

## **"TELL WHAT THE LORD DID FOR YOU."**

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**First Christian Reformed Church, Lynden**

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**Texts for the Sermon: Mark 5:14-20**

### **Introduction**

This morning we return to Mark 5 to, as Paul Harvey used to say, "hear the rest of the story." Jesus had crossed over the Sea of Galilee with His disciples to the east side into Gentile territory where He was immediately accosted by a man possessed by an unclean spirit, or actually a legion of unclean spirits. Jesus cast them out into a herd of 2000 pigs who then rushed headlong into the Sea of Galilee and drowned. We begin reading now at Mark 5:14.

You are about to hear the inspired, infallible Word of Almighty God, which our Lord Jesus Christ said is Truth. Truth that cannot fail. Truth that cannot be broken. Please receive it as such this morning.

### **Mark 5:14-20.**

The Gospels record numerous stories of miraculous healings. Interestingly we don't hear very much about what happens to those people afterwards. Some go off leaping and jumping and praising the Lord. Ten lepers were healed and one comes back to thank Jesus. But beyond that we don't hear much. Not even anything about Lazarus after he was raised from the dead.

So this miraculous deliverance from a legion of demons is somewhat unique in that we get more insight into what happens afterwards.

As a result of this great miracle, two requests are made of Jesus, two very different or opposite requests. And the two requests receive two different replies, replies that seem the opposite of what we might expect.

### **Mark 5:14-17, when people say no to God.**

The Gadarene herdsmen and towns people come out to see what had happened. They see the demon-possessed man clothed and in his right mind, sane and talking rationally. They see Jesus who did the miracle. They see 2000 pigs floating in the Sea of Galilee. They are *afraid* and they don't just ask, they beg Jesus to leave their country.

They are more afraid of God in their presence than of Satan in their presence. Maybe they were more comfortable with Satan, than with Jesus. So they *beg Jesus to depart* from them.

Why? Why after such an amazing miracle wouldn't they want more miracles? Why in the world would they shut the door to more miracles, shut the door to the Gospel, to God's goodness and grace? Why do they want nothing to do with Jesus?

Why aren't they begging Jesus to use His power to heal and help. Why aren't they asking for revival, for relief from all kinds of bondage or oppression or darkness?

What can be the answer except that they love the world and the things of the world more than Jesus? They wanted to keep things the way they were, they wanted to keep their comfortable, familiar old habits. They weren't willing to give up their lifestyle or their sins. They refused Christ and His new ways. They could see in this miracle a great conflict, a great tension, a great choice between their old ways and Jesus' new ways.

The Gadarenes are still among us. Those who hear missionary reports of the conversion of souls, who hear of the great success of the Gospel, and receive it with bored disinterest; but when told of the loss of employment or of some investment or some financial or personal setback and they are filled with anxiety and concern.

There are so many in our world that if they are given a little money and a few of the world's pleasures they have no interest or concern in this Jesus. This is a spirit of our age from which we need to pray to be delivered. Beware of loving this world and the things of this world more than Christ. Don't get your priorities upside down. Don't worship the bottom line, it's not the main thing, or most important thing.

The light of the glory of the Gospel has shined as brightly in this nation as any nation on earth. So ask yourself why is the Gospel so greatly despised and rejected by so many, especially those in positions of power and wealth? Why do they want the Gospel buried out of sight?

Men love darkness and hate holiness. Just call people to holiness, to righteousness, to self-denial and watch the reaction. The day is coming when the very sight of a cross on a steeple will drive some mad and demand that it be removed.

It's a sign of great spiritual hardness that they were angrier over the loss of some swine than they were overjoyed at the deliverance and salvation of a lost soul.

This is the dark side of PETA (People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals). They are more concerned about animals than people, more grieved over the death of a hundred whales than over the slaughter of millions of babies. They are more concerned about Starbucks using insect extracts in their drinks than they are about human trafficking.

When our hearts grow hard toward the human condition and the divine solution, it turns everything upside down and backwards.

***This raises yet a question about Jesus' response.*** Knowing that this is a bad decision on their part, why does Jesus grant them their request?

Because there comes a time, a moment with each of us when if we willfully reject the truth, the truth will be taken away from us; if we reject the light, the light will be taken from us.

Make no mistake Christ is exceedingly patient and long suffering. He offers second and third and fourth chances. His invitations are broad and wide and repeated again and again.

But this story warns us that we can resist, reject, deny and refuse to obey and say no to the point that we see Jesus getting smaller and smaller in the rearview mirror. They said, "Depart from us" and He did. And there is nothing more fearful and scary than to be finally left alone by Christ.

**Romans 1:28** Since they did not see fit to acknowledge God, God gave them up to a debased mind to do what ought not to be done. (ESV)

Beware of the coldness of your heart, and the worldliness of your affections and interests. Of all your sins, there's none than to finally push Jesus away and say "I don't want you to come in mess up my life."

The greatest mercy would be for Him to go ahead and come in anyway and mess it up.  
The greatest judgment would be for Him to turn His back and walk away.

Make it your prayer today and every day that Jesus never leave you or forsake you. In the midst of your sin, of your repeated sin, plead that Jesus never give you over completely to your sin, plead that He continue to keep your conscience clear, clean and sharp, that He stir up guilt and shame as tools of His grace to cause us to hate sin and turn to Him.

Plead that He never hand you over to wickedness and worldly passions and ungodly desires. If you ever find yourself wishing Jesus would go away, let that strike terror in your heart and cause you go to Him.

**Mark 5:18-20, when God says no to people.**

Understandably this man who has been miraculously delivered from a horrible and tormenting demon would want to follow and serve the man who saved his life and who gave him his life back. His love and affection for Jesus were deep, he was willing to do anything for Him, even leave his home and country. He begs Jesus that he might be able to come with Him.

Jesus honored the request of the demons, they got what they wanted. Jesus honored the requests of the Gadarenes, they got what they wanted. But he denies this man's request. He tells him to go on back home. What could possibly be wrong with following Jesus, what could be wrong with giving up your home and country, your family and friends, to go after Christ?

Decisions made in haste are not always the best decisions. This is especially true for new and young converts. We often chose for ourselves a path that's most agreeable to our tastes and inclinations. We are not the best judge of what's best for us and our souls.

As finite humans we are ignorant when it comes to figuring out the infinite wisdom of God and what's the very best place for us in this world. We must submit to God and trust His wisdom.

The path each of our lives follows is the very best path for our souls as determined by the One who can see the end from the beginning. Our daily prayer needs to be, "Lord, not my will, but your will be done in everything. Lead me where you will, give me what you will, place me where you will. But your will be done."

***Go home to your friends and family.***

Our home and family have a strong claim on our time and attention. Does your home and family have a priority claim on your time and attention?

Some of you husbands and fathers need to take Jesus' words to heart and put them into action.  
Some of you wives and mothers need to take Jesus' words to heart and put them into action.

I don't have to know who you are, I know that just me speaking those words is sufficient for the Holy Spirit to cause them to hit their mark and stir up conviction in your soul. Don't ignore Him, His mission is always grace. His call is always good. Don't ignore His call to home.

We are focusing attention today on home, on our *mothers*, on their love and compassion, on their kindness and sacrifice for us. This is good and right. This honors God.

Motherhood is the highest calling a woman can have and it's a sin if all of us don't honor it and respect it and speak well of it. Our culture despises the domestic calling, the church must never.

Home is where we should begin. Home is where we do good first. Don't be a friend to strangers and a stranger to your friends and family.

**1 Timothy 5:8** If anyone does not provide for his relatives, and especially for members of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever. (ESV)

Home should receive our first and best affections. No creature in the universe is treated better by Christ than His Bride. No human being on this planet should be treated better by a husband than his wife. No human being on this planet should be treated better by a wife than her husband.

To be nice to everyone else and ugly at home is sin. To be pleasant and agreeable and polite and considerate in public and mean and nasty in private is sin. I know what I'm talking about, I've committed that sin more times than I can count or want to remember. May it never be said of us that we are saints in the world, and devils at home.

***Tell them how much the Lord has done for you and how he has had mercy on you.***

The most important event in this man's life was the day Jesus entered his world. The most important event in the history of the world was when Jesus Christ came to earth, and the most important thing to know and to tell is that He did and why He did.

This man is the first preacher Jesus sent out. He was sent out even before Jesus sent out the disciples. This is the first missionary, a Gentile going to Gentiles.

But wait a minute, he hasn't had any training, he hasn't been to missionary school. What about his terrible past, running around naked among the tombs, an embarrassment to the whole region?

What does it take to be a missionary, to give a testimony? A true encounter with the life-changing power of Jesus. From the moment of your conversion you have the Holy Spirit and you have something to give. God has had mercy on you, you can talk about that.

Most of you have been to Christian School, Sunday School, church all your life. You know a thousand times more than this man when Jesus sent him, so don't tell me you don't know what to say. If you know enough to be saved then you know enough to tell someone else how to be saved. So just say a prayer, ask Jesus to give you an opportunity, ask the Holy Spirit to give you the words and start talking about how much the Lord has done for you.

Will you take up His call? Will you testify to what God has done for you? He's not asking you to teach a seminary class on the theological meaning of the atonement, but He is asking you to

tell someone how much the Lord has done for you even in the just the past year and how He has had mercy on you.

**1 Peter 2:9-10** You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. [10] Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy. (ESV)

In Jesus' infinite wisdom He knew what was best for this man and for the Gospel. And notice there's a flicker of grace and truth and light in denying his request. Jesus leaves one small candle burning among the Gadarenes, one person to testify to who Jesus is and how much He has done for him.

Are you that candle somewhere or for someone, at home, at work, at school, in our community? Moms, thank you for the countless ways you are a light in your words, actions, sacrifices, caring and attention. God has blessed us all through the blessing of our mothers. Having been so blessed we are to be a blessing to others. To whom so much has been given, much is expected.

**Prayer:**

**2 Corinthians 1:3-4** Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, [4] who comforts us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God. (ESV)