

Mark Chapter 5

Mark 5:1-43 [5:1] *They came to the other side of the sea, to the country of the Gerasenes.* [2] *And when Jesus had stepped out of the boat, immediately there met him out of the tombs a man with an unclean spirit.* [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.* [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!**"* [9] *And Jesus asked him, "What is your name?"* He replied, *"My name is Legion, for we are many."* [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.***

[14] *The herdsmen fled and told it in the city and in the country.* And people came to see what it was **that had happened.** [15] *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.*** [16] *And those who had seen it described to them what had happened to the demon-possessed man and to the pigs.* [17] *And they began to **beg Jesus to depart from their region.*** [18] *As he was getting into the boat, the man who had been possessed with demons begged him that he might be with him.* [19] *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.**"* [20] *And he went away and began to proclaim in the Decapolis how much Jesus had done for him, **and everyone marveled.***

[5:1] They came to the other side of the sea, to the country of the Gerasenes.

Gerasenes is on the Eastern side of the Sea of Galilee. This area was primarily inhabited by Gentiles. Hence the herding of pigs. No pigs would be near the dwelling areas of the Jews because pigs were considered an unclean animal and it was even in violation of the Mosaic law to touch such an animal.

And for the third time in the book of Mark, Jesus is confronted with a demon possessed person. And this is the most severe and graphic case so far.

This is one bad dude. If you've worked with the homeless or those struggling with addictions you may have run into someone similar to this, but in this case, this guy cannot even be incarcerated. He's free to roam about creating violence and havoc wherever he wants... at anytime and anyplace. But most of all, Mark describes the pain and affliction that this man suffers with and how it affects the one who is possessed.

And this whole story is full of elements of uncleanness.

The Eastern shore of the Sea of Galilee. Home to Gentiles and Pagan Hellenistic Ideals.

Demoniac living among the tombs. Both are considered unclean. (contact with the dead) contact with demons.

Swine herders raising them for the Roman army. Swine.

So... Jesus meets an unclean man filled with an unclean spirit, in unclean tombs surrounded by unclean animals and unclean people employed in unclean occupations in an unclean Gentile territory. Do you see where this is going?

This is a place that no one would want to go for any reason. And contrary to any reasonable expectation... Jesus says... "lets go over here".

And what happens? This demoniac doesn't come and attack Jesus... he falls on his knees before Him. Wow! When demons meet Jesus... it is a no contest event. They immediately surrender.

Now think about this... Jesus sends the demons into the swine right? Two Thousand pigs. Have you ever spent any time with pigs? Pig story.

These are big, ugly, nasty, angry, vicious animals that will gouge you with their tusks. These were not the domesticated pigs we see today. These were super stinky, super nasty and super mean. And there are 2,000 of them. These demons had the power to kill 2,000 pigs.

And these demons are sent out of this man solely by the authoritative word of the "Son of the Most High God".

Legion is a military term taken from the latin legio which was the largest troop in the Roman army. 5,600 soldiers. This entire region is rife with demons and demonic activity... and here comes Jesus.

You see, Jesus doesn't just come to cure your symptoms... he comes to cure the cause. He comes to cure the root of the problem. He doesn't come to heal your body... He comes to heal everything. He doesn't come to redeem your marriage... He comes to redeem EVERYTHING. He doesn't mess around... He kicks sin to the curb! And to use Mark's favorite word... He does it IMMEDIATELY!

Now look what happens.

Pigs go over the embankment into the water and die.

There goes a big chunk of money and property for the herders. They've got to be ticked off.

Then you have the problem of 2,000 dead pigs floating in the sea. In the sun... dead... filling with gas from decomposition. These things are exploding in the sea and making a huge mess for everyone.

These herders also lost a bunch of money by losing this herd of pigs. And it probably affected a good number of people. Those that would buy the pigs or the meat. Those that process the meat. Those that herded and those than owned the pigs. This is a pretty big deal.

Do you think that they care that the man no longer has any demons... or are they just upset at their own hardship? So they plead with Jesus to leave their land.

Many people, when confronted with Jesus... say that same thing to him. they ask Him to leave.

When Jesus shows up He does what Ed Pride refers to as "meddling". He changes our heart which changes our reason for living. He changes our motives for everything we do. Nothing stays the same when Jesus is on the scene.

He changes our desires which can change our profession, our location, our relationships, our finances... and He does it all for the better. All to build us into the person He wants us to be and to fulfill His will for our life and His Kingdom. And He does it all for His own glory.

And as this part of the story ends, we see the same response as when Jesus calmed the storm... fear. These people were in fear of one who has this kind of awesome power.

And think about this for a minute: How many times have you heard someone say that they would believe in Jesus if God would show them an awesome miracle or a sign. Well this is proof that this is not necessarily true. Many people have seen the mighty works of God yet refuse to surrender themselves to the lordship of Christ. They just want to continue to be the lord of themselves.

And why did Jesus tell the demoniac that it was OK to tell the people about His deliverance? It may be because he lived in a Gentile territory where there was no fear of messianic expectations as there were with the Jews. The healed demoniac becomes the first missionary/preacher sent out by Jesus and in an amazing twist, he is a Gentile sent to minister to Gentiles. Put that in your pipe and smoke it.

Mark 5:21-24 [21] And when Jesus had crossed again in the boat to the other side, a great crowd gathered about him, and he was beside the sea. [22] Then came one of the rulers of the synagogue, Jairus by name, and seeing him, **he fell at his feet** [23] and implored him earnestly, saying, "My little daughter is at the point of death. Come and lay your hands on her, so that she may be made well and live." [24] **And he went with him.**

Jairus was a ruler of the synagogue. The head of a local Jewish worshiping community. Not necessarily a teacher but more like an executive director of the synagogue. He would oversee orthodoxy in teaching as well as building maintenance, security, procuring of scrolls for scripture reading. Arranging Sabbath worship and the like.

Jesus responds immediately by going with Jairus. But once again He is interrupted by another large crowd.

Mark 5:24b- 34 *And a great crowd followed him and thronged about him. [25] And there was a woman who had had a discharge of blood for twelve years, [26] and who had suffered much under many physicians, and had spent all that she had, and was no better but rather grew worse. [27] She had heard the reports about Jesus and came up behind him in the crowd and touched his garment. [28] For she said, "If I touch even his garments, I will be made well." [29] And immediately the flow of blood dried up, and she felt in her body that she was healed of her disease. [30] And Jesus, perceiving in himself that power had gone out from him, immediately turned about in the crowd and said, "Who touched my garments?" [31] And his disciples said to him, "You see the crowd pressing around you, and yet you say, 'Who touched me?'" [32] And he looked around to see who had done it. [33] But the woman, knowing what had happened to her, came in fear and trembling and fell down before him and told him the whole truth. [34] And he said to her, "Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace, and be healed of your disease."*

Mark describes this as a menstrual blood flow that is ongoing. She is losing blood and will probably eventually bleed to death. Mark uses the greek word "mastix" that describes a "scourge or torment". The term combines physical suffering and pain.

Many doctors, used all her wealth, and she's gotten worse.

Women were not allowed to enter the temple during menstruation. She was considered unclean for 7 days after her monthly period. This woman remained unclean throughout her affliction. Anyone in contact with her was to be banished from the community until purification. She was suffering and all alone. Had no friends or family that could even be in contact with her on a daily basis.

We don't know what she was thinking by reaching out and touching Jesus. It was a common belief that rulers and important people could bless you by just one touch. But here is a woman who is not supposed to be near anyone especially a rabbi like Jesus. Yet she risks everything to get to him. In her mind she probably felt that she had already lost everything. She had nothing left to lose.

Many of us came to Jesus after being at the end of ourselves. The end of our abilities, and at the end of our world as we knew it. We may have come with superstitions like this woman but when we saw Jesus... we couldn't resist His calling.

And immediately the flow of blood dried up and she knew she was healed. And Jesus notices that power went out of Him. An act of faith had occurred before the woman even understands it's meaning.

That's what Jesus does. He meets our need whether we understand it or not. He operates in His will to our benefit and His glory whether we get it or not. Have you ever looked back on your life and seen how God has done wonderful things for you yet at the time you thought you were suffering or being punished?

And isn't it interesting that this woman, like us, initially comes to Jesus for what he can give us. Yet Jesus (the one who always is reaching out to us) wants more than just to meet our needs. He wants a relationship. He wants an encounter. He wants to redeem not just this medical issue... but everything about this woman. In the Kingdom of God... miracles lead to meeting Jesus.

Following Jesus isn't just about our needs being met. It's about being in the presence of Jesus, being known by Him and following Him. This woman's fear is not met by reproach or anger but with tender compassion. This is a wonderful picture of who God is. We are ashamed of our sin, yet Jesus wants our sin to drive us into His presence. To drive us into His arms.

And then you know what He does? He says... "be free from your suffering". "Go in peace".

But Jesus has been sidetracked right? What about the sick little girl?

[35] While he was still speaking, there came from the ruler's house some who said, "Your daughter is dead. Why trouble the Teacher any further?" [36] But overhearing what they said, Jesus said to the ruler of the synagogue, "Do not fear, only believe." [37] And he allowed no one to follow him except Peter and James and John the brother of James. [38] They came to the house of the ruler of the synagogue, and Jesus saw a commotion, people weeping and wailing loudly. [39] And when he had entered, he said to them, "Why are you making a commotion and weeping? The child is not dead but sleeping." [40] And they laughed at him. But he put them all outside and took the child's father and mother and those who were with him and went in where the child was. [41] Taking her by the hand he said to her, "Talitha cumi," which means, "Little girl, I say to you, arise." [42] And immediately the girl got up and began walking (for she was twelve years of age), and they were immediately overcome with amazement. [43] And he strictly charged them that no one should know this, and told them to give her something to eat.

Now we're back to the insider / outsider theme. The woman with the issue of blood vs. The official from the synagogue. On his way to Jairus' house he stops to deal with the woman and her issue of blood. Wow. Once again turning the tables on the culture and the people in it.

And now attendants show up to tell Jairus that it is of no use... his daughter has died. We go from divine healing/success to divine failure. The child is dead.

But not with Jesus on the scene. Jesus didn't pay any attention to the circumstances. He says... "do not fear, only believe".

Now there were professional mourners already on the scene. Judaism required a certain number of mourners and even the poorest people would hire them to fulfill their Jewish duty. Wailing women, clapping and singing lamenting tunes.

These mourners (professional I might add) responded with laughter at Jesus' proclamation that the child was only sleeping.

Jairus and the woman with the issue of blood have only one thing in common.

They are desperate. They are victims of desperate circumstances who have no hope apart from Jesus.

Jairus has position and standing in the community. Money and a home and a family. He has everything that the woman does not. Yet Jesus treats them both equally. In fact, Jesus helps the woman first even to the perceived detriment of Jairus.

She approaches Jesus from anonymity. Jairus approaches Jesus, face to face. But Jairus holds no advantage when it comes to Jesus. And the woman had faith... Jairus had to be instructed to have faith.

This woman defines faith for Jairus. She trusted Jesus despite everything to the contrary. She showed that in Christ there are no limits. That in Him there are none. Not even the raising of a dead child.

