

Sermon Study Guide

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THE MAIN THING:

Christ's authority is absolute and irresistible even to demonic influences in our lives.

PURSUE RELATIONSHIP: *Opportunities to connect and pray as a group*

1. 'There is no neutral ground in the universe. Every square foot of space is contested.' (Eugene Peterson)
When have you felt the influence of the evil one in a personal struggle?
2. C. S. Lewis wrote: 'There are two equal and opposite errors into which our race can fall about the devils. One is to disbelieve in their existence. The other is to believe, and to feel an excessive and unhealthy interest in them. They themselves are equally pleased by both errors.'
Do you agree? Disagree? Why?

PURSUE GOD: *Time that is devoted to the Word of God*

1. The Gospel writers include healing from demonic activity as a part Jesus' ministry. (Mt 4:24; Mk 1:32; Lk 6:18,19).
Why is it important to see healing from demonic activity as distinct from other healing ministries? How can we apply this understanding to our Christian life today?
2. Read Mark 5:1-20. Describe the man's behaviours, emotions and attitudes before he met Jesus. How can he be seen as an illustration of demonic powers in our Western society today?
3. Using Mark 5:1-20 Describe the man's behaviours, emotions and attitudes after Jesus healed him. What was the significance in Jesus sending him back to his family? (Mk 5:19)
4. What does the encounter between Jesus and the man tell you about the 'Mighty Saviour'?

PURSUE MISSION: *Seek to be the community of God's people in your community as you live out your calling*

1. Is there someone in your life whom you need to reclaim for Jesus? Have the group pray with you for that person.
2. To whom is God calling you to go 'back to' and share what Jesus' mercy has done for you? How will you follow through with this?
3. Pray about the systems and ideologies working in our society -- that they would also be reclaimed for Jesus.
4. How might you experience the Mighty Saviour in your world this coming week?

<https://www.rightnow.org/Content/Series/1178#4> 'Into the Whirlwind'
(article by Mark Buchanan, referenced by Pastor Ashwin)

THE WORD (NIV)

Matthew 4:24

²⁴News about him spread all over Syria, and people brought to him all who were ill with various diseases, those suffering severe pain, the demon-possessed, those having seizures, and the paralyzed; and he healed them.

Mark 1:32

³²That evening after sunset the people brought to Jesus all the sick and demon-possessed.

Luke 6:18,19

¹⁸who had come to hear him and to be healed of their diseases. Those troubled by impure spirits were cured, ¹⁹and the people all tried to touch him, because power was coming from him and healing them all.

Mark 5:1-20

They went across the lake to the region of the Gerasenes. ²When Jesus got out of the boat, a man with an impure spirit came from the tombs to meet him. ³This man lived in the tombs, and no one could bind him anymore, not even with a chain. ⁴For he had often been chained hand and foot, but he tore the chains apart and broke the irons on his feet. No one was strong enough to subdue him. ⁵Night and day among the tombs and in the hills he would cry out and cut himself with stones.

⁶When he saw Jesus from a distance, he ran and fell on his knees in front of him. ⁷He shouted at the top of his voice, "What do you want with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? In God's name don't torture me!" ⁸For Jesus had said to him, "Come out of this man, you impure spirit!" ⁹Then Jesus asked him, "What is your name?" "My name is Legion," he replied, "for we are many." ¹⁰And he begged Jesus again and again not to send them out of the area. ¹¹A large herd of pigs was feeding on the nearby hillside. ¹²The demons begged Jesus, "Send us among the pigs; allow us to go into them." ¹³He gave them permission, and the impure spirits came out and went into the pigs. The herd, about two thousand in number, rushed down the steep bank into the lake and were drowned. ¹⁴Those tending the pigs ran off and reported this in the town and countryside, and the people went out to see what had happened. ¹⁵When they came to Jesus, they saw the man who had been possessed by the legion of demons, sitting there, dressed and in his right mind; and they were afraid. ¹⁶Those who had seen it told the people what had happened to the demon-possessed man—and told about the pigs as well. ¹⁷Then the people began to plead with Jesus to leave their region. ¹⁸As Jesus was getting into the boat, the man who had been demon-possessed begged to go with him. ¹⁹Jesus did not let him, but said, "Go home to your own people and tell them how much the Lord has done for you, and how he has had mercy on you." ²⁰So the man went away and began to tell in the Decapolis ^[b] how much Jesus had done for him. And all the people were amazed.

Sermon Study Summary

In life we are often placed in a theological conundrum: on the one hand we have a Mighty Saviour; on the other, challenging circumstances loom over us. These trying times may have us questioning our faith and wondering whether God is truly in control of our lives. When we are faced with such conflicts, we are reminded in Scripture that Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever. The church has made Jesus into a great teacher par excellence, who communicates profound truths. But as we read the four gospels, we find not only are His words powerful, but so are His works. Chapters four and five of the Gospel of Mark illustrate for us the amazing power and authority of Jesus Christ. This message is concerned with his authority over demons as seen in Mark 5:1-20.

C.S. Lewis wrote on spiritual warfare that "there are two equal and opposite errors into which our race can fall about the devils. One is to disbelief in their existence. The other is to believe, and to feel an excessive and unhealthy interest in them. They themselves are equally pleased by both errors."

Demonic influence and possession is not a piece of antiquated doctrine - the gospel stories are meant to continually remind us of spiritual realities. We must resist immediately rationalizing any suspicion of the demonic to mental illness or primitive superstitions. The biblical writers themselves did not reduce every unexplained incident to demonic possession. The New Testament is quite adamant in insisting there is resistance from the forces of darkness as the Kingdom of God advances. As Eugene Peterson said, "There is no neutral ground in the universe. Every square foot of space is contested." This struggle is adequately proved when Jesus exorcises the demon possessed man in Mark 5:1-20.

In our Western culture, we might not encounter the same kind of situation. However, the expression or influence of the demonic can be actively seen in politics, business, family life, and in media and the arts which has created a world that is hostile to God. This is the subtlety of spiritual warfare. Everyone can recognize the external traits of a demon possessed individuals, but it's not as easy to recognize the subtle demonic effect in our systems. The demonic manifests itself in our culture as internal struggles with greed, materialism, and lust.

The good news is that God, through His mercy, can free us from the bondage of evil influences. The demons that possessed the man Jesus came across immediately saw Jesus for who He was - The Christ. Even though these spirits are rebellious towards God, the authority of Christ is indisputable. Where before this hopeless man could not surmount the legion of demons within, Jesus rebuked them with a single word. In the same way, we can call upon our Lord to help us when all things seem hopeless. The healing of the demon possessed man teaches us that the mercies of God are great, and that it is God who has the final word on all matters. If the most hopeless man in that town was saved by Christ, there is no limit to whom Jesus can save.

Prior to the Cross, Satan had a foothold in people's lives to keep them slaves to sin, but that has been reversed. Today, Jesus disarms the power and also reclaims the territory that Satan claims as his own through Christ's redemption of people by bringing them out of darkness and into God's marvelous light. Just as Jesus commanded the healed man to go back to his town and proclaim all that God's mercy had accomplished in his life, so too are we commissioned to take experiences of our Mighty Saviour and reach out to others to share this life altering miracle.