

Legions encounter with Jesus

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[0 : 00] Let us come back together to Mark chapter 5, to that portion of scripture we read earlier on.

And we're going to consider briefly a wonderful miracle that Jesus did, a wonderful deliverance that Jesus brought in the life of a man when he healed him from the possession of demons.

This is not an easy chapter, it is well known, but there are things in this chapter which are very difficult to explain. For example, why did the demons ask Jesus to be sent among the pigs? What was the reason? What was their thinking? What was their gain? After all, as soon as they possessed the pigs, the pigs ran into the water and died.

So what was the reason behind this? There is speculation about these things and no one can really understand how far was the possession that this demon, that this man was experiencing?

[1 : 16] How was it possible that a legion, many demons were possessing this man? There are questions that we cannot answer and yet it is a very rich and wealthy chapter for us to consider.

It reminds us something that is often neglected and that is the spiritual warfare that we are involved in.

Too often we forget that the devil is a roaring lion, that when we are involved in spiritual business we are not fighting with flesh and blood, but with the powers and authorities that are spiritual forces. There are passages in Daniel, for example, remember, of the angel of Persia fighting with the angels of Greece and what that means. There is something happening all around us.

We are not aware of, when we evangelize, we often think that all we have to do is to persuade a person about the reasons of our faith.

[2 : 24] We don't see that behind that reason, behind that word preached and word explained, there is a spiritual war. The devil is at war against us, against the people of God, against the kingdom of God.

And it's something that our methods, our systems, our ideas and our efforts would never achieve anything unless God is on our side.

And so here we see that there is a spiritual battle between the kingdom of the devil, the kingdom of God, against the devil and the Son of God. And the great encouragement for us is a legion of demons cannot resist the power of God and the power and authority of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

First of all, let's look at the condition of this man. This man is a slave. This man is not free. When Jesus speaks to him, it's not him who answered the question.

When you ask your name, who is the demon who is answering? So this man is not in control of his own life. This man is under the authority and control and power of demons.

[3 : 41] It's not free. It's not free to do what he likes, what he wants. He's doing what the demon wants him to do. In his case, they cannot control him.

They cannot put chains on him. It's in a very sad situation, is enslaved by the power of the devil. Now in a certain sense, every man is under that authority. They're not as strong and powerful and dominant, but we are under his authority.

Jesus says that if we're not the children of God, we are the children of the devil. Of course, it doesn't mean that we're possessed by the devil, but it means that we're not free to do what we want.

Paul tells us in Romans that we are not able to do the good that we would and should. We are enslaved. That's why we sin.

[4 : 42] Before coming to Christ, our life is a life of sin because we are under sin, under the authority of sin, the influence of sin, the power of sin.

We cannot resist. We do not have the strength to say no unto sin until God comes to us and delivers us from that influence, from that dominion and that power.

This man is in a miserable condition. He's alone. He dwells among the tombs. He hurts himself. He's a mad person. Everyone unvotes him because in the eyes of the people, he's mad. And there is nothing they can do. They did try to bind him, but with no result.

Enabled by the demon possessing him, he broke the chains and the shackles that were keeping him. This man is in a very poor condition.

[5 : 43] Unable to speak for himself. Unable even to ask for help. And you notice that there is nothing that he does that is reasonable.

And not in the same measure. We don't run. No, we don't live among the cemetery. We have houses and everything. And yet if we are honest, if we look back to our lives before God's intervention, there was an element of misery there.

A meaninglessness. An emptiness. And we were working and doing things. But why? Why working?

Why earning money? Why going on holiday? There was something within us that made our life meaningless. Our life was miserable until Jesus came to us.

And what Jesus did, he delivered us like he delivered this man. It is Jesus that comes to this man. It is Jesus that goes to him and Jesus takes the initiative.

[6 : 54] And Jesus speaks and through his word, this man is free. The man said to the Spirit, go out.

And there is nothing the Spirit can do. The Spirit has to obey. The Spirit must do what Jesus tells him to do.

He has no power, no authority to disobey him. Isn't that incredible? That powerful spiritual beings whose aim is the destruction of the kingdom of God, whose very existence is against Christ, when Jesus commands them something, they do it.

Isn't that incredible? They cannot do anything else but do what Jesus tells them to do.

The demons are under the authority of Christ. So Jesus speaks and this man is free.

[8 : 01] Jesus doesn't shout, doesn't pray, doesn't do any kind of exercises. Jesus speaks and this man is fully delivered by the powerful word of Christ.

This should not surprise us because God made all things by the word of His power. God spoke and it was light.

God spoke and life came to be. God spoke and we were created from the beginning. The world did all things and everything that exists exists through that word.

So when Jesus speaks, the very power that created the whole universe was speaking to this man. This man has been delivered by the word of Christ. And this is true of us. We were not saved by a miracle.

[9 : 13] We were saved from our spiritual slavery, saved from our miserable life, from the authority of sin by the power of Christ.

In the form of a sermon, in the form of a verse, in the form of a witness from an un-believer, from a book. It was the word of Jesus that delivered us from our sins.

It is the gospel of Jesus Christ that delivered us from our slavery and our misery. Isn't that similar to the experience of this man?

But also this man is delivered by the transforming power of Christ. There is an incredible change in the life of this man.

At the beginning of the chapter, he is uncontrollable. He is out of his mind, running like a mad man among the tombs, unable to be stopped, unwilling to stop.

[10 : 15] Now when the people hear what happens, they find this man sick and in his right mind. No need of change, no need of man holding this man.

He was completely transformed, completely healed, completely saved. And that what God did to us. When God came into our lives, He changed our lives altogether.

Yes, the sin is still present within us. Yes, we are still fighting with sins and old habits. But we are free.

The change in us is remarkable. Sometimes you don't realize it. But maybe people outside, they are impressed by that change.

And notice that change is not something that we have done, that change is the work of God in us. This man is not sitting in his right mind because he wanted to or because he forced himself into that position.

[11 : 20] No. It is the work of Christ that caused this man to be in his right mind. And the change that happens in us is not the change that we work out, it is the change of God.

It is the work of God in us that changes us. We are different, not because we try harder than other people, we are different because God has changed us.

We are what we are by the grace of God. When Peter speaks about evangelism, he doesn't speak about create opportunities.

He says when they ask you about your faith, then you tell them. Why do they ask questions to us? Because they see a difference. They see a change. They wonder what has happened in your life. Why don't you do what you used to do? Why your reaction is different?

[12 : 23] What's wrong with you? You are not the same person anymore. I know I am different. I am a new creation in Jesus Christ. I am a new person. God has changed my life.

He has given me new motives, new desires, new ambition and new lifestyle. He has changed us. Here we are friends.

We were born into sin, enslaved by sin. Jesus has, by His word, through His gospel, delivered us from sin and made us servants of righteousness.

We have been delivered by Christ, His powerful, transforming power. And finally, notice that there is a lifelong commission.

There is a sad condition, there is a wonderful deliverance, there is a lifelong commission. This man is delivered by Jesus.

[13 : 23] If you have received something from someone, there is an attachment. There is a desire to repay that kindness. We want to do good to those who do good to us, usually.

So this man received a wonderful gift from Christ, a new life, a new start, a new opportunity. And so his desire is to be with the one who has done so much good to him.

And so his desire is he begged Jesus. He begged him that he might be with him. That's a good desire. And I wish I had a desire myself.

I have to force myself to seek the face of Christ, to pray and to read and to be with him. It's almost a chore, a duty. For this man is a delight.

He's begging Jesus, please Jesus, let me be with you. Let me have fellowship with you. Let me be where you are. A good desire. And yet Jesus says, no, that's not your portion.

[14 : 24] I have something else for you. And Jesus gives him an imperative. Go home and tell your friends what God has done for you.

Go and tell. That's the command with this man received. Go back to your family and let your family see and hear from you what has happened to you.

Go and tell them about the misery that you experienced because of sin. Go and tell them about the misery that sin brought into your life. Go and tell them about the failing and misery that you went through because of sin.

But don't stop there. Go and tell them the grace of God in your life. But there's an imperative. Go and tell.

In Romans 10 Paul says, how will they know? If no one tells them. So someone has to go and preach to them that they might know that they might believe.

[15 : 35] So there is an imperative for this man. And there is in a certain way an imperative for us of being delivered by Christ. To go and tell. You don't have to come to Italy with me but go and tell your friends and your family what God has done for you.

Show them the intervention and the work of God in you. It's interesting that God decides where he has to go.

And I say go wherever you like. Go wherever you feel called. He said go to your friends. Go home. He decides where this man is going to be a witness.

God decides where he has to be an evangelist. And many ways even Jesus' ministry was limited by the will of God. The father had decided where.

And remember when a Kenanite woman comes to him and says my ministry is for the Jews. Have come for me. So you can see Jesus was under commission.

[16:44] This man is under commission. And you and I are under commission. We might have an explicit commandment but God in His providence leads us in the place where we have to be witnesses for you.

So you are here in Canary. I've noticed there is a board at the entrance that says you're entering in the mission field. That is where Jesus has called you to be an evangelist.

In your workplace, among your family, among your friends. God is sending you there in His providence.

In His providence so far God has sent me to Italy. For how long I don't know but I am in Italy. He decides where to go.

God gives a message. So there is a God imperative. There is a God given place. There is a God given message. Go and tell them not what you think is going to work, not what you think is going to persuade them.

[17:50] Go and tell them what the Lord has done for you. God decides what we have to preach. What decide what you have to tell your family and friends.

And this is very important. For me as a preacher, I am not free to preach what I want. I have to preach what God wants. It's not my message. It is God's message.

It's not my word. It is God's word. When we are involved in evangelists, we have to tell what He wants us to say. And what it is He wants us to say, what He has done for you.

You don't have to be a theologian to be an evangelist. You don't need a caller to share the gospel. Because all you have to say to the people in Carlyway is what God has done for you.

I was a sinner. I wasn't able to do any good. I was lost. And Jesus' family. I was blind. And Jesus gave me life.

[18:55] I was evil. But Jesus made me a new creation. I was unrighteous. But Jesus gave me His righteousness. I was going to a lost eternity. But now by His grace, I'm going into heaven.

We are called to share and witness what God has done for us. We have to speak to them.

God's word. Jesus said to this man, go and tell them what God has done. Tell them what you have done. But God has done. And very often friends, when we give our testimony, we fail because we speak so much about ourselves.

That's not the purpose of giving our testimony. It's about giving glory to God. And we glorify God when we tell others what He has done.

His word. Think of Lazarus. He was dead for four days. We are told that after his resurrection, people who are converted believed because of him.

[20:09] Not his work, but the work of Jesus. Imagine Lazarus giving his testimony. I did nothing. I was dead.

Jesus spoke. And I was alive. Lazarus couldn't say, I was seeking for the truth. I was seeking for God. I was seeking for salvation. No, he wasn't. He was dead.

But all he was able to say is, I was dead. I'm alive. And that's our weakness. That's our testimony. I was dead.

I couldn't care less about God and about His word and about the gospel, about church and salvation. I couldn't care less until He came to me. Until He woke me up from my spiritual lens.

Until He gave me spiritual life. And I was able to come to Him. God's mercy.

[21:07] How He has a mercy on you. Friends, all of us who are Christians are tokens of God's mercy.

If we are saved, it is because of God's mercy. God saw us in our misery and He had compassion upon us. He had pity for us.

He could have said, you deserve it. It's what you deserve for your sin. But He did it. He saw us in misery and slavery and to sin.

And He was moved to compassion. Like He was for this man, like He was for the lepers that He met. When He saw Israel like sheep without shepherd, He had compassion upon them.

And He saw upon you, friends, and upon me, in all our disgusting sinful nature. He had compassion. He came to us and saved us.

[22:13] And the message. And this I discovered, sadly, only now that I've come back to Italy. I've lost sight of this. The message of the church for this world is the mercy of God in Jesus Christ.

We often say, oh, we have to be like Jeremiah. We have to preach like Jeremiah. Two point friends. We're not going to destroy wars. We're not going to preach only judgment.

We're not going to preach salvation in Jesus Christ. Yes, we have to tell them about judgment, tell them about hell and about the wrath of God. Of course we have to.

But all that has to lead us to the mercy of God in Jesus Christ. This is our message. We preach a God in whom is plenty of redemption.

We preach a God who is gracious, unmerciful, and longsuffering, and slow to wrath. We preach a God who has no delight in the condemnation of evil people.

[23 : 16] We preach a God whose delight is for sinners to turn. We preach a merciful God. And this is our experience, friends, isn't it?

God has been merciful to you and been merciful to me. He has not dealt with me the way I deserved. My witness, my testimonist, is a faithful and merciful God.

We preach a God who has become in Jesus Christ our heavenly Father. A God who has loved us with an everlasting love. A God who is caring and gentle and kind.

And yes, he's glorious and omnipotent and holy and a consuming fire, but together with that holiness and majesty and sovereignty, there is love, there is grace, and they kiss in him.

Behold the severity and goodness of God. This man was saved by God. Here we are, saved by God.

[24 : 29] And let me read at the end of this chapter that this man obeyed the commission Jesus gave him. May God grant that we will also faithful and like this man proclaim all the things that Jesus has done for us.

Let us pray. Our God and Heavenly Father, we are what we are but your grace.

If we have hope for eternity, if we are able to do any good, it is because of your grace in our lives.

Our salvation belongs to you. Enable us, we pray, by your spirit and power to proclaim your grace, mercy, and salvation to the people around us.

May we show to them with our works and with our words the glory of God in Jesus Christ. Here as we pray, bless us for we ask in Jesus' name.

[25 : 40] God be merciful and bless us, shine upon us with your face, that the earth may know your actions and all lands you are saving grace.

God be merciful and bless us, shine upon us with your face, that the earth may know your actions and all lands you are saving grace.

May the people praise you, may the people sing your praise, for you judge and nation justly, ruling over every race.

May they sing with joy and gladness, may they all rejoice us one.

O God may the people's praise you, as they all unite in song.

[26 : 57] Then the land will yield its harvest, God will pour his gifts abroad, God our God will surely bless us, all the earth will fear our God.

Let's come to the beginning. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all.

Happy Easter.