

Mark 5:1-20 ~ Scripture Verses

The Healing of a Demon-Possessed Man

¹ They went across the lake to the region of the Gerasenes. ² When Jesus got out of the boat, a man with an evil spirit came from the tombs to meet him. ³ This man lived in the tombs, and no one could bind him any more, not even with a chain. ⁴ For he had often been chained hand and foot, but he tore the chains apart and broke the irons on his feet. No one was strong enough to subdue him. ⁵ Night and day among the tombs and in the hills he would cry out and cut himself with stones.

⁶ When he saw Jesus from a distance, he ran and fell on his knees in front of him. ⁷ He shouted at the top of his voice, “What do you want with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? Swear to God that you won’t torture me!” ⁸ For Jesus had said to him, “Come out of this man, you evil spirit!”

⁹ Then Jesus asked him, “What is your name?”

“My name is Legion,” he replied, “for we are many.” ¹⁰ And he begged Jesus again and again not to send them out of the area.

¹¹ A large herd of pigs was feeding on the nearby hillside. ¹² The demons begged Jesus, “Send us among the pigs; allow us to go into them.” ¹³ He gave them permission, and the evil spirits came out and went into the pigs. The herd, about two thousand in number, rushed down the steep bank into the lake and were drowned.

¹⁴ Those tending the pigs ran off and reported this in the town and countryside, and the people went out to see what had happened. ¹⁵ When they came to Jesus, they saw the man who had been possessed by the legion of demons, sitting there, dressed and in his right mind; and they were afraid. ¹⁶ Those who had seen it told the people what had happened to the demon-possessed man—and told about the pigs as well. ¹⁷ Then the people began to plead with Jesus to leave their region.

¹⁸ As Jesus was getting into the boat, the man who had been demon-possessed begged to go with him. ¹⁹ Jesus did not let him, but said, “Go home to your family and tell them how much the Lord has done for you, and how he has had mercy on you.” ²⁰ So the man went away and began to tell in the Decapolis how much Jesus had done for him. And all the people were amazed.

[New International Version, NIV, 1984]

Mark 5:1-20 ~ Discussion Questions

1. What do people today think of the devil (Satan) and demons?
2. What was the demon-possessed man's life like? (5:3-5)
3. How did the demon-possessed man respond to Jesus? (5:6-7) Why were the demons so terrified of Jesus? In what ways do people today ask Jesus to leave them alone?
4. Are people today possessed by the kind of demons described here? What kind of demons have possessed you or do possess you? Have you ever done something you didn't want to do but felt powerless to stop yourself? (Romans 7:15-19, Galatians 5:17)
5. In general, how did Jesus treat the man? (5:8-20)
6. What did Jesus ask the demons? (5:9) What did the demons beg of Jesus? (5:7, 10, 12) The events in this scene are rather unusual—why? Why did Jesus allow the demons to enter the pigs instead of just banishing or killing them?
7. What emotion gripped everyone except the man who had been possessed by demons? (5:14-17) What did the Gerasene people think of Jesus gracious action?
8. Do you believe that demons are active today? What situations or forces have left you not in your right mind? What are powers of evil that hold people in bondage in our day and age? How does naming those powers help break their power?
9. Often Jesus asked those that he healed to be quiet about the healing, but he told this man to tell others about it (5:19). Why? When Jesus touched your life (assuming he did), do you think he would ask you to be quiet about it or tell others about it?
10. When has the Lord delivered you from a serious sickness or difficulty in your life? How did you react? Did you keep it secret or did you tell others?
11. What make you resistant to talking about God or religion?

Mark 5:1-20 ~ Leader's Guide

1. What do people today think of the devil (Satan) and demons?
2. What was the demon-possessed man's life like? (5:3-5)

Luke 8:27 says “for a long time” this man was unclothed. This certainly set him off from others and made him a social outcast. Indeed, he did not live at home, but he lived among the tombs. Jewish readers would have been “put off” by this—it marked out the man as unclean.

Why does he live among the tombs? Why naked? Perhaps among the tombs because this was the only place where he could find some fellowship with those who wouldn't cast him out of their midst. Perhaps he lived there because there was still a glint of humanity in the man, and he knew enough to have a sort of “longing for death,” a condition which is shared by many people today who are afraid to mention it.

3. How did the demon-possessed man respond to Jesus? (5:6-7) Why did he run towards Jesus? In what ways do people today ask Jesus to leave them alone?

He sees Jesus, runs to him, falls on his face before him as in worship and then says, “Don't torture me.” The demons, speaking through the man, recognize immediately that a more powerful spirit is with Jesus.

But why does the man run towards Jesus rather than away from him? It is the first of several indications in this passage that people are drawn or driven almost irrespective of their will. The presence of the divine and of spiritual power in our midst leads to inexplicable “drawing” or “driving” among us.

People “ask” Jesus to leave them alone in many ways. First, by simply turning away from him. Second by rationalizing your behavior or by saying to yourself, “oh, God will forgive me for doing this.” Third, by going to church or to a Bible study and not paying attention to the sermon or lesson.

4. Are people today possessed by the kind of demons described here? What kind of demons have possessed you or do possess you? Have you ever done something you didn't want to do but felt powerless to stop yourself? (Romans 7:15-19, Galatians 5:17)

Romans 7:15-19 – ¹⁵ I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do. ¹⁶ And if I do what I do not want to do, I agree that the law is good. ¹⁷ As it is, it is no longer I myself who do it, but it is sin living in me. ¹⁸ I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. ¹⁹ For what I do is not the good I want to do; no, the evil I do not want to do—this I keep on doing.

Galatians 5:17 – For the sinful nature desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the sinful nature. They are in conflict with each other, so that you do not do what you want.

5. In general, how did Jesus treat the man? (5:8-20)

As was his custom, Jesus treated the man as a human in need. He recognized that the man's actions and talk were the demons speaking and acting through him and this was not the man's basic nature. Don't mistake the way Jesus treated the demons as how he felt toward the man.

6. What did Jesus ask the demons? (5:9) What did the demons beg of Jesus? (5:7, 10, 12) The events in this scene are rather unusual—why?

Jesus had already commanded the demons to come out of the man (5:8). But either the demons are reluctant to do so or have not been properly commanded, because there ensues a rare event—a brief conversation between the demons and Jesus, a sort of bargaining session. The discussion centers on the issue of the demon's name. In antiquity the name signified the power of an entity. Know the name and you may have power over it. The demon(s) knew Jesus name--the "Son of the Most High God" (5:6) but could do nothing with this knowledge but tremble. But seemingly Jesus was in the dark about the demons. An indication of that is in verse 5:9, where the singular is used: 'Jesus asked him, "What is your name?"' Well, that is reasonable, but it indicates that Jesus is still trying to "size up" the situation.

The demon coughs up its name. It is "Legion." A Roman Legion was the most feared aggregation of men in that day. Consisting of 5,600 soldiers, Roman Legions conquered land from England to Persia in the centuries just before and after Jesus' life. The man may have seen Roman legions training in the nearby plains, and had internalized their power to his soul—believing that the powers that controlled him inside were as powerful as this most potent human force. But once Jesus learned the name of his opponent, he could do with it as he would. Now it is the demon's turn to ask a favor. 'Don't send us out of the area,' perhaps afraid that Jesus would send them into the Abyss, a place where even demons fear to go (Revelation 9:1 and 20:1-3).

In response to Legion's request that they not be sent away, Jesus sends them into the herd of pigs (an unclean animal for Jews) which was feeding nearby. Why?

Matthew Henry says (paraphrased), thus Jesus would let the Gadarenes see what powerful *spiteful* enemies devils are, that they attempted to make Jesus their friend, who alone was able to control and conquer them, and had demonstrated this. Immediately the unclean spirits entered into the unclean swine, which love to wallow in the mire, the fittest place for them. Like the swine, those humans who

delight in the mire of sensual lusts, are fit habitations for Satan.

Phil Ware at Heartlight says, “Jesus had, and still has, power over the demonic world. In fact, his death and resurrection has made clear that power over Satan and his legions. This is important because we clearly see the result of demonic control in the fate of the pigs: *death and destruction*.”

In other words, had Jesus simply banished the demons, the people would not have seen their horrendous power, but by allowing the demons to destroy a herd of 2,000 pigs it is evident that Satan has enormous power that we cannot overcome without the help of Jesus. When Satan and his demons are allowed control, they bring death and destruction—and don’t forget that the Devil still has legions of demons that continuously seek to work death and destruction in each of our lives!

7. What emotion gripped everyone except the man who had been possessed by demons? (5:14-17) What did the Gerasene people think of Jesus gracious action?

The people were amazed and ran to tell the other villagers. They were afraid (5:15) and not at all pleased that Jesus had effectively destroyed their herd of pigs and a large part of their local economy. Indeed, they pleaded with him to leave the region. (5:17)

In contrast, the ex-demon-possessed man was calm, happy, and wanted to stay with Jesus.

This whole story is a very important one. It is recorded in all three synoptic gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke) and is the first time that Jesus told someone to tell others about what he [Jesus] had done. Why? Because this was more than a miracle of healing—Jesus demonstrated that he had power over Satan’s demons, and the only one who could have that power is God. Now people could see that he wasn’t just a prophet or a miracle worker—he was God himself.

8. Do you believe that demons are active today? What situations or forces have left you not in your right mind? What are powers of evil that hold people in bondage in our day and age? How does naming those powers help break their power?

9. Often Jesus asked those that he healed to be quiet about the healing, but he told this man to tell others about it (5:19). Why? When Jesus touched your life (assuming he did), do you think he would ask you to be quiet about it or tell others about it?

10. When has the Lord delivered you from a serious sickness or difficulty in your life? How did you react? Did you keep it secret or did you tell others?

11. What make you resistant to talking about God or religion?