

The Power Of A Changed Life

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[0 : 00] Again, thank you if you are with us today. My name is Jesse, and one of the pastors here, if you're new with us, really are glad that you're with us. And if you're listening to this online, glad you're doing that too.

We are continuing on in our series through the Gospel of Mark. We'll be in Mark chapter five today. So if you got a Bible, go ahead and start making your way to that. If you don't have a Bible with you, that is totally okay.

We're gonna have the verses up on the screen for you to follow along. And the particular passage we are looking at today is fascinating for a lot of reasons.

It is an incredible story of demonic deliverance. And it's also one of the longest stories of any gospel, of an event that happened between Jesus and a person.

And so it is full of amazing truths, but we got a lot to get through. So let's begin in verse one of Mark chapter five. It says this, they came to the other side of the sea, to the country of the Gerasenes.

[0 : 57] And when Jesus had stepped out of the boat, immediately there met him out of the tombs, a man with an unclean spirit. He lived among the tombs and no one could bind him anymore, not even with the chain.

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. Night and day among the tombs and on the mountains he was always crying out and cutting himself with stones.

And when he saw Jesus from afar, he ran and fell down before him. 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. For he was saying to him, come out of the man, you unclean spirit. And Jesus asked him, what is your name?

He replied, my name is Legion, for we are many. And he begged him earnestly not to send them out of the country. Now a great herd of pigs was feeding there on the hillside.

[2 : 02] And they begged him saying, send us to the pigs, let us enter them. So he gave them permission and the unclean spirits came out and entered the pigs. And the herd numbering about 2,000 rushed down the steep bank into the sea and drowned in the sea.

The herdsmen fled and told it in the city and in the country. And people came to see what it was that had happened. 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. And those who had seen it described to them what had happened to the demon-possessed man and to the pigs. And they began to beg Jesus to depart from their region.

As he was getting into the boat, the man who had been possessed with demons begged him that he might be with him. 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.

And he went away and began to proclaim in the Decapolis how much Jesus had done for him. And everyone marveled. This is God's word. So this story, no doubt, fascinates us, kind of draws us in really quickly, right?

[3 : 18] It's a pretty marvelous thing. And most of us probably think it's crazy or interesting or fascinating because we've never experienced somebody who's been demon-possessed.

Although we may have wondered about our boss at times at work that they may have or the kid in the grocery store throwing a tantrum. They give plausible reason for us to believe that maybe there is such a thing as demonic possession.

But this story, what it is, it's meant to draw us and it's actually meant to captivate us, but not in the way we might think. We could teach, and I could teach this passage on the power of deliverance from demon possession and oppression.

And there is a reality to that, which is often, I think, really underappreciated, mostly in our first world context here. but actually in many nations where the occult is practiced regularly, where there's witchcraft, and there's typically these kind of stories, it's not really met with eye rolls like it is probably in America.

And this sermon, I just want to say from the get-go that it is not going to be about deliverance ministry, not because we as a church don't believe in that. We actually do.

[4 : 30] And in fact, Brian Hart, he's one of the pastors down in our Moorhead site, he's going to be teaching a class on deliverance ministry this summer. And so if that's something that interests you and intrigues you and you want to learn about and grow in, there's going to be details about that that'll be coming up.

And if you want to, you can go ahead and participate in that. But this story, I just want to say, is fascinating because it isn't an indictment on the demon-possessed man at all.

Actually, it shows us the power of a changed life. And for our lives to change, it requires something we may not necessarily want.

And it's this, Jesus has to step into our lives in order for change to come. Now, Jesus, think about this, he had told his disciples to cross the Sea of Galilee.

Alan unpacked what it was for Jesus to go and tell his disciples get in the boat, cross the Sea of Galilee, we're going to the other side, and they hit this crazy storm where they think they're going to die, right?

[5 : 32] And so, they get through that, Jesus calms the storm, they land on this side, and they're right into another storm, right? They are met immediately by this guy with this unclean spirit.

And I can't help but wonder if Jesus had this appointment in mind all along when he told his disciples, let us go across to the other side. And up to this point, think about this man's life, what we know about it.

Up to this point, he was a terror to his own town, to the people that knew him, to a family. He was a danger to them, and he was a danger to himself.

The translation that we read says that he was crying. Actually, that word means he was shrieking loudly, like screaming, okay?

He's cutting himself. He is so strong under the influence of demons that, like, people can't even keep him in chains. He's able to have this supernatural, superhuman power that can break apart metal chains.

[6 : 39] So, he's shrieking like a banshee, uncontrollable, living among tombs, naked and on mountaintops. And those places, those tombs and mountaintops, those were places of isolation.

They were not well visited. And so, he's there. He's living far away from everybody. Now, up to this point, we also see that people tried to step in to help him, right?

It said they tried to bind him with chains and shackles, but their efforts amounted to nothing more than just trying to control and contain him, which I think is an important point in this passage for us to consider.

Our efforts to deliver and heal and restore in a meaningful way will always fall short. Think about this. In our own modern day, when we think about kind of our own brokenness and some of the stuff that we feel chained to, that we struggle getting healing with, where do we go in this day and age?

Well, it's typically a therapist, a counselor, that could be Christian, it could be non-Christian. We go to those things. And those fields of psychology, those fields of psychiatry, those fields that have learned some things, all they can do is really manage and really minimize a person's neurosis or mental illness.

[7 : 59] And I want to say this, man, I am not dogging on those things. Those fields have proven very helpful for so many in so many ways. They are a common grace to us, I think, that we can stop and we can appreciate, but we also have to acknowledge that they can only go so far.

They are not able to deliver and heal a person like this in the same way that Jesus did. They just can't. But without Jesus, that is what we're left with.

You've got to do the best that you have with what you got. And that is what is happening to this guy and what's happened to this guy up to this point. Our society today isn't different in its approach.

What we can't change, we try to contain. That's what we do. Consider what they did. Verse 4, he had often been bound with shackles and chains and broke out of those. Okay, well, what's the next thing we can do?

Well, let's just like put him out of sight, out of mind. Let's send him away to live in the tombs and the mountaintops far away. All right? And I just want to say this, like, we aren't very different to the way we approach our own problems.

[9 : 08] You and I, we can live with shame and guilt of sin that we've done and we can live with the shame of sin that's been done to us and even feeling guilty that somehow we deserved it.

And I just want to say this, this isn't just like some people in the room, this is everybody in the room. But whatever schemes that we try to come up with to cope with this, to constrain the guilt and the shame and to minimize it and limit it, it has a way of breaking our constraints and our shackles are man-made versions that we try to put on them.

We aren't really free of them. But what other choice do we have but to suppress and ignore it? We often act like that child who's scared of the boogeyman, right?

If I just put my head under the covers and close my eyes, he's going to go away. Well, that works if your boogeyman isn't real. But the problem is our boogeyman is real. And as hard as we try to ignore our sin or the pain of being sinned against, it doesn't stay quiet.

It shrieks. And as it lives inside of us, it cuts at our soul. Even if you try to pretend it's not there, it is doing that. And every once in a while, it reminds us it's in there and it exists as this quiet, unspoken terror.

[10 : 33] It leaks out of us sometimes. And that is the true desperate condition of our souls that we cannot fix without Jesus. And this is the beauty of the gospel in this story.

This man was helpless. These town people were helpless to help him. And then in steps Jesus into this man's life. Imagine what Jesus can do when he steps into yours.

Now, we would think we would want that kind of interruption. Lord, just bring it all day long. I want the healing. I want the healing. You would think that we would run and say yes and amen every single time that we would want to be set free.

But this is where the story gets very interesting. And I think where it should challenge us. Because there are two very different reactions to Jesus delivering this man.

There is the man himself who was delivered. And there is everyone else in that region. Look what they do. Verse 14. The herdsmen fled and told it in the city and in the country.

[11 : 42] And people came to see what it was that had happened. 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. And those who had seen it described to them what had happened to the demon-possessed man and to the pigs. And they began to beg Jesus to depart from their region.

Isn't that fascinating? Like, that doesn't make sense to us. Why would they want to do that? Instead of being thankful and like, man, Jesus, you just did an amazing thing.

Could you please stay? I got some brothers and sisters that you might can help as well. What do they do? They send him away. Why? Because the one who can deliver us from evil has the authority to command us as well.

And Jesus, having that kind of authority is either good news or bad news. For the townsfolk, it's bad news.

[12 : 52] They were not relieved at seeing this man delivered because Jesus was a new and different kind of threat. And they wanted him to leave.

The reason for this is the same reason many like the idea of following Jesus at first, but in the end, they walk away. Being a disciple sounds great if the story is simply his deliverance, his saving me from my problems, healing, peace, restoration.

But there's another part to the story. Submitting to the authority of Jesus. See, Jesus had just played a willing part in drowning this town's economic fortunes.

Jesus sent those demons into that herd of pigs. There were 2,000 pigs. That is a lot of money in that day. Every single one of those pigs represented some serious denaro.

And Jesus destroys it all. But remember, there's another part to this that we have to consider. Was Jesus just being unkind and unthoughtful? Well, pigs were also unclean animals in God's law.

[14 : 05] Jews were not supposed to raise them. They were not supposed to eat them. They were not supposed to touch them. And here is where we enter into some rich irony in this story. The man who was demon-possessed, and he lived in an unclean place too.

Living among tombs in Jewish law, that was considered to be, you were considered to be unclean if you were among tombs and living in tombs. And Jesus had delivered him from that evil, but yet, what we see, the herdsmen and the people of this city, they are engaged in a sanitized version of a similar sort of evil, a similar sort of uncleanness.

To maintain pigs was a rejection of God and his law, and obviously, it had become acceptable in that region. What had happened is they had become a community of compromise.

That's what happened here. And as a community, they not only disobeyed God's law to, you shouldn't keep pigs, they end up rejecting Jesus, the son of the most high.

They aren't glad by Jesus' presence, they are tormented by it, just like the demons were. So they ask Jesus to leave their region. It's like those old westerns where the two guys get together, you know, you have the protagonist and the antagonist, and one of them says to the other, this town isn't big enough for the two of us.

[15 : 30] It's kind of what they're saying to Jesus here. This place isn't big enough for you and us. And it's not just, they don't want just a little distance from Jesus like, hey, can you just move on to the next town?

They're like, can you just leave our whole region? They don't want Jesus just like a little gone, they want him like gone, gone. They want him like far, far away.

And we read this, and you know, it's really easy to take this and being like, oh man, let's make this about an indictment against society at large today. It's easy to do that.

But we have to reckon that society is always going to be at odds with Jesus and God's law. We shouldn't be surprised by that, but what we need to recognize here is that this story didn't happen in Rome.

It didn't happen in some far away pagan nation. It happened in Israel. It happened among God's people who knew the law and knew better. And that is what should alarm us and warn us.

[16 : 31] Jesus' purging of the pig herd here is very similar to his flipping tables in the temple. And when he invades our lives, when Jesus comes into our lives, what he loves to do is he loves to overturn the status quo.

That is part of the big change that we experience. Jesus enters in as the savior that delivers us, but he also comes as the king that commands us.

He doesn't come any other way. He doesn't make any other compromise, which is why many end up walking away. Man, we want and love Jesus as savior, but not always Jesus the king.

We're too afraid and want to maintain control of our lives, but this passage shows you and I, we don't get to have it both ways. You either embrace him as both or you reject him fully.

And if you embrace him as both, here is the good news. You also embrace the power that changes your life for the better. And here's what Jesus does.

[17 : 39] Jesus changes our life by restoring us. Think about this guy, how radically different he was after Jesus delivered him. In verse 15, it says, the townspeople came to Jesus and saw the demon-possessed man.

They saw this guy that they knew, the one who had the legion. He was sitting there, clothed and in his right mind.

This is quite the transformation. Before, they couldn't chain him down. They couldn't keep him in a seat. And now, he is sitting calmly of his own volition, peacefully restored.

Where he wandered around naked, vulnerable to the sun and to the cold, now he is robed. Which, I think, is such a beautiful thing about our Savior.

He deals with us in practical ways, too. He took time to not just save this man and send the demons away. He put a robe around him. And it's a beautiful picture of the salvation that we have.

[18 : 42] Isaiah 61, 10 says, I will greatly rejoice in the Lord. My soul shall exalt in my God, for he has clothed me with the garments of salvation. He has covered me with the robe of righteousness.

And so, we see a beautiful restoration of God putting back dignity on this man, covering him and robing him. But the other thing that we see is his mind is right again.

Another translation calls it, he is of sound mind once again. He's not cutting himself. He is not crazy. He's in his right mind. He's thinking clearly. And here is the beauty of Jesus' salvation.

It's a total work of restoration. Mind, body, and soul. It's all of those things. He doesn't leave any of that alone.

Now, we'd all agree that looking at this story and seeing what happened, this man has changed for the better. But Jesus' changes and his change over our lives, it goes even further than that.

[19 : 48] Jesus changes our life by giving us a clear purpose. Look at verse 18. And he was getting into the boat. He, Jesus, was getting into the boat. And the man who had been possessed with demons begged him that he might be with him.

And Jesus 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. It is no surprise that this man would want to remain with Jesus, right?

I mean, if that happened to me, whoever that guy that delivered me out of that, I'd be like, hey, buddy, I'm sticking with you, right? I'm gonna stay with you. After all that torment, all that isolation, this guy has lived through, now he is healed, he is whole, he's renewed mind, body, and soul.

And you know what? For many of us, we see that and we're just like, amen, praise God, that's enough. But God made us and he knows it actually isn't enough. We need more than just emotional stability restored to us.

We need more than just a clear mind returned and a healthy body being renewed. Which our modern moment would actually say, no, no, no, that is the purpose of life.

[21 : 05] Those things, they can be important and they can be necessary to the thriving life but in our day and age, they become the total reason for life.

They become the ultimate meaning for living. And if we live believing that, it means that our highest purpose in life is living for ourselves.

And again, I'm not throwing shade at emotional health and growing in emotional maturity. Actually, that is very important. There's a pastor named Pete Scazzaro. He has a great line.

He says, you can't be emotionally immature and spiritually mature at the same time. And I would agree with that. And I would say wholeheartedly, yes and amen as most of my pastor friends would say too.

And why? Because emotional maturity has to do with our character. And growing in character is an important part of following Jesus as Paul points out in Romans 5 verse 4.

[22 : 04] But it's so easy for us to make a good pursuit the only pursuit. In our day and age, the pursuit of personal growth and emotional health can become for many of us the means to its own end.

Which is why Jesus tells this guy, no. This guy wants to get in the boat with him and he says, sorry. And it can seem like the most spiritually mature thing to do is to spend, Lord, I just, all I want to do is spend all my time with you.

If at all possible. And why not? He made me whole and the more time I'm with the one who made me whole, he'll just make me holier. If that's a word. But here, Jesus tells him no.

And here's the thing, Jesus is not rejecting him by telling him no. He's redirecting him. Jesus has another purpose for your life and for mine than just doing devotions, Bible studies, going to conferences and silence and solitude retreats.

And I'm not bagging on those things at all. Those things are great and good things to do for your spiritual growth. In one sense, as a follower of Jesus, your life should be about growing to become more like Jesus.

[23 : 23] That is an important purpose. But he also knows in order to do that, you need to be others focused too. Go home. Tell your friends how much I've done for you and tell them about my mercy that you've experienced.

And this brings us to our final point in the sermon. When Jesus changes your life, it does bring amazing blessings to you personally, but it is meant to be shared with others because our changed lives prove the power of the gospel that we proclaim.

Jesus doesn't send this guy to perfect strangers who have no idea who he is. He sends him back to his friends, his family, his neighbors.

And what is implied here is that this man will not move away from his past and bury it. It is a part of his testimony, his gospel story of Jesus' mercy and power that changed his life.

This guy's testimony was legit. Nobody could deny that. Look at what he does. He listens to Jesus and he does exactly what Jesus asked him to do in verse 20.

[24 : 46] He went away and began to proclaim that in the Decapolis, it's an area, 10 cities in that region, how much Jesus had done for him and everyone marveled.

Everyone marveled. Our transformed lives bear witness to Jesus' power and authenticity. What if Jesus, I want to challenge us in the room with this question.

What if Jesus was right here in this room giving us that same command, go home to your friends. You tell them how much I've done for you.

What would you and I have to tell? Do we have a story to tell? Would our lives currently back up our message that the gospel is powerful to change us?

For some of us, our Jesus story is old and it's stale. He did something a long time ago but nothing much has happened since and perhaps it's because we've too often have not let him enter into our lives.

[26 : 01] We acted more like the herdsman who's just send him away when he comes to give us commands. We haven't submitted and surrendered to him. We're living life on our own terms.

Maybe that's you. Maybe it's not. Maybe you do have a story to tell but you're sitting on it. This man, he could have run and hid.

He could have started a new life somewhere else where nobody knew his past kind of like the spiritual witness protection program or something. But we often hide our past because we are too ashamed of what people think if they knew the ugly stuff.

But that's what shame does. It makes us hide things. Even the stuff we know has been forgiven. Even the stuff we know that Jesus has healed and covered in his grace and his mercy.

Kurt Thompson, he's a Christian counselor. He wrote a book called The Soul of Shame and he argues this and with very good reason. He says the remedy to shame is vulnerability.

[27 : 09] See, shame says hide. The gospel says live in the light because when Jesus saves you, you become children of the light.

We're called to bear witness of Jesus' transforming work by refusing to hide the past that he has healed. The past sins that he has forgiven.

And the pathway out of shame requires vulnerability and confessing those things that shame compels us to keep hidden. Let me just say this.

It's just some kind pastoral care. Just a little tip. Don't start being vulnerable with people you don't know.

Start with save people that are trustworthy and get grace. It's okay to be vulnerable with those people. Not everybody is able to handle vulnerability well.

[28 : 14] People are always amazed that I can speak so openly about having been addicted to pornography but that is my story. That is my testimony of saying look at what Jesus has done for me.

And there's more to my life than just that. I was greedy. I've been deceitful, self-righteous, judgmental, prejudiced, proud, arrogant. And I wouldn't think twice about cutting people down with my words.

That's who I was. But Jesus has never stopped healing those dark places in my heart. In many ways my life now doesn't bear witness to those sins.

I'm less judgmental. I'm not perfect. I am less judgmental. I am less self-righteous. I am less deceitful. I am less greedy.

And today it's more natural for me to use my words to bless and build others up than it is to tear them down. And here's why I'm telling you this. When you and I let Jesus command our lives, our lives will continually be changed radically by him.

[29 : 26] And the power of the transformed life gives power to the proclamation of the gospel. You know what's fascinating is this guy, Jesus delivered him and sent him on mission and there was not three years of seminary that happened in between those things.

All's he went and said this is what Jesus did for me. And his message and his life lined up and that is the power that we're looking for.

That is the power that we want. And like it says at the very end of verse 21, everyone will marvel at that.

Everyone. As the band comes up, how do we respond? If you're here, you're not yet a Christian, you wouldn't consider yourself a follower of Jesus. Man, I am so happy that you're here.

I am so happy. that you got to hear this story. And I know there's some crazy stuff in there about demoniacs and everything that might make you think like, wow, this is new territory for me.

[30 : 31] But I hope that you hear and have heard about Jesus and this Savior and what he can do. The authority that he has, but also the mercy that he offers.

And here's the thing, you and I, we can't be healed, we can't be set free from the things that we are hoping to be set free from. It's more than just like, man, Lord, make me a better person.

It's, Lord, make me a new person. That's what happened to this man. He got a new life. And he got a new purpose to live. And Jesus is inviting you today, man, I am the Savior.

He wants to come in and deliver you, to heal you, to restore you. And I am the king who wants to put you on a better purpose of life, give you a better reason to live, to send you out, to say, come and see what the Lord did for me.

There's going to be a prayer. We're all going to pray together in a moment. There's going to be a prayer for you during that time up on the screen here. And if that's you, and you'll know if that's you, you can pray that prayer.

[31 : 37] That is a prayer of surrender. That is a prayer for asking Jesus to save you, and he will. If you're here and you're already a Christian, I want to say to us in the room, friends, how is God calling us to respond?

In a moment, we're going to take communion. Communion is this beautiful, it's this beautiful way that we enjoy our Savior, being one with him, being united with him, to remember the healing, the restoring, the deliverance that he's done and is doing in our lives.

But before we do that, the Bible commands us, man, examine your hearts. We examine our hearts. We don't want to take this, we don't want to take this unless, man, we've made sure that, man, God, I want to get right with you before I do this.

I want to come to you. And I want to ask us and stir some questions up that you can consider as we examine ourselves. I want to say, where have we started living for ourselves? Where have we drifted into not letting Jesus heal certain parts of our lives?

Where have we stopped submitting to his commands and to his direction? And here's the beautiful truth. When we come to him with these things, we're not coming to an angry father.

[33 : 02] He's going to smack us around. We come to a loving father that welcomes us in grace and mercy with open arms that says, like, yes, son, this is, I've been putting this on your heart to come and bring this to me.

Now let me heal you. Let me restore you. Let me set you back on the right path. So let's take 30 seconds now. Move towards God and his grace and his mercy and do business with him.

Appreciate it.