

Deliverance From Darkness

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Deliverance

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This morning, I want to encourage you to open your Bibles to two very specific places within the New Testament, primarily we're going to be in the gospel of Mark, the second book of your New Testament, chapter 5, but in a few moments we're also going to find ourselves in the gospel of John 3 just for a brief moment, but the majority of today is going to be in Mark 5 and if you're new to us, maybe you're a guest or a visitor, or maybe you haven't had the privilege of being with us in some time, I want to welcome you to a journey through the gospel of Mark. Now the gospel of Mark, much like Matthew, Luke and John, tells us a story of the life, the death, the eventual resurrection and even the Second Coming of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, but the gospel of Mark has, as you would probably be willing to admit having been so for some weeks now, it just kind of has a different feel. It's the shortest of all the four gospels yet at the same time it probably has the most action of all of the gospels, over 60 times there is this phrase "and immediately," and one of the things that we've noticed is that in other gospel accounts where maybe half a chapter or maybe 10-15 verses are utilized to tell a story, sometimes in the gospel of Mark just two or three verses will "suffice." Today as we turn to Mark 5, this may be one of the most action packed chapters in all of the Bible.

It begins with the story of a demoniac who's delivered in the Gadarenes. Shortly thereafter, we discover a woman who has an issue of blood that for 12 years she spent all of her money, she went to every doctor, she could not be healed until she touched the hem of Jesus' garment, and it ends with a man by the name of Jairus who has a daughter that has passed away and even though the community mocks and makes fun of him, Jesus brings her back from the dead. Today, we're going to spend our time in the first 20 verses. It's probably the story of all three that you least identify with. We understand what it's like to go through prolonged time periods of pain and suffering and have the Lord show up in only the way that he can, we understand what it looks like for the Lord to get us through some of those dark moments of life, even experiencing the death of a loved one, but today this man who is possessed, oppressed with a legion of demons, who is out of control and nobody can seem to get ahold of. Today, we're going to continue our thoughts with deliverance. It's one of those words that simply just means to be set free, to have the shackles removed from one's self, to be taken from one place to another, and if there was anybody who needed deliverance in the gospel of Mark, it is this guy. He is in a bad place, in fact, today we might say he is in a very dark place.

Mark 5, beginning in verse 1. It says,

1 And they came over unto the other side of the sea, into the country of the Gadarenes. 2 And when he was come out of the ship, immediately there met him out of the tombs a man with an unclean spirit, 3 Who had his dwelling among the tombs; and no man could bind him, no, not with chains: 4 Because that he had been often bound with fetters and chains, and the chains had been plucked asunder by him, and the fetters broken in pieces: neither could any man tame him. 5 And always, night and day, he was in the mountains, and in the tombs, crying, and cutting himself with stones. 6 But when he saw Jesus afar off, he ran and worshipped him, 7 And cried with a loud voice, and said, What have I to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of the most high God? I adjure thee by God, that thou torment me not. 8 For he said unto him, Come out of the man, thou unclean spirit. 9 And he asked him, What is thy name? And he answered, saying, My name is Legion: for we are many. 10 And he besought him much that he would not send them away out of the country. 11 Now there was there nigh unto the mountains a great herd of swine feeding. 12 And all the devils besought him, saying, Send us into the swine, that we may enter into them. 13 And forthwith Jesus gave them leave. And the unclean spirits went out, and entered into the swine: and the herd ran violently down a steep place into the sea, (they were about two thousand;) and were choked in the sea. 14 And they that fed the swine fled, and told it in the city, and in the country. And they went out to see what it was that was done. 15 And they come to Jesus, and see him that was possessed with the devil, and had the legion, sitting, and clothed, and in his right mind: and they were afraid. 16 And they that saw it told them how it befell to him that was possessed with the devil, and also concerning the swine. 17 And they began to pray him to depart out of their coasts. 18 And when he was come into the ship, he that had been possessed with the devil prayed him that he might be with him. 19 Howbeit Jesus suffered him not, but saith unto him, Go home to thy friends, and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee, and hath had compassion on thee. 20 And he departed, and began to publish in Decapolis how great things Jesus had done for him: and all men did marvel.

Now we read this story and it's one of those stories that we know it's there in scripture, it's very dramatic in its nature but most of us, for the most part, have a really tough time relating to this story and so I want to begin today with some clarification. In just a moment, we are going to address some of the aspects of who this man was, the behavior that he exhibited, the mentality that he had, and I want to clarify something, today as we talk about those subjects, please understand that just because maybe you or somebody you know or you love struggles with some of these same issues, it is not definitively saying that they are "demon possessed or demon oppressed." But on the same hand, can we also acknowledge from the very beginning, can we clarify that the demonic does

exist? The forces of darkness are real and one of the biggest issues that we have in our culture today is that we want to say that everything is physical, everything is tangible, everything if we cannot touch it, taste it, or smell it, then it's not real. So just as a point of clarification, understand that if you or somebody you know or love is struggling in some of these areas, please do not think necessarily that there is demonic possession and/or oppression but at the same time can we admit it does exist and it does impact people's lives?

The most important clarification is that this young man who was suffering in such darkness, who was struggling with all that was happening, he didn't even realize it was happening? In fact, I want you to turn to verse 6 and I want you to see how the story plays out. It says but "when he saw Jesus afar off, he ran and he worshiped him, he cried with a loud voice and he said, What have I to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of the most high God? I adjure thee by God, torment me not." Listen to verse 8, "For he said unto him, Come out of the man, thou unclean spirit. And he asked him, What is thy name?" You see, when you read the story at first glance, when you get to verse 6 it looks like Jesus comes out of the ship, shows up on the shore, and this man runs to him begging and pleading for some type of mercy regarding his situation but look at verse 8, "For he said unto him." In other words, the chronology of the story is that Jesus shows up, he calls it out for what it is, and then the man responds.

Why does that need such clarification this morning? Because oftentimes when we struggle with the darkness, when we're dealing with oppression, whatever it may be, we may not even realize it's happening. In fact, a dear friend of mine has a great statement, he says when your life is not in control, that means something else is in control. This man, the words that are spoken were not his words, it was that that was within him and so if you'll allow me to kind of summarize the clarification here, I'm not saying that all of our struggles are necessarily demonic though the demonic exists, the thing I want you to hear is this: oftentimes as we're walking through what we might call darkness, we're oblivious to it, we don't even know it's occurring. Which is why the next aspect of this message is so important and I want to make some comparisons. I want to see how this man's life looked and then I want to compare it to our society, and then I want you to compare it to your own life because if there are markers, if there are aspects of his life in your life or in our culture's life, then they must be addressed in the same manner.

Before we look at him specifically, turn to John 3 for just a moment. John 3. It's a very famous account in scripture because of verse 16, but primarily because you have a man by the name of Nicodemus and Jesus who in the evening one night are having a theological conversation. Nicodemus who Jesus calls a master of Israel, a title reserved for nobody else from his lips, questions how can he know about eternity. Jesus says, "You must be born again." He has difficulty comprehending that, then obviously verse 16 comes into play, "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." I want you to fast forward to verse 19. Verse 19 is a part of the same message that Jesus gives Nicodemus in that famous verse 16. It says, "And this is the condemnation, that light is

come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil."

So when we talk about this comparison, when we look at his life and we compare it to what we see out in the world, when we even compare it to our own lives, understand that the Bible described this man's life as darkness. What is darkness? It is the absence of light. Even a simple dictionary definition will communicate that and Jesus in John 8:12 is described as the light of the world. So why is it that we would "desire darkness"? Why is it that we would want to have a life that is even remotely comparable to this guy? We just read it, because deep down in our flesh we desire the things of this world and our deeds are, as according to John 3:19, they are evil.

So let's compare. What are some of the aspects of this man's life? How do they compare to our culture and society today? And more importantly, how might they compare to your own lives? Well, the first quality I want you to recognize is found there in verse 3 back in Mark 5. He says he had his dwelling among the tombs. In fact, twice in this passage it makes it very clear to communicate that this guy made his dwelling place a cemetery. He was more comfortable surrounded by death than he was by life. Now let me unpack that for just a moment because you and I are entering one of my personal and most uncomfortable seasons of the year. For the next two weeks, what we will see happening in our world, in our culture is really, it just goes against my grain and every aspect of it. Why? Because it's a culture that will begin to celebrate death, pain, agony, violence. Even this week another sequel to another famous horror movie has come out and it netted millions of dollars at the box office. We have a culture today that profits off a culture of death. This is ironic because over the last 18 months do you know what we've been told? At all costs, take care and maintain life but yet we make millions off of movies that promoted death, we have songs that make it to number 1 that talk about killing people, and don't get me started on the video games. We have an entire culture that profits, makes a living and promotes death. We've become a culture that is more comfortable in an environment of death than it is life.

Here this man made his dwelling among the tombs and think about how much of our culture is saturated not just with the things of this particular season but it's continuous of all seasons. A second thing I want you to notice about him, notice it says he had an issue controlling himself. Look at verse 3, no man could bind him, no, not with chains. And then it goes on to talk about that they tried and nothing availed, nothing worked, nothing helped. I don't think it's just myself today who recognizes that within our culture and our world today, humanity's disposition, the way that we handle ourselves is becoming more and more out of control. How many more videos do we need to see of an individual laying on the ground with eight law enforcement officers and he's able to throw them all off? Now I know what you're thinking, "Oh, it's because he ingested an illegal substance," and I get all that but you understand that when you're 150 pounds and you start throwing people who weigh twice your weight with one arm, there's something supernatural that is happening there.

They couldn't control him and yet we live in a culture today that thinks the more out of control we are – hear me – the more medicine we need to ingest. Think about that for just a moment. Out of control, cannot be handled consistently. I'm going to tell you the culture we've created, it's a culture of lawlessness. I know what you're thinking, "Well, those are rare occasions we see some of those acts of violence," but do you know what's kind of been the mantra of our culture as of late? I'm going to speak Southernese, "You're not gonna tell me what to do." That's exactly what's happened in our world. It doesn't matter who makes the law, it doesn't matter what the regulations are, we've simply stated as a society, "I'm gonna do whatever I want and no man is gonna bind me." Isn't that interesting? It may not be as flamboyant as this man's story but it's pretty comparable, is it not?

And lastly, this may not be described in the front part of the story but we see it in the second half very clearly, does it strike you odd his appearance? Now he's running around the cemetery, nobody can control him, he's completely out of control, no man can bind him, he's shouting, he's screaming, the Bible even says he's cutting himself. Notice his attire. It's comparable to the last statement that's made about him: he's naked, he has no clothes on. He's running around just in his what we might call birthday suit. Why is this important? It's not just the fact of a culture of death, it's not just the fact that he was uncontrollable in his actions, his behaviors, and his words, the worst part about it was he didn't have any shame.

You say, "What do you mean, shame?" I want you to think back to Genesis 3. The garden of Eden, everything appears to be going okay until Adam and Eve fall into the transgression. Do you remember what the Bible says the first thing they said or thought when they realized what happened? They realized they were, what? Naked. What did they try to do? Cover themselves. What did the Lord do in verse 21? Before he sent them out of the garden, he made sure that they were covered because our sin should be shameful and yet we've become a culture who wants to display in every methodology known to man. But I'm going to get literal for just a moment. Some of you may think I'm going to meddling, I call it Bible preaching. Here we go. It's not just this man running around naked, it's half the people at college football games today. I can't believe what we "won't wear" in public. Now this isn't just about the ladies. Guys, y'all are just as guilty. I've walked through the department stores and clothing today out to be called band-aids. In fact, I've come up with a statement our men's ministry knows about it, I have trademarked it. If you hear this from anybody else, they got it from me. We need to have a culture that covers the crease. Just let that settle in a moment. If your body has a crease, it needs to be covered. And guys, that goes for you too. You know, typically this issue we like to pick on the ladies but I'm shocked at what I'll see some guys running around in.

What happened? When this man was running around doing all that he was doing, he was just in what we might call his birthday suit. There was no shame at all. What are we seeing in our culture today? There's no shame. We just put it out there for everybody to see. So think about that, we've become a culture that craves an environment of death more than life, we've become a culture who is more interested in how you cannot control them more than abiding by what is in place, and we've become a culture that says it is

actually more important to show everything than cover anything. In other words, his problems aren't as far off as our problems, are they? And it's easy to throw the proverbial rock at the stained glass of those "out there" but let that rock bounce back for just a moment. Are there any of these areas that you just turn a blind eye to? Are there any of these areas that you see and witness and observe and it doesn't seem to bother you?

So let's flip the proverbial script here. Let's look at how there's a contrast. I want you to go to verse 15. This is the key verse to the entire passage. It says, "And they come," now who are "they"? They are the people who owned the swine. They are the ones who were making money off his darkness. You do understand the reason our world promotes darkness is because it makes a whole lot of money. "And they come to Jesus, and see him that was possessed with the devil, and had the legion, sitting, and clothed, and in his right mind: and they were afraid." Now let's think about this man's disposition for a moment. For years he's been in the tombs, not wearing a stitch of clothing, yelling, screaming, cussing, cutting, nobody could control him and all of a sudden he's seated, fully dressed, and in his right mind. In fact, at the end of the story he talks with Jesus, where in the beginning of the story, it's the Legion talking with Jesus. Isn't that interesting that on the backside of the story he's able to process properly, he's in his right mind.

Now we see this on a regular basis, you observe it when you'll hear people make different statements and you say, "How can they think that way? How can they process that way? That doesn't even make sense." You're absolutely right, it doesn't. Being in your right mind means $2 + 2 = 4$, not what you want it or feel like it should be. In your right mind is observing what truth is, calling out what error is, and not "getting confused by emotions, feelings or the latest fad."

He was in his right mind and he was clothed, what that means, it's more than just "wardrobe," it means that he understood his shameful sinful condition and he was seated. Isn't that interesting? Not a single prescription was dispensed, not a single moment of time was "spent in therapy," and all of a sudden everything is gone. He's seated, he's clothed, in his right mind. Can I share with you the one thing that happened? He met Jesus. Why is that so important? Because we live in a world today that no matter what kind of darkness you're walking through, no matter what kind of issues you're struggling with, no matter what's happening around you, the world says do anything but Jesus, and yet Jesus is the only one who can fix this mess. Jesus is the only one who can drive out the darkness because last time I checked, if you've got a dark room, the only way to light it up is with a light and Jesus said, "I am the light of the world."

So today the darkness continues to perpetuate itself, it continues to prosper because we just read men love their evil deeds, they love darkness, it profits them, it prospers them. The only thing that will "cure the darkness" is Jesus. So let's look at the consequences. What happens in your own life, what happened in this man's life, what happens in our "culture" if we actually, excuse the pun, swallow the Jesus pill? What if we said, "Do you know what? We're tired of all these man-made contraptions, we're just going to do it God's way. We're going to call it for what it is according to the Bible and deal with it according to the Bible." What will happen? What are the consequences? Two things.

Number 1, go to verse 17, "they began to pray him to depart out of their coasts." You will be rejected which is why most people never do. That's how the world responded to Jesus fixing the problem, they begged him, "Get out of here!" Why? Because he messed up their prosperity, messed up their position. We see the same thing in the book of Acts. The Apostle Paul comes in and starts preaching, people start coming to Jesus and all of a sudden they're not buying idols anymore. Can I put that in today's language? All of a sudden they're not going to those movies anymore, all of a sudden they're not buying those video games anymore, all of a sudden they're not downloading that music anymore, and they're not buying those excuse for clothes anymore. Oh, it hurts the economy, doesn't it? It hurts everything from a "financial prosperous means."

They begged him, "Please leave here." You see, that happens personally, it happens corporately. Anytime we call upon Jesus to be the solution for whatever we're struggling with, the world rejects you and rejects him and rejects the solution because it messes up their system. Please hear me clearly: this dark world prospers off of evil, it prospers off of rebellion, and anytime Jesus in righteousness is entered, there is a price to pay. There's always a price to pay. But there's one other consequence that may just make it worth it. Beginning in verse 18 it says, "And when he was come into the ship, he that had been possessed with the devil," this is this man, "prayed him that he might be with him." Now if I were this guy, I would be doing the same thing. I mean, here he was in bondage and darkness for years and years and years, all of a sudden Jesus shows up, he's seated, he's clothed, in his right mind. I'd want to move houses too. I'd want to change locations. He said, "Please let me go with you!"

Look in verse 19, "Howbeit Jesus suffered him not, but saith unto him, Go home to thy friends, and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee, and hath had compassion on thee." Verse 20, "he departed, and began to publish in Decapolis how great things Jesus had done for him: and all men did marvel." This is important. This man who had been a part of this incredible transformation wants to spend time in the boat with Jesus and Jesus says, "No, no, no. Go back home." Where was home? Decapolis. What do you need to do? Jesus told him, "Tell everybody. Tell all men." Here's what's interesting, it's not hard to figure out. The word Decapolis means cities of 10, deca, much like we would use decimals. I mean, we know that phraseology as in parts of 10. He lived in a place before the tombs that had 10 cities all in one big conglomerate. Jesus said, "Go and tell everybody what's happened."

Can I get you to turn a few pages to the right to chapter 7? Let's talk about consequences for a moment. Oh, there's rejection, don't get me wrong, that's not optional, but here's the one that might just make it worth it: revival. Now that's one of those words kind of like deliverance, we've got a whole lot of different definitions. Can I tell you what revival means? To take that which is dead and to wake it up, to take that which is immobile and to give it movement or motion.

In chapter 7, verse 31, it says, "And again, departing from the coasts of Tyre and Sidon, he," that's Jesus, "came unto the sea of Galilee, through the midst of the coasts of," you guessed it, "Decapolis." Look at the next verse, "And they bring unto him one that was

deaf." Can I share with you how this story has switched? When Jesus showed up to the Gadarenes, this man who was tormented and making life miserable yet profitable for everybody, Jesus got off the boat and said, "Hey, you gotta get out of him." When Jesus shows up to Decapolis they're waiting for him at the shore. Jesus didn't have to publicize his arrival, he didn't have to send a warning team in advance. Why do they show up? Because a man whose life was wrecked, torn up, and in darkness showed up wearing clothes, in his right mind, and he could control himself.

Many people say, "Well, what do you think he said to them?" I don't know what he said but did he have to say anything at all? You know, oftentimes our body language is actually more than our verbal language. Think about that individual whose life is twisted up, torn, and all of a sudden... in other words, in our language we don't go where we used to go, we don't do what we used to do, we don't say what we used to say, we don't promote what we used to promote. You don't have to speak it, it'll show up. And when he goes to Decapolis, when Jesus shows up all of a sudden everybody shows up.

I'll close quickly. Over the last 18 months, can I tell you what we're being told? We're being told that up to 30% of people who used to be a part of a church are no longer going to come because of the pandemic. It doesn't matter what study you read, every study is doom and gloom. They're all bad. The church has lost its influence, it's lost its impact. I could give you the numbers. I won't bore you. But maybe just maybe the reason is because we don't leave here seated, clothed, and in our right mind. When we're at restaurants, when we're at ball games, when we're at work, we're always worried about, "I don't know what I would say." Can I tell you what speaks more than even your words is when your disposition, your behavior and your actions are so different than they used to be. You see, the big problem is that we like to get in here and kind of put on a little show and then we go out and we thrive in the darkness. If you and I will be like this guy and what we advocate in here is lived out there, we might just show up next Sunday and have people sitting on the front steps saying, "I don't know what it is but I need some of that."

Let's pray with our heads bowed and our eyes closed. Maybe this morning as we talk about a life changed out there, maybe you're that person this morning saying, "Man, I need that now. My life is wrecked. My life is torn up. My life is inside out. It is nothing but darkness." I've got great news for you, the Bible says whoever calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. Whoever means whomever. It doesn't matter where you've been, what you've done, who you've been with, what it may be, whoever calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.

Can I encourage you to do that this morning? It's not about saying the right words, it's not about checking off boxes, it's about just crying out to the Lord and maybe your heart's cry would come something like this. "God, today, Lord, I confess like this man, I've got a sin problem and I'm ashamed of it. God, I have rebelled against you, I have done things I shouldn't have done, I have said things I shouldn't have said, I have thought things I shouldn't have thought but, God, today I recognize that I'm never going to fix it myself, I'm never going to take care of it. God, I need Jesus. God, I believe, I believe that Jesus Christ loved me so much that he was willing to be born on my behalf, he was willing to

live a completely sinless life on my behalf. God, I believe that when he went to the cross, all that sin, all that shame, he took and paid the price for it. And God, I believe that three days later when he rose from the dead, he actually made it possible for my sin to be forgiven, for my soul to be saved. God, today I don't have all the answers to all the issues, all the struggles, all the problems of life but there's one thing I know very clearly is that Jesus Christ is the only one who can take care of my sin condition. I'm asking you to forgive me. I'm asking you to save me. The best way I know how, I just want to turn my life over to you."

With our heads still bowed and our eyes still closed, maybe you're that person today, you had that genuine heart cry to the Lord, we'd love to celebrate with you. In fact, in Luke 15 it says that when one sinner repents, it says all of heaven rejoices. We want to get in on the party. In just a moment, I'm going to pray for us, we're going to stand and sing. If you're that person today who had that conversation with the Lord or maybe you've got questions about it, just step out, step forward, we've got people here who want to hear your story, we want to pray with you, we want to pray for you. But maybe today you say, "Pastor, I had that conversation years ago, decades ago." A very important rhetorical litmus test kind of question is in a few moments when you walk out of this place, is your life more emblematic of the darkness or of the light? Which side of the story do you need to be on?

Heavenly Father, as we come to this time of decision, thank you that in spite of where we've been, in spite of our sinful shameful past that you're a God of redemption, you're a God of salvation, you're a God of mercy, you're a God of grace. God, your word says that our iniquity cannot go beyond your arm of mercy. Help us, O God, today to listen to you and no other voice. It is in the name of Jesus Christ we pray. Amen.