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Preacher: Josh Ortiz

[0:00] So, I heard that you guys are going through a series in Matthew, but this morning I actually want to take you to a book over to the Gospel of Mark. And so, if you've got your Bibles, turn to the Gospel of Mark, chapter 5.

That's where we're going to be at this morning. So, Gospel of Mark, chapter 5, and we're going to be looking at verses 1 to 20 today.

And so, this morning, in Mark 5, I want us to be drawn in to a dramatic scene in Jesus' earthly ministry.

In this passage, we're going to see Jesus engage with truly an unforgettable man. And in this unforgettable encounter, we're going to see a little more clearly who Jesus really is and what difference that should make in our lives.

Before we get there, I want to start by just by doing something. I want to start by saying a word, and I want to have you see what comes into your mind. Okay? So, I'm just going to say a word, and then you can feel free to write something down if you want, or just think about something, whatever comes to mind.

[1:10] So, here's the word. You ready? The word is this. Freedom. Freedom. Freedom. What comes into your mind when you think about the word freedom?

Perhaps for you, you think about America. The land of the free, right? And the home of the brave. Or maybe you think about specific freedoms that we have in our country.

The freedom of religion. The freedom of speech. Freedom of press. The freedom to petition.

Freedom to assemble. Freedom. Or maybe for you, freedom is something a little bit more personal.

Freedom over a struggle that's in your life right now. Freedom from a deep hurt or painful memories that haunt you. Freedom from a bad habit you just can't kick.

Perhaps it's freedom of movement from your body or freedom from illness. Financial freedom.

Freedom. If you're a student, freedom of summer.

[2:17] No more homework. Students, we're not going with this. No more tests. Freedom. Can I get an amen from the students out there, anybody? Okay. Okay. Thank you. Well, I don't know what comes to your mind when you think about freedom.

But I think it's safe to say that freedom is important to all of us, right? We like being people who are free. And yet imagine, imagine with me that you were not free.

Imagine if all of your freedoms were suddenly stripped away. Freedom to carry on a normal life.

Gone. Freedom to be with your family and friends.

Gone. Freedom to speak and think clearly. Gone. Gone. Freedom even over the movement of your own body. That gone as well.

And then to top it all off in this situation, imagine that you were in bondage to a cruel and ruthless master. Can you imagine that kind of experience?

[3:26] It would be horrifying, right? It would be absolutely terrible. And yet it's into that kind of nightmare that we step as we open up the Gospel of Mark to chapter 5.

So let's see what happens, starting in verse 1. They came to the other side of the sea, to the country of the Gerasenes. 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 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. Night and day among the tombs and on the mountains, he was always crying out and cutting himself with stones. When he saw Jesus from afar, he ran and 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 he was saying to him, Come out of the man, you unclean spirit.

[4:37] And Jesus asked him, What is your name? He replied, My name is Legion, for we are many. 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. The herdsmen fled and told it in the city and in the country.

And people came to see what it was that had happened. 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. 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.

[5:41] As he was getting into the boat, the man who had been possessed with the demons begged him that he might be with him. 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.

And he went away and began to proclaim it in the Decapolis how much Jesus had done for him. And everyone marveled. Let's pray. Father, we come to your word this morning.

We thank you that you speak to us. God, we thank you that you've spoken to us in many times and in many ways in your word and to the prophets. We thank you most of all by sending Jesus, the word made flesh.

And God, we thank you that we had this written word in our own language in our laps this morning. And so we pray, God, we ask that you would feed our souls this morning. We would ask, we would pray that you would open up your word and show us wonderful things.

Show us more of who Jesus is. I pray in his name. Amen. So we've read the passage. We've entered into the nightmare.

[6:55] And we see Jesus coming and he changes everything, right? But what are we supposed to make of all of this? All this stuff that just happened? Well, this morning, I want to briefly walk through this story again to get a feel for what's actually going on.

And then I want us to pull back from the story and think about this passage's compelling truth and how it applies to our lives. And so I think there's something that God wants us to know from this passage this morning.

So let's get that and then let's apply that to our lives. So first, let's walk through the story again. So the passage starts off in a rather eerie way.

Look at verse one. They came to the other side of the sea, so Jesus and his disciples, to the country of the Gerasenes. And when Jesus had stepped out of the boat, immediately there met him out of the tombs, a man with an unclean spirit.

And so Jesus and his band of disciples have gone to the eastern side of the Sea of Galilee. Now, what's so strange or eerie about that? Well, this is Gentile territory.

[8:01] Gentiles are non-Jews. They are considered unclean to the Jews. And so they don't worship the one true God. And yet here is Jesus, a Jew, boldly going to the other side.

He's going to the country of the Gerasenes to raise some questions in our mind. What's going on here? And yet the suspense only begins to build because as soon as Jesus steps out of the boat, out of nowhere comes running up to him a wild, naked, screaming man.

And so we read that this man has an unclean spirit. Somehow he's been possessed by a demon which has overpowered him and enslaved him and turned his life into a living horror show. And so look at verse 3 to 5. This man lived among the tombs and no one could bind him anymore, not even with a chain, 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. Night and day, imagine this, among the tombs and on the mountains, he was always crying out and cutting himself with stones. And so this enslaved man is in complete misery.

[9:20] He is such a danger to society that he's been isolated to live among the dirty, bone-riddled tombs. And he's so far beyond hope that the locals have repeatedly tried to shackle him so he doesn't hurt himself or hurt other people.

And yet, it doesn't work. Time and time again, this guy has wrenched these things off of him with his Herculean strength. And so cut off from society with no cure in sight, all this tortured, demonized man is left to do is to wander around, crying out and cutting himself with stones.

I mean, this is a wretched, wretched picture. I mean, maybe you've been in a situation where you felt stuck. You were weighed down.

You were overwhelmed. You were isolated from others. You saw no way out of the darkness gathering around you and gathering in you.

If you've had a taste of that kind of misery, imagine that multiplied by 10,000. And that is what this man is experiencing.

[10:36] His life is really a living hell. And yet, into this seemingly hopeless and enslaved situation, steps a deliverer.

Jesus arrives. He steps out of the boat and in verse 6, we have a picture of the demon-possessed man falling down before Jesus. The fact that he falls down is a reminder that a power far greater than Satan is present here.

In fact, we know that because Jesus begins to command the demon to leave. And the demon cries out through the man in verse 7, What have you to do with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I adjure you, by God, do not torment me. Do not torment me. The demons know that Jesus is not here to mess around.

And yet, the demons can do nothing to stop him. In calling Jesus the Son of the Most High God, some have thought that the demon is trying to gain control of Jesus by uttering his name.

[11:47] And yet, Jesus is the one who's really in control. He gets the name of the demon, Legion, and to our horror, we learn that this man is not just possessed by a demon, but by a vast number of demons.

A Roman Legion was a unit of around 6,000 soldiers, an organized, efficient, mighty fighting force. And so a legion of demons is a terrifying, terrifying supernatural foe.

And yet, this supernatural confrontation is almost over before it begins. Jesus walks onto the scene and this powerful legion of demons is falling to his feet.

When Jesus simply speaks, the demons are begging to be sent away. Send us away! Send us away! This legion of demons can't stand being in the presence of such holy power, in the presence of unmistakable divinity.

But where will they go? Well, they want to be sent into a local herd of pigs, peacefully grazing on the hillside. And so if they can't destroy this man, then they want to destroy something else.

[13:05] And so we read what happens in verse 13. And 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.

Wow. I mean, can you imagine what that would have been like to see that? A stampede, a stampede of 2,000 pigs, suicidal pigs, rushing down, rushing down a steep embankment, plummeting right into the sea.

I mean, just try to imagine that. I mean, I'm sure the jaws of the herzmens just dropped. Whoa. You know, what in the world just happened? Our pigs, they're just gone.

I mean, so these guys, obviously, run off to tell everyone what they just saw. I mean, they get to their town, maybe, and they're like, you wouldn't believe what just happened. You know that crazy,

demon-possessed guy out in the tombs? Yeah, well, there's this guy named Jesus, and he came, and then he cast out all the demons into our pigs.

And then the pigs, like, took off down the hill and into the sea. I mean, you can just imagine people's wide eyes, like, what? I mean, if it happened today, it would have been on the front page of the Gerasene Daily News, flying pigs or something like that.

[14:28] It would have been a trending topic on the Gerasene Twitter feed, hashtag pigs into the sea. So it's not surprising that these people from the country begin flocking in to see what happened.

And when they come, guess what they find? Look at verse 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. I mean, if the pigs were wowed, this is double wowed. I mean, it's one thing to see 2,000 swine shooting into the sea. It's another thing to see what used to be a naked, insane, raging, demon-possessed man, now sane, clothed, and peacefully sitting at the feet of Jesus.

What an amazing transformation. I mean, this is kind of like, you know, you meet someone you used to know like years ago, and then you meet them and they're like completely different. You ever had that experience?

You get that feeling of shock that comes over. You're like, are you the same person like, in grade school I used to know? Okay. That's what these people were feeling. Last they knew, this crazy naked guy was gashing himself in the graveyard and screaming like a maniac.

[15:48] And now, here he is, clothed, calm, clear-headed. I mean, surely you would have to think that this would have inspired hope for real change and spiritual freedom in that area.

But look, I mean, this guy was healed. He's free. But look what happens. Verse 16, And those who had seen it described to them what had happened to the demon-possessed man to the pigs.

Notice this. And they began to beg Jesus to depart from their region. As he was getting into the boat, the man who had been possessed by the demons begged him that he might be with him. that people are completely spooked. That people don't know what to make of this Jesus character. I mean, is he some kind of sorcerer?

And what about those 2,000 pigs? I mean, that's a lot of money that just got hurled into the sea. Or maybe they were thinking, you know, if we couldn't control the demon-possessed guy with all the chains broken in the tombs, we're definitely not going to be able to control this Jesus who just healed him.

[16:58] I mean, whatever they were thinking, we don't know for sure. We do know this. They begged Jesus to leave. Get out of here, Jesus. And yet, the exact opposite is true of the man who had been possessed by the demons.

In verse 18, he begs Jesus that he might be with him. Now, think about this. Think about this. Almost everyone else in this passage, the demons, the people in the region, are begging to be far from Jesus.

But this one man, this former wretch, is begging, pleading to be near Jesus. Jesus has just saved his life.

Jesus had freed him. Why would he not want to be with Jesus? And yet, in one last surprising turn of events, Jesus says something to this man that probably blew him away.

He said no. What? Why, Jesus? I want to be with you. No. Jesus has a bigger plan. Jesus says to the man, verse 19, he did not permit him to go, to 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.

[18:18] And he went away and began to proclaim in the Decapolis how much Jesus had done for him and everyone marveled. A miserable man tortured and enslaved by a legion of demons is freed into being a joyful proclaimer of God's powerful mercy.

What a powerful story of healing, of freedom from slavery. But what are you and I supposed to make of that? What difference should this true story make in our lives?

Well, I think the compelling truth, the compelling truth of this passage is simply this. We are to find true freedom in the powerful Jesus.

This passage is calling us to find true freedom in the powerful Jesus. If you want to truly be free, if you want the shackles broken in your life, if you want to be transformed, you need, I need, a strong deliverer.

We need Jesus. You need the power and the mercy of Jesus to find true freedom. That's what this passage is telling us. And yet, in order to apply that correctly, we need to think very carefully about what freedom really is.

[19:48] See, is freedom just having the ability to do whatever we want as long as we don't hurt anybody? Is that the freedom that Jesus gives us? If we just come to him, we can spend our money however we want.

We can talk however we want. We can do whatever we want with our sexuality as long as we don't hurt anybody. Is that the freedom that Jesus provides? And the answer is no.

Doing whatever you want as long as you don't hurt anyone is not true freedom. Our culture might say it is, but it's not. According to the Bible, that's not true freedom. No, true freedom is shaped by two things.

By what Jesus frees us from and what Jesus frees us to. True freedom is shaped by what Jesus frees us from and by what Jesus frees us to.

There's something very specific he frees us from and there's something very specific he frees us to. And so I think we need to see both sides of this freedom coin to get a clearer picture of the true freedom that Jesus powerfully provides.

[20:52] So first, Jesus frees us from the slavery of sin and Satan. Jesus frees us from the slavery of sin and Satan.

Clearly, this demon-possessed man is under the destructive sway of Satan. Satan knows that this man and each one of us are made in the image of God. And since Satan hates God, there is nothing more that he enjoys than destroying those made in the image of God.

Do you remember that kid growing up that always loved to destroy other people's creations? Maybe it was your Lego set, wham, took it right out. Maybe you went to the beach and you're building some beautiful sandcastle and over they come and they start kicking away your sandcastle.

Well, that's Satan. That's what he loves to do with humanity. He gets pleasure out of our misery. He enjoys tempting, he enjoys accusing, he enjoys wreaking havoc with God's creation.

Now, knowing that about Satan, would you want someone like that to have a massive influence in your life? Well, no, of course not. And yet, that's exactly the kind of power that Satan has over the lives of every single person born into this world.

[22:13] 2 Corinthians 4, 4 says that Satan has blinded the minds of unbelievers to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel. And Ephesians 2 says that all of us by nature follow Satan, the prince of the power of the air, and are sons of disobedience, naturally children of wrath.

So think about your relatives. Think about your neighbors, your co-workers, your friends. All of them. If they have not been set free, are in the death grip of Satan.

Their slavery, and perhaps your slavery, may not look like this man's in this passage, but it's no less slavery to a cruel master who is bent on our utter destruction.

But here's the really sad thing. Satan doesn't have to work that hard. Why is that? Because each of us gladly put the shackles on ourselves.

From the moment we are born, we love, we look to sin. Romans 3, 10 through 12 says this, None is righteous, no, not one. No one understands.

[23:24] No one seeks after God. All have turned aside. Together they have become worthless. No one does good, not even one. We don't need to teach our children to disobey.

I'm learning that. We don't have to figure out how to be greedy. You don't have to have a tutor to know how to lust. It all comes so naturally.

Because we are native-born slaves to sin. Jesus said in John 8, 34, Everyone who practices sin is a slave to sin. That's us.

On our own, that's us. Every single one of us. So do you see, each of us need to be freed from something. We need to be freed from the slavery of sin and Satan in our lives.

And all of the consequences that come from that. Guilt, shame, broken relationships, despair, death itself, the list goes on. We need true freedom.

[24:25] And that's exactly, exactly, exactly, what Jesus provides. Jesus comes to free us. He comes to do what we cannot do. He came to break the grip of Satan on our lives.

And just like this man, Jesus comes to make us whole, to put us in our right minds, to bring us near to God. And he does that. Think about this. He does that despite great cost.

Here, in this passage, Jesus crosses a stormy sea to go to a region where he's not welcome to free a man whom everybody had probably given up on. And if that costs 2,000 pigs, Jesus is willing to make the sacrifice.

He's willing to go to great lengths to free even one person from their bondage to sin and Satan. He's willing to go to great lengths to heal a broken soul.

And the ultimate display of this is seen in his willingness to go all the way to the cross. Jesus was willing to pay the ultimate price to set us free. He was willing to be forsaken by the Father.

[25:33] He was willing to be tortured in our place. He was willing to overcome death itself for you and me. So when Jesus says in John 8, 36, so if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed.

He means it. He's done everything to make our true freedom from sin and Satan possible. So the question is this morning, have you personally come to Jesus to find freedom?

Let me encourage you today to pause and take a hard look in the mirror and to see the insanity of your sin. It promises freedom.

It always does. But as we all know, it enslaves us. It only leads to misery in the long run. If not in this life, then in the eternity apart from God.

There is no freedom in sin. There is only freedom in Jesus. And so now, friends, now is the time to turn from your sin and turn to Jesus who can free you.

[26:41] Now is the time to fall at His feet. Now is the time to receive His mercy. Have you done that? Jesus stands ready to free all those who come to Him.

If you are hearing His call this morning, come to Jesus. He can free you. But if you have trusted in Jesus, if you have come to Jesus, let me encourage you this morning as well to consider this piece of beautiful news.

guess what? You have been set free. You're free. You're no longer a Christian, a slave to sin or Satan. You are a child of the Most High God.

And that means you do not have to sin. You don't have to believe Satan's lies anymore. You don't have to live in isolation, struggling by yourself. You are a new person in Christ.

The all-powerful God of the universe is at work in you. And every day He wants you to live into the freedom you already have in Christ. 1 Peter 2.16 says, Live as people who are free.

[27:52] Not using your freedom as a cover-up for evil, but living as servants of God. Live as people who are free. Believer, that is what you are now. You are free.

A servant of God and nothing can change that. Now this doesn't mean, believer, that we aren't going to struggle with sin. It doesn't mean that there aren't going to be consequences that we might have to face for some of the sins that we have committed.

It doesn't mean that we won't have to face the effects of living in a world that is in bondage to corruption. Our minds are likely going to wither. Our bodies will fall apart. Sadly, we will die.

And yet, as believers, we are truly free. An article reminded me this week that we have to remember the three Ps. What are those? Penalty, power, and presence.

In Christ, we have been set free from the penalty of our sin. Done away with. In Christ, we are being set free from the power of sin.

[28:56] Going on right now. And one day, in Christ, we will be set free from the presence of sin. Penalty, power, and presence. We've been set free from the penalty.

We are being set free from the power of sin in our lives. And one day, one glorious day, we're going to be set free from the presence of sin. Forever. See, that's the kind of true freedom that Jesus provides to all those who come to Him.

So believer, keep coming to Jesus. Come to Him daily for the deliverance from sin that you still struggle with. He does not grow weary of you. He loves you.

Come to Him for strength and perspective in your marriage and your parenting. Come to Him for the power to persevere through every trial and every suffering you will face. Because in Him lies your hope.

And in Him lies your freedom. So come to Jesus. There's one more thing we need to see here before we close. Jesus not only frees us from something, He also frees us to something.

[30:05] Jesus frees us to join God's mission of mercy. Jesus frees us to join God's mission of mercy. Did you notice what happened to the man after he was freed from the demons?

Almost instantly as Jesus begins to leave, the man wants to be with Jesus. He wants to go with Jesus. And it's not surprising. I mean, he realizes that his life is not his own.

He didn't free himself. Jesus freed him. And so out of gratitude and love, he now wants to be with the one who freed him. It's not a burden to be with Jesus.

It's a joy. It's a privilege. And that should be the heart's desire of all those who have been freed by Jesus. We want to be with Him. We want to join Him in what He is doing.

Yet this doesn't have to be as complicated as we sometimes make it. Jesus is simply telling this man, go home and tell your relatives and tell your friends about what God has done for you.

[31:10] Tell them about how enslaved you were. Tell them about how hopeless you were. And then tell them how God reached down and showed you mercy. Tell them about how He gave you true freedom for your soul.

And do you know what? Each of us, each of us, we know Christ, have the same exact call. In His sovereign plan, God has given us, each of us, a unique network of relationships that other people don't have.

We have particular children. We have particular classmates. We have particular co-workers. We have particular neighbors. Think of their names. It's not a mistake that you are in their lives.

No, it's a unique opportunity. Those are the people that God wants you to go and tell about His mercy. So have you been set free, believer? Have you tasted of God's mercy in Christ?

Have you been clothed in the white robes of His righteousness? Do you know of God's immense love for you in Christ? If so, then you have so much to share.

[32:19] You have had the mercy of God poured out on your life and others need to hear about that. Others need to hear about the mercy that God, that Jesus, can show to them.

And so maybe that will happen this week when you are taking out the trash and you talk to a neighbor. Maybe when you're putting your child to sleep at night. Or at the lunch table with some classmates or at a local Starbucks with a friend.

Maybe there's someone you've known for a while that you simply want to invite to, hey, let's just read the Gospel of Mark one chapter at a time. Just see what Jesus is all about. I don't know what it looks like for you, but may God help each of us who have been freed to tell others where they can find true freedom.

And that's only in the powerful Jesus. Let's pray. Lord, we thank you so much for your word.

We pray that you would now plant it deep within us. And we pray that you would produce much fruit for your glory and for the good of those around us. And for the good of our own lives, God.

[33:28] We thank you for the freedom that you give us in Christ. Help us to live in that this week. I pray in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Amen.