

THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE

JUNE 28TH-29TH, 2025 // GOSPEL OF MARK

GERASENES (MARK 5:1-5)

While the disciples are still wrestling with the question of Jesus' identity, the boat arrives at its destination on the eastern shore of the Sea of Galilee at the "region of the Gerasenes" (v. 1).

- The entire region was predominantly Gentile, although some Jews did live in the area.
- This region is in the area known as the Decapolis ("ten cities"), and the nearby city of Gadara led to it also being called "Gadarenes."

South of the town of Gerasa was a steep slope only 40 yards from the shore—two miles from there were tombs.

- As soon as they get out of the boat, they are met by a man with an unclean spirit who has come out of the tombs (v. 2).
- Why did he live in the tombs? Because he was unclean/defiled due to demonic possession—here was a man living among the dead.

The Jewish Talmud gave four signs of "madness": (1) walking about at night, (2) spending the night on a grave, (3) tearing one's clothes, (4) destroying what one was given.

- Not only did this man check every box, he also provides the most detailed description in the Bible of demonic possession.
- How this man became so overtaken by darkness we do not know, but he was enslaved to it.

Satan's agenda is to "steal and kill and destroy." He has set his sights on defiling and defacing those who bear the image of God (humans).

- Here was a pitiful soul howling like a wild animal, living amongst tombs, and running about scabbed, bloody, bruised, and unkempt.
- Perhaps the self-harm/cutting was depraved pagan worship, perhaps it was attempts to oust the demons, or perhaps failed suicide attempts.

We learn a few things about the nature of demons and the demonic from this passage:

1. Demons can influence or even control the bodies and minds of human beings.
 2. Demonic influence defiles, isolates, and seeks out darkness and perversion ("in the tombs").
 3. Demonic presence/influence manifests in violence ("crying out and cutting himself with stones").
 4. Demonic influence creates bizarre, unexplainable, uncontrollable behavior (super-human strength, self-harm).
- To be sure, this is a disturbing and dramatic picture of Satan's power and the influence of darkness. But what does it have to do with us?
 - Eph. 2:2 tells us that before a person comes to Christ, they walk "according to the ruler of the power of the air, the spirit now working in the disobedient."

In other words, without Christ we are in bondage to Satan and are unable to free ourselves.

- Our bondage robs us of our true humanity and self-control, fills us with darkness and perversion, and condemns us to Hell.
- What Jesus does for this man He will do for anyone else! He came (even braving a storm to do so) and delivered him through the power only He possesses.

Jesus can (and will) deliver any person from their bondage to Satan, sin, darkness, and perversion, and restore them through His power when we call on His name for salvation.

- However, spiritual attack/warfare is still very much a reality in the Christian life.
- We must make sure, as Christians, we do not willingly open the door to any demonic influence in our lives.

The Bible uses the Greek word *daimonizomai*, which means "demonized."

- It can refer to possession, but it can also refer to anyone under the influence of the demonic.
- Even a Christian can experience demonic influence or oppression if they open doors to spiritual darkness and allow thoughts, actions, or attitudes to be influenced by demons.
- Even Peter let this happen (Mt. 16:21-23).

While Christians are redeemed by Jesus' blood and possessed/owned by God (John 10:28-29; Rom. 5:9), Satan can still cause havoc, making them fruitless and robbing them of joy, peace, and victory.

- Satan CANNOT possess a Christian's soul; however, we must be vigilant to his attacks and commit to never opening doors or allowing him to gain any footholds in our life (1 Pt. 5:8).

DOORS/FOOTHOLDS FOR THE DEMONIC

Satan uses the occult, astrology, tarot cards, fortune telling, psychics, mysticism, "New Age" teachings, false prophets, false religions, false miracles, ghosts/false views of the afterlife, exaltation of angels, and spirit mediums (necromancy) to display his power, to deceive people from following Christ, and to attempt to influence and control humans through the demonic.

- Unforgiveness, bitterness, resentment, and unrestrained anger (Eph. 4:26-27).
- Habitual and secret sin (pornography/sexual sin, substance abuse, addiction).
- Pride (making us resistant to correction).
- Negative thought patterns (self-hatred, constant condemnation, anxiety without prayer) give the enemy ground to torment our thoughts.

AS CHRISTIANS...

"Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them" (Eph. 5:11, ESV).

- "...we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ" (2 Cor. 10:5, NIV).

CONFRONTATION (MARK 5:6-13)

Demons know exactly who Jesus is ("Son of the Most High God", v. 7).

- Demons are afraid of Jesus and know that He holds ALL AUTHORITY over them!
- Demons know that there will be an appointed time for their judgment by Christ and their eternal torture ("...before the appointed time," Mt. 8:29b, NIV).
- Demons are resistant in leaving.

Notice that the demons in this man cry out in a loud voice and beg Jesus not to torment them after He told them, "Come out of the man, you unclean spirit" (v. 8).

- Satan is a liar (so are his demons), but one thing he is not is a quitter—he is stubborn (which is why spiritual warfare is still a thing).
- When Jesus asks for the demon's name, He gets a chilling response.

"LEGION...BECAUSE WE ARE MANY" (V. 9)

A legion is a contingency of 6,000 Roman soldiers: this man was not just possessed by one demon but by thousands.

- This force of demons, speaking as one, begs Jesus not to send them out of the region (one of the cities in the Decapolis, Hippos, was dedicated to demons). The herd of pigs in the story shows that we are in Gentile territory.

The demons attempt to barter with Jesus—they beg Him to send them to the pigs feeding on the hillside.

- Apparently, demons do not like to be homeless. They desire to inhabit ("possess") physical bodies.
- We also learn that the demons need Jesus' permission and recognize His authority (v. 13a).

Jesus had the power to drive them out and leave them without a home or host if He so wished.

- This is ultimately what happens as the pigs are driven mad by the presence of the demons, rush down the bank, and drown in the sea, leaving the demons without a host (v. 13b).
- Poor piggies...does Jesus just hate pigs?
- The behavior of the pigs is recorded as visible and dramatic proof of the exorcism.

SATAN IS A MURDERER (JOHN 8:44)

The demons (not Jesus) destroyed the pigs. The demons were finally able to do to the pigs what they had been trying to get the man to do.

- God loves animals, but He loves humanity more. They bear His image, and He died for them on the cross for salvation.
- Satan's murderous agenda was revealed by the drowning pigs—so was the man's freedom!

AFTERMATH (MARK 5:14-20)

Imagine being a herdsman or a local farmer witnessing this scene.

- You are obviously well acquainted with this demon-possessed madman, then here comes a Jewish stranger who exorcises the demons and frees him. But it comes with dramatic flair, great chaos, and economic loss.

- The herdsman flee in terror, running to the city to tell everyone what happened (v. 14).

Those from the town and countryside came to see Jesus and the aftermath of what had happened.

- What did they see?
- The man who had once been defiled, defaced, and demonized was sitting with Jesus, dressed and in his right mind.
- The man was free, healed, and completely delivered; he had his dignity back.
- "...and they were afraid" (v. 15).

We see a bit of human nature in the residents of this city.

- When Jesus saves and delivers us, nothing in our lives is ever the same. He wrecks everything.
- However, some of us would rather stay in bondage than allow Him to free us and take control of our lives. Out of fear of what Jesus may require from us, take from us, or change about us, we do not want Him in our lives.

"THEN THEY BEGAN TO BEG HIM TO LEAVE..."

These folks do not know who Jesus is, only that He has done a mighty miracle that cost them quite a bit and they do not want to find out more.

- Isn't it sad that sometimes we prefer the security and familiarity of our own brokenness over the true freedom that Christ provides?
- The fear of what it may cost us prevents us from experiencing the beauty of true freedom.

If you are the man who has been delivered from thousands of demons, how do you even start to express your gratitude to Jesus?

- The man begged Jesus earnestly to remain with Him and travel as one of His disciples (v. 18).
- But sometimes obedience to Jesus looks like staying home and living out your testimony of a changed life (2 Cor. 5:17).
- Sometimes staying home is harder than going!

"GO HOME TO YOUR OWN PEOPLE..." (VS. 19-20)

This formerly demon-possessed man becomes perhaps one of the earliest Christian missionaries as he goes out and proclaims in these 10 Gentile cities how much Jesus had done for him.

- There is great evangelistic power in the evidence of a changed life. Are we living as if we have been changed?

SATAN WANTS TO DEBASE, DEFILE, AND DESTROY

- Satan attempts to degrade, humiliate, and corrupt human beings through perversion, filth, darkness, and lies. He attacks your value as an image bearer.
- Satan wants you to be unclean and remain unclean. He is decidedly anti-Christ, anti-truth, anti-repentance, and anti-redemption.
- Satan wants you to come with him to Hell.

JESUS WANTS TO DELIVER, CHANGE, AND EMPOWER

- Jesus sets us free. He delivers us from our bondage to sin, death, Hell, darkness, and the devil (Col. 1:13).
- Jesus transforms lives. He changes hearts, minds, and destinies (2 Cor. 5:17).
- Jesus fills us with strength and purpose. He empowers us to live boldly, serve faithfully, and walk in victory (Eph. 3:20).

WHAT DO YOU SEE IN THIS MIRACLE?

- The fact that Jesus can deliver you from darkness, change your life from the inside out, and empower you with a new purpose, mission, and calling—or the fear of what Jesus may require from you, take from you, or change about you?
- Would you rather live and walk in radical freedom or stay in familiar bondage?