

When the Majesty of Christ is Seen...

Mark 5:1-20

Halifax: 21 July 2019

Introduction

Today, we will continue our sermon series in the Gospel of Mark.

- We have come to chapter 5.
- In our most recent sermon from Mark,
 - we came to that place in Mark where he presents the majesty and sovereign power of Christ to us in ways that go beyond the exorcisms and healings that we have already seen.
 - At the end of chapter 4, Mark showed us that Christ has power to still a raging storm—a display that left His disciples in awe when He commanded the storm with the words “Peace, be still,” and it immediately obeyed Him.
- Today, in the first twenty verses of chapter 5, Mark shows us how Jesus commands a whole host of demons that had so taken over a man that the community could not control him or restrain him. In looking at this today,
 - First, we will examine the power of Satan and his minions.
 - Then, we will see the superior power of Christ.
 - And then we will consider the begging that the manifestation of Christ’s majesty generates.

Please give me your attention now as I read our text to you... Mark 5:1-20.

- Remember that this is not the word of man, but the word of God which ought to be received with reverence and awe.

Mark 5:1-20: Then they came to the other side of the sea, to the country of the Gadarenes. ² And when He had come out of the boat, immediately there met Him out of the tombs a man with an unclean spirit, ³ who had *his* dwelling among the tombs; and no one could bind him, not even with chains, ⁴ because he had often been bound with shackles and chains. And the chains had been pulled apart by him, and the shackles broken in pieces; neither could anyone tame him. ⁵ And always, night and day, he was in the mountains and in the tombs, crying out and cutting himself with stones. ⁶ When he saw Jesus from afar, he ran and worshiped Him. ⁷ And he cried out with a loud voice and said, “What have I to do with You, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I implore You by God that You do not torment me.” ⁸ For He said to him, “Come out of the man, unclean spirit!” ⁹ Then He asked him, “What *is* your name?”

And he answered, saying, “My name *is* Legion; for we are many.” ¹⁰ Also he begged Him earnestly that He would not send them out of the country. ¹¹ Now a large herd of swine was feeding there near the mountains. ¹² So all the demons begged Him, saying, “Send us to the swine, that we may enter them.” ¹³ And at once Jesus gave them permission. Then the unclean spirits went out and entered the swine (there were about two thousand); and the herd ran violently down the steep place into the sea, and drowned in the sea. ¹⁴ So those who fed the swine fled, and they told *it* in the city and in the country. And they went out to see what it was that had happened. ¹⁵ Then they came to Jesus, and saw the one *who had been* demon-possessed and had the legion, sitting and clothed and in his right mind. And they were afraid. ¹⁶ And those who saw it told them how it happened to him *who had been* demon-possessed, and

about the swine. ¹⁷ Then they began to plead with Him to depart from their region. ¹⁸ And when He got into the boat, he who had been demon-possessed begged Him that he might be with Him. ¹⁹ However, Jesus did not permit him, but said to him, “Go

home to your friends, and tell them what great things the Lord has done for you, and how He has had compassion on you.” ²⁰ And he departed and began to proclaim in Decapolis all that Jesus had done for him; and all marveled.

May the LORD add His blessing to the reading of His holy word.

Here we see Jesus in the region of the Gadarenes,

- a place on the other side of the Sea of Galilee that was dominated by Gentiles who did not know God.
- Jesus, having commanded His disciples to take Him there and bringing them through the storm to get there, enters the land and encounters a demoniac—a man controlled by unclean spirits.
- Clearly, His purpose in going there is deliver this man, displaying His majesty and power.

I. See here the malicious power of Satan and his minions displayed by what they had done to this wretched man.

A. It is important for all of you to know that Satan is the enemy of all people.

1. If you are ignorant of his power and malice, he will be able to play you.
 - From the beginning, it has been one of his devices to pretend that he is a dear friend who wants to help you and to advise you.
 - He appeals to you as he did to Eve that your true happiness will be found if you follow your own desires instead of following God’s commands.
 - His goal is to break the tie we have to God as our Master and to convince us that it will go well for us if we go our own way.
2. Just as Satan used the crafty serpent in the beginning, so now he uses teachers, university professors, parents, friends, and very often religious leaders and ministers—
 - even those who identify themselves as Christians... to deceive us.
 - What damage they can do in weakening our allegiance to God with only a few words—breaking the tie we have with God as our God.

B. But here we see true malice that is in him.

1. Here we see that the goal of demons is to reduce to men to what they reduced this demonic to... to destroy every last vestige of the likeness of God in us.
 - As we are the image of God, we are to show forth His likeness by our wisdom, holiness, justice, goodness, love.
 - Satan is pleased that we are the image of God—his goal is to make us an image of God that totally misrepresents Him—a twisted image.
2. You can see in our text the condition to which Satan’s minions, here called “unclean spirits” brought this man.
 - See how he is described from verse 2: **there met Him out of the tombs a man with an unclean spirit, ³ who had his dwelling among the tombs; and no one could bind him, not even with chains, ⁴ because he had often been bound with**

shackles and chains. And the chains had been pulled apart by him, and the shackles broken in pieces; neither could anyone tame him. ⁵ And always, night and day, he was in the mountains and in the tombs, crying out and cutting himself with stones.

- a. There is in this man a fascination with all that has to do with the curse...
 - He dwells in the tombs among the dead—sadly we see our society glorying in death—in abortion, suicide, euthanasia—and in things associated with death.
 - He cuts himself with stones—we see this very practice of cutting on the rise in our society, just that the prophets of Baal did in 1 Kings 18.
 - b. We also see this man terrorising his community as the community tries to restrain him and cannot.
 - They go to a lot of expense and effort, binding him with shackles and chains, but he breaks them.
 - They try to tame him, but he will not be tamed.
 - He roams about in nakedness, crying out with unearthly cries.
 - c. He is a terror to himself and to everyone else... a wretch of a man—made in the image of God, but reduced to this hideous condition.
3. This is the goal that Satan has for all men.
- He works by deception, he works in stages, but if can—if given permission, this is the condition to which he would bring every one of us.
 - He is happy to work behind the scenes for a time, but once he gains ground, he becomes more and more visible, just as he is today.
- C. See here how zealous Satan is to do as much damage as he possibly can to man.
1. We are told in 1 Peter 5:8 that he walks about as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. He is searching for those he can harm.
 - His malice against God is unquenchable, and his way of striking at God is to strike at man, the image of God... he searches high and low for victims.
 - Understand that the original call of the angels was to minister to men—the fallen angels, these unclean spirits, continue to be interested in man, only now to destroying any likeness of God in him.
 - Here we see how these spirits, once they find a victim that God will let them assault, will go as far as they can with the ruin of that victim.
 - When Jesus asks the spirit for his name, he declares that he is not just one, but a whole legion of demons... you can see that in verse 9.
 - Finding a man God will let them attack, they all converge upon him like wild animals in a feeding frenzy.
 2. Their zeal is further seen in their reluctance to leave this region.
 - When they see that they must leave the man, they beg to at least stay in the community.
 - Verse 10 says: **Also he [the unclean spirit] begged Him earnestly that He would not send them [the unclean spirits] out of the country.**
 - They have accomplished much harm here—and they do not want to abandon their work.

- When they see that they can no longer inhabit this man, they beg that they might be able to enter the swine...
- Verse 11-12: **Now a large herd of swine was feeding there near the mountains. So all the demons begged Him [Jesus], saying, “Send us to the swine, that we may enter them.”**
 - They want to keep up the work they have begun in this community.

TRANS> So see that Satan and his hosts will do all that they can to ruin the human race.

- Do not underestimate either their power or their malicious intent.
 - Both are clearly revealed right here in Mark 5.
- Know your enemy lest you be taken in by him and ruined.
 - There is only one way to escape from Satan’s power and sway...by Jesus Christ who came to destroy the works of the devil.

II. See here, in our text, the superior power of Christ Jesus.

- He is the one who came to deliver us from the devil and his works.
 - 1 John 3:8 says: **For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil.**

A. The unclean spirits are the first to confess that Jesus is their superior.

1. They come prostrating themselves before Him—confessing that He is the Son of the Most High God.
 - In verse 6 & 7 we are told what the man did: **When he saw Jesus from afar, he ran and worshiped Him. 7 And he cried out with a loud voice and said, “What have I to do with You, Jesus, Son of the Most High God?”**
 - This title is the one that pagans used when they recognised that the LORD was superior to their gods—they called Him the Most High God.
 - And notice that the unclean spirits also know that He is Jesus—Jesus has just arrived here, but they already know all about Him.
2. We have seen this before with demons.
 - There is no confusion for them about who Jesus is.
 - They have known Him from the time of their creation.
 - They fully acknowledge, though reluctantly, that He has all authority.

B. Yes, the power of these unclean spirits was great, but Jesus’ power is superior to theirs in two ways.

1. First, it is superior because it is a stronger power.
 - Think of it—here He is, an individual who has come to this place where there is this demonised man that the whole community cannot control.
 - They could not bind him and they could not tame him.
 - They were completely helpless before the power of these spirits.
 - But Jesus, effortlessly, commands these spirits to come out and they obey Him, doing only whatever He gives them permission to do.
 - What a display of power this is!
 - Where a whole community was helpless, Jesus is in complete control, just as He was at the storm.
 - How it struck all who lived in this community and who knew this man to see him now sitting and clothed and in his right mind.

- Verse 15 tells us: **Then they came to Jesus, and saw the one *who had been demon-possessed and had the legion, sitting and clothed and in his right mind. And they were afraid.***
 - They were awestruck, just as Jesus' disciples had been when He calmed the storm.
 - Think of it—not only does He display power to restrain what men could not restrain; He even has power to tame that man that they could not tame.
 - How glad we should be to see how helpless a whole company of devils is before our mighty Lord!
2. And secondly, you see in this how His power is superior to theirs because it is a gracious power.
- In other words, it is morally superior.
 - We are told that the holy angels are inferior in strength to Satan, but their power is superior in a more important way—in that their power is employed for good instead of for harm—with gracious rather than malicious intent.
 - I tell you, you are far better to be small in power, but gracious, than you are to be great in power but malicious.
 - Surely it is much better to do a little good than much harm!
 - What a dreadful thing it would be if Christ's power were malicious, but what a wonderful thing it is that He is set on fulfilling God's gracious purpose in saving the world.
 - Yes indeed, by His almighty power, the world will at last be all that God intended it to be from the start—a world filled with people who are in His likeness—a world filled with people who truly love and serve God.
 - Jesus has come to save the world and He will save the world—by redeeming some sinners and by casting out others.
 - Even now, He is busy calling a people out of this fallen world for salvation and when He has gathered the last of them,
 - He will return with power to overthrow all the rest and to renew the earth as a paradise filled with people who are like God—not equal in power to God—but full of grace and love, perfect in justice and holiness...people in His likeness...
 - A world of worshippers who delight in their God and serve Him in love and beauty.

C. See how He sets this man free and restores him by His gracious power!

1. This is a display of the same power that sets free all those that the Father gives Him.
 - In the deliverance of this man who was so dominated by unclean spirits, we see what the gracious power of Christ can do!
 - It is recorded here for us to give us hope that we might come to Him to save us.
2. Not one of you is beyond the power of Christ to deliver you.
 - Here is this man, once roaming the hills with his cutting and his cries and shrieks and beyond the control of all...
 - now sitting, clothed and in his right mind.
 - No matter how far you are from God, the LORD Jesus has the power and the authority and the willingness to restore you.

3. But let me warn you.
- In looking at this demoniac, do not get the idea that you do not need Christ to save you because you are not in such a horrid condition as this man.
 - It is true that God does not let Satan go this far with most people.
 - But it is also true that every person needs to be delivered from Satan and that nobody can be delivered but by Christ.
 - But I tell you, if you are not reconciled to God—if you are not restored to God to serve Him—you are in just as desperate need of salvation.
 - In fact, your need may be even greater because you do not see your need—if you do not see how utterly ruined you are as a human being that is not subject to the living God who made us, you are in a worse state.
 - Like all of us in this sinful world, you are a distorted, twisted, wretched image of God and the Day of Judgment will expose just how distorted and twisted you truly are.
 - The whole reason Jesus came and died on the cross was to restore human beings, for we were all estranged from God.
 - You cannot restore yourself—it takes this one Jesus, the Son of the Most High God to do that.
 - It takes nothing less than the shedding of His blood to atone for sin and nothing less than the power of His grace to deliver us from Satan and to bring us back to God.

TRANS> When Jesus was physically present on the earth, His power was displayed wherever He was personally present

- We have seen how storms were silenced, lepers cleansed, the sick restored to health, and how demons were cast out.
 - It was a display to us of what it will be like when He comes to be with us forever at the last day—storms, leprosy, sickness, demons, and death will all be banished by His power.
- But at present, Jesus is **not** physically present with us.
 - And He has left demons and the curse for us to wrestle with, but at times He manifests His power by His spiritual presence... whenever He comes to deliver us by His mighty hand and work in the world.
 - We see His majesty and power.
 - In our passage, we learn about how creatures respond when His majesty and power are revealed to them.
 - Although these responses are very different from one another, they all share one thing in common.

III. When Jesus makes His presence known (whether physically as at Gadara or spiritually as He does now), all become beggars before Him.

- This only makes sense because when His majesty is revealed, we see that we are utterly dependant on Him for everything.
 - We realise that He has all authority and that we have no authority unless He gives it to us.

- See how our text presents three classes of beggars...
- A. First, there are the demons who grovel and beg before Him in desperation.
1. They not only beg him to let them stay in the region and go into the swine (as we already saw—5:10-11)... but they also beg Him not to torment them.
 - They are obviously desperate before His majestic authority.
 - See their plea in verse 7 where the unclean spirit says: **“I implore You by God that You do not torment me.” For He said to him, “Come out of the man, unclean spirit.”**
 2. These demons know that Jesus had authority to judge them and that He will judge them.
 - Their only hope is that He will not do it yet.
 - And it is interesting that though He casts them out of this man, He grants their request to remain in the region and to enter the swine.
 - He does not send them to their final judgment, but leaves them in the region.
 3. He does this, not because He lacks authority—that is clear—but because the time has not yet come—the Day of Judgment had not yet come.
 - On the one hand, He sets boundaries to their activities else the world would be in such chaos that none could be saved.
 - But He also gives them leave that we might, in this fallen world, see their power and malice, and that we might learn to trust Him when they are active.
 - In His wisdom, God has not chosen to deliver us all at once, but in a way that teaches us more fully to understand what we have been delivered from.
 - He raises them up and gives them power and authority, as He did Pharaoh, to make His power known to us.
 - As we saw today, His power is displayed in overcoming these whose power a whole community could not overcome.
 - We have confidence that He will send them to torment at the appointed time, but that in meantime,
 - He will display His power and grace in delivering those that the Father has given Him from their power and dominion.
 - We are to engage in active warfare against them by fervent prayer, by countering their deceptions, and by standing for the Lord in the power of His might amidst their temptations.
 - This is how our relationship with our Lord grows.
 - If you are not engaged in this battle, it probably indicates that you have never truly come to the Lord.
 - But you who are engaged in battle for the Lord, know that when you look to Christ, the demons grovel and beg for mercy before Him...
 - And know that the day is coming when they will be cast into the place of torment.
- B. Second, see the begging of the people of the Gadarenes when the majesty of Jesus is revealed to them.

1. This is the begging that the world has when they encounter Jesus Christ.
 - a. It is rather simple—they want simply to be left alone.
 - They want an arrangement where the Lord won't bother them and they won't bother Him.
 - Verse 17 says: **Then they began to plead with Him to depart from their region.**
 - b. This was a very stupid request... very stupid indeed!
 - Here Jesus had come into their territory and He had restored a man that had terrorised their community—a man that was a problem to them.
 - They had tried in different ways to restrain this man or even to tame him, but all their efforts had failed.
 - You would think that they would have been delighted to have Christ among them.
 - But this is something we see today—
 - For example, those who come to Christ are delivered from crime, from drug addiction, from drunkenness, from abusing other people.
 - In Christ, they become people of integrity who can be trusted, people who are out to help their neighbours.
 - They are delivered from some of the very things that the world is trying to deal with and can't.
 - They are also delivered from many other things that the world accepts, such as sexual immorality, pride, blasphemy, Sabbath breaking, and idolatry—most of all they are reconciled to God...
 - But the point is that even though they are delivered from things that the world wants to be delivered from, the world still opposes Christ and does not want Him around.
2. Why did these people of Gadara and why does the world oppose Him?
 - a. Some have suggested that they were troubled because Jesus had allowed the unclean spirits to enter the swine so that two thousand of them had perished.
 - They opposed Jesus on account of this, but I think our text points us to something more fundamental.
 - At the end of verse 15, we are told that when they saw the man that had had the legion clothed and in his right mind, they were afraid.
 - It unnerved them.
 - Here was one with divine authority in their midst.
 - They did not want to have to deal with Him.
 - They would not be able to control Him.
 - He would call for changes in their lives—for godliness—and they did not want to make those changes.
 - They were comfortable in being distant from God—they enjoyed their independence from God and they were clever enough to see that Jesus would change all that.

- b. Isn't that the way it is with the world today?
 - Even when they encounter Jesus and are impressed with His saving work—when they can see how it has changed lives—
 - they still don't want to deal with Him.
 - If they could control Him and get Him to solve the problems they want solved (and only those), that would be fine...
 - but they are smart enough to know that if He comes among them, He will demand changes that they do not want to make.
 - There are things that they simply do not want to give up...so they resist Him.
3. But I should add that though they may avoid Him for a while, they can no more avoid Him forever than this demoniac could.
- When Jesus has purposed to save someone, He will do it.
 - He changes us so that we will respond to His call.
 - And although these Gadarenes thought they had rid their territory of Jesus, we are told that in the first century, a strong church was raised up in this region.
 - If Jesus wants to come and save people, you cannot keep Him out.
 - Many have tried—in fact almost every new place the gospel goes they try to repel it—but if He wants to establish His church there, it is established.
 - What's more, some of these who opposed Jesus may have continued to oppose Him when He returned through the agency of His ministers to establish a church there...
 - They may have opposed Him then as well, but they too will be forced to deal with Him on the Day of Judgment.
 - Avoiding Him is only temporary.
 - Someday, everyone will be forced to deal with Him and there will be no escape, no sending Him away.
 - When that day comes, the fate of those that have rejected Him in this world will be the same as that of the unclean spirits.
- C. But now let's look at a happier subject, the begging of the one who is truly delivered by the grace and power and Christ.
1. There is this man who was once a demoniac.
- Unlike the villagers who asked Jesus to leave, this man, seeing this, does his own pleading—he begs Jesus that he might go with Him.
 - **Verse 18: And when He got into the boat, he who had been demon-possessed begged Him that he might be with Him.**
 - It is the desire of all those who are delivered by Christ to be with Him.
 - That is our very inheritance in the gospel.
 - It is the promise of God revealed from Genesis to revelation—
 - Adam and Eve begin the presence of God and are cast out because of their sin.

- But then the entire Old Testament promises that those who come to God for His salvation will be restored to His presence... it is the focus of the Temple.
 - When Jesus came, believers were brought all the more into the spiritual presence of God...
 - And we see in Revelation that at the end, God will dwell in the midst of us and us in Him... Christ will be both spiritually and physically (or bodily) present with us.
 - It is a right and a godly desire.
 - It was Paul's desire when he was threatened with death and said that it was indeed his desire to depart and be with Christ.
 - If we do not want to be with Him, we have not yet experienced His saving work.
2. But you may be surprised at the response of Jesus.
- In verse 19, He tells the man that he may not come with Him: **However, Jesus did not permit him, but said to him...**
 - It is not yet time for us to be in the physical presence of Jesus—not yet.
 - He was only here for a short time and He appointed the twelve to be with Him, but this was not a permanent arrangement.
 - The arrangement from His ascension until His return is that He be with us spiritually... to strengthen us, to comfort us, to bless our service and our worship...
 - but we will not have storms and sickness and leprosy and death and Satan banished from us for a time as we will when He is physically present with us again.
 - As we have already seen—we are presently to serve Him in the midst of all of these things—by the grace that He supplies.
3. Jesus has work for us to do here until then—and it is work that involves suffering in this present fallen world until the time is fulfilled for us to be with Him.
- Look at what He says to the man... verse 19 from the beginning for context: **19 However, Jesus did not permit him, but said to him, "Go home to your friends, and tell them what great things the Lord has done for you, and how He has had compassion on you."**
 - What better thing does He have for this man than this?
 - People knew him.
 - His family knew of his former condition.
 - His deliverance was obvious and it was his privilege to tell people what the LORD had done for him... what Jesus had done for him.
 - If you have experienced true conversion, you have the potential to influence the people who know you most of all.
 - Simply tell them what the Lord has done for you... what great things He has done for you!

- You may not have a lot of theological training, but you have more than this man—and all you have to do is tell people what Christ has done for you.
 - Some of you have dramatic conversion experiences like this man. Talk to the people who knew you before and tell them what God did.
 - Some of you have the blessing of growing up in a Christian home.
 - You may have known the Lord from childhood—that is glorious. You don't have to have a story like this man.
 - You have the privilege of growing up with the understanding of what Christ has done for His people and of how He keeps us and communes with us.
 - Tell the people around you what great things He has done for you and for all of His people.
 - Tell them how God has sent His Son and reconciled us to Himself through His cross.
 - Invite them to come and join you at church in praising God for what He had done for us His people.
 - Urge them to trust in Him too so that they might also experience His salvation and be reconciled to God.
- Verse 20 tells you that this man did what Jesus told him to do with zeal.
- **And he departed and began to proclaim in Decapolis all that Jesus had done for him; and all marveled.**
 - That people marveled does not mean that they also trusted Jesus.
 - They may only have marveled at first.
 - But as I mentioned before, a strong church was raised up in this region, and surely this man and some of those who marveled were among its first members.
 - This is how Christ works.
 - The man learned of Christ spiritual presence with him until He comes to be physically present with us forever.