority. They most likely didn't know what to expect from Him.
- vi. Some people are afraid of spiritual entities whether it is Jesus or a demon. They simply don't want anything to do with these powers that they can't understand. They have great fear because of misconceptions or misunderstandings.
- vii. **Application:** We need not fear anything because we are with Jesus. But at the same time, there may be times when God uses us in a powerful way to release someone from demonic activity, and they may not be grateful or may be afraid of us because of God's power in us. But that comes with our position as God's servants.

B. People sometimes react to Jesus' power out of thankfulness.

- i. Unlike the people of the Decapolis, the man who has been freed from the demons react completely in the opposite way. First, we see him for the first time in his right mind and clothed and sitting at Jesus' feet.
- ii. Look at the difference in this man. He is clothed and more civilized, not like before running around in lewd and wicked approach. He is no longer subservient to Jesus and bowing before Him, but sitting at His feet.
- iii. His posture has changed from one who is in fear of Jesus because of the demonic influence to one who is under his own control and wanting to know more about God through Jesus. Jesus has become his Teacher.
- iv. We also notice that the man is in his right mind. He is not being controlled by demons and doing their bidding. His mind and body once again belong to him.
- v. I have to imagine that he was not particularly fond of the abuse and violence the demons did to him personally and through him. It would be like being paralyzed and used against your will without the ability to stop it.
- vi. While the man may have been open to demonic influence and possession at some point for some reason or another, he was certainly not ready for all that happened to him with the thousands of demons that took advantage of him.
- vii. Evil looks good when we first are enticed by it, but it quickly abuses and uses us for its own purposes and we quickly find that it leaves more of a mess than before it came.
- viii. This man realized Jesus' great power was greater than that of the demons, and he wanted to travel with Jesus and be in His presence, but Jesus wanted him to tell of what God had done.
- ix. As with all the other types of miracles, they are designed that God will receive glory for what He has done in our lives. This man wanted to be with Jesus, probably to stay protected. But Jesus wanted him to tell others of God's power over demons so that they could know the Almighty God.
- x. **Application:** Even the casting out of demons is for God's glory, not our own. This is not about us, but about the Kingdom of God breaking into this dark and evil world, the light exposing and destroying the darkness of sin and evil around us. It is about God being victor and us being used as His servants. We must always praise God instead of taking credit for anything that we do in His name and with His power.

Conclusion

We don't spend a lot of time talking about demons because they are the losers in the battle against evil and they have no power comparable to God's power. But while we need not

fear demons, we must also not minimize their danger and power. They can do damage in our world. And if we come into contact with them as we go about the work of God's Kingdom, we need to know how to deal with them. In talking about demons, what I have found is that God's incredible power is highlighted! Let us go in the power of the Spirit and fear nothing, for God is always with us!

Action Points

- Demons can only possess those who are open to their influence. Christians need not fear demons or their influence because the Holy Spirit dwells in us, and He who is in us is greater than he who is in the world.
- Demons must bow to the power of Jesus in all circumstances! We should not be arrogant or unprepared to deal with these spiritual forces, but we must not give them ground or be afraid of what little power they have. We must have confidence in God's power over theirs.
- We should give God all the glory when we come into contact with demons and they are put in their place because of God's power in us. While we are confident in Him, we humbly give Him the glory He deserves when He sets someone free!