

Jesus Meets Legion

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 16 January 2022

Preacher: Allan Shearer

[0 : 00] We're going to have our Bibles open at Mark's Gospel, chapter 5, as we follow along in that passage of Scripture together. And as we do so, let's seek the Lord's help once more.

Father God, we pray that you would renew our minds, that you would cleanse our consciences, that you would soften our hearts, and that, Father, you would shape us and mould us, that we might better be conformed to the image of your Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, in whose name we pray. Amen.

Well, there are two great kingdoms in this world. There's the kingdom of light with Jesus Christ as its king, and there's the kingdom of darkness with Satan at its head.

And, of course, the two kingdoms are opposed to each other. One represents goodness and purity and holiness and justice and truth. The other represents everything that's evil, that's unclean, unholy, and in rebellion against God.

But there is never, ever a question over which kingdom will ultimately triumph. Jesus always wins. Jesus always wins.

[1 : 26] Satan can never defeat God. And if you go on a little walk through Mark's gospel up to this point, up to chapter 5, you see these two great kingdoms have clashed already.

And they're going to clash all the way through the gospels, and all the way through the epistles, all the way through to Revelation, because they're still clashing even today. And as the kingdom of Jesus advances, what you see is that he sets free those who are under slavery to sin.

And as he does that, the kingdom of hell responds powerfully. In chapter 1, Jesus faces Satan at the temptation, and he defeats him soundly.

And then soon after that, you've got evil spirits who enslave a man, and Jesus sets that man free. And the spirit even recognizes Jesus as the Holy One of God, and cannot resist Jesus' command to come out of the man.

And then you have the incident in chapter 3, where the Jewish elite accused Jesus of doing his works in the power of the evil one. What a blasphemous statement that ever was to make before the Lord Jesus Christ.

[2 : 42] And Jesus demonstrates his power there as well, and shows that he is not doing them in the power of the evil one, but very much in the power of the Holy Spirit. Well, in today's passage, we have one of the most detailed accounts of Jesus versus demons in all of the gospels.

This man is possessed not just by one spirit, but by a legion of them. And depending on what Roman account you read, that could be as many as 2,000 to 3,000 Roman soldiers.

So believe it or not, this man has 2,000 to 3,000 demons inside of him. But we see that Jesus has power even here. And that's what we're going to see this morning, what we're about to see.

So we're going to have three headings to help us out this morning, to learn the lessons in this passage. First, we'll look at legion's helplessness. Second, the Lord's power.

And then third, the crowd's fear. Legion's helplessness, the Lord's power, and the crowd's fear. So first, in verses 1 to 5, we have legion's helplessness.

[3 : 48] And we come across a man in these verses who's in truly a helpless state. We read in verse 2, Now, the word here for evil is perhaps better translated unclean or impure.

He is demon-possessed by a spirit who is working on behalf of Satan. Now, of course, all human beings, not all human beings who don't know the Lord, they are not demon-possessed.

But this is a very particular case. And this man is truly pitiable. But nevertheless, in our natural-born state, we are all controlled, in some sense, by the evil one.

Because we're under his power. We are slaves to sin. We are blinded to the things of God. So we're not all demon-possessed. But nevertheless, we're under the control of Satan, who is a ruler in this

world to a certain degree.

I think scripture makes that plain. Back in Mark chapter 3, verses 20 to 30, you see the incident where Jesus is accused of working in the power of Satan. And there, Jesus uses an illustration to challenge the awful accusation.

[5 : 04] And he likened Satan to a strong man. And Jesus, as the Savior, has come to bind a strong man and carry off his possessions from his house.

That strong man is Satan. And Satan's possessions are every single person who has not yet been set free from sin. All those are in slavery to sin.

Ephesians has it as well. Ephesians chapter 2, verse 1. As for you, you were dead in your trespasses and sins in which you used to live when you followed the ways of the world and of the follower of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient.

That's Satan. Jesus has come to rob Satan of his power, to carry off and to set humanity free so that once again we might praise the name of God, our creator.

That is why Jesus has come. Legion here is possessed by an impure spirit. But there's an entire legion of them inside of this man.

[6 : 07] 3,000, it could be as many as 6,000. Sinclair Ferguson helpfully comments that this man was an outpost of demonic activity in this world. The spirits had come to this man and made him a fortified city against the kingdom of God.

And we read in verse 3 that he lives among the tombs. That's not some place that you generally want to live, is it? Among the tombs.

He lived among the dead. That's where he lived. A living man. But he chose to live among the dead. He could also not be bound up by anyone.

Can you imagine that? When people came to see you, all they wanted to do to you was put chains on you to tie you up and to cast you away. That's what they tried to do with this man.

The demons would break the chains as soon as they were formed. There was also no one strong enough to subdue him. Even the strongest person in the town could not handle Legion. His predicament is also constant.

[7 : 13] He had no let up from this, night or day. There was no relief from what he was feeling. No relief. No one could speak comfort into him. He was in inner turmoil in every way.

Perhaps he tried to get some relief by cutting himself with the stones, as we read here. Both body and mind are affected too. He's beyond self-help. He's beyond all human help.

I wonder if this morning we can feel something of this man's helplessness. I wonder if we can feel something of that weight of helplessness. Perhaps we've not been like Legion, but perhaps we've been in a state or a situation where we too have felt helpless.

Beyond human help. Beyond any other help we think at the time. Now as I said, not everyone who does not know the Lord is demon-possessed, but we do learn from this passage how Satan wants to control the human race.

How he wants to destroy the human race. And why does Satan want to destroy the human race? Because it belongs to God. That's why he wants to destroy it.

[8 : 19] Satan wants to destroy everything and anything that resembles God. And humanity is still, even though it's tainted and graffiti has been poured over it, we are still made in God's image.

There is still a semblance of God's image in each and every one of us. And Satan doesn't like that. He hates that. So he's going to attack it and try to do something about it.

He wants to keep us bound in the chains of sin. He wants to keep us separated from God. He wants us in a helpless state. Blind to our helplessness.

Blind to our sin. And this is how each and every one of us is without the Lord Jesus Christ. Whether we acknowledge it or not. We are helpless. Sin, you see, affects every part of us.

And Satan wants it that way. But all Satan can offer us at the end of the day is hell. Because that's where he's going. And that's all he can offer anybody else that he tries to take with him.

[9 : 20] He will do all in his power to prevent us from coming to know the Lord Jesus as well. Remember earlier on in the gospel where Jesus gives the parable of the sowing of the seed and how the seed falls on the path and the birds come and take the seed away.

And he says that's Satan. He tries to come and take away the seed that was sown. Because he doesn't want it. He knows the power of God's word and he doesn't want it taking root. That's what he tries to do. We are helpless.

And there is a strong foe. But you know, when we actually come to see we're helpless, that's the best place for us to be in. It really is.

Because it's in that place of helplessness that we stop trusting in ourselves and we start looking outside of ourselves for a solution. And that's where we need to look.

Lord, from the depths to thee I cried. My voice, Lord, do thou hear. We come to our second point, the Lord's power in verses 6 to 13.

[10:20] Legion could not control himself. Uncontrollable by humans. Controlled by demons. But now he has an encounter with Jesus that changes his life forever and ever.

Jesus issues a command to the demon. In verse 8 we read, Come out of this man, you evil spirit. It's a simple and straightforward command.

No one can say they don't understand what that is. It's very straightforward. It's not go left, go right, turn up and down, do this, do that. No. Come out of this man, you evil spirit.

No one was mistaking what the command was. And if Jesus had no power over this demon, you wouldn't have expected anything to happen. Nothing would have happened.

These demons would have continued to do what they'd been doing for years. No one else could control this man. But when Jesus finishes speaking, a number of things happen.

[11:24] First, the man runs to Jesus. I think that's beautiful. Because that's what we all need to do. We need to run to Jesus. Not just the moment we're first saved, but each and every day of our lives, more, more, more of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Verse 6, when he saw Jesus from a distance, he ran and fell on his knees in front of him. This is a sign of either pleading for mercy or recognition of being in the presence of someone greater.

I think both could apply here. Both could apply here. Second, the man asks, what do you want with me, Jesus, son of the most high God?

Now it's a little hard to work out from the text who is actually speaking here. Is it the demons who are speaking to Jesus? Is it the man who's speaking to Jesus?

Either way though, it's clear that Jesus is recognised for who he is. His identity is not in question. Everyone recognises him here, certainly the demons do, as Jesus, the son of the most high God.

[12:32] And it's striking that in the calming of the storm just a little earlier, Jesus' own followers ask the question, the disciples ask it, who is this? Even the wind and the waves obey him.

And here what you have are Jesus' enemies, an entire army of Jesus' enemies recognise who Jesus is.

His own enemies give him the acknowledgement that he is Jesus, the son of the most high God. and a poor, helpless, demon-possessed man understands exactly who Jesus is.

Third, the man says, and perhaps it's the demon speaking again, swear to God that you won't torture me. Now this, this is a wee bit strange, isn't it?

When has Jesus ever tortured anybody in his ministry to this point? He hasn't. He's going about healing people, he's going about preaching the word of God to people and caring for the sick and the destitute and all these other things.

[13:37] But I think it's the demons speaking here. And what the demons are saying is, we know who you are Jesus. We know that you are the king of righteousness, that you are the king of glory.

We know that you're the sovereign over all. And we know what is awaiting us on that final day of judgment. They're looking ahead. They know exactly what their end is going to be.

They know. They know their end. And that's the thing. Satan must know. He's not got a chance against God. He must. The demons certainly seem to recognize it here.

They know that they're going to be cast forever into hell. And in that place, all they will face in hell is the wrath of God. The anger of God burning against them for all eternity because of their sin and rebellion against him.

And that will certainly be beyond any idea of torture that we could possibly ever imagine. You see, terrible atrocities in this world of people who have been tortured that will not compare to what will happen in that last day.

[14:54] Not compare at all. the demons recognize that Jesus has power over them and there is nothing that they can do about it. Jesus speaks and they recognize his power.

We saw Jesus' power last in the gospel just before when by a simple command, the wind and the waves obey him. All creation bows to him. Now by a single simple command, demons are instructed to leave this man.

Now, if there was a single demon, you may think that Jesus was powerful. Wow, look, he's just cast out a demon. That's amazing. But when Jesus asks this demon for his name, the demon says, my name is Legion for we are many.

That's three to six thousand soldiers and at the very least two thousand of them because they go into the pigs and there's two thousand pigs. There's at least two thousand of them.

And what you see is Jesus doesn't just have power over one demon. He has power over them all. Every single one of them to a demon come out of this man.

[16:04] There's not even one left. Not a single one who was hiding away somewhere. Out they come. Every one of them. Jesus' power is on full display.

These demons recognize their creator and they must bow down to his will. and the man is instantly, instantly restored to his right mind.

There's not even a recovery period. He's not even told to go and lie down and recuperate. It's instantaneous. And all Jesus had done was speak. It reminds us of when God spoke in the beginning, let there be and there was.

Here is God in the flesh speaking again. and the demons have to do as they are told. None of the greatest generals of history, no matter how powerful, had this power over their enemies.

Jesus had and Jesus does. The story is told of a young boy who was traveling by airplane to visit his grandparents and on that plane he was seated beside a professor of theology and the child was reading some of his Sunday school homework and the professor thought he would have some fun and said, young man, if you can tell me something that God can do, I will give you a big shiny apple.

[17:28] If you can tell me something God can do, I will give you a big shiny apple. The boy looked and thought a wee minute and looked at the professor again and then he replied, sir, if you can tell me something that God can't do, I will give you a whole barrel full of apples.

Which one of those had it round the right way? It wasn't the professor of theology. It was that boy. He had it round the wrong way. Tell me something God can't do and I will give you a whole barrel. I am sure that young boy got his apple immediately from the professor. That boy had it round the right way because Jesus has the power. It is not a question of him being able.

It is not a question of him having the power because he is none other than God in the flesh. There is nothing that he cannot do. No matter how helpless we think ourselves to be, no matter the depths of our sin or slavery to it, Jesus has the power to save.

In another gospel, he says, come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Jesus will save to the uttermost all who come to him.

[18:39] That's got to be good news. That really has to be good news. It's got nothing to do with how good or not we think ourselves to be, but it's got everything to do with who he is and what he has done.

And perhaps you're thinking today, can Jesus save me? Will he save even me? Well, he has the power over the wind and the waves. He has power over two, three, six thousand demons.

Yes, of course, he can save even you. He can save even me. Perhaps you're thinking, but will Jesus have me this morning? He will. Yes, he will.

If you come to him in faith and in repentance, he has never cast away anyone who has done that. There is not a saint in the heavens who can say that Jesus is not faithful.

There's not anyone on the earth who can say that Jesus has cast him away either. The hymn sums it up well. I was sinking deep in sin, sinking to rise no more. Overwhelmed by guilt within, mercy I did implore.

[19:43] Then the master of the sea heard my despairing cry. Christ, my Savior, lifted me. Now safe am I. Love lifted me. Love lifted me.

When no one but Christ could help, love lifted me. And your helplessness turn to Jesus. Jesus. And lastly, and more briefly, the third point, the crowds fear.

How did the crowd respond to this great and wondrous healing miracle? Verses 14 to 20. There is something strange in the miracle of Jesus casting out the demons. This, of course, has to do with the thing we've not mentioned yet.

The pigs. What on earth have they got to do with this healing miracle? The demons say to Jesus, they don't want to leave the area. We want to stay in this area. And they seem to plead with him and say, can we not go into those pigs instead?

Don't send us away. Put us into the pigs instead. And Jesus permits it. If he hadn't permitted it, it wouldn't have happened. So Jesus permits it. And the entire herd run down the mountainside to be drowned.

[20 : 51] What's all that about? Well, here again, we see something of what Satan desires for the human race. He desires death. Those pigs are a representation of what Satan and the demons want to do.

They want to cause death. That's what they're in the business of doing. And those tending the pigs immediately run back into the town and let the others know what's happened. And the whole town comes out to see what's just happened.

They all pour out from their homes. Verse 15. When they came to Jesus, they saw the man who had been possessed by the legion of demons. He was 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. I don't know if we can imagine it, but try and picture it for a moment.

Jesus is still with the man, legion. We don't know his own name. We call him legion still. The man legion. A large crowd of townspeople come for themselves. They start crowding around Jesus and this man.

[22 : 00] Everyone would have recognized this man from the town. Every one of them would have known about legion. Perhaps some of them had been the woes who had bound him or tried to subdue him. None of them could help him.

You might have thought that the one response from these people would have been to bow and worship. Remember, no one had been able to help.

Jesus had just done that. But that is not their response. They don't worship. They don't gaze in wonder at someone who has this power. But they're afraid.

And they earnestly plead with him to go away. We don't want anything to do with you, Jesus. Perhaps they were scared that next time Jesus might send the demons into their sheep or their cows.

The economic loss that could have come to their town if Jesus had remained there. Perhaps that is what they were thinking. Most of them seem to be pig keepers anyway. Their livelihoods would have been affected, surely.

[23 : 01] Maybe that's how they were thinking. Some atheists have used this very passage of scripture to try to show the absurdity of Christianity. All those pigs killed, they say. How stupid is that?

How can you believe in a God that does all of that? I can't believe in any of that nonsense. What's wrong with that attitude? They're looking at the pigs. What's wrong with the crowd's attitude? They're looking at the pigs. Where is Legion looking? Not at the pigs. He's looking at Jesus. See, that's the point. Everyone is looking in the wrong place.

They're looking at these pigs when they should be looking at Jesus and seeing the power that he had. Legion is looking at Jesus because Jesus had just healed him when no one else could.

Jesus had just sent 2,000 plus demons away into the pigs and that's the point. You see, to Jesus, to the Lord Jesus Christ, this one man's life was of more value than 2,000 pigs.

[24 : 10] That's what Legion could see. They're all saying, the crowds are all saying, goodness, look, 2,000 pigs destroyed. Legion is saying, Lord, you love me at least to the value of 2,000 pigs because you've saved me and this is what you have done for me.

No one else had tried to do that for him. They tried to cage him like some kind of wild animal, but Jesus saves him to the extent of at least 2,000 pigs. And you know something?

If you're a brother and sister of mine this morning in the Lord Jesus Christ, our Heavenly Father loves us not to the extent of 2,000 pigs but he loves us to the extent of what we see on Mount Calvary that he didn't offer 2,000 pigs or the blood of bulls and goats but on Mount Calvary his own dear son was sacrificed for you and for me.

Why such love for us? That's a question we'll ask for all eternity. He has done it for us that salvation is costly. It took God the Father and God the Son paying the price on Calvary and God says to us again if you're one of the Saviors this morning you're mine.

I love you. I have sent my son to die for you and no one but no one not Satan not any demon no one in any power on this earth or in the heavens above will be able to pluck you out of my hand. [25 : 40] That's what God has done for us in Christ Jesus and that's that's amazing and if that doesn't draw out worship from us nothing else will.

This caused Legion to plead with Jesus to go along with him take me with you I want to go with you Lord but Jesus says something maybe a bit strange in verse 19 go home go home to your family and tell them how much the Lord has done for you and how he has shown mercy to you. Now surely you want to follow Jesus is that not what Jesus said to Peter Andrew James and John follow me and I will make you fishers of men why then does he say to this man go back into your home go back into your town well it's because it's the region of the Gerasenes it's because it's the region of the Decapolis this was a region of the the ten cities where the gospel had as of yet was still making inroads it hadn't fully Jesus had taught there certainly but most of his teaching to this point had been in the Jewish regions not in the Gentile regions and what Jesus does to this man Legion he says I'm going to commission you as an evangelist I want you to go back to your hometown and I want you to represent me here and tell everyone what I have done for you in your life that's what he does that's what he does who knows indeed that this might have been the initial seed that later evangelists watered maybe even the disciples themselves as they took the gospel to these regions were building on the work of Legion that Jesus had left behind there the man obeyed and began to tell all the Decapolis how much Jesus had done for him and all the people were amazed

I wonder knowing then as Legion did he was loved to at least the extent of 2000 pigs they went told everybody about Jesus brothers and sisters in Christ if you are this morning we've got the cross and how much more of a spur should the cross be to evangelism than even what Legion experienced here we can go and tell people I'm a hell deserving wretched sinner as I am but Jesus loves me he died for me and because of that his righteousness is credited to me and I now stand as a son or daughter before God's throne and I'm going to be with him forever because of what he's done for me and we're to tell it and tell it far and tell it wide if you're a Christian today struggling then remember this precious truth just how much the father loved you and how much he loves you and the evidence of it is that he gave the most precious gift it was his to give for your salvation and for mine

Jesus Jesus there are two kingdoms in this world they are both powerful but not equal the kingdom of light with Jesus as its king is infinitely more powerful than Satan could ever possibly be Satan is powerful but we're not to get preoccupied with him either Jesus is more than able to bring down every single stronghold that Satan has built and his cross has already delivered the mortal blow it's stripped Satan of his power and in the end hell awaits Satan judgment forever which kingdom are you in this morning?

[29 : 34] which kingdom are you in this morning? come to Jesus' side it's the only other side of victory it's the side of victory come before Jesus see his love in the cross confess him as your saviour as your lord and your helplessness look to him who is the one who is the help of his people and believe in your heart and you shall be saved let's pray Lord God how can we possibly thank you for such a salvation Lord you are so amazing and so wonderful that you would condescend from the very heights of the heavens the very majesty on high that you would come down to this sin sick world to choose to live among sinners entering enemy territory and even offering yourself over to those very enemies that they might be saved

Lord we bow before you this morning in humble worship and praise it's such a salvation Lord why such love to us we don't know but all we know are that you love us and you care for us so much to send Jesus Lord God may you fix these truths before us seal them in our hearts this morning that we might go away from this place rejoicing in the glory of the king Jesus Christ in whose name we pray Amen Amen Amen so let me forth and bear with us the beginning of the time and theiling