

**Mark 5:1-20 (NIV)**

**5** Then they came to the other side of the sea, to the country of the Gadarenes. <sup>2</sup> And when He had come out of the boat, immediately there met Him out of the tombs a man with an unclean spirit, <sup>3</sup> who had *his* dwelling among the tombs; and no one could bind him, not even with chains, <sup>4</sup> because he had often been bound with shackles and chains. And the chains had been pulled apart by him, and the shackles broken in pieces; neither could anyone tame him. <sup>5</sup> And always, night and day, he was in the mountains and in the tombs, crying out and cutting himself with stones.

<sup>6</sup> When he saw Jesus from afar, he ran and worshiped Him. <sup>7</sup> And he cried out with a loud voice and said, "What have I to do with You, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I implore You by God that You do not torment me."

<sup>8</sup> For He said to him, "Come out of the man, unclean spirit!" <sup>9</sup> Then He asked him, "What *is* your name?"

And he answered, saying, "My name *is* Legion; for we are many." <sup>10</sup> Also he begged Him earnestly that He would not send them out of the country.

<sup>11</sup> Now a large herd of swine was feeding there near the mountains. <sup>12</sup> So all the demons begged Him, saying, "Send us to the swine, that we may enter them." <sup>13</sup> And at once Jesus gave them permission. Then the unclean spirits went out and entered the swine (there were about two thousand); and the herd ran violently down the steep place into the sea, and drowned in the sea.

<sup>14</sup> So those who fed the swine fled, and they told *it* in the city and in the country. And they went out to see what it was that had happened. <sup>15</sup> Then they came to Jesus, and saw the one *who had been* demon-possessed and had the legion, sitting and clothed and in his right mind. And they were afraid. <sup>16</sup> And those who saw it told them how it happened to him *who had been* demon-possessed, and about the swine. <sup>17</sup> Then they began to plead with Him to depart from their region.

<sup>18</sup> And when He got into the boat, he who had been demon-possessed begged Him that he might be with Him. <sup>19</sup> However, Jesus did not permit him, but said to him, "Go home to your friends, and tell them what great things the Lord has done for you, and how He has had compassion on you." <sup>20</sup> And he departed and began to proclaim in Decapolis all that Jesus had done for him; and all marveled.

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**Grace and Peace be to you from God our Father, and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.**

A while back I heard an interview with former NFL quarterback, Kurt Warner. Warner was a sensation twenty years ago (1999) when he led the St. Louis Rams to victory in Super bowl 34. That season Warner threw 41 touchdown passes, which puts him in 10<sup>th</sup> place, all-time, in that

category. But the really remarkable thing is, only five years before Warner had been stocking shelves at a supermarket for \$5.50 an hour.

During the interview that I heard, Warner spoke about his faith in Jesus, and how it was difficult for him to talk to the press because they rarely printed the things he said about his Savior. At one point in the interview, Warner said that if you talked with him and his wife there's a good chance you're going to hear about Jesus. That's the way he was before the NFL and it's the way he is now.

Apparently, Warner recognizes that his success was a gift from God. And he also recognizes that his football gifts are secondary to the gift of eternal life through Jesus Christ.

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In our reading for today, we read about another man who was given a gift by God. A much greater gift than football stardom.

I would guess most of us don't have any experience with demon possession. And because of this fact, we may have a hard time putting ourselves in this man's place.

What was it like to be under the control of a demon, or in this case a number of demons? Was the demon possessed man conscious of the things he was doing? Did he hear voices in his head? Were they quiet at times, getting his hopes up that they had left? We don't know.

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We DO know that the man in our text was no longer acting like a man. We learn from the parallel account in Luke that he had stopped wearing clothing. He no longer lived in a house. He lived in tombs that were cut into the sandstone hills away from town.

Take that in for a moment. The demons had driven this man to live in burial caves—with the dead. It's not hard to see why people feared him. **(Luke 8:26-39)**

Apparently some had tried to restrain him with chains and shackles, but he had broken these.

How hopeless he must have felt. He no longer had any control of himself and he couldn't do a thing about it. This wasn't a sin that could be avoided or fought. Positive thinking couldn't push the demons out. There wasn't a self-help book or a group that met every day that could help this man solve his problem. The demons that sat in the driver's seat of his body were real. And they weren't planning to leave. Perhaps the man had simply given up.

It appears that his family and friends had given up. Perhaps they were the ones who had chained him up. They probably wanted to stop himself from cutting himself, or hurting others. But they failed. And even if they had succeeded, what a horrible life that would have been, living as a chained up home for demons.

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**But then one day, a Man came who had power.** A Man who the demons HATED, but who they FEARED even more. The God-Man Jesus Christ came to visit, and to set the man free. Doing

what no one else could do, Jesus cast the demons out. And in doing so, Jesus gave this man his life back.

He had been powerless to save himself. His family and friends had failed him. The whole world had given up on him—but God had not. God knew who he was, knew how he needed saving. And when no one else could help—God could, and did.

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And so it shouldn't surprise us that the man wanted to go back with Jesus. How he must have loved Jesus! Oh, how thankful he must have been!! Of course he wanted to go with Jesus!!! Where else would he want to be, Jesus had words of powerful healing. And more than that, Jesus had the words of eternal life.

But next comes something that surprises us. **Jesus sends him AWAY.** What!? Why would Jesus send the man AWAY instead of letting him come along?

**We know the answer.** The man wouldn't be going home with Jesus, but Jesus would be going home with the man—in his heart. The man had been changed. With his word Jesus had cast the demons out, and his word Jesus changed this man's heart.

Jesus healed the demon possessed man **physically and spiritually**, and He has done the same for us. Through the word of God we know that Jesus is our Savior. We know that He lived a perfect life, when we couldn't. We know that this sacrifice in our place makes us right with God. We know that because of the Him, our sins are completely forgiven. And we are confident that Jesus has prepared a place for us, in heaven.

The demon possessed man loved Jesus because of what Jesus had done for him. We love Jesus because of what Jesus has done for us. And we want to be with Him—in heaven!

But, like the demon possessed man, we have not been allowed to come along, just yet. Like the demon possessed man, we have been given an assignment.

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When the man pleaded to go with Jesus in the boat, Jesus told him,

“Go home to your friends, and tell them what great things the Lord has done for you, and how He has had compassion on you.” (v19)

The assignment Jesus gave the man is the same assignment He has given us. And it's simple.

**First**, the man was to go home. There he would see his family and friends. They would see him. To his family and friends, this wasn't, “the demon possessed man,” he had a name. Maybe he had brothers, or sisters, or parents waiting at home. Maybe he had a wife, and children. The Bible doesn't tell us.

Whatever family or friends he had, imagine the emotions they must have felt seeing him from a distance. It have filled them with fear at first. But soon that fear softened to reluctance as the man reassured them that he had been healed! That the demons were gone! Jesus of Nazareth had cast them out. What joy and amazement must have filled their hearts when they saw it was true.

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**It wasn't hard for the man to tell his family and friends about what God had done for him.**

God had changed his life. God had saved him in every way a person can be saved. And God had done it through a man named Jesus. A story like that wasn't hard to tell, it begged to be told!

**And this is what Jesus told him to do.** He wasn't sent to convert the world, just to tell the people. Which people? The ones **where he was**. This was his mission, and it is ours too.

When we hear "mission work", perhaps we think of knocking on doors or traveling to far away. And it's true, these things can be part of mission work. But mission work in its simplest form is just speaking God's Word, and living out His will. When we do this, we don't have to knock on our neighbor's doors. When our lives spill over with God's Word, and our actions are in line with God's will, then Jesus does the knocking. He knocks on the doors of people's hearts. And when we tell people that their sins have been forgiven because of Jesus, the Holy Spirit opens those heart doors.

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**Just like the man who had been possessed, our mission work must start at home.** In order for God's Word to fill our lives, He must be part of our day. In order to be successful in our mission work, our relationship with God must be a relationship, not a cold religion, but a daily part of our lives. The most important part. What God tells us must be the foundation of all our thinking. Then our work for God will simply be an extension of our love for Him.

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The man Jesus healed was not sent to preach a complicated message. Tell the story of what God did for you. He wasn't in charge of converting people. He couldn't make people believe any more than we can. The Holy Spirit is the one who is in charge of softening hard hearts and creating faith.

But we often get our job mixed up with the Holy Spirit's job, don't we. We want to see the results of our telling the good news. And if we don't see results right away we get frustrated and we give up. We need to remember, the power isn't in us, it's in the message. And we need to remember that the Holy Spirit works on His own time-table, not ours. We may never get to see the result of our mission work.

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When the formerly demon-possessed man went out and proclaimed what Jesus had done for him we are told "all marveled." This amazement probably wasn't faith in every case. But a foundation was being laid for the preaching of the Apostles. They would come to this region a year or two later. No doubt they found a number of people who had already been impressed by the living testimony of this man.

Those effected by this man’s story were not affected because of his great talent for speaking. He didn’t have seminary training, and he didn’t need it. Because ya’ don’t need seminary training, or speech 101 to effectively proclaim the message of the cross.

A child can tell you, “Jesus loves me this I know, for the Bible tells me so. Little ones to Him belong, they are weak but He is strong.” A kindergartner can tell you, “Jesus died on the cross for my sins. And he died for yours too.”

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So, the formerly demon possessed man was told (1) what to say, and (2) where to say it, but WHEN was he to tell this story? That’s the one thing that Jesus didn’t tell the man. So when DID the man speak? Verse 20 says,

“And he departed and began to proclaim in Decapolis all that Jesus had done for him; and all marveled.” (v20)

We aren’t told that he began to tell his FAMILY. We aren’t told that he began to tell his HOME TOWN. We are told that he began to proclaim in DECAPOLIS all that Jesus had done for him. Decapolis was a ten-city district east of Galilee.

It seems that no matter where this man went, he shared the message of God’s gift to him. He was a walking testimony to the love and mercy of Jesus Christ—to the love and mercy of God.

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**But really aren’t we all?** We’ve been touched by God. Our sins have been forgiven through Jesus’ life, death, and resurrection. We have been made children of God. Sinners made Saints. The un-forgivable, forgiven.

We aren’t walking testimonies because an unclean spirit has been cast out of us. Instead we are walking testimonies because God’s Holy Spirit, has come into us. Through the Word of God the Spirit has created faith, and sustains that faith to this day.

Faith created in a sinner’s heart is just as amazing as demons cast out of a man. In fact, the message that creates this faith is more amazing. The love of God was so great that He sent his Only begotten Son to die for us? **“He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours, but also for the sins of the whole world.” (1 John 2:2)**

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We have a message to proclaim. Each of us in our corner of the world. Each of us in our own way. Our proclaiming of the gospel may starts with a kind word to a person who has been ridiculed, or an act of generosity—there are countless ways to begin. But our ultimate goal is to tell the story of sins forgiven through Jesus Christ.

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We may even get to see the results of the Holy Spirit’s work from time to time. We may get to see the light in the eyes of a child who finally understands as we teach Sunday school. We may get to see tears in the eyes of an adult who has heard the message of God’s forgiveness for the first time.

**But perhaps not.** Perhaps we will not see the results of our words on this earth, but only in heaven. Imagine that. A man or a woman, a girl or a boy, walking up to us in heaven to say, "Thank you. Thank you for sharing Jesus with me. I know it didn't seem like you were getting through, and YOU weren't, but the Holy Spirit was. God used you to plant the seed which He watered, my faith in Christ Jesus our God and Savior."

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Back in 1999 Kurt Warner threw 41 touchdown passes and won Super Bowl 34. In time those passes will be forgotten. That Super Bowl, forgotten. His name, forgotten.

What will remain, what will matter for all eternity, will be the seeds that were cast each time he spoke the Gospel.

The same will be true of your life. So lets fill ourselves up with the Word of God. And lets spill that on people wherever we go. Let's go home to our friends, and tell them what great things the Lord has done for us, and how He has had compassion on us. Amen.

**The peace of God, which surpasses all understanding keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.**