

The Gospel reaches the Gentiles.  
Mark 5:1-20

Congregation: Psalm 118:1-9  
Psalm: 29  
Colossians 3:1-17

Before we start out in chapter 5 this morning, I want to as usual go back and read a few verses recapping from last week. I like doing this because I think it brings a sense of cohesion to the book, instead of seeing it broken up into groups of stories or accounts, it keeps the flow intact, building upon each other and leading into the next section. So lets start this morning by reading the account of Jesus and his disciples as they cross the Sea of Galilee after ministering to the multitudes.

Starting in verse 33 and lets go ahead and read through the verses we are going to look at today, up to verse 20 in chapter 5. Something that stood out to me on my first reading of this passage is the effect of Jesus traveling to the other shore. Here he was, teaching multitudes of people that were gathering around amazed at his teaching and the miracles he was doing, but he tells his disciples that he wanted to take the boat to the other side. We see that when they arrive he isn't met by multitudes of people, he arrives quietly, unannounced and has the encounter with the demon possessed man. After which after the request by the fearful response of the local people he and his disciples return to their boats and go back to the other shore.

Did you notice the same thing that I noticed here on a surface read through? Jesus traveled across the sea, through a storm to get to this man on the other side of the sea, then, he leaves back to where he came from. This is a perfect picture of God's sovereign grace being showed toward this man, and aligns perfectly with Jesus calling Levi to follow him in chapter 2, lets read that real quick keeping this thought in mind, starting in verse 13. "Then he went out again by the sea, and all the multitude came with him, and he taught them. As he passed by, he saw Levi the son of Alphaeus sitting at the tax office. And he said to him, Follow me. So he arose and followed him."

Do you see the similarities? Jesus singled out both of these men, he did not focus on the multitudes, but on these individuals. He left the multitudes on the shore line to travel across the sea to get to this demon possessed man, and here in the account in chapter 2, with the multitude following him he calls over to a tax collector, specifically and tells him to follow him. There is purpose and meaning behind what Jesus does, and just as we see in the account here with the demoniac, and with Levi, Jesus does not ask permission, does not timidly invite, but instead of commands, and with that command comes the willingness and ability to do so. I am sure Levi, just like all of the other disciples had heard of Jesus and the multitudes that were gathering to him, but they went about their own daily business. Even with Jesus and the multitudes following close behind passing by the tax office, Levi was sitting there, probably doing his job until Jesus calls to him, to which he leaves his job, and everything behind to follow Jesus. Just as the fishermen did.

He did not plead, he did not beg, he did not even ask. He effectually called these men to follow him. Picked them specifically out of a crowd of people, and said Follow me. And now we see something along the same lines here in chapter 5. None of these people were seeking out Jesus, but rather he sought them.

The mention here of the location that Jesus and his disciples has gone to is an interesting one. Scholars have debated as to which city this meeting of the demoniac happened at. This area across the

sea was known as the Decapolis, which means the 10 cities. These cities were predominately Gentile, Archaeologists have found remains of a Roman settlement and harbor here which is widely believed to be where this encounter had happened.

Mark goes into more detail here than in any of the other gospel accounts. Going into detail of the suffering that this demoniac man was going through. Mark paints a picture here of someone who is suffering a great deal, and it also effected all who were around that area. As we see in verse 4 that he was often bound by chains and shackles but nothing could hold him, and neither could anyone tame him. The type of language used here is the same that would be used toward a feral wild animal, that would be a danger to all who traveled by. No matter how much anyone would try to restrain, or control him it was impossible to do so. This man had a violent storm raging inside, which was calmed by the voice of Jesus, just as the storm was as they crossed over the Sea of Galilee.

From the Jewish perspective this account is filled with everything that they considered to be unclean. A demon possessed man, living in a tomb, surrounded by gentiles who were raising the unclean swine in a Gentile country. Yet Jesus came to this area to minister to these people. Just as we have seen Jesus do on many accounts now, he breaches the barrier of the ritually unclean to rescue a soul. Just as he did with the healing of the leper in chapter 1., Jesus reached out and touched the unclean leper. Just as people would avoid a leper, so too people would avoid going to the area around this tomb for they would not want to be attacked by this demoniac who was not only a danger to all those around him but also to himself as we see in verse 5 that he was cutting himself with stones.

This is a man who is violent, who would attack anyone who came by. Who broke chains and could not be bound. Anyone who would travel through that area I am sure would be afraid of him, and likely avoided that area out of fear, yet look what happens when Jesus shows up. Jesus is not the one who is afraid, rather it is the demons who possess this man who respond to Jesus in fear. The Greek word used here for falling on his knees is *proskynien*, which denotes being prostrate, falling on one's face before another to show reverence or worship. The demons that would strike fear into men, were subdued and filled with fear just being in the very presence of Jesus.

Not only is there this physical act of falling prostrate on the ground before Jesus, look at what he says. "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." In his outcry is the admittance to his subservience to Jesus. These demons knew that their time was at hand, and they were begging Jesus not to torment them. But the interesting thing in this statement isn't as much their plea, but their outcry that Jesus, is the Son of the Most High God. It is a term that the Israelites would use to describe God over the other pagan gods. Showing that their God was the true god, the almighty and powerful one. The Most High, and holy. In the midst of a region of Pagan Gentiles, a group of demons large enough to possess a whole herd of swine meet face to face with the Son of the one true God, and fall prostrate, begging him.

It's not hard to understand why the people who lived in the surrounding cities acting in fear toward Jesus as they did for they had never come across such power, that even this demon possessed man who could not be bound, is subdued, and even cleansed by Jesus. And as if that was not enough, all it took was a command for Jesus for the demons to flee into the heard of pigs. The gentiles were familiar with demonic possession, and there have been found many manuscripts of long drawn out formulas, spells, and conjurations in an attempt to cast out demons, yet Jesus does so with only words.

As I had mentioned before when talking about the miracles that Jesus performed, many of them by nothing more than a spoken command. This shows his complete and abject authority, over sickness, over the weather and the roaring sea, and even over demonic powers. I think it is good to be reminded of just who Jesus is, of his power and his authority.

How often do we doubt, like the disciples forgetting God's power and authority over all things, even over the minions and realm of Satan. Despite their pleading, and imploring Jesus to leave them alone for as they said, "What have I to do with you." Jesus commands them to leave the man, and it is here that we find out that this is not the work of a singular demon as we have seen so far in the book of Mark, but this demon calls himself legion, for he is many. The term legion is a Latin term, used by the Roman military to denote their largest most powerful group of soldiers.

Some argue today that these accounts of demonic possession are really nothing more than what can now be scientifically and medically diagnosed as mental disorders, split personality which can be treated through modern medicine. And while that may seem to fit the case with some of the recorded accounts of demonic possession, it does not match with this account. Jesus here is not talking to the possessed man, but rather to the demons who possess him, and they identify as being a large amount, to which we see later there was about 2000 of them.

Which brings us to an interesting little application to this account. The loss of 2000 pigs would be a very large economic loss for these farmers. There is no record here as to the economic damages that this caused the local region but it more than likely would have a pretty significant impact. The good that Jesus did for this one man, by the casting out of these demons, resulted in a great loss and misfortune for many. The loss of these pigs would not only directly effect the farmers, but the food supply, and other markets tied to them. Yet, we see that Jesus puts the value of this single soul, higher than the 2000 pigs, and higher than the physical loss to these farmers or anyone else this would effect.

This begs the question again, how much is a single soul worth? Can we put a price tag on it? What is considered an acceptable sacrifice in the ministering of the word? Jesus considered this one man of more value than 2000 pigs, which I can only imagine would have been an absolute fortune in those days. So once again, as I said a few weeks back, we as churches need to stop seeing the mission field as a business weighing investment versus results like we are sitting on the board of directors in God's kingdom. The salvation of a single soul is priceless, it is an eternal treasure that can not be measured, or weighed in our finite values. I don't think that this is an issue that we have here, but if you talk to any missionaries they will tell you that this is something that they face constantly in their attempt to find financial support so they can then focus on the ministry at hand and not on their needs. So I challenge anyone else who maybe on a missionary board, to instead of trying to ascertain value of their missionary support that should instead praise God for any lost souls who he has saved, and rejoice in the part that God had them play in that salvation.

Moving on here to verses 14-17 we see the reaction of those who were watching over the herd of pigs, and subsequently the reaction of those in the surrounding cities and villages to their report. "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. 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. And those who saw it told them how it happened to him who had been demon-possessed, and about the swine. Then they began to plead with him to depart from their region."

What we see with this healing of this demon possessed man is a perfect picture of salvation. Every single person has a storm raging inside them, being full of doubt, anger, fear, pride, when left to our own devices we seek to find solice in pleasures of this world, seeking an escape from the ever gnawing depression of our eternal state.

But Just like how Jesus brought peace to this demon possessed and tormented violent man, so to does he bring peace to our heart and mind, calming the storm of doubt and fear. This demoniac has now been restored, and he is sitting clothed, quiet and calm at the feet of the one who saved him. Notice how this account here ends, it ends with the people in the region being afraid of Jesus. When confronted by the almight power and authority of God it strikes fear, we even saw that with the disciples with the calming of the storm.

They had witnessed healing, and exorcisms, had been following Jesus for some time now, but after Jesus calmed the storm, by rebuking it, mark says, in verse 41 of chapter 4. "And they feared exceedingly, and said to one another, Who can this be that even the wind and the sea obey him." The disciples were now more afraid of Jesus then they were of perishing in the storm. And here we see that the locals in the region are now more afraid of Jesus then they ever were of this demon possessed man that ran wild in the area.

As we go through mark and read about the miracles that Jesus performed in front of thousands of witnesses, we keep seeing that many people are amazed, or fearful, but do not repent and believe. It is the same here with the healing of the demoniac. They witnessed a great miracle, yet they did not come kneeling at the feet of Jesus in reverence, but rather reacted in fear and wanted to have nothing to do with him. Today there is an idea that people say that they would believe if they could only see. If they witnessed a miracle they would believe that God exists, or that Jesus is the messiah. Yet the entire new testament is full of such miracles, and crowds who have witnessed them yet never believe.

Then lastly here, verses 18-20, Jesus and his disciples leave to head back to the other side of the sea. "And when he got into the boat, he who had been demon possessed begged him that he might be with him. 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. And he departed and began to proclaim in Decapolis all that Jesus had done for him, and all marveled."

He wanted to go with Jesus and his disciples but Jesus had another plan for him. This now saved unclean demon possessed gentile has become the first missionary to the gentile people. They may have banished Jesus from their land, but they did not get rid of him and his message. And we see that the message of Jesus is received by these gentiles in the same way it was received by the Jews, verse 20 ends saying, that they all marveled.

In many ways we were all like this demoniac, some maybe more then others but when christ comes, the turmoil, and doubt, and fear subsides and we are left with peace, and grace, and love. And our mission is the same, Go to your family, and your friends in the city and tell them what great things that Lord has done for you. Our salvation, our changed lives stand as a witness to Gods grace, and authority, just as this demoniac.