

FPFWC Christian Development



Called from the Margins of Society

March 2023

Spring Quarter

March 25, 2023

Lesson #4 – Jesus Overpowers Legion

SCRIPTURE TEXT – Mark 5:1-13, 18-20

ICE BREAKERS-

1. What can we do to overcome resistance to the message of Christ?
2. Why is it important that we remember Jesus's mighty power and be quick to ask Him for deliverance?

Key Verse: “He departed, and began to publish in Decapolis how great things Jesus had done for him: and all men did marvel.” —Mark 5:20

LESSON BACKGROUND –

Mark's Gospel was likely written between AD 60 and 62, certainly before Matthew, Luke, or John. With Matthew and Luke, the book of Mark rounds out the Synoptic Gospels, so called because of their similar records of Jesus' earthly ministry. Today's text from Mark 5 is one example of the books' shared material, with parallels in Matthew 8:28–34 and Luke 8:26–39. Differences between the accounts say less about the historical *accuracy* of the event than about the *faith perspectives* the writers brought to the details.

A somewhat perplexing characteristic of the Gospel of Mark is also on display in this account: Jesus' tendency throughout the first half of the book to tell people whom Jesus had healed to keep quiet about the matter (Mark 1:44; 7:36; 8:30). This has been called the messianic secret.

Many theories have been proposed for this counterintuitive command to silence. One such is that Jesus did not want the people to become invested in wrong ideas about what it meant for Him to be the Messiah. While the people were looking for a political Messiah to deliver them from Roman imperialism, Jesus used the time of secrecy to teach about the larger role of the Messiah—beyond Israel and its politics. Jesus also wanted His ministry to be defined as a preaching and teaching ministry more than a healing and miracles ministry (Mark 1:35–39). The constant needs of people around Him and of crushing crowds looking for healing could have taken all His time if Jesus had not guarded it carefully. His preaching ministry was supported by the miracles, not the other way around. This suggests an element of crowd control (see 1:43–45).

The account of the Gadarene demoniac occurs during Jesus' preaching ministry in Galilee. This story is in a section of Mark that contains several other accounts focusing on Jesus' power and authority (see 4:35–41; 5:21–34).

LESSON COMMENTARY

5:1–5. Jesus and the disciples arrived in **the country of the Gerasenes**, a region largely populated by Gentiles. A demon-possessed man who was dwelling among the tombs met them. His demonic strength kept anyone from being able to bind him, but by **night and day** his shrieks were heard as he gashed **himself with stones**.

5:6–10. The man **bowed down before** [Jesus] The demon cried out, **What business do we have with each other?** He knew Jesus as the **Son of the Most High God**. He continued, **I implore You by God, do not torment me!** He understood he was a creature under Jesus' authority and that his ultimate end was separation from God. Jesus actually initiated the encounter. **He had been saying to him, "Come out of the man, you unclean spirit!"** Jesus asked the demon his name. **My name is Legion; for we are many**, he replied. A Roman legion's maximum strength was six thousand men. The demon continued begging Jesus not to send them out of the region. They needed to possess something or they would be forced into the Abyss (cf. Lk 8:31).

5:11–13. **A large herd of swine** was feeding nearby. Since demons are unclean spirits and pigs unclean animals, they probably thought their request would be favorably received. When given permission they entered the swine and the herd **rushed down the steep bank into the sea** and drowned. The herd numbered about two thousand pigs.

5:18–20. As Jesus was departing, the delivered man wanted to go with Jesus and become a disciple. The greater need for this man was to return to his home and report **what great things** God had done for him. He could now return to his estranged family with a testimony of God's work in his life. He did become a great testifier for Jesus in the region of the **Decapolis**. He faithfully proclaimed his testimony and **everyone was amazed**.

LESSON NUGGET – Jesus went through a storm to get to two demoniacs (Matthew 8:28) who needed his help. The demons begged not to be sent to the pit (5:10), the citizens begged Jesus to leave (v. 17), and one healed man begged to be allowed to go with Jesus (v.18). The citizens were concerned more with financial profit than with spiritual benefit. Imagine asking Jesus to leave you!

Sources: Moody Bible Commentary, Standard Lesson Commentary, Wiersbe Study Bible and The Essential Everyday Bible Commentary