

## "DESTROYING DEMONS."

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First Christian Reformed Church, Lynden

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### **Texts for the Sermon: Mark 5:1-13**

#### **Introduction**

As we dig in to exposit this text and expose its message there are dozens of questions we could ask. Why did Jesus purposefully go to this place? Why did the possessed man come to him? Why did the demons expect to be tortured and beg not to be? Why do they ask to go into the pigs and why did Jesus grant their desire? And most of all, what in the world could this text possibly say to us today? If "all Scripture is God-breathed and useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness" (II Timothy 3:16) then how so with this text?

#### **Mark 5:1-13**

**Mark 5:1** They came to the other side of the sea, to the country of the Gerasenes.

The region of the Gerasenes is a Gentile area on the east side of the Sea of Galilee. This is pagan territory, a land flowing with pigs and demons. Everything about it is unclean and to be avoided by Jews, the tombs, the Gentiles, the swine, and the unclean spirits.

**Mark 5:2** And when Jesus had stepped out of the boat, immediately there met him out of the tombs a man with an unclean spirit.

Immediately after setting foot on shore Jesus is accosted by a man with an unclean spirit, who lives among unclean tombs, surrounded by herdsman occupied by an unclean trade and all of this taking place in an unclean territory. This is a place no one would ever want to go, yet Jesus goes there on purpose. Jesus goes where all others fear, Jesus enters into our worst nightmares.

**Mark 5:3** He lived among the tombs. And no one could bind him anymore, not even with a chain, [4] 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. [5] Night and day among the tombs and on the mountains he was always crying out and cutting himself with stones.

Mark's graphic description is meant to impress on us the power of evil. This man can't be bound or restrained by human means. Repeated attempts to restrain this man have failed. Even shackles and chains can't hold him. He wanders among the tombs outside of town howling and screaming. He wounds and cuts and bruises himself with stones doing all manner of self-destructive behavior.

The point of Mark's detailed explanation is to show Satan's fury, his terrible and destructive power; and to show the man's misery and utter inability to get free of his bondage. This is a picture of hell itself, a place of horrible misery and pain and suffering with no escape.

Mark's description prepares to see Christ's incredible power.

*Jesus confronts evil, without fear, with power and authority.*

**Mark 5:6** And when he saw Jesus from afar, he ran and fell down before him. [7] 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.” [8] For he was saying to him, “Come out of the man, you unclean spirit!”

Why would a demon possessed man immediately come up and meet Christ as soon as He stepped ashore? If they know and recognize him why wouldn't they flee the other way to get away from Christ?

Christ came across the lake to have this encounter, and by His hidden power He has drawn the demon possessed man against his own power to come and meet Him here and bow down. The entire kingdom of Satan is under the control of God. They are not free as we will see in the conversation that follows.

They call Him Jesus, Son of the Most High God which is the title the angel Gabriel used when he told Mary about His birth. It's remarkable that the demons and devils never once fail to recognize Jesus and acknowledge him to be the Son of God and yet men constantly question and doubt and refuse to believe.

They beg him not to torment them. Matthew's account of this explains their meaning:

**Matthew 8:29** And behold, they cried out, “What have you to do with us, O Son of God? Have you come here to torment us *before the time*?”

Satan and all his demons know that their days are numbered and they know the fate that awaits them, a day appointed for their eternal destruction and torment in hell. Now these demons see Christ and know that they are before their Judge, the one who will cast them in hell for all their evil and wick deeds.

They don't beg for mercy, they only ask for more time. The end is inevitable so they just try to delay it. God has no mercy for the fallen angels, there's no hope for them, they are irredeemable, Jesus doesn't take their nature or die for them.

**Mark 5:9** And Jesus asked him, “What is your name?” He replied, “My name is Legion, for we are many.”

Why does Jesus ask, “What's your name?”

**Legion** is a Roman military term for a fighting unit of around five thousand men. If this were today they might answer brigade which can have anywhere from 3 to 5 thousand men. The point is they are many, Jesus is facing an army of demons.

Who could possibly deliver this man from such a great horde of demons? Jesus is clearly way out numbered. But it's not even a contest and the demons know it. He asks their name to reveal how great His power and authority are against even so many. Notice they beg permission to stay in the area and they submit to His authority and His will.

**Mark 5:10** And he begged him earnestly not to send them out of the country. [11] Now a great herd of pigs was feeding there on the hillside, [12] and they begged him, saying, "Send us to the pigs; let us enter them." [13] So he gave them permission. And the unclean spirits came out and entered the pigs; and the herd, numbering about two thousand, rushed down the steep bank into the sea and drowned in the sea. (ESV)

Jesus let them pick their fate. If they can no longer harm man then they will harm another part of God's creation. But their intent may be greater than that. If they strike such an economic blow perhaps the people will turn against God, which in deed they do when they beg Jesus to leave the region.

Satan's mission is always to steal, kill and destroy (John 10:10). One of his names is Apollyon (Revelation 9:11) which means "the destroyer." By whatever sly, subtle, sneaky, cunning, crafty means he will do anything and everything he can to kill and destroy. It's his only nature.

### **Application and conclusion.**

At the beginning of the sermon I asked the question, what in the world could this text possibly say to us today? If "all Scripture is God-breathed and useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness" (II Timothy 3:16) then how so with this text?

Do you see how this text speaks to all of us this morning about the nature of sin and of our sin?

### ***Sin isolates and destroys us.***

Satan's strategy is to divide and conquer, find the weakness and exploit it.

Sin alienates us from others, breaks trust and ties to family and friends. Sin separated him from his family and friends. Out among the tombs shows the man's isolation. He's alone, shunned by others, left to his bondage. Sin and evil have a way of doing that, of making us withdraw due to shame and guilt, making us retreat and hide in the shadows of darkness to suffer alone. Satan isolates us and attacks us and lies to us that we are the only ones who struggle, the only ones with this sin.

Satan doesn't want us to know the freedom of confession and forgiveness and the freedom of fellowship with fellow sinners.

The tombs remind us that Satan's purposes are always death. "You will surely not die," said Satan in the garden and with that deception Satan introduced death into our world. And he continues to lie. "This little sin won't kill you, it's fun or no big deal or you deserve it."

However enticing it might be sin is always destructive, it damages, harms, hurts, maims and kills. Sin is dehumanizing, it deforms the image of God in us.

This story is just a small glimpse of how powerful, cruel, evil and malicious Satan is. He hates God and he hates Christians. He is out to make people as miserable and unhappy as possible. Nothing gives Satan more joy than to give us more misery.

This is why Scripture urges us to kill the sin in us. Sin is no small thing, either be killing sin or it will kill you.

***Sin has a name.***

Each week I call us to confess our sins before God and I urge us to name them, call them by name. You can't fight an enemy you don't know and you won't fight seriously if you can't identify what you are fighting against.

Years ago a couple came to me whose marriage was in trouble. It quickly became clear that they had a ton of unconfessed sin so I asked them to come back next week with a list of their sins. She came back with a long list of her specific sins, almost to the time, date and place. It was powerful as she named the poison and killed it one by one. He couldn't really think of anything. His unnamed enemies killed his soul and his marriage.

What are the names of your demons? It's important to name them so you know what you are dealing with. Demons in a bottle, or a check book or credit card or at the mall or demons in your mouth, in your words, or in your heart in your attitude or prejudices or in your pride. Demons of lust or immorality or miss placed intimacy. Demons on the computer or TV. Demons of trying to get your needs met by things or others, through spouses or children or friends or work. Demons of anxiety, fear, doubt, depression, anger, hate. Name them and call them out.

***Sin is legion, our sins are too many to number.***

We need to be just as honest in saying that the sins that indwell us are great and many.

**Psalm 38:4** My iniquities have gone over my head;  
like a heavy burden, they are too heavy for me. (ESV)

**Psalm 40:12** Evils have encompassed me beyond number;  
my iniquities have overtaken me, and I cannot see;  
they are more than the hairs of my head; my heart fails me. (ESV)

***Sin leads us to want to dwell with swine.***

Is there any greater picture of the power and effect and fruit of sin?

Remember the son of the very wealthy father, who had a good home, good parents, a great environment, the best of everything. But he selfishly and impatiently asked for his inheritance and soon was feeding pigs and eating pig food.

Where did this legion of demons come from? They were once angels in heaven, surrounding the throne of the God. They dwelt in the highest heaven and held the highest privileges of any created beings. They enjoyed perfect and sweet fellowship with the Father and divine discourse with the Son. They had everything. Yet now they are asking if they can dwell in pigs. Sin always takes us from the highest heights and dumps us in the garbage heaps of life.

None of us plans to be wicked or to commit great sins, but broad is the path and easy the way that eventually leads to destruction. The path to stealing or lying or deceiving or adultery or sexual sin or doubt and unbelief, you can never see the end from the beginning. It all starts so small and innocent.

Before long the soul in sin is no longer comfortable in God's presence, in the presence of worship and singing and prayer and hearing God's Word. And the descent into hell begins. One small sin unconfessed and unrepented leads to another and then another and one day he's asking "Send me into some swine."

There's no neutrality, no in between, no third way. It's one path or the other, the easy and broad way or the narrow and hard way. The path that leads upward or the path that leads downward. Every decision, every choice, every desire, every temptation, every yes or no, sets before us life and death, blessings and curses, to dwell with angels or to dwell with swine.

And if you have been dwelling with the company of pigs lately, it's not too late. Jesus has come to save us and set us free from every bondage and every lie and every deceit and every curse and every slavery to sin.

*Jesus is our deliver, our Savior, our redeemer. He has come to set us free.*

Our world is filled with great evil and darkness, with sinful, wicked, malevolent beings. We have a terrible enemy of our souls.

Jesus came across the lake and into Gentile territory to confront this evil and He didn't just cross a lake to do this, He stepped across the threshold of heaven and onto the shores of earth to confront evil and sin and deal it a death blow.

Thanks be to God who has won the victory over sin and evil and death and the devil and is able to preserve and protect and save us and deliver us into His presence in glory. Because of who Jesus is and what He is able to do, we don't despair at our own battles. Though pressed down we are not defeated.

Jesus has triumphed gloriously on the cross. The gates of hell cannot prevail against Christ's followers. We are more than conquerors through Him who loves us (Romans 8:37). Sin wants to enslave you, Jesus wants to set you free.

*To drive sin out costs, there's a price to paid, something must die.*

Our encounters with evil come with a price, it will cost something, something will have to be given up or died to. The cross proves this. Someone had to die, there is a price to be paid. And it's true with our remaining sin. We have to die to it, we have to kill it, we have to say no to it, we have to deny it.

How do you kill a living thing? By denying it food, water and air. You kill sin the same way, by denying whatever gives it life. If you want life then you have to kill what takes your life. Living with sin is like living with a demon.

Paul says this in **Romans 13:14**: "make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires."

**Romans 6:12** Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, to make you obey its passions.

**1 Peter 2:11** Beloved, I urge you as sojourners and exiles to abstain from the passions of the flesh, which wage war against your soul. (ESV)

## *How do we deal with sin and Satan?*

We repent and believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, thus renouncing Satan as our father and making God our Father. By grace we are saved and set free from his bonds.

We put on the whole armor of God that we might stand and fight and resist.

We daily resist Satan and make him flee from us. We learn from the Lord's Prayer that no prayer is complete without a daily petition and plea to be kept from evil and the evil one.

And just as the words of Jesus set that man free so the Word of God heard and read and believed has the power to exorcize sin and evil from our hearts and homes and churches and communities. Read it, pray it, meditate on it, let it speak truth to you.

Though our enemy is great, one little word will bring him down.

“And though this world, with devils filled,  
Should threaten to undo us,  
We will not fear, for God hath willed  
His truth to triumph through us:  
The Prince of Darkness grim,  
We tremble not for him;  
His rage we can endure,  
For lo, his doom is sure,  
One little word shall fell him.

Our memory verse for the month and the verse right after it fit perfectly with this morning's text:

**Micah 7:18-19** Who is a God like you, pardoning iniquity and passing over transgression for the remnant of his inheritance?

He does not retain his anger forever, because he delights in steadfast love.

[19] He will again have compassion on us; he will tread our iniquities underfoot.

***You will cast all our sins into the depths of the sea.*** (ESV)

Like the pigs, God casts into the sea our legion of sins that are confessed and repented of and turned from. Glory to God who delights to glorify His power and grace and mercy by forgiving our great and many sins when we call on him to deliver us from the power of sin.

**Prayer:** Lord Jesus Christ, Son of the Most High God, we acknowledge that our lives have been ruined by sin and that there remains much sin in our lives, sin of every kind and variety. And if left unchecked we know that this sin can and will destroy us. Jesus, we also acknowledge our own powerlessness to control our sin or stop it or root it out of our hearts. But we know that you have all power and authority in heaven and on earth. You defeated the power of sin and evil and death on the cross through your death and resurrection. You have power over the sin in our lives and you have power over all the brokenness in our lives.

We surrender and submit to your power and authority, we ask you to take control of the chaos and confusion in our lives. We ask you to forgive us all our great and many sins and to deliver us from the bondage and power of our sin. We know that this path of righteousness called sanctification is a long and hard path but we begin today asking you to purify, cleanse, heal, redeem and deliver. And every day make our consciences clear and quick to repent and turn to you. Grant us that grace that enables us to say no to ungodliness and worldly passion and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age (Titus 2:11-12). For the sake of your name and your power and your glory hear our prayer and answer, we ask in your strong and mighty name. Amen.