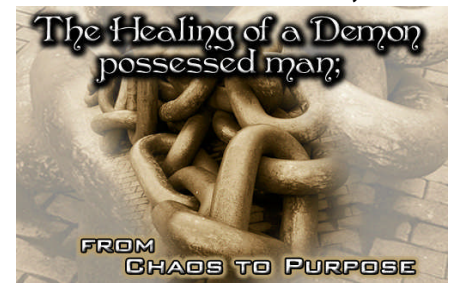


The Healing of a Demon-possessed Man;
from Chaos to Purpose

Today we would call him “homeless,” mentally ill, or self abusing. The Bible says this man's problem was, at it's root, a spiritual issue. How did this man get in this condition? Where did he open his soul to the powers of evil that they completely took over? The text doesn't say, but we know one thing; after his encounter with Christ his life took on a very different goal.

December 14, 2008



Mark 5:1-20 They went across the lake to the region of the Gerasenes. When Jesus got out of the boat, a man with an evil spirit came from the tombs to meet him. This man lived in the tombs, and no one could bind him any more, not even with a chain. For 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. Night and day among the tombs and in the hills he would cry out and cut himself with stones. When he saw Jesus from a distance, he ran and fell on his knees in front of him. He shouted at the top of his voice, "What do you want with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? Swear to God that you won't torture me!" For Jesus had said to him, "Come out of this man, you evil spirit!" Then Jesus asked him, "What is your name?" "My name is Legion," he replied, "for we are many." And he begged Jesus again and again not to send them out of the area. A large herd of pigs was feeding on the nearby hillside. The demons begged Jesus, "Send us among the pigs; allow us to go into them." He gave them permission, and the evil 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. Those tending the pigs ran off and reported this in the town and countryside, and the people went out to see what had happened. When 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. Those who had seen it told the people what had happened to the demon-possessed man—and told about the pigs as well. Then the people began to plead with Jesus to leave their region. As Jesus was getting into the boat, the man who had been demon-possessed begged to go with him. Jesus did not let him, but said, "Go home to your family and tell them how much the Lord has done for you, and how he has had mercy on you." So the man went away and began to tell in the Decapolis how much Jesus had done for him. And all the people were amazed.

Reflections

Every now and again, the Bible faces us with a really strange story. In this case we encounter a guy who spends day and night among the tombs, moaning and screeching, cutting himself, not quite fully clothed. The townsfolk have given up. Jesus comes, but He doesn't even seem to talk to the guy directly. Jesus addresses a wild hoard of *some things* that lives inside the man. Then some pigs go drown themselves, and suddenly it's all better. How can this story relate to us now?

What can possibly be going on here? Take a another look and see the chaos. Chaos is an absence of any discernable order. It is random and rapid fire; utterly destructive to anything like coherent action, or purpose, or hope. The picture Mark presents of this man is a picture like that. A man perceived to have no *value* at all. But

Jesus comes to him, and in ways that may sound strange to modern ears, Jesus changes this man. He emerges from the madness into quiet, in his right mind. At Jesus' command he takes on a simple, profound task: "go... tell what the Lord has done." From chaos to quiet to purpose.

The essential message here is that Jesus is the master of things that master us.

The story is strange, and the demons seem foreign to us. Yet in its strangeness, it points to something we need to know. What we see when we meet this man is wild, but not totally random. There is something that controls him; that impels him to self-destruction. It is

this something that Jesus confronts. Call it demons, or evil, or madness... Jesus confronts it head on. And *overwhelms* it, utterly: from mastery over a human soul to comedy of errors in squealing pigs.

What is it that has such mastery over us? What are the things that make us do what we don't want to do, that make for chaos in our lives? Is it money or madness, confusion or despair, anger, grief, fear or...? The essential message here is that Jesus is the master of things that master us. In his touch, we can be changed. Easily? Not always. Some changes take a long and painful process (maybe there just aren't any pigs handy!). But we can enter that process, face those fears, contend with what binds us, in full certainty that the Lord we serve is Master over all our obstacles. At his hand, we too can have a story to "tell what the Lord has done."

— Bob Henderson

Readings

Sunday, December 14 — Preparation

Psalm 46:1-3, 10-11; Mark 5:1-5 The psalm describes chaos without. Mark's story describes chaos within. As we approach our week, where in our lives do we need to hear the words: "Be still...and know that I am God"? Can we "be still"?

Monday, December 15 — "Quiet! Be still."

Mark 4:35-41; Psalm 42:11 This is the story that comes just ahead of the gospel for this week. A step from chaos toward purpose can quiet the storm. Where in your life do you need Him to quiet a storm? Do you trust Him there? If not, what needs to change for you to do so?

Tuesday, December 16 — A still small voice

Mark 5:6-13; 1 Kings 19:11-13 It takes an upheaval to free this man. For Elijah too, God first sends the earthquake and storm. But in the quiet that follows, the Lord is able to speak. How do we trust God for where he might be leading us, even when His first step may take us through a storm?

Wednesday, December 17 — In his right mind

Mark 5:15; 1 Kings 19:13; Psalm 27:10-14 Verse 15 is not so much an event as a place: seated, stilled, in his right mind, and like Elijah, ready to listen. It is a place we need God to bring us, if He is to have His way. Where in your life might you long for God to do so? Let the psalm speak to that longing.

Thursday, December 18 — From quiet to purpose

Mark 5:14-19 What a change! The tumult is now all around him – among those tending pigs, in the town's people. But this quieted man goes to Jesus. A heart at peace is a heart ready for purpose. As the peace comes, how might we prepare for the call? How might a sense of call be misunderstood if the peace has not come first? What is His call on you?

Friday, December 19 — Go to your family

Mark 5:18-19; (compare to 1 Kings 19:15-16) This man asks to go with Jesus, but Jesus has a different plan. Jesus chooses his ministry and sends him back to his own people. Where has his family been? How might his witness affect them? Is there a relationship in your family need you can help to mend? Pray for a heart that will let God choose your way.

Saturday, December 20 — An amazing grace

Mark 5:20; Colossians 1:21-22

A simple purpose for one now reconciled —tell a story of grace that amazes those who hear it. What is your story of grace to share? Who needs to hear about the grace you have experienced? Offer God your willingness to accept His next step with your life.

Don't have a Bible? Access these scriptures at biblegateway.com.