

Sermon outline and notes prepared by:

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## Mark 5:1-20 “The Power of Christ to Change Lives” or “Jesus & the Wild Man”

Intro. A few years ago we had members of Team Impact in the area for a Crusade. They were men of great strength. They could rip a thick phone book with their bare hands. They could break through many concrete blocks & do other feats of strength. Many were certainly impressed with their strength.

Well I want to talk to you about Someone who is much more powerful. You see, in Mark chapters 4 & 5 we see many evidences of the great power of Jesus Christ. Last Sunday we saw evidence of the power of Christ over nature, as He calmed the storm & the raging sea (4:41). Following my text today you could read about the power of Christ over diseases. There was a woman who had an issue of blood for 12 years. Doctors were powerless to help her. But with just a touch of Jesus, she was healed. We see His power even over death when He restored to life 12 year-old-girl. But there is another awesome power in the universe that Christ confronted time and time again, and that is the evil power of Satan and his demons. And in each case Christ had complete control over the forces of evil. So from a description of the wild sea in chapter 4, Mark moves on to that of a wild man in chapter 5. Humanly speaking both were untamable, but Jesus subdued both.

Now one of the main things that I want to get across to you is the power of Christ to change a life. If Christ can change for the better a wild, miserable, demon possessed man, He can certainly change *your* life. The Bible promises, “If any man be in Christ, he is a new creation, old things are passed away, behold all things become new” (2 Cor. 5:17). Yet some do not become Christians because they do not think they can live the Christian life. They have lived a certain way so long that they just can’t see how they can truly change. But God *can* change your life, & He does it from the inside out. He can cause you to be born again. He can give you a new heart. You will then have the power of the Holy Spirit to help you live right. So let’s look at our text today, and may God help us to accept His truth. First of all, notice with me:

### I. THE PLIGHT OF THE MAN

I want you to understand the terrible plight of the man that came out to meet Jesus. In vv.1-2 we read, “Then they came to the other side of the sea, to the country of the Gadarenes. And when He had come out of the boat, immediately there met Him out of the tombs a man with an unclean spirit.” This man was in great need of the Savior. He had a number of problems. For one thing:

A. He Was Possessed & Controlled by Demons - We are going to see evidence of the fact that we are dealing here with a demoniac, not merely with a maniac. Demon possession is fairly rare in the United States, but it was all too common in Jesus’ day, & it occurs at times today, especially in non-Christian nations. A person possessed by a demon is incapable of separating their own consciousness and ideas from the influence of the demon. Their own identity is merged and lost in that of their tormentors.

The picture Mark draws is filled with terror. This event probably took place at dawn, in the midst of shadows. Notice how Mark describes the demon spirits within this man. First:

1. He Was Possessed by *Unclean* Spirits – In the last of v.2 we read that this man had “an unclean spirit.” Demons are evil and exceedingly sinful. These evil spirits can easily get a foothold in the lives of people who cultivate sinful practices, or dabble in the occult. In contrast, we Christians are indwelt by the *Holy* Spirit.

2. He Was Possessed by Powerful Spirits – People in the area were afraid of this man. They were concerned for their own safety. So notice what we read beginning in the last of v.3, “no one could bind him, not even with chains, because he had often been bound with shackles and chains. And the chains had been pulled apart by him, and the shackles broken in pieces; neither could anyone tame him.” No one could help the man. No one could cast out his demons. All they hoped to do was bind the man hand and foot. But Mark strongly emphasized, with 3 negatives, that no one could bind him, even with shackles & chains. The shackles were used to bind the feet. Yet he would just break them in pieces by crushing them together (*suntribo*, “to rub together, to crush together”).

Illustration: [Bring a chain? Ask strongest man in audience to try to break it?]

This is one of the clear evidences of the fact that we are dealing with demon possession, & not just with a mental illness. You cannot explain the superhuman strength of this man apart from demon possession.

3. He Was Possessed by Numerous Spirits – When the demons within identified themselves, a spokesman said in v.9, “My name is Legion; for we are many.” This man is under the control not of just one demon, the spokesman, but of an entire host, a Legion! A full Roman legion had 6,826 men. It is likely that the term is to be taken figuratively of a very large number. It is also possible that the term “Legion” conjured up the vision of a powerful & numerous army of occupation, cruelty, and destruction. This was a army of evil spirits bent on destruction.

Now because he was possessed & controlled by these evil demons, we also see:

B. His Degraded Manner of Life - When there is evil on the inside, it will show itself on the outside. Here we see that Satan is evil & cruel, & he desires to inflict as much misery as possible upon others. As a result of Satan’s control over his life:

1. He Lived Among the Tombs – This man had been driven from his home & community. The only home he could find was to live in the cave tombs of the area, for Mark reports in v.3 that he “had his dwelling among the tombs.” The whole country around is burrowed with limestone caverns and rock-chambers for the dead. The word translated “dwelling” (*katoikesis*) indicates a permanent dwelling. This was a settled habitation for him, not just a temporary abode. [Note also that “had” is an imperfect tense]. What kind of person would want to live there among the dead? Satan is a murderer. He loves death, so we are not surprised that his demons were all-too-happy to live among the dead.

Young people, you need to stay away from music that focuses upon death. I don’t think you should wear clothes that glorify death. Children, we are in the Halloween season, & you should have no part in wearing costumes or engaging in activities that glorify death, or Satan, or any such thing.

2. He Cried Out in Anguish – In v.5 we read, “And always, night and day, he was in the mountains and in the tombs, crying out....” This man could not get a good night’s sleep. Even through most of the night he would let out ear-splitting screams which echoed eerily from cavern to cavern near the rocky shore, striking terror into the hearts of any traveler who might dare to come within hearing distance. Just think, the disciples just endured a frightful experience with the storm.

Now I can imagine that the disciples were fearful as they approached this area, & heard the cries of the demoniac.

3. He Would Injure Himself – In the last of v.5 we read that he was “cutting himself with stones.” In John 10:10 Jesus said that Satan is a thief, whose ultimate purpose is to steal, kill, & destroy (cf. Rev. 9:11). He does everything he can to influence people to slowly destroy themselves with drugs, alcohol, and even suicide. How sad it is to see so many people living self-destructive lives, including too many of our precious young people in the community.

4. He Was Naked – This is clearly implied in v.15. After the demons were cast out, he was then “clothed.” In fact, Lk. 8:27 specifically says that “he wore no clothes.” Listen folks, God clothed Adam & Eve, but the devil takes clothes off people. Now when it comes to the way you dress, who’s influencing your life: God or Satan?

Now because this man yielded to Satan, he lost everything! He lost his self-control and lived like a wild animal. He lost his home and the fellowship of his family and friends. He lost his decency as he ran around the tombs naked. He lost his peace and purpose in living.

Dear friend, you need to stay away from the influence of Satan. He will lead you into a life of self-inflicted misery. He wants to take away from you all that is good & precious. He wants to lead you into a life of shame.

So here was a man who desperately needed help. He was possessed by many demons, and he was living a life of misery. Ah, but notice next of all:

## II. THE ARRIVAL OF JESUS

Now we come to the hero of our story! God sent His Son into the world to seek and to save that which is lost. 1 Jn. 3:8 says, “For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil.” Aren’t you glad that Jesus arrived? Christian, aren’t you glad Jesus arrived into your life? Oh, what a difference He makes!

Notice what we see here about the arrival of Jesus.

A. The Demons Recognized His Authority - In v.6 we read, “When he saw Jesus from afar, he ran and worshiped Him.” Before the boat even reached the shore the demoniac, “from afar” spying its approach, came running, and he actually met Jesus as the latter steps ashore. So the demoniac came running towards them, probably with hostile intentions. The onrush of the naked, yelling maniac must have tried the newly recovered confidence of the 12. They were ready to get back in the boat! Or maybe they never got out of the boat! But suddenly, the man fell prostrate at the feet of Jesus, which is the literal meaning of the word translated “worshiped.” Why did he do this? It was because the demons recognized who Jesus is, and they knew He had complete authority over them. Though men will at times do their utmost to deny Jesus’ deity, the demons do not.

Immediately, according to v.8, Jesus began to say, “Come out of the man, unclean spirit!” How striking is Christ’s unmoved calm in the face of all this fury! As the progressive imperfect (“said”) indicates, Jesus was commanding the demons to come out before they said anything.

We also see in our story that:

B. The Demons Fear Their Destiny – This is another reason why the demoniac fell prostrate before Jesus. In v.7 the demons spoke up & said to Jesus, “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.” The demonic world realizes that the day is coming when their relative freedom to roam about will cease forever, and

that their final and most terrible punishment is destined to begin at that time. Their representative, who is now speaking to Jesus, knows that right now he is face to face with the One to whom the final judgment has been committed (cf. Acts 17:31). The demon even recognized that Jesus had the authority to torment him, or cast him into hell right then & there. Jesus said that hell was prepared for the devil and his angels. So he sought to make Jesus swear by God not to send them to that terrible place of torment. In fact, the verb translated “implore” (*horkizo*) means “to administer an oath.” Demons believe in the reality of judgment and the reality of hell. This is more than many religious people believe today!

If you are not yet a Christian, shouldn't you fear the coming judgment of God. You have sinned against a holy God, and you know it. Eternal death & hell await those who do not come to Jesus for the forgiveness of sin. Listen to the warning of these demons, & turn to Christ in repentance & faith today!

Then, while recognizing the authority of Jesus, the demon asked in v.10 that he not be sent out of the country. The tense is imperfect, “He kept on pleading with Him.” Decapolis, full of Gentiles & Hellenistic apostate Jews, was loved by the demons. And this particular area of tombs, skeletons, death, and destruction was desired by such demons of darkness. So fearing the alternative, in v.12 they asked to be allowed to enter into the swine that were feeding nearby. Once again, they recognized His absolute authority, and knew they needed His permission. Why the swine? Was it simply a yearning to destroy? Was it perhaps a sinister hope that the owners of the herd, seeing their property destroyed, would be filled with antagonism toward Jesus? We do not know. The main point is that anywhere was better than hell, and they may have thought that unless they could find some creature to enter, there they must go.

C. Jesus Exercised His Authority – We see this in v.13, “And at once Jesus gave them permission.” By the power of His Word, He cast out the demons and set this man free from their control. No long, drawn out rituals were used. It should be noted that our Lord did not command the demons, but only gave them permission to enter the swine. One reason may have been to give this man visible assurance that the demons had left him. But when they did, they ran violently down a steep place into the sea. There, they all were choked with water as they drowned in the Sea. The imperfect tense pictures graphically the drowning of pig after pig. I wonder if the demons anticipated this result? Even swine feel uncomfortable when a demon is in them, and in their panic they rush anywhere to escape, only to rush down into the sea.

Here we see another example of the fact that Satan & his demons are bent on doing harm, to kill and to destroy. No wonder he is called Apollyon, the destroyer.

Even demons recognize the authority of Jesus, but too many people do not. They want to live autonomous lives. They want to live as they please. But we are to recognize the authority of Jesus, and live in obedience to Him. Jesus said in Mt. 28:18 after His resurrection, “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth.” Do you acknowledge His authority over your life?

Having cast out the demons, we next see:

### III. THE CHANGED LIFE

Once Jesus cast out the demons from this man, there was a tremendous change in his life. Now if Jesus can change this man's life, He can certainly change your life. Now notice in what ways Jesus changed this man. First, he experienced:

A. A Change of Heart & Mind – Notice in the last of v.15 that after Jesus cast out the demons, they saw him “sitting and clothed and in his right mind.” Many would want to change the outward actions of the man. They would plead with the man to quit cutting himself and quit living like a savage. They would try to change the outward behaviors. But God changes a man from within. The only effective way to change a person’s outward actions is to first change their heart, mind, & desires.

Have you been born again? Is your life being change by renewing your mind by the Word of God?

B. A Change of Lord and Master – No longer is he enslaved to demons and Satan. Now Jesus is his Master. We see from v.18 that he acknowledged Jesus authority over his life. With a change of master come a change of behavior.

It is far better to have Jesus as your Lord & Master. We have seen what a cruel master Satan is. Your own sin nature is a terrible master. Make Jesus the Lord of your lives!

C. A Change of Life-Style – Again, in the last of v.15 we see that he was “sitting and clothed and in his right mind.” Here we see him now sitting at the feet of Jesus, wanting to learn of Him, wanting to be with Him. He is now fully clothed, as a disciple of Jesus should be in public. Now he is in his right mind. That word (*sophroneo*) means he is able to exercise self control. He is now able to curb his passions, & thus his outward actions. He not only has also been restored to reason, but also to human society. As we shall see, he could go home now.

Jesus dramatically changed the life of this man. Who but the Son of God could so change a life? I believe Jesus is the Son of God. Have you put your faith in Him to change your life for the better? He can change you from the inside-out.

There is yet another way Jesus changed this man. He now had:

D. A Change of Purpose in Living - Perhaps prompted by weakness or a fear of some recurrence, he wanted to be with Jesus & follow Him, as we see in v.18. We can well understand that request. He felt grateful for the blessed change that had taken place in him. He felt full of love towards his Deliverer. He thought he could not do better than follow our Lord and go with him as His companion and disciple. But Christ did not grant this request. Sometimes it is best for God to say “No” to our requests. God knows what is best. You see, Jesus had something more important for him to do. So according to v.19, this man was to go and “tell them what great things the Lord has done for you, and how He has had compassion on you.” The verb “has done” is in the perfect tense, speaking of the complete, finished results of a past action. It was a permanent cure. So he had a new purpose in living, to share his testimony of the power of Jesus to change lives. He could lead many to faith in Jesus by his testimony.

Notice where he was to go & tell his story. He was to go home “to your friends.” This is literally, “Go to your house, to your [own].” Thus, Jesus probably had in mind going to his family, to his own people. The family & friends of this man had probably not seen him for some years, except under the terrible influence of Satan. Oh, what joy he would bring to them as he returned home! And he was to go home, because that is the place above all others where the child of God ought to make his first endeavors to do good. Home is the place where he should strive daily to be a witness for Christ. True missionary activity begins at home, but does not end there. Effective Christian living must begin at home where people know us the best. So this man became one of the earliest missionaries to the Gentiles, though some Jews lived there as well. Certainly no people

needed the message about Christ more than these people who were about to beg Jesus to leave. This man had probably been known throughout Decapolis (ten cities) as the famous madman of the Gadarenes. Imagine the impact he would have, proclaiming what great things Jesus had done for him. We trust that many of those Gentiles believed on the Savior through his witness.

Christ has a mission for you as well. We are to go home & elsewhere & testify to others what Christ has done for us. Next month we will observe Thanksgiving. Perhaps you can suggest that everyone share what they are thankful for. When it is your turn, give grateful testimony of what Christ has done for you! Perhaps God will use you to lead someone else to Jesus, who can forgive them, and change their life.

But I must ask, do you have anything to tell others? Can you testify to any work of grace in your heart? Have you experienced any deliverance from the power of the world, the flesh and the devil? If you have anything to tell others about Christ, then resolve to tell it. Let us not be silent. May being a witness for Christ be one of your primary purposes in life.

We have seen that Christ changed the life of this poor, wretched man. Yet we also see in our story:

#### IV. THE HINDRENCES TO A CHANGED LIFE

You see, many people do not want to change. For example, when the herders saw what happened, and when this great act of compassion had been reported to the local people, how should they have responded? Should they not have tried to prevail upon Jesus to stay a while longer in their midst, in order to impart blessings for body and soul? (cf. John 4:40). We would think that they would have brought their sick and handicapped to Jesus to be healed. But that is not what happened. In contrast with the changed life of the demoniac, we read of a large number of people who did not allow Jesus to change their lives for the better. They said, "Leave us alone, Jesus." Oh, what a terrible thing it is to ask Jesus to live you alone, but many do that to this very day.

Now why did they ask Jesus to leave? It was certainly not because they lacked evidence that Jesus was the Son of God and a wonderful Savior. In v.15 it says that they "saw the one who had been demon-possessed." The particular word translated "saw" (*theoreo*) means "to view attentively, to examine carefully." And v.16 indicates that the people had their own eyewitnesses of the power of Christ. And what did they discover? They found the man "in his right mind." The swine herders saw clear evidence that Jesus had cast out at least 2000 demons!

So in spite of the evidence that Jesus was a great Prophet, & had great power, why did they ask Him to leave? I can think of two main reasons.

A. Fear of Change - They saw Him as a disturber of their familiar mode of life. Have you noticed that people have a tendency to resist change. They prefer the status quo. Just look around. Most of you sit in the same pew every Sunday unless someone takes your spot. We don't want to change. We like what is familiar.

But there are times when we need to change. If you are committing sin you need to repent, and change your ways. If you are heading down the path of self-destruction, you need to turn around, & trust in Jesus. Listen, don't be afraid to let Jesus change your life. Step away from what is familiar, and step into the adventure of a new life with Jesus. He will change your life for the better.

Another reason why they asked Jesus to leave was due to:

B. Fear of Giving Up Sin, Possessions, Etc. - Here in Decapolis pagan influence was strong and the owners of the hogs cared more for the loss of their property than for the healing of the wild demoniac. They already had given up 2,000 pigs. That was no small loss. They may have been afraid that some more of their wealth would have to go the same road as the herd. For, they knew the Jews were opposed to herding swine for food. In the clash between business and spiritual welfare, business came first with them.

Isn't that true today? How many drug dealers do not come to Christ because they are afraid they will have to stop selling drugs & get an honest job? How many others who deal in immoral businesses do not come to Christ because they don't want to give up their ill gotten income? Don't put money ahead of Jesus!

Conclusion: After the people had asked Jesus to leave, what did Jesus do? Did He stay anyway & force Himself on them? No. He got in the boat and left. The tragedy of life is that we have the awful power of severing ourselves from His influence. Christ commands unclean spirits, but He can only plead with human hearts.

Likewise, Jesus will not force Himself into your life. You must invite Him. Rev. 3:20 says, "Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me."

Do you need Jesus in your life? Let me ask you, does your life show that you have been delivered from Satan's power? Has Christ changed your life from sin to righteousness? Has He changed your destiny from hell to heaven? This after all is the grand question that concerns our souls. Satan still reigns and rules in the hearts of all who are disobedient (Ephesians 2:2). He is still a king over the ungodly. Have you, by grace, broken his bonds and escaped his hand? Have you really renounced him and all his works? If not, I invite you to trust in Christ today. Let Him into your heart & life. He will change you for the better.

Christian, are you a witness for Christ? Do you resist the devil daily and make him flee? Do you put on the whole armor of God and stand against him? Let us join Jesus in pushing back the darkness. Let us reclaim the souls that have been enslaved by Satan for too long!

Sources: Alfred Edersheim, *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1971); William Hendriksen, *New Testament Commentary: Mark* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1975); Alexander Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture*, Vol. 8 (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1977 reprint); Larry Pierce, *Online Bible [CD-ROM]* (Ontario: Timnathserah Inc., 1996); A.T. Robertson, *New Testament Word Pictures*, Vol. IV (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1931); J.C. Ryle (1816-1900), *Mark: Expository Thoughts on the Gospels* (Wheaton: Crossway Books, 1993); Warren W. Wiersbe, *Be Diligent: Mark* (Wheaton: Victor Books, 1987); Kenneth S. Wuest's *Word Studies from the Greek New Testament*, Vol. 1, Mark (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1950). Other sources listed in the footnotes. Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations are from *The New King James Version* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1982).

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