

Greetings to you! The theme for our morning's meditation is, "Bearing witness to the healing mercy of God." In Mark's Gospel from chapter 4 and 5 we see that Mark records for us Jesus vanquishing various powers that are hostile to him. In chapter 4 Mark has Jesus vanquishing the powers of nature. In chapter 5 Jesus vanquishes the powers of darkness and of Satan, and in the latter half of chapter 5 Jesus shows his power over sickness with the healing of Jarius' daughter and a woman who had been subject to bleeding for twelve years. This morning we will be looking at this section where Jesus shows his authority over Satan and the powers of darkness.

Mark informs us that they had crossed lake region of Gerasenes. Matthew records the place as Gadara. Gerasa is located 50km south east from the Sea of Galilee and there is a small village there now known as Khersa. Less than 2km south is a fairly steep slope within 120 feet from the shore. There were cavern tombs which seem to have been used as dwellings (Luke 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 tombs showed 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 portrayed in graphic detail. 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 iron on his feet. No one could subdue him. He was also self-destructive as he would cry out and cut himself with stones. Mark gives us a vivid picture of his condition that there were multiple possessions. The present condition of the man was hopeless, ostracized, self-destructive, possessed and one who had great strength.

When he saw Jesus from a distance he ran and fell on his knees before Jesus. There is an inner conflict as the man wants to meet Jesus, but the demons inside him do not want to meet with Jesus; in fact, they say, "What do you want with me Jesus Son of Most High God?" Two spiritual powers are confronting each other and the demoniac falling at Jesus' feet shows who is superior. The demons inside say, "Swear to God that you won't torture me." The evil spirits were trying to make Jesus bind himself on oath so that they could escape. They recognized Jesus as the Son of the Most High God and therefore seek to address Jesus by name to gain control over him. However, we know that Jesus is God, and the evil spirits are rebellious creatures. Jesus had already said to him 'Come out of this man you evil spirit!' Jesus then asks the man 'What is your name?' Naming of a spirit was to have control over them.

The dialogue continues and the evil spirit replies, "My name is Legion" 'for we are many'. The term 'Legion' meant troops of about 6,000 people in the Roman army. The

evil spirits request Jesus not to send them out of the region but to send them into the pigs. The pigs that died were about two thousand. All this indicates that the man had multiple possessions. Jesus gave permission and they went into the pigs and rushed down into the steep bank and were drowned.

Those who tended the pigs ran out to the town and told the people all that Jesus had done. They came and saw the man who was possessed sitting, dressed and in his right mind. The people were taken aback by the demonstration of power and therefore requested Jesus to leave that region.

As Jesus was getting into the boat, the man who was demon possessed begged Jesus to go with him. Jesus however told the man to go home and tell his family how much the Lord had done for him, and how he had mercy on him. The demon possessed man bore witness to the healing mercies of God.

We too can be delivered from various bondages when we come to Christ. We may be in such terrible shackles that we may think there is no hope for us. But Jesus will deliver us when we come to him. May we this Sunday bring all our bondages to the feet of Jesus and ask him to deliver us from the evil one. When we are delivered may we bear witness to the healing mercy of God.

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