

Jesus Goes Where No One Else Will Go

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[0 : 00] This morning we are continuing in the book of Mark.

! We are in chapter 5 and verses 1 to 20. This is immediately following the calming of the storm.

The disciples have been on the boat with Jesus. They've been terrified. They thought they were going to die. Then Jesus miraculously spoke and commanded the wind and sea to shush.

And it did. And the disciples had even more fear at who Jesus was. And following this instance, the boat then came to the shore.

And Mark continues to tell the account, probably through the eyes of Peter. They came to the other side of the sea, to the country of the Gerasenes.

[1 : 29] And when Jesus had stepped out of the boat, immediately there met him out of the tombs, a man with an unclean spirit. He lived among the tombs and no one could bind him anymore, not even with a chain.

For he'd 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.

Night and day among the tombs and on the mountains he was always crying out. Ah! And cutting himself with stones. And when he saw Jesus from afar, he ran.

And he fell down before him. 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.

For Jesus was saying to him, Come out of the man, you unclean spirit. And Jesus asked him, What is your name? And he replied, My name is Legion, for we are many.

[2 : 41] And he begged him earnestly not to send them out of the country. Now a great herd of pigs was feeding there on the hillside. And they begged him, saying, Send us to the pigs.

Let us enter them. So he gave them permission. And the unclean spirits came out and entered the pigs. And the herd, numbering about 2,000, rushed down the steep bank into the sea and drowned in the sea.

And the herdsmen fled and told it in the city and in the country. And the people came to see what it was that had happened. And they came to Jesus. And they saw the demon-possessed man, the one who had the legion, sitting there clothed and in his right mind.

And they were afraid. And those who had seen it described to them what had happened to the demon-possessed man and to the pigs. And they began to beg Jesus to depart from their region.

As he was getting into the boat, the man who had been possessed with demons begged him that he might be with them. 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.

[4 : 12] And he went away and began to proclaim in the Decapolis how much Jesus had done for him. And everyone marveled. This is God's word and we pray he blesses the reading of it.

What are we to do when we live in a world that is loving pigs, hiding lunatics, and rejecting the liberator?

That's the world we live in. We love pigs and animals and we reject and hide the lunatics away in a corner. And then the liberator comes and we just want to reject them.

That's the world we live in. An insane world. A mad world. We've only been through four chapters of Mark's Gospel and already we've read about the extraordinary power of Jesus and his authority.

His authority over demons, over diseases, over sin, over the Sabbath, over the wind and the sea. And yet we've also seen the variety of incredulous responses that people had despite witnessing these things firsthand.

[5 : 22] And yet Jesus explained the variety of responses with the parable of the sower and soils. And he made the point that believing is not a matter of the eyes, but it's a matter of the heart.

You can see miracles and yet still blindly reject Christ. And on the other hand, you can see very little and yet recognize who he is.

As it says in Romans 10, faith comes from hearing and hearing through the word of Christ. So let me remind us of the progression of this in Mark's Gospel so far.

In chapter 1 of Mark's Gospel, Jesus' words and actions result in undesired and unhelpful fame. And then chapter 2, Jesus' words and actions result in questions and confusion.

And then in chapter 3, his words and actions result in division with the religious leaders accusing him of being demonic and plotting to destroy him. Ordinary folk like fishermen are chosen to follow him and his family misunderstand him.

[6 : 34] And then in chapter 4, Jesus begins to teach in parables specifically about the power of his word. And then following these teachings of parables about the power of Jesus' word are four desperate circumstances which are only resolved by the power of Jesus at his command.

Four desperate circumstances that illustrate the power of Jesus and his word. The word of Jesus is the difference in these otherwise impossible situations.

A storm on the sea. A man possessed by an army of demons. A man whose daughter is dying and indeed will die. And a woman who's been bleeding for 12 years without any cure.

Four impossible and desperate situations that are only resolved by Jesus. And it illustrates to the disciples what he's been teaching in the parables.

And so this morning we're looking at the account of a man whose life was wrecked by demons. Perhaps you are skeptical that demons exist. But the symptoms were evident and extreme with this man.

[7 : 51] He had been reduced to a naked, self-harming, violent maniac who could not be bound. He lived among the tombs shouting out day and night utterly tormented.

Luke records that many times it seized him and he was kept under guard and he was bound with chains and shackles but he would just break the bonds and be driven into the desert by the demon.

Mark says he could no longer be bound with chains. No one had the strength to subdue him. So he was left to live among the dead and yet he had no rest.

Every day and night was like a living hell for this man. And Matthew says that he was so fierce that no one could pass by that way.

We get the picture that the demons had made this man like the raging violent storm the disciples had just experienced. Like the stormy sea, this man was uncontrollable, impassable, violent and deadly.

[8 : 59] You hear about people battling their demons. Have you ever heard that? Perhaps you've known people who were uncontrollably violent. Have you ever known people like that?

Well, demons had turned this man into a monster. And Jesus gets off the boat with his disciples and they come face to face with your worst nightmare.

A monster of a man. Utterly uncontrollable and violent. Madman. And yet Jesus came for this man.

He came to the place just for this man. The son of man comes to seek and save the lost. And certainly this man was lost. Remember, it was Jesus' idea to get into the boat and cross the sea in the first place.

In chapter 4, verse 35, Jesus said to the disciples, let's go across to the other side. If they knew what was on the other side, they would say, no, let's not. And so I've got four simple headings to unpack this passage.

[10 : 05] Number one, Jesus confronts. Number two, Jesus commands. Number three, Jesus cares. And number four, Jesus commissions. Jesus confronts.

Jesus commands. Jesus cares. Jesus commissions. And so Jesus confronts. In each account of this man in the Gospels, we are told that he is so far gone and so dangerous that people just avoided him.

On the one hand, it's very understandable. On the other hand, we like to hide darkness off in some corner and ignore it. That's what our culture likes to do.

In fact, our culture is the kind of culture that if you walk up Buchanan Street, we like to avoid charity workers. I had a friend who was new to the country, was walking up that way.

Not new to the country, actually. It was Cammy. Sorry, I'm getting mixed up. It was Cammy who was telling a story of being in Glasgow. And he suddenly thought to himself, it's so clear in the middle of Buchanan Street.

[11 : 20] Now I can walk without having to dodge in between people. And he wondered, why is it so clear? And he realized everyone's off to the side dodging the charity workers. If that's how we treat charity workers, how are we going to treat the tormented?

the people who are out of their right mind? How are we going to treat darkness?

We're going to hide it off in a corner and ignore it and avoid it. Think about all the dark things in our world that people are just hiding in a corner. We don't want to speak about it. We want to hide it.

Like abortion. The truth of abortion is not told to people who are supporting abortion. They don't know what the truth of it is.

The truth of assisted suicide is not told to the people who are considering that. We hide darkness away in a corner. We like to avoid it. Ignore it.

[12 : 21] We don't want to talk about it. It says in John 3 that people who love the dark like to hide in the dark. They don't like the light to expose how dark it really is because we like to be ignorant of darkness.

We like to pretend it's not as evil as it really is. And so this man is just hidden. Abandoned. Ignored. Avoided.

Left among the tombs. But Jesus is not afraid to confront it. The light came not just to shine before nice people but to confront and expose the darkness.

And so Jesus it was his idea to go across the sea and to pull in at this very point where this man was. And not only that we see that Jesus being the son of God is not afraid to confront an army of demons.

One of the things that Mark would want his first readers to understand is that darkness often has a demonic influence. Some of the darkest things you see in our society will look behind the curtain and you'll see the devil at work.

[13 : 30] Okay? We fight not against flesh and blood. And so they often have a demonic influence yet Jesus is far more powerful than even a whole army of demons.

And you know that because for 2,000 years he's been rescuing people in impossible situations. some people in real dark and demonic situations have been rescued by Jesus.

And so this man is perhaps one of the worst one of the most demonic manifestations that ever occurred. This man. Yet it's nothing to Jesus.

Nothing. He shows that whether it's one demon or a thousand demons they're no match for the person of Jesus and the power of his word. And it's like when Paul says that Jesus saved him the worst of sinners so that everyone else might know that Jesus can save you too.

And Jesus saved and rescued and redeemed and restored the most demonic influence over a person to show that anyone can be restored and redeemed.

[14 : 39] We are to confront darkness and yet when we confront darkness we cannot do it in our own merit or on our own strength or with our own little words and incantations they won't work.

It's only in the name of Jesus. The power of his word darkness will flee. Darkness has to be confronted yet it can be confronted without destroying the person.

Do you notice that? It's all too easy to either hide darkness away among the tombs to ignore it and avoid it and leave people to their own destruction or we use darkness against darkness and just destroy those people.

Just get rid of them. I'm not saying that we shouldn't have laws and prisons and safeguards and consequences but there are plenty of people in society that others would either want to hide away and ignore and avoid or destroy all the while flaunting their own version of sin and darkness.

You see our world likes to flaunt sin and darkness all the while hiding people away or destroying other people. And for Mark's first readers and for us part of discipleship is seeing that our battle is not just with flesh and blood.

[15 : 58] There are forces of evil and darkness behind these things and the forces of evil do not care if they destroy their human hosts. They don't care. And depending on how we have been affected we might not care.

We might not care if a person is just destroyed. Have you ever had someone do something to you that is so bad and nasty that you just want them to die? Has anybody ever hurt you so much that you would rather they just be destroyed?

I mean Jesus' own disciples James and John wanted to call down fire from heaven to kill people. This is a human fall inside of us.

We want to hide it. We want to flaunt it. We want to destroy it. And yet Jesus came to save the lost. And so God takes no pleasure.

Even in the death of the wicked says Ezekiel. How can we get rid of darkness without destroying the person? Our world cannot. Humans cannot.

[17 : 06] For thousands of years for the entire human history we have not been able to deal with evil and darkness without either hiding it away or destroying it. Only Jesus can.

Only he can deal with it without destroying the person. And interestingly you'll notice that the disciples are not mentioned at all in this account. Jesus is showing them in this moment that he has the power to remove the demons from the person without destroying him.

And Jesus has shown the disciples that they must confront darkness only in his name. Because not long after this Jesus is going to send them out to preach and to cast out demons.

And if they're going to do that they cannot simply preach to nice people in nice places. And Jesus has shown the disciples before he sends them out that you can't just confront darkness by going to nice people in nice places.

You need to go where no one else is willing to go. You need to confront what no one else is willing to confront. But you can do it in my name in a way that doesn't destroy the person.

[18 : 14] And so for us perhaps we will not encounter the same level of demonic manifestation. But if we are going to reach the lost we won't always be able to do that when they are nice and safe and sane.

Jesus commands. Nothing has been able to help this man. No cures have helped him. No chains have bound him. Jesus has shown his disciples that his word alone is powerful.

Think of being a disciple of Jesus in this moment that you come off the boat and you're still struggling to come to terms with Jesus commanding the wind and the sea. And you're still wondering to yourself who is this?

Who is Jesus? And then you see this monster of a man running down the hill towards Jesus falling at his feet and crying out, what have you to do with me Jesus, son of the most high God?

He knows who Jesus is. And this man who's filled with a legion of demons begs Jesus, I adjure you by God, do not torment me.

[19 : 24] The disciples of Jesus are like, what on earth is going on? They see Jesus confront a legion of demons and not only do they fall down and recognize him, but the demons pray to Jesus.

They beg Jesus not to torment them. Even a whole army of demons is no match for Jesus, let alone a monster of a man, one man.

Remember the disciples struggled in the boat with who Jesus was and if he cared. And Jesus asked them, why are you afraid? And do you still have no faith?

And so this is a lesson in faith in Jesus. What have they to be afraid of when the wind and sea obey him and armies of demons fear him and beg him?

What have we got to be afraid of? What have we to be afraid of when Jesus' word can calm the storm and banish an army of demons, all the while restoring an insane violent person to his right mind?

[20 : 30] How much do we need the reminder that Jesus' word really can deal with darkness? How much do we need to know that Jesus' word can really transform the kind of people that we would write off?

You ever just look out at people and think, nah, not them. who will I give my evangelistic efforts to? Not them. They're never going to change.

Would we ever change if it were not for Jesus? His word really can transform people. His word really can banish the demons. His word really can deal with the darkness.

Jesus has been teaching in parables about the power of his word, like seeds sown on soil. And if ever God's word doesn't seem powerful, it is not a problem with his word, it is the hard hearts that cannot receive him, like hard soil cannot receive a seed.

Jesus chose these twelve to be with him so that he would send them out to preach the word, so they need to know that the word is powerful. And he sent them out to cast out demons, so they need to see that his word is powerful.

[21 : 44] He is showing us, Mark is showing us how Jesus shows them his power and the effect of his word in circumstances that were otherwise desperate, out of control, and beyond human help.

And this is an important thing for the disciples to see because in chapter six, Jesus sends them out with nothing but his word, nothing but his word and his authority.

authority, I think much of the time compared with the wind and sea and armies of demons, think about this for a moment.

The wind and the sea knew the power of Jesus' word and a whole army of demons knew the power of Jesus' word.

But how often as Christians, week in, week out, do we just not even realize the power of Jesus' word? We don't know the half of it. His word is incredibly powerful.

[22 : 49] His word brought to existence the entire cosmos. Jesus' word is so powerful. And so Jesus cares.

In this encounter, Jesus gives his disciples not only a lesson in how to handle demons, but a lesson in how to care for outcasts. It's like the woman at the well in John 4.

Jesus comes for those who are rejected by everyone else. The physician came for the sick. He would take, Jesus would take the worst person in town, the most hopeless of all, and restore them, transform them, and through them reach the whole town.

And yet, as disciples, even the twelve, and us, we are too often busy trying to test the soil to see if it's worth the seed or not.

I understand there are times we ought not cast pearls before swine. That's the kind of people who overtly oppose Christ. But rather, what I'm talking about are those whose lives are a mess.

[23 : 58] People whose lives are broken and wrecked. Unclean people in unclean places. That's what this guy was. people whose lives seem to have lost their value.

They are consigned to the graveyards and mental hospitals and prisons. People who are as good as dead. Nothing's worked for them. Lost in the social work system.

Not getting help. Nothing's worked for them, and now they're just ignored and avoided by all people. people who would be treated less kindly than a pet dog.

Do you know people like that? Treated less kindly than a pet dog or valued less than a pig is what our passage illustrates. The disciples had just asked Jesus if they cared.

Do you not care that we are perishing? And now they see Jesus caring for someone that everyone else had written off. A Gentile no less. This Jew caring for a Gentile?

[25 : 05] What kind of Messiah are you Jesus? A naked man, a violent man, unclean in a thousand ways, living among the unclean.

In some ways the town might have received Jesus if he just got rid of this man. If Jesus came, pulled into shore and killed a man, the town might have said, yes, come on, join us, let's have some bacon together.

But Jesus sees this man's life is more valuable than 2,000 pigs. Does Jesus not see the value where nobody else sees the value in somebody's life?

I thank God that Jesus found value in my life and your life. Please God help us to see the value in the life of others where no one else sees it.

Some people struggle with this account because they focus on the pigs rather than the man. What a waste! What a waste! Why did the innocent pigs have to die?

[26 : 18] They didn't deserve that. And ironically, people see what happened to the pigs and they ask the same question the disciples ask. Does Jesus not care?

Why would he do that to the pigs? And they miss the point completely. Look at the man and you'll see that Jesus cares. Who was it? Let me ask this.

Who was it that killed the pigs? Was it Jesus? No, it was an army of demons that killed the pigs. It was the demons who caused the pigs to go crazy and destroy their own lives.

And it gives us an idea of what these demons were doing to this man. Jesus has shown us what the demons would do to people if they had the chance. Ah, but why use the pigs?

Why not just send the demons away? I'll confess, we don't fully know. I think it probably has something to do with how the townsfolk were using the pigs for their own gain and their own wealth and satisfaction.

[27 : 27] That they were counting the pigs more valuable than one of their own neighbours because at least the pigs could do something for them. Unlike this man.

You see how people treat other people when they can't do anything for them? what are you going to do for me if I help you? And so the people would rather have their pigs than their saviour or neighbour.

And the people didn't love the pigs as animals and pets. That's the thing that people miss. The people weren't treating these pigs nice as little pets that they love.

they only valued and loved what they gained from the pigs. And so the people of the town beg Jesus to get away from them.

How unbelievable is that? One of their own neighbours who was so far gone has now been restored clothed in his right mind. And they see that and then they notice all the pigs are gone and they think we don't want a person like you anywhere near our town.

[28 : 42] How unbelievable is that? They cannot even celebrate gaining back one of their neighbours. He might have been a husband. He might have been a father. At least he was a neighbour.

At the very least he was a human being. And yet they still think in this transaction that they're at a loss. What they have lost is more valuable than what they've gained.

How twisted is that? But that's what we do. Jesus cares more than this town realises. And we see that in how not only he rescues this man but despite being rejected by the town Jesus leaves this man for the sake of the town.

Jesus cares even when people don't realise he cares. And so Jesus commissions. See how this man is about the only person in the book of Mark who actually asks and begs Jesus to follow him.

You'd think this was a great win. Yes finally someone wants to follow Jesus. He's begging to follow Jesus and Jesus says no. How unusual is that?

[29 : 53] You would think this would be great. Doesn't Jesus want followers? Well yes he does but he doesn't just want followers for his own sake. He wants believers for the sake of those who are lost.

And so he doesn't question he knows that this man believes and how easy considering the rejection from the town how easy would it have been for Jesus to take this man and to curse the town how easy would it have been for Jesus to turn his back on all those people but Jesus cares enough to commission this man for these lost souls rather than have that place be without a witness And you see Jesus thinks that Jesus would leave the man for their sake even although they rejected Jesus do you ever wonder to yourself why Jesus doesn't just take us to be with him already I wonder that sometimes I want that sometimes I don't want to be hanging about here sometimes this world is so dark and dreary and disgusting sometimes my sin that clings to me is so I'm weary!

I want rid of it and sometimes the world out there are just I don't want to be around anymore I want to be with Jesus and I wonder why are you just not going to take us and yet it's for their sake Jesus cares enough to commission us to tell our friends and neighbours and family how much the Lord has done for us and that he would do the same for them if they would come to him this man didn't have to go to Bible school he didn't need a degree in theology he didn't have to do evangelism classes he didn't even need to know Jesus said to him go home to your friends and tell them how much the Lord has done for you and how he had mercy on you think about the difference between this man and the Pharisees the Pharisees knew all about the law and all about the covenants and feasts and the Old

Testament they could recite all 613 of the commands just by memory and yet one crucial thing they go and learn what this means I desire mercy not sacrifice they forgot the mercy of God with all the knowledge they had they misrepresented God's character to the people and presented him as some legalistic cold judge and God is judge he's righteous but he is a merciful God Jesus said that all this man needed to tell others about was the mercy of the Lord and the power of his word has God had mercy on you let's think about the mercy the Lord has had on us and what he's done for us you might be like this man you might be the only sane person in an insane world and yet if you are if you find yourself being the only sane person in an insane world it's not so that you can then look at them and!

them it's so that you can tell them about the mercy of God we don't need to know as much as we think we need to know in order to tell others perhaps the problem is we're not confident in Jesus word or perhaps the problem is we've forgotten how merciful God has done to us or perhaps the problem is that we just don't know how much the Lord has done for us if he has been merciful to you then your job isn't to go out and judge others confront darkness yes but see how Jesus confronted darkness in the same person that he was merciful to the demons were destroying!

[33 : 58] this man and sin is destroying our neighbors sin is destroying them yet we can show them all the Lord has done for us sinners and that he can do it for them without destroying them some people think that God would just want rid of them some people think if God was to show up he would just get rid of me no he wouldn't he wants rid of your sin but he wants to save you so the Lord confronted these things because he was merciful if he wasn't merciful he wouldn't confront them he would just get rid of them he would just destroy the humans along with the demons and sin and darkness let me end with this we have a powerful and a merciful Lord who confronts who commands who cares and commissions and if you know his mercy you only know it because his light confronted your darkness because his power and his word transformed your heart because you know his care he commissions you to tell the next person to confront darkness without fear but with faith in the power of

Jesus to trust in the power of his word and to tell of his great mercy to go where others are not willing to go to have mercy on those whom others are not willing to have mercy and to speak the powerful word of God Amen let me pray merciful God thank you so much for having mercy on us thank you for not leaving us without a believer or witness that can tell us of your great mercy and your great power thank you for not leaving us among the tombs without hearing your word Lord please would you transform our hearts please would you show us how much you've done for us please would you impress upon us how merciful you are and please would you give us confidence courage and faith in your word not just for our own lives to trust in your promise but for those out there who are still lost who are still tormented who need to be clothed and put in their right mind

Lord we thank you for your great grace and mercy and power in Jesus name Amen