

BREAKING THE CHAINS

Mark 5:1-20

Introduction:

We have spent several weeks already in the Gospel of Mark. Mark is a very fast-moving account of Jesus life and ministry. He jumps right into ministry of Jesus...

- Preparing the way – John the Baptist
- Jesus' baptism and temptation
- Jesus preaching and calling disciples to follow him
- Healing and preaching – sick, diseased, lame, paralyzed
- Confrontations with the Pharisees and scribes
- Appointing of the twelve to preach and heal
- Extended teaching regarding the kingdom of God – a spiritual kingdom where Christ rules in the hearts and lives of people

Last time we looked at the subject of fear or faith and the question of whether Jesus really cares when we are overwhelmed and feel like our ship is sinking.

- Jesus and the disciples were in a boat crossing the lake – great storm arose
- Jesus asleep in the back of the boat
- Disciples question – “Do you not care that we are perishing?”
- Jesus calmed the storm and then challenged them regarding their fear and their faith.

Does Jesus care? Certainly he does. Do we have faith to believe that when we feel like everything we know is being threatened and our boat is going to sink? How can we grow in our faith? Today we are going to continue to try to build our faith by seeing what God wants to tell us from Mark 5:1-20...

A Desperate Situation

We read vv. 1-13 a few minutes ago. After stilling the storm on the sea, Jesus and his disciples landed on the other side – Gergesa...

He was met there by a demon-possessed man. Interestingly, the NT language never really uses the term demon-possession. The word that is consistently used of some individuals is *daimonizomai* – “*dahee-mon-id'-zom-ahee*” – could be better translated as demonized. It is debatable whether it means possession or control or influence but one thing is clear. This man was under Satan's control.

It is evident that there are various stages and degrees to which demons, evil spirits, can affect and possess or control human beings. This is certainly an extreme case, but it shows us some clear signs which indicate when demonic spirits are at work in the life of an individual. I would like to mention some of these as we see them in vv. 1-5. (*Taken from Ray Stedman*)

- The first is the word "unclean". There is always an element of the unclean present in demonic effect. Some moral or physical filth or pollution is evident. In this case, the man lived among the tombs. You always find this element -- the demonic living in the midst of dirt and squalor and rubbish, or evidencing moral pollution.
- Isolation - this man had a home, and he had friends, because Jesus sent him back to both at the end of the story. But he chose to live by himself in utter segregation, away from humanity, cut off from them. In every case of demonic influence, you find this attitude of withdrawal, a willingness to be separate physically or emotionally from other people.
- Supernatural strength - This is often the case. There are many instances today of people possessed or controlled by demons exercising unusual strength. This man had been bound with chains and fetters. But he had snapped the chains and torn off the fetters, and no one had the strength to subdue him—a remarkable demonstration of demonic power.
- A sense of torment – this man was tormented. At first, demonic influence can seem to be very alluring and seductive, very attractive and fascinating. But that is designed to lead one on until finally this torment sets in, the deep sense of restlessness which this man exhibited, wandering up and down the mountains, crying out in pain at the torment he felt within, bruising himself with stones -- evidently in an attempt to drive out his inner torment.

In vv. 6-10 we see the confrontation between Jesus and the demon spirits that were controlling this man. Notes:

- Recognition of Jesus and his authority – he called Jesus by name ... identified him as the Son of God ... recognized that he was subject to Jesus' power and authority.
- When confronted by Jesus, he was forced to identify himself: Legion – multiple spirits, personalities.

In verses 11-13, we have one of the most confusing parts of this whole incident. Why did Jesus allow the demonic spirits to enter the pigs? Why did the pigs destroy themselves in the sea? Another characteristic of demonic activity – destructive, even suicidal behaviour. Satan's goal is always destruction. You see that even in the man. v. 5 – "...always crying out and cutting himself with stones."

This was the desperate situation Jesus was confronted with and had to deal with. But beginning in v. 14 we have...

A Dramatic Transformation

There are a number of things to note in these verses:

1. The change that had come over the demonized man – v. 15. Note the contrast with vv. 3-5. Matthew tells us that for a long time he had worn no clothes. Now he was fully clothed. He had been restless, wandering aimlessly among the tombs. Now he was sitting, quietly with Jesus. He had been wild and self-destructive, insane. Now he was in his right mind. What a wonderful transformation took place when he met Jesus.
2. The response of the people – vv. 14-17. Fear, they were afraid and kicked Jesus out of town! Why do you suppose they did that? The people were comfortable with evil and they didn't want to follow Jesus. They didn't like the way He was upsetting their way of life. It probably didn't help that his actions had just destroyed somebody's livelihood, with the death of 2000 pigs.
3. The response of the man who was released from the demonic oppression – vv. 18-20. He begged to follow Jesus. He wanted to go with him. But Jesus issued a challenge to him to go back home and to testify about what Jesus had done. He did and people marvelled!

Conclusion

So, what lessons can we take from this? Several things:

On a practical level:

1. The reality of demons and demonic influence and oppression.
2. Jesus has power over Satan and all his demonic forces.

On a more personal level, there are some things we can glean from this passage:

1. Outside of Jesus Christ we are just as desperate as this demonized man. We are bound and chained by Satan and sin
2. Jesus has the power to set us free from that bondage – refer to the song we sang – My chains are gone, I've been set free. My God, my Saviour, has ransomed me, And like a flood His mercy rains, Unending love, Amazing grace

Then there is the question of what we are to do about what we have learned this morning:

1. Have you been set free from the bondage of sin? Has there ever been a day when Jesus passed by where you were, trapped in the bondage of your sins, and set you free? Have you experienced His life-changing, bondage-breaking power in your life? If you haven't, you can experience it today.
2. If you know Jesus Christ, and you have experienced that freedom, then Jesus has a command for you this morning. Just as he told this newly released man, *"Go home to your friends and tell them how much the Lord has done for you, and how he has had mercy on you."* That is really what witnessing is all about – telling others what Jesus has done for us.
There is a big difference between witnessing and evangelizing. We cannot all be evangelists, but we can all testify about what we have experienced when we encountered Jesus.