

A KINGDOM OF COMPLETE MAKE-OVERS

SERIES:

Stories for the Heart – a closer look at the words and works of Jesus

16 February 2025 – Scottsville Community Church, 9 am

READING: Mark 5: 1-20 (Jesus heals a man with a demon) – (**WORKS**)



SERMON OUTLINE

- The portrait of a Satan-defeated man
- An encounter with Jesus
- The reaction of the observers

INTRODUCTION

My first year **Zoology professor** at Rhodes University told a story about a student who survived on a **mince meat diet**. He says this student ended up **'reporting weather in a planet that has yet to be discovered'**. It's been many years since the story was told and so I no longer remember how it is related to his lectures on invertebrates. As an African, I still wonder why a **protein-rich diet** would lead to a mental health problem. I therefore conclude that his story must have been **imaginary**.

At Natal University (Pietermaritzburg campus), **Professor Lindegger, in a Psychology 303** class, Abnormal Psychology, told another story. This was about a student who had an **unconventional strategy for bringing back to memory** things he had forgotten. This student would try as best as he could to **physically retrace his steps**. This would mean going back to digs. Get inside the bed. Wake up. Make up his bed again. God take a shower for a second time. Eat breakfast again. He would do the same for every activity leading to the time where the need to retrieve something from memory surfaced. This was **a true story about a person's lived experiences**. But it was a story of a person who was **largely functional except for this unusual condition**.

Today's story, from Mark 5:1-20, is different. **It is neither imaginary nor a mild condition of an otherwise functional person**. Mark is concerned with **what Jesus did**. He is especially concerned about demonstrating **his divinity/deity**, that Jesus was God.

SYNOPSIS

- Jesus and his disciples find themselves on the land of **Gennesaret (Gadara)**.
- They immediately meet a **demon-possessed** man.
- The man has been a **menace to the community** for his violence and self-destructive habits.
- Jesus **casts out the demons**.
- The man is **restored**.
- Jesus sends the man **back to his gentile community** to tell others about God's mercy.
- **But the community** is not happy that Jesus has done these things.

Let's now take a closer look at this story.

	What the 1 st century audience saw and heard	What we must see and hear in 2025
Oppression described	Mark Dever (The Message of the New Testament) notes that Mark, in this story, provides far more details than Luke (8:27-28) and Matthew (8:28-29). 'You can almost feel the vigorous, impetuous Peter recounting this story to Mark', says Mark Dever. MATTHEW: • Mentions 'TWO men coming out of the tombs' • 'So fierce that no one could pass that way' • They cried out to the 'Son of God', 'have you come to torment us before the time?' LUKE: • 'a man from the city who had demons' • 'for a long time he had won no clothes, • 'he had not lived in a house but among tombs' • To the Son of Most High God, he said with a loud voice, 'I beg you, do not torment me' • 'the evil spirit often seized him' • 'was kept under guard and bound with chains...driven by a demon to the desert'' MARK: <i>Zooms in on the 'talking man':</i> • 'out of the tombs a man with an unclean spirit' (v2) • He lived among the tombs (v3). • 'no one could bind him anymore...wrenched the chains apart...broke the shackles in pieces' (v4) • 'night and day among the tombs...crying out and cutting himself with stones' (v5) • 'Legion...for we are many' (v9) • 'What have you to do with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God' (v6). I adjure you by God, 'do not torment me' (v6) Demon-possession or 'me-time' or 'bad-hair day'? • He was ease with the uncleanness (tombs for Jews!), pain and strangeness of death. • He was at war with himself: no clothes, cutting himself, breaking chains/shackles. • The demons spoke through his mouth. • He was a community threat. • His condition had persisted for many years.	Surely such images of demonic oppression are scarce today... <i>The opposite is true!</i> • Unending wars in Africa that keep the continent in self-inflicted poverty. • Rape of children in South Africa. • Chronic and deep hatred and strife in families. • Alcohol and drug abuse • Enduring poor judgement in choosing partners • 2 examples from schools owned by JSE-listed companies. [These are managing directors. They are people who know how to break the chains and fetters of outward constraints. Both MD's hold master's degrees. The turnover in both companies runs into billions. But both do not know freedom. It makes sense why Jesus had 'go over to the other side'. The kingdom has to advance, there are oppressed people everywhere. Satan must be dethroned from people, families, systems etc. The storm was necessary to prepare them for ministry in the country of Gadara... and so are your storms AND 'promotions'... These are tools Jesus employs to win people into his kingdom and to set them free!

An encounter with Jesus	THE EXORCISM: Mark 5:8 - 'come out of the man, you unclean spirit! Luke 8:29 – 'For he had commanded the unclean spirit to come out of the man'. ✓ The exorcism was an effortless process accomplished by the words of Jesus. ✓ These evil forces are powerful against mortals but not against Jesus' authoritative words. Mark 5:12-13 - 'send us to the pigs...he gave them permission... 'and were drowned in the sea' Luke 8:31 – 'begged him not to command them to depart into the abyss'... Warren Wiersbe: Demons believe that Jesus answers prayer, Jesus will come to judge, that he is the Son of the Most High God, and have faith (James 2:19) Pigs: ✓ a graphic illustration of ugliness of demons and the authority of Jesus' word ✓ To convince sceptics THE EFFECT: 'sitting there, clothed, and in his right mind...' (v15) • From restlessness to 'sitting' • From nakedness to being 'clothed' • From insanity to being 'in his right mind' • From 'no one could pass that way' to 'people went out to see what had happened' (Luke 8:35) 'he begged Jesus that he might be with him' (v18) 'go home to your friends and tell them how much the Lord has done for you...mercy on you...Decapolis' (v19-20) • Jesus has turned his life around for he now longs for his presence, and to be his disciple, and his servant. Once he was alone in the tombs, now he wants to be one with others. • His offer is not accepted. His fellow gentiles need to hear the good news of Jesus Christ. Jesus would not allow his to duplicate an existing ministry when there are areas where his fame has not been proclaimed...especially in among his friends.	Jesus cast out demons in several contexts: Luke 11:14 – a mute demon and the a person spoke Mark 9:25 - 'you deaf and mute spirit...'. He was even accused of casting out demons by Beelzebul (ruler of demons)! In all instances, he spoke a word and people were set free. Jesus is not here today in physical form. But we have his word, the Bible. As such, the ministry of exorcism continues through the proclamation of God's word, not slow jam songs or laying on off hands...but the word. Psalms 29:5 – 'The voice of the Lord breaks the cedars; the Lord breaks in pieces the cedars of Lebanon' Hebrews 4:12 – 'For the word of God is alive and powerful. It is sharper than the sharpest two-edged sword, cutting between soul and spirit, between joint and marrow. It exposes our innermost thoughts and desires.' DSM-V: Major depression caused by neurotransmitter imbalances. Probably correct. But the selfish manifestations of depression will be dealt with by an ongoing, intentional exposure to God's word. The demoniac conversed with Jesus before his exorcism. People are never too depressed to obey God's word.
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The reaction of the observers	‘the herdsmen fled...city and country’ (v14) Mark 5:14 ‘people came to see what it was that had happened’ Mark 5:16 ‘And those who had seen it described to them what had happened to the demon-possessed man AND the pigs’ Mark 5:17 ‘And they began to beg Jesus to depart from their region’ Legion (about 6 000 Roman soldiers) All demons entered the pigs. All pigs drowned. 2000 pigs: • These were Gentiles. • A commercial enterprise? • Hence, the reaction of the owners? The demons and of the residents make the same request: Demons: Luke 8:31 (abyss) Mark 5:9 (not out of country) Residents: Jesus must depart from the region (v17). Jesus honours the request of both: ‘As Jesus was getting into the boat...’ Mark 5:18	The one set free from satanic forces beg Jesus to be one of his disciples. He wants to be with him. Those whose pigs had drowned beg Jesus to leave. The pigs (& livelihood) is of more value to them that a life has been ‘brought back from the dead’. Could it be that some forms of satanic oppression only manifest in the form of ideas? THE NHI problem in SA: Is the government care for the masses without medical aid genuine? Is the private sector innocent? Ritalin and Antidepressants: Are all these small children sick? Are doctors creating more business for themselves? Did you notice that demons did not want to leave the region? What can we say about perennial tension between countries in Africa?
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CONCLUSION

Has God taken you to the 'other side': setbacks or fortunes? Interrogate your relationship with your setbacks or fortunes. Are they serving God's purpose? **What do you see there?** Have you become **obsessed with how your setbacks** have affected you? Has your **fortunes released an evangelist** in you to make known the powers of the kingdom of God?

Interrogate your relationship with medicine. Not every illness need antibiotics and paracetamol. **The Balm of Gilead still heals.** The immune systems, just like the wind and the waves, obeys him!

Jesus doesn't apply the 'spit and soil' method that he used to open blind eyes. He speaks a word and the demons flee. **Interrogate your relationship with God's word. Does the word of God have a say in all the aspects of your life?** Is it setting you free, **practically?**

Interrogate your relationship with your family. Why does Jesus not send this man to his family, but **'to his friends'**? Is your relationship the one that enables life? **The kingdom of Jesus is a family.**

NEXT SUNDAY: The Kingdom interacts with what we would call **a 'clever black'**. **And the kingdom advances.**

Amen.