

Last week we looked at Jesus vanquishing the powers of nature that were hostile to him and commanding them to be calm. Jesus had calmed the storm and the disciples were surprised that even the wind and the waves listened to Jesus. Mark continues with the theme of Jesus vanquishing the powers that were hostile to him in chapter 5 as well. In 5:1-20 we see the healing of the demon possessed man from Gerasenes. Mark shows the power and authority of Jesus over the demoniac who was untamable and who was possessed by a whole army of demons. In the taming of the storm, Mark left us with the question, 'Who is this that even the wind and the waves obey him?' In this section the answer comes out as the hostile demonic forces shout, 'What do you want with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God?' In today's text we note that Jesus vanquishes the powers of demons to show that he is indeed the Son of the Most High God and that he is the King of kings and Lord of Lords. The demoniac who is healed bears witness to the healing mercy of God.

Mark now gives us the location that they had crossed the lake to the region of the Gerasenes. Matthew records the place as Gadarene which is located towards the South west corner of the lake, where the city of Gadara some six miles from the shore may have controlled the territory reaching the lake shore. Gerasa is located 50km south east of the sea of Galilee and may have had holdings on the eastern shore of the sea giving its name to a small village there now known as Khersa. Less than 2 km south is a fairly steep slope within 120 feet from the shore. There were cavern tombs which seemed to have been used as dwellings (Lk 8:27)

Mark records for us that as Jesus got out of the boat a man with an evil spirit came from the tombs to meet him. That this man was living among the tombs shows that he was ostracized from society. He had no place to go and therefore he was living among these rock-cut tombs. The condition of the man is again portrayed in graphic detail. No one could bind him and keep him down even if they used chains. He was so strong under possession that even though he was chained in his hands and feet he tore the chains apart and broke the irons on his feet. No one could subdue him. He was also self-destructive as he would cry out and cut himself with stones.

When he saw Jesus from a distance he ran and fell on his knees and shouted at the top of his voice, 'What do you want with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? In God's name don't torture me!' Jesus had said to him, 'Come out of this man, you impure spirit!' Jesus then asks the man his name and he says, 'My name is Legion, for we are many'. The demons beg Jesus through the man to send them into the pigs who were nearby. The demons came out of the man and took possession of over 2000 pigs and rushed down a steep bank into the lake and were drowned. News about this quickly spread into the town and country side.

When the people came from the villages they saw the demon possessed man in his right mind, sitting there dressed. The people were afraid of Jesus and asked him to leave their town. Meanwhile the man who had been healed wanted to come with Jesus and be his disciple. Jesus asks him to go to his own people and bear witness to the healing mercy of God. The man in turn went to the Decapolis and told everyone how much Jesus had done for him.

Jesus is the same yesterday, today, and forever. He continues to have mercy on all human beings. He works out his healing as we come into his presence and seek his help. We can overcome every attack of the evil one only by the power of the Holy Spirit that God gives us. As we experience his healing we too are called to bear witness in the world and tell others about the healing mercy of God. May we continue to testify to his healing grace in our lives.

Shalom,
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