

Legion

Good morning Pleasant Hill! How was your week? I had a good week. It was a shame that it rained during trunk or treat. That's two years in a row. Maybe next year we should move it back a week. Both years we've had the event it's been beautiful and perfect the week before our event and then pouring on the day of our trunk or treat.

Oh well, it was a lot of fun and we got to meet several new families and pour blessings on them. **It's my hope that you had a chance to talk to several of the families who visited and begin building a relationship with them so that you can share the gospel with them. That's what we've seen in Jesus ministry so far isn't it?**

Look, we aren't having events where demons are being cast out or people with disabilities are being healed to draw crowds. But when we have events like Trunk or Treat, when we do things that draw a crowd for Jesus we are giving ourselves the same opportunity to share the gospel that Jesus did.

Jesus really set the model didn't He? He developed a relationship with several people in the community. He drew a crowd by serving those in that community until He was exhausted. **When the crowd gathered He preached the gospel to them and called them to repent. Some repented and began following Him. Others went on their way after the entertainment was over.**

Whether people repented and followed or not, Jesus was always faithful to His Father's commands. Jesus always drew crowds to share the gospel with people. Jesus always loved people, He offered them healing, He offered them grace. **That's my vision for building the Kingdom brothers and sisters in Jesus.**

What's your desire? In the deepest parts of your heart do you deeply desire our church to grow? Or do you deeply desire the Kingdom of God to grow? Those two things aren't necessarily connected nor are they necessarily opposed to each other.

When we do things like we did yesterday in our community we are following the model for making disciples that Jesus set for us.

What if, one month per year, our church gave over and above our tithes and offerings and collected money to bless a family in need. What if we were to pull together funds that would literally change someone's life in such a profound way that they can see the love of Jesus pouring through us onto them.

I know you do this multiple times throughout the year. You give for Operation Christmas Child. You give special offerings at Christmas for Lottie Moon and at Easter for the Annie Armstrong offering.

Some of you even give special offerings each month for specific missionaries that our church supports. I know that last spring most of you went above and beyond and lavished gifts of grace on the staff of Seipelt Elementary.

Pleasant Hill is filled with generous people. I love that about you. I want you to see that drawing people to Jesus is less about programs like Sunday School and children's and youth ministry and more about blessing and serving people and sharing the gospel with them.

Please don't misunderstand what I'm saying. Sunday School and children's and youth programs are important tools for discipling people who are coming to our churches. And there may be a few new families who are looking for a place to worship that may even be a draw to them. **But that's not the model that Jesus gave us for sharing the gospel and growing the Kingdom.**

I hope you can see that truth demonstrated throughout text from week to week as we go through the book of Mark. That's why I would love for us to set a monetary goal of giving for one month to change someone's life.

Or maybe it's not monetary, maybe we go build a home for someone or find a homeless family and pay their rent for a year. Or maybe we can provide a

computer and clothes and babysitting for people who need them so they can find a job. Maybe it's using our connections and relationships with others to help those who need a job, get a job.

What I'm saying is this, all of us have been blessed more than we can ever say. If nothing else we have been forgiven a greater debt that any of us could ever repay when Jesus forgave our sins.

What if we were able to demonstrate that forgiveness with no strings attached like Jesus forgave us? Would that draw a crowd to share the gospel with them and those who know them?

I'm going to let you chew on that while we dig into our passage for today. We will be in the **fifth chapter of Mark**. We will be covering **verses 1 through 20** today. If you have your Bible, and I hope you do, go ahead and flip there. If you don't have your Bible with you please know that any text I read today will be on the screens behind me.

Okay, **Mark chapter 5 verses 1 through 20** read, "**1** They came to the other side of the sea, to the country of the Gerasenes. **2** And when Jesus had stepped out of the boat, immediately there met him out of the tombs a man with an unclean spirit. **3** He lived among the tombs. And no one could bind him anymore, not even with a chain, **4** for he had often been bound with shackles and chains, but he wrenched the chains apart, and he broke the shackles in pieces. No one had the strength to subdue him. **5** Night and day among the tombs and on the mountains he was always crying out and cutting himself with stones. **6** And when he saw Jesus from afar, he ran and fell down before him. **7** 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.' **8** For he was saying to him, 'Come out of the man, you unclean spirit!' **9** And Jesus asked him, 'What is your name?' He replied, 'My name is Legion, for we are many.' **10** And he begged him earnestly not to send them out of the country. **11** Now a great herd of pigs was feeding there on the hillside, **12** and they begged him, saying, 'Send us to the pigs; let us enter them.' **13** So he gave

them permission. And the unclean spirits came out and entered the pigs; and the herd, numbering about two thousand, rushed down the steep bank into the sea and drowned in the sea.

14 The herdsmen fled and told it in the city and in the country. And people came to see what it was that had happened. 15 And they came to Jesus and saw the demon-possessed man, the one who had had the legion, sitting there, clothed and in his right mind, and they were afraid. 16 And those who had seen it described to them what had happened to the demon-possessed man and to the pigs. 17 And they began to beg Jesus to depart from their region. 18 As he was getting into the boat, the man who had been possessed with demons begged him that he might be with him. 19 And he did not permit him but said to him, "Go home to your friends and tell them how much the Lord has done for you, and how he has had mercy on you." 20 And he went away and began to proclaim in the Decapolis how much Jesus had done for him, and everyone marveled."

May God bless the reading of His Word. Will you pray with me? Amen.

I love the timing of this sermon. Isn't it great to be able to read this just prior to Halloween when everyone seems to want to hear about spooky things? **What's spookier than a bloody demon possessed man living in a graveyard who cuts himself and screams all night long? Anyone want to hang out in that town after dark?**

Jesus did. Remember, last week we read that Jesus had gone to the Sea of Galilee to preach the gospel and a huge crowd gathered to hear Him. In fact, the crowd was so large that Jesus got on a boat to teach and other boats crowded around him to hear Him. I told you to imagine the Labor Day fireworks on the river with people on the Serpentine Wall and the Kentucky side of the river with boats crowded next to each other.

Then we read that Jesus told them to take Him to the other side of the Sea as night fell and He went to the back of the boat and napped on a pillow. Then the storm raged and the men on the boat feared for their lives as and woke Jesus up and

Jesus spoke to the storm telling it to be still, and it listened to Him and we read that the men went from being afraid of the storm to being afraid of Jesus wondering who is this that even the wind obeys His commands.

So after that long day and tumultuous night they arrive on the east side of the Sea of Galilee near the city of Gersa. Both Gersa and Gadara were twin cities located east of the Sea of Galilee. There is some debate from scholars as to whether these were Jewish inhabitants or Gentiles. I believe it was a mixture of both.

The question comes because they were pig herders, which was strictly forbidden by Jewish law. I believe that there were at least SOME Jews living there, but we'll get into that a little more in a few minutes but before we do let's look a little more closely at our passage together.

Look with me at **Mark chapter 5 verses 1 through 5**. It reads, "**1 They came to the other side of the sea, to the country of the Gerasenes. 2 And when Jesus had stepped out of the boat, immediately there met him out of the tombs a man with an unclean spirit. 3 He lived among the tombs. And no one could bind him anymore, not even with a chain, 4 for he had often been bound with shackles and chains, but he wrenched the chains apart, and he broke the shackles in pieces. No one had the strength to subdue him. 5 Night and day among the tombs and on the mountains he was always crying out and cutting himself with stones.**"

It's about 13 miles across the Sea of Galilee. On a sailboat traveling on a normal day that means it will take about two and a half hours to cross. I'm not sure how long Jesus and His disciples stayed on the boat after they arrived. I don't know if they fell asleep for the two hour ride across the sea after the winds died down and then when they arrived they woke up and immediately came into the town. I don't know if they arrived and slept until morning.

Mark isn't entirely clear about the timing of Jesus meeting with the demon possessed man. Both **Matthew** and **Luke** give a similar accounting of the event, although **Matthew** says there were two men who were demon possessed and **Mark**

and **Luke** write about one man. Just because **Mark** and **Luke** only wrote about one demon possessed man doesn't mean there weren't two. They only chose to write about one.

In any case, I tend to lean towards the thought that Jesus and His disciples didn't depart the boat until morning for a couple of reasons. First, Jesus was clearly tired when He told the disciples to take Him to the other side of the sea to Gersa. We know that because He was sleeping during the storm.

So it would stand to reason that they all slept and came out of the boat in the morning. Second, we see Jesus interacting with other people after He sends the demons into the pigs. That would indicate that it was probably morning or at least daytime otherwise everyone would be asleep themselves when the herdsmen came to tell them what happened.

Regardless, we aren't exactly sure how much time transpired between **verse 1**, "**1** *They came to the other side of the sea, to the country of the Gerasenes.*" and **verse 2** "**2** *And when Jesus had stepped out of the boat,*". What we do know is that after Jesus stepped out of the boat, "*immediately there met him out of the tombs a man with an unclean spirit.*"

Picture the landscape of the encounter with me. The Sea of Galilee is to the west of the town. On the outskirts of town near the sea is a cemetery. Not a cemetery like we know, but one filled with caves in the side of a mountain, and that mountain overlooked the sea.

The man or men who were possessed probably saw a fleet of boats coming to dock in the night and began making their way to see what is going on. As the demon possessed man came closer the demons began to recognize they were in the presence of God and they know they are subjected to Him.

Mark gives us some background about this man. He writes that, "**3** *He lived among the tombs. And no one could bind him anymore, not even with a chain, 4 for he had*

often been bound with shackles and chains, but he wrenched the chains apart, and he broke the shackles in pieces. No one had the strength to subdue him. 5 Night and day among the tombs and on the mountains he was always crying out and cutting himself with stones."

Look, that's scary I don't care who you are. I can walk through any haunted house and barely blink an eye because I know there are a bunch of teenagers who can't touch me banging on pots and screaming. That's not scary to me in the least. I live with teenagers. That's an average day of arguing over filling the dishwasher at my house at best.

This dude lived with the dead, **BY CHOICE**. The townspeople tried to chain him up, **MORE THAN ONCE** and he broke the chains. What I want to know is who went the second time to chain him up after he broke the chains the first time? Now that's a brave dude cause I ain't doing that.

Apparently this guy was getting stronger and stronger because Mark tells us that it had gotten to the point that now no one in the town was strong enough to restrain him.

All the guy did night and day was scream and cry from the graveyard and cut himself. Talk about a boogeyman story to scare your kids with. Imagine this conversation.

"It's time to go to bed kids."

"We don't want to go! We're not tired".

"Alright, that's fine, I'll just take you up to the demon possessed man in the graveyard to stay up because I'm going to bed."

"Night mom! Night dad!".

I'm not even kidding here. That's scary. That's the stuff nightmares are made of. A naked, bloody, demon possessed man or men (which is honestly worse) comes at you screaming. What do you do? I've gotta be honest. I'm out of there. My theory is, I don't have to run fast, I just have to run faster than you do.

That's not my Jesus though. My Jesus is in control of all things. All authority in heaven and earth has been given to Him. He is God. Jesus doesn't run. Jesus isn't afraid of anything you are struggling with in your life. Jesus is in control of all things. Look what happened when this man (or men) approached Jesus in **verses 6 through 8**.

Mark tells us, "**6 And when he saw Jesus from afar, he ran and fell down before him. 7 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.'**" **8 For he was saying to him, 'Come out of the man, you unclean spirit!'**"

A couple of things we need to understand about this part of the passage. First, we read that when he, the demon possessed man, "**saw Jesus from afar, he ran and fell down before Him**". That's important because when ANYONE comes face to face with Jesus and sees Him, that's the only response they can have.

There is a reason why we read in **Philippians chapter 2 verses 9 through 11** that, "**at the name of Jesus every knee will bow, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father**".

When you and I and every other person who has ever lived or who will ever live and every single demon and angel come face to face with God the Father and Christ the Son, there is only one response and that is one of fear and reverence proclaiming Christ's authority over our lives.

The demons in this man were no exception and Jesus began speaking to them as he approached and Jesus told the demon to come out of the man.

Look, I love the exorcist. It's one of my favorite scary movies. Since I was very young I can remember being interested and afraid of demons and angels. See, here's the part of the movie that is really Hollywood's misunderstanding of how this works.

I never see Jesus command a demon to come out and an argument ensues. I never see a giant battle where beds are lifted in the air, heads spin around and pea soup is spewed on anyone in the area. When I read the Bible I see demons encountering Jesus and they begin to beg Him for mercy and do exactly what Jesus tells them to do when He tells them to do it.

There's no fight because they know He is God and has the power to destroy them. The mere presence of the holiness of Jesus was enough to torment the demon and caused him to beg for mercy.

Brother's and sisters in Christ, if only we could be as aware of the holiness of Jesus as the demons. If only we were aware of the presence of Jesus that surrounds us by the Holy Spirit and if only we would do exactly what Jesus tells us to do when He tells us to do it!

Often times we are more like the people projected as demon possessed in Hollywood. We argue with God. We refuse to do what God tells us to do. We contort our bodies and torment our families with our disobedience because we don't want to do what Jesus tells us to do.

If you and I would finally realize the authority that Jesus has over our hearts and our very souls then we would become more obedient to the movement of the Holy Spirit in our lives and go and do what Jesus commands us to do.

As the demon begs for mercy, Jesus has a conversation with him. Look with me at **Mark chapter 4 verses 9 through 13**. It reads, "**9 And Jesus asked him, 'What is your name?' He replied, 'My name is Legion, for we are many.'**"

Let's pause here for a moment. If you've ever been in any Sunday School classroom that has read this story, you probably know that the reference that the man is giving is to a legion of Roman soldiers. Each legion of Roman soldiers had between 4,000 and 6,000 men in it.

So what the demon is saying is that there are many demons in this man. There are thousands of demons who have taken control over this man's body. Let that sink in for a moment.

Look, I don't think any of you are demon possessed. If you are, you are doing a good job of hiding it. But, if you are like me you have hundreds of things that you struggle with. Things that overcome your personality. Things that you wish would leave you and quit tormenting you. Sins that you have struggled with for years and you can't seem to get rid of.

Anytime you hear the Word of God preached or anytime you read it you feel awful about this sin that's been weighing you down. You can't shake it. You promise God that this time will be the last time and yet you find yourself doing it again and again. When you really think about it, it's not just this one thing, it's many things that lead into this one thing. You are tormented by thousands of things and all of them have such a hold on your life that you are imprisoned by them.

This man was held captive by his demons and with every day that passed more demons came to him. Is that how you feel today? **Are you swarmed by the demons that hold you down?** Jesus can set you free, but you have to do what this man did and submit to His authority in your life and He will set you free.

Let's keep reading in **verse 10**, "**10 And he begged him earnestly not to send them out of the country. 11 Now a great herd of pigs was feeding there on the hillside, 12 and they begged him, saying, 'Send us to the pigs; let us enter them.'**" **13 So he gave them permission. And the unclean spirits came out and entered the pigs; and**

the herd, numbering about two thousand, rushed down the steep bank into the sea and drowned in the sea."

Here's why it matters if these were Jewish men and women or Gentiles. We touched on it briefly a little while ago. God forbid the Jews to handle swine. He did so for their safety in the Jewish law. Jesus came to make all things clean but in the process He had to address where they were being disobedient to God's command.

Let me put it this way, conviction from the Holy Spirit comes when we see our sin laid in front of the backdrop of God's holiness. Jesus went to places where sin was rampant to preach the gospel so that those who were living in sin would see the holiness of God.

The Jewish men and women who were living in that area were living in disobedience to God and that drew the presence of evil to them. **You and I can't continue to live in disobedience to God and not expect that evil will be drawn to us.**

Disobedience to God always and without exception draws more evil your way. The possessed man was an outward reflection of the cities inward disobedience. Their struggle to contain their demons to the graveyard and bind them were as unsuccessful as your and my efforts to contain our sin to a part of our lives so that we can pretend that we can go on with our normal life.

There is no normal life for a Christian who is living in sin! All you are doing when you do that is inviting more evil to come alongside you! Stop what you are doing and repent! Turn to Jesus as this man did and submit to Him and let Him cast your demons away from you.

Don't miss this, it's so important for you to understand. Do you want to be set free from your sin? Do you want the demons in your life to go away?

You find yourself begging Jesus to set you free and when He tries you refuse to let them go. There was a cost to setting the man free! There was a cost to the

disobedience of the town. Their financial security was taken away. They had built a system, a life, that was dependent on living disobediently and Jesus destroyed it all when He set the man free.

Brothers and sisters in Jesus, you can't have it both ways. **If you want to be free of sin, you have to be willing to let Jesus tear it all down and start new!** You can't hang onto part of the sinful life that enslaved you! It's going to hurt at first, but in the end you will be free!

If you are there, if that's where you are, confess. Rip off the bandaid. Let it out. Let Jesus start new and build you up from the ground up. Would you rather save your lifestyle but lose your soul? Or would you rather lose your lifestyle and save your soul? Jesus is big enough and trustworthy enough to rebuild your life.

Let's keep going and wrap up this passage today by reading the response from the townspeople to the healing of this man. Look with me at **Mark chapter 5 verses 14 through 20**. It reads, "**14 The herdsmen fled and told it in the city and in the country. And people came to see what it was that had happened. 15 And they came to Jesus and saw the demon-possessed man, the one who had had the legion, sitting there, clothed and in his right mind, and they were afraid. 16 And those who had seen it described to them what had happened to the demon-possessed man and to the pigs. 17 And they began to beg Jesus to depart from their region. 18 As he was getting into the boat, the man who had been possessed with demons begged him that he might be with him. 19 And he did not permit him but said to him, 'Go home to your friends and tell them how much the Lord has done for you, and how he has had mercy on you.' 20 And he went away and began to proclaim in the Decapolis how much Jesus had done for him, and everyone marveled.**"

Luke records that after the people came to see the man who had been demon possessed in his right mind and wearing clothes they asked Jesus to leave because they were afraid of Him. People become afraid when they don't understand the power of God. Jesus had just taken care of a problem that none of them had the strength to overcome and they asked Him to leave their town.

Think about that response to Jesus. I can't wrap my brain around it. Here is a man who had a fleet of ships following Him; here is a man who the wind and the sea obey; here is a man who with a word cast out a legion of demons and healed a man who had been terrorizing an entire city; here is a man who can offer healing to an entire city, and yet they asked Him to leave.

If you and I can see that, then why are we so surprised and hurt when we serve others and yet there is no doors opened? It didn't stop Jesus from going to places that wouldn't invite Him in and seeking the lost there. It shouldn't stop us either.

Verses 18 through 20 are my favorite verses of this passage because I love the gratitude of the one who was saved. **Mark** tells us that, "**18 As he (Jesus) was getting into the boat, the man who had been possessed with demons begged him that he might be with him. 19 And he did not permit him but said to him, "Go home to your friends and tell them how much the Lord has done for you, and how he has had mercy on you." 20 And he went away and began to proclaim in the Decapolis how much Jesus had done for him, and everyone marveled.**"

This man wanted to be with Jesus. All he knows is whereas once he was bound to sin and oppressed by his demons, now he has a new life thanks to Jesus. **Do you know that too? Can you say the same today?**

This man wanted to be with Jesus more than anything else. But what did Jesus tell him to do? Jesus told him to, "**Go home to your friends and tell them how much the Lord has done for you, and how he has had mercy on you.**"

Have you done that church? Do you do that everyday? That's our charge. We are supposed to go home and tell our friends and family how much the Lord has done for us and had mercy on us.

<The worship band should come to the stage, start playing when you get to the stage>

Did the man do what Jesus said? You'd better believe it. Mark tells us that "*he went away and began to proclaim in the Decapolis how much Jesus had done for him, and everyone marveled.*"

Are you as obedient as a demon possessed man? Do you share the gospel with your friends and share with them about the mercy the Lord has poured out on you or do you keep it to yourself because it might be uncomfortable to talk to them about it?

You and I have the same charge that the demon possessed man has if we've been healed and forgiven of our sins. If you are a follower of Jesus then we need to be seed spreaders everyday. We need to share our story with others and let them know that they too can begin new with God through the death and resurrection of Jesus.

Begin time of response.

Anytime we take communion I like to read from **1 Corinthians 11:23-26** which reads, "*For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you: that the Lord Jesus on the same night in which He was betrayed took bread; and when He had given thanks, He broke it and said, 'Take, eat; this is My body which is broken for you; do this in remembrance of Me.'*" *In the same manner He also took the cup after supper, saying, 'This cup is the new covenant in My blood. This do, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me.'*"

For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death till He comes." Would you stand and pray with me as we begin this time of response?

Pray. Amen.