

Mark - He Sets the Prisoner Free

by J. Glyn Owen

Jesus Christ is the Lord of nature and the soul, and He can bring peace and calm to the heart and mind of a person.

Duration: 43:55

Scripture: Matthew 8:28-34, Mark 4:35 - 5:20

Topics: "Freedom"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher discusses the story of Jesus healing a demon-possessed man and the subsequent reaction of the crowd. The preacher emphasizes the power and compassion of Jesus, as demonstrated by the expulsion of the demon from the man. The crowd is amazed by this supernatural event and spreads the news throughout the city and surrounding areas. The preacher also mentions how Jesus' control over natural forces, as seen in the calming of the storm in a previous passage, further establishes his authority.

Transcript

Now shall we turn together to the Word of God and the passage we read earlier from Mark 5 1-20. As we indicated in reading the passage, it's rather lengthy so we shall not read it again, but you may find it helpful to have the New Testament open before you as we proceed. Now you will remember that last Lord's Day morning we were considering the previous passage, the passage that comes at the end of chapter 4. And there we saw how our Lord was total Lord and Master of natural forces.

This was exhibited in the way He quelled the storm that brewed so suddenly on that little sea of Galilee, and how He brought about a calm that was as great as the storm. The episode began with a great storm and it ended with a great calm. And the one responsible was the great Lord, the Savior, the Son of God, whom most of us, and I trust all of us, are glad to acknowledge as our Savior and our Master this morning.

Well now, we move now, we move from that scene of the storm on the little sea of Galilee, or Gennesaret as it is sometimes called, and we see that little boat coming out of the storm and landing on the shores of the country of Gadara, or Gerasa, and it has a third name, it doesn't really matter which you take. No sooner was our Lord on the soil of Gadara or Gerasa than He encounters the tragic character that is described for us in the opening verses of chapter 5 of Mark's gospel, and of course in other places in Matthew and in Luke, in Matthew chapter 8 and in Luke chapter 8. Now I want us to look in the first place at the man and his tragedy. The man before us was clearly demon possessed.

This is not however the first contact that we've had in Mark's gospel with demon possession. You may remember that early in chapter 1 in verse 26 for example, we encountered the first incident recorded in this gospel. Jesus was in the synagogue in Capernaum, and a man arrived there who was in the grip of evil spirits, and our Lord in His infinite mercy healed the man, exorcised, cast out the demon, so that he was saved from his catastrophe.

At the end of that particular day, we read in verse 32, I think it is of chapter 1, how the crowds who brought their sick to the Lord Jesus on that occasion also brought a number of demon possessed. Evidently they'd heard the news of what had happened earlier that day in the synagogue, and many took advantage of His presence in their city, and they knew of those in this category and brought them along. Demon possession seems to have been such a striking phenomenon in our Lord's time.

He seemed to have aggravated the underworld to explode and to manifest itself in evil, evil forces and evil powers, that early on in the gospel as we saw in chapter 3 in verse 15, Jesus felt it necessary to give His disciples special power to cast out evil spirits. When God became incarnate in Jesus Christ, He seemed to have created in the underworld such a commotion that the demons of hell decided they too must become incarnate in men and harass Him and challenge Him as He goes about His God-given task upon earth. But what we have in the case before us is an instance of a man whom society have tried to help through they haven't been able to do much, but they've tried and they failed.

Now let's look at the man's condition in the first place as it is described here. Verse 2 in chapter 5 puts it like this. When He, that is Jesus, had come out of the boat, there met Him out of the tombs a man with an unclean spirit or an evil spirit or a demonic spirit.

Now let's say right at the outset our knowledge of this kind of phenomenon is limited. We accept for our part what scripture reveals believing that the Holy Spirit of God knows more about it than we do. And when we expand this passage we do so on that basis that God knows more about these things than we do and we accept what the Word of God says.

No less ferocious than the storm through which Jesus and His disciples have just passed is this man who now meets them on the soil of Gadara. The spectacle was harassing and tragic in the extreme. Making his home in the eerie atmosphere of rock-hewn tombs, the crazed man was wild, restless, menacing, apparently insensitive and insensible to wounds that he himself inflicted upon his own body.

He enjoyed the sight of his own blood and moved from place to place shrieking and yelling to the menace of the entire populace. He rendered it unsafe for anybody to be out by day or by night especially alone and his energy according to the picture that we have before us was almost inexhaustible. It was certainly superhuman.

Now it's necessary for us to remember that though we know little about this phenomenon, though some of our missionaries fill in some blanks time and again and we learn a little at a time, but Scripture distinguishes between degrees of demon possession. Sometimes for example as in Mark chapter 1, the passage to which we've referred, the first instance of it in Mark's gospel, we encounter what we may speak of as the simplest form. A man possessed by a demon.

Later on here in Mark's gospel as well as in the other gospels we read at least of one person who was possessed by seven devils or seven demons. Then again we have a record in the gospels of a person who was possessed of a demon who was exorcised, who was cast out, but when he got out he decided

that it was best to return whence he had come and so he took with him seven other demons and went back. So you have a person possessed by eight demons and the end of that person's life was worse than the beginning.

But I'd like you to notice that in this case this is the extreme case in the New Testament. When Jesus asked this man his name the answer was, our name he says is legion for we are many. Now I don't know whether we are to take that literally because a legion of soldiers comprise 6,826 Roman soldiers.

I don't suppose it's necessary to take that literally but it certainly means this, that this man is inhabited and completely mastered, totally mastered, utterly overcome by a whole community of evil spirits so that he is a complete prisoner. Their influence therefore was overwhelming and irresistible. He was under total control.

Now in this condition it will be noticed that the man was tragically divided within himself. He appears here as a split personality, now speaking more or less as himself. You notice for example without my going into the details, he starts a sentence saying I, this, that and the other but halfway through the sentence he transfers to the we and the them.

In other words the poor man doesn't recognize himself from the demons that are in charge of him. On the one moment it's I myself, the next moment it's we and us and it simply means that this sad mental state is such that the poor man has no future even as his presence has been dark as hell. The next thing I want you to notice is the man's relation to society.

Look at verse 3. He lived we're told among the tombs and no one could bind him anymore even with a chain. Now that statement that no one could bind him anymore even with a chain is most revealing. You see society had tried to do something for the man as we've already indicated and what they had tried to do was the common thing done for men who were supposed to be evil demon possessed in those days, it's to bind them up.

The kind of thing that was normally done in this society was to have chains and chain their arms and chain their legs and chain their feet so that if they could move about and be a menace to the society well at least their motion was limited. Were it only because of the heavy weights they carried they were unable to cope and of course if their feet were properly chained they couldn't move around. There was no possibility of great mobility but in this case you notice that there is this superhuman, there is this tremendous power that the man had.

He had been bound with fetters and shackles but it snapped them all. I think there is a sad picture here. None of the chains the old time men had been able to bring about, none of the chains that they could bring about to try and change this man could stand before the superhuman power of the character here.

He snapped them all so that it was useless putting chains on this man. He just broke out. They could not bind him and then you notice this other word they could not tame him.

Now I don't pretend to understand everything implied there. In all probability this refers to the psychological methods employed by whatever those methods were. They tried to tame him as you would tame an animal to cool him down to persuade him to see a little bit of sense but of course the man was unpersuadable.

He could not be persuaded. He was beyond persuasion. He couldn't understand.

He was beside himself. They attempted to persuade him but to no avail. Thus out of sheer dismay and frustration society seems at last to have confined the man to an isolation unit.

Whether he chose it himself or whether they chose it for him I don't know. He was happy to be there anyway and the isolation unit is there in a cemetery overlooking the shore of the Sea of Galilee dwelling among the tomb. There in that eerie atmosphere he continued his shrieking and generally caused a nuisance of himself to the bewilderment of society at large.

And the next thing I want you to notice is the man and the Savior. When confronted by the Son of God this man's sickness expressed itself in a hypersensitivity. The one symptom of his peculiar condition is this.

He was super sensitive to the presence of deity. Look at verses 6 and 7. When he saw Jesus from afar not close at hand not near up when he saw Jesus from afar and Jesus had not been here before. When he saw Jesus from afar he ran and worshipped him and crying out with a loud voice he said what have you to do with me Jesus son of the most high God I adjure you by God do not torment me.

This is most staggering is it not? When men were stubbornly unyielding to the claims of our Lord Jesus Christ despite the ever accumulating testimony to his deity and to his grace and power this demoniac of Gadara was uncannily aware of the truth that he was the Son of God and had the capacity to torment him. And what is more he was willing to offer the Lord Jesus instinctively almost a kind of obeisance. Some of the translations refer to it as worship.

Well what kind of worship it was I'm not sure but he was certainly willing to bow down and to acknowledge that Jesus was far far greater than himself he calls him even the Son of God. He singled Jesus out from the disciples. Mark that.

He singled him out and called him the Son of God. So also of course did the other demoniac in the synagogue in chapter one. But it was an unbearably distressing sensitivity that he shows because he confesses that Jesus is a torment to him.

Permit me to ask a question at this point. Is there someone here this morning to whom the name Jesus is a torment? You say that's a strange question. It's not strange at all.

Another member of staff and I had a very excruciating experience in my office not all that long ago when in mentioning the name of Jesus there was someone there who was choking physically choking unable to mention the name of Jesus. Jesus was an enemy. Jesus was threatening because this person was so much in the grip of demonic power.

You torment me says this poor character. You torment me. Your presence is such it's a torment to me.

Jesus comes to save but if you're in the grip of his enemy he may be a torment to you as you go through the process of being extricated by him. The man and his tragedy. I haven't said everything but I think that's enough.

Now let's turn to the divine physician and his treatment. How does Jesus face this? What does he got to do? What can he do? Well you notice the first thing that Jesus does is to ask the man's name. Verse 9. Jesus asked him what's your name? Was it that Jesus was ignorant of his name? Well it may have been but I don't think it was that.

I suggest to you that there was a reason why Jesus asked this man his name. I think he was so psychologically aware of the need and of the problem that he this is exactly what he chose to do was the first act towards healing and releasing the man. What's your name? He said well the man answered my name is legion for we are many.

Why did Jesus ask him this question? Well I think it's for this reason. Our Lord wanted him to become conscious of the reality of his condition. Our Lord wanted him at this pregnant moment when Jesus comes to deliver him our Lord wanted him to be so aware of his condition so conscious of the reality of the evil powers that had invaded his soul that Jesus could as it were enlist the man's own will over against the demons that were possessing him.

And what Jesus wanted to do was to heighten his consciousness his awarenessness of the reality of what has taken place in his life and he does that precisely. The question elicits the very answer that Jesus wanted. Yes he says my name is legion for we are many.

In other words the man was aware of it all. He'd forgotten his own personal name and could only think of himself in terms of a man submerged in a wilderness of demons overcome by these awful powers. Our name is legion.

Now look at our Lord's sovereign compulsion and yet his gracious concession. It seems that as Jesus was facing the man Jesus was already repeating something. In the new international version verse 8 goes like this.

Jesus was saying to him come out of this man you evil spirit. Jesus was repeating something and this is significant. Here is the son of God.

He's seeing the man coming. He hasn't eased right up yet. They're shouting at each other.

The man was yelling. Jesus answers back. They're not face to face yet.

They're not close at hand but as the man came Jesus recognized the situation and asked for his name and as he got the name he was saying evil spirit come out of him. Evil spirit come out of him. Having elicited the man's self-awareness to some extent by asking his name our Lord now seems to have in some measure summoned the man to take sides against the invaders of his soul.

This in turn of course results in the demons becoming sensitive to the imminence of their enforced exodus or exorcism and in their recognition of Jesus' capacity to dethrone them and to expel them and get rid of them. They now in turn mark the masters who possessed the man addressed Jesus and say look don't send us out of the country. Don't do this that and the other with us but instead let us go into the swine that were there in the background.

Now again we're out of our depth. Our knowledge limits our capacity even to comment with assurance. Suffice it therefore suffice it to say that for some reason unknown to us Jesus granted permission to these savage demonic powers to enter that herd of swine and this they did with the result that the whole herd became uncontrollable.

Pigs have little sense at the best of times but these certainly had little sense and they were over the precipice into the sea and they were drowned. Now if you ask me to hazard a guess why Jesus allowed this I will tell you what I think but it's only my thought. This is not said in scripture and you need to

distinguish between the preacher's comment or view and what scripture says.

My belief is of course that Jesus wanted to persuade this man that he was really dealing with the realities of the situation. The man was possessed by this legion of demons and Jesus wants to prove to him that the demons are not only going to come out but that they're going away once for all and forever. How can he do that? How can he prove to the man that the demons you can't see a demon you can't touch a demon.

How can Jesus prove to the man that these demons are coming out and they're going to leave him? You see Jesus' concern for man is supreme. He wanted to save the man. He had compassion for the man and a thousand pigs are not the value of one man.

So what Jesus does was this he grants their permission and he tells the demons right he says okay go and they make their exit from the man and they enter the pigs. Well surely the pigs will go on grazing. They're insensitive to these things.

Surely demons can't control pigs. Don't you think, don't you believe it. The moment the demons entered into these pigs they began to dance with a frenzy and over the cliff they go and into the sea they go and they're drowned.

Two things the man learned the mighty power of the demons that had possessed him and the fact that they've come out of him and gone into the swine and been submerged in the sea. You see part of the glory of the gospel and of our Lord Jesus as a teacher and a healer is this. He can communicate with people in a language they can understand.

He didn't, they didn't, this man didn't speak our psychological language. I'm not sure that many of us do anyway. Medical terminology is beyond us but you see our Lord was communicating with a man in his day and in his age and he wanted to assure the man that he was going to deal with this problem and he does so in a manner that speaks to the man.

Now turn with me for a moment to society and its reaction. The news spread like lightning. The herdsmen, the rest of their herd scattered posthaste to the city and some to the surrounding neighborhood and they said exactly what had happened.

What had happened to this man that everybody knew and what had happened to the herd of 200 swine. In no time therefore a crowd of anxiously inquisitive people gathered and tried to assess the significance of it all. Look at the spectacle that greeted them.

Verse 15 and they came to Jesus and they saw the demoniac sitting, sitting there clothed and in his right mind the man who had had the legion and they were afraid. The identity of the man you see was undeniable. They all knew him.

There was no question about that. So that the reality of the miracle was equally evident. It was beyond dispute.

He had plagued their countryside long enough to be known alike by his features and by his foul fearsome shrieks and behavior. Everybody knew the man. There was no question of a wrong identity here.

Some of them had even been involved in binding him with chains and I'm sure they'd watched to see whether he would break them. They knew him all right. They recognized him all right but recognition was one thing.

There was a challenging difference about the man they recognized. The diabolical frenzy that drove him on his errands of hate and self-immolation had gone. There he was sitting, sitting.

You know there's a miracle behind that simple statement. He was sitting down, he was sitting down and he was clothed. This man roamed in his nakedness over the countryside.

He was clothed and he was in his right mind. There are signs of sanity and real humanity re-emerging. This is something big and this is something challenging.

So big that they really are afraid. Do notice. Don't miss this.

You see the gospels are portraying Jesus Christ. These are but incidents. Don't let's get so involved with the incidents that we don't see the savior who's responsible.

The storm on the little sea began as a great storm, ended with a great peace. There had been an equal storm within the soul and within the heart and spirit of this man but it ended with an equal peace. I don't apologize but I have to say hallelujah there.

You see our Lord Jesus Christ cannot simply, does not simply control the forces of nature. He is lord of nature on the outside, outside nature but he is also lord of the soul and the heart and the mind and the intellect and the emotions of men and he can bring peace within even as he can bring peace without. He can bring calm and tranquility into the heart in turmoil.

It's a beautiful picture. The spectacle which greeted them, the emotions they felt. Look at verses 15 and 16.

And they were afraid and those who had seen it told what had happened to the demoniac and to the swine. Gazing at that incomparable testimony to our Lord's compassion and power the crowd sensed the awesome wonder of it all. With the demons expelled from his soul the man's shrieks had not only abated but his sanity was beginning to return and his sense of propriety and he was normal again.

And this meant you see that the one responsible is someone out of this world. The demons had called him the son of God. I'm not so sure that they were prepared to go that far.

Perhaps their background and their knowledge was was not adequate to let them go that far but here they acknowledge him as someone big and great and they're afraid of him. You see he had healed the man all right but what about the swine? What about the swine? And then the folk give them an explanation of what had happened to the swine. The man was healed all right but 2,000 swine were lost and so all turned to fear.

The healer could evidently deal with the moral and the social problems of Gadara but it was at the expense of their pigs and their swine and if that is the case then what are they going to do? If it's a question of having Jesus and society healed at the loss at the expense of their swine then what? Look at the request they made. It's unbelievable isn't it? It's unbelievable but this is it. Read the story verse 17.

And they began to beg Jesus to depart from their neighborhood. Their insane assessment of things led them to plead repeatedly and ardently that the benefactor and author of such healing leave their territory rather than endanger their property. In other words they'd rather have the demon possessed shrieking and tearing himself to pieces and causing a nuisance to their society.

They'd rather have that than lose their business. My friends I find this challenging because I'm not so sure the 20th century Toronto is any different from Gadara. If it's a question of Jesus Christ and his healing and his saving power on the one hand or opulence on the other which one will we choose? I'll be honest if he threatens our pig trade some people say it was illicit that that Jews were responsible for it anyway.

Well I don't know I'm not so sure because Decapolis was filled with gentiles. The area around was a gentile area largely predominantly so we can't say that. But the question remains my friend the question remains would we have done any differently? Someone has put this in terms of a poem I don't know whether you've heard it and they put the whole sad episode in these words.

Rabbi be gone thy powers bring loss to us and ours our ways are not as thine thou lovest men we swine oh get you hence omnipotence and take this fool of thine his soul what care we for his soul what good to us that thou hast made him whole since we have lost our swine and then the application in the second last stanza and Christ went sadly he had wrought for them a sign of love and hope and tenderness divine they wanted swine Christ stands without your door and gently knocks but if your gold or swine the entrance blocks he forces no man's hold he will depart and leave you with the treasure of your heart and whatever it is that occupies the place of swine in our society in our individual lives the sad thing is my friend that our lord Jesus will not so press himself upon you but will leave you to the swine or the gold or the glitter that your heart prefers to him.

One last word the savior and the liberated man I must say this because it's so precious and so true the populace persuaded the healer to leave their land they can't have him it costs too much they're going to lose their swine and it's too dangerous so he's about to leave now the liberated man begged Jesus if he's leaving to let him accompany him.

Verse 18 as he was getting into the boat that is Jesus the man who had been possessed with demons begged him that he might be with him now have you got the picture here is the division of any society and it's the division of people in Knox this morning perhaps here are the multitude of people who are afraid they're going to lose their pig trade and they want to get rid of the savior it costs too much to have him near but here is this man who's been healed by him and it's a matter of heart rending to him that all his fellows of want to get rid of the one that has healed him and saved him and made a man of him again and so he says to Jesus Jesus he says if you must go let me come with you I don't want to be severed from you anymore you've bound yourself to me by your grace and your love and

I want to come with you and he goes down to the boat and he almost puts his foot in the boat and says let me come with you you see henceforth the healed man the man who's received the grace of God in Jesus Christ belongs to Jesus Christ and desires him and desires him there's no such thing as receiving the grace of God and not desiring to be with Jesus Christ now I think that is one of the most challenging statements of the scriptures I'm not quoting scripture but I'm quoting a scriptural fact if you talk about salvation and about being born again and about a Christian experience whatever it is and you don't desire Jesus to be with him and he with you I say to you that experience is questionable no man will go to heaven who doesn't want to go to heaven whose heart is not in heaven who's

not being caught up with Jesus and who loves him you see and this is this is the test this is the hallmark of real Christian experience you want Jesus you want the father you want the spirit you want the saints of course and if you don't there's something wrong this man wanted to be with Jesus because what Jesus did was such as to bind him to himself and Jesus said no now this must have been a little bit of a surprise and a little bit of a shock to the man but Jesus says no no no no he says I got something better for you something better for me what can I do what can I do you're the only friend I've ever met you're the only one that's ever helped me what what can I do says Jesus he refused and he said to him go home to your friends tell them how much the Lord has done for you and how he

has had mercy on you says Jesus they want to get rid of me all right you belong so you in turn be the missionary here be my representative be on view for men and women to see what I did for you and tell them tell them who did it give them my name and address tell them where I came from speak about me show forth my power and my grace and my love and tell them I am the son of God tell them who I am and he did and we read that he went about the entire community of Decapolis which means ten cities I don't know how he did it I can't tell you how words he used I just don't know and I don't want to know but I know he did it and it must have meant a little grace and a little grit and a little perseverance to move from city to city and show himself and present himself as the man that was so

utterly possessed but is now set free he sets the prisoner free is there someone here in chains today if the son shall make you free you shall be free indeed can you see the portrait of the Lord Jesus that is emerging he's the Lord of demons as well as the Lord of the storm and the sea and the ocean he can heal them physically sick he can deal with a mentally deranged he can forgive sins can you see the picture that is emerging in this gospel that's the picture I want to leave with you one who is adequate one who is such that he can deal with your needs and mine and having him we have all is he yours is there someone here today to whom Jesus is but a man my friend I commend him to you you cannot be other than persuaded of his deity and saving grace and power as you read these words

honestly I commend him to you as portrayed in the gospel of mark and I ask you if you've never done it before invite him invite him to live in your heart by his spirit and to be master of your life by his word do that now make it a decisive act of personal faith and personal trust and surrender that this day shall be to you the beginning of days you've never known the beginning before let us pray almighty God we thank you for sending forth your co-equal son into this world of ours and there he was clad in a body like ours we thank you that he manifest himself to be the son of the living God competent to deal with all our problems even to bear away our sins and to snap the bonds of death at last and of Satan spirit of God lead each one of us into a living personal knowledge of the savior

the emancipator and redeemer let us not be content with seeing the description of what he is capable of doing and reading it and enjoying it and even in a sense appreciating it oh may he be ours in all the length and breadth and depth and height of his grace and in all the adequacy of his mercy we ask it in his holy name amen

Audio: <https://sermonindex1.b-cdn.net/26/SID26530.mp3>

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/j-glyn-owen/mark-he-sets-the-prisoner-free/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net