

...save us from Satan

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[0 : 00] where the Christmas season is well and truly upon us. We've had the Black Friday sales, which actually started on Thursday and end on Monday tomorrow.

I don't know why they called Friday. We've got the decorations going up, and even here, Bruce and Joy did a great job with the trees, got the pew decorations and so on.

And in the church calendar, it's the season of Advent. Now, you may or may not know that the word Advent comes from the Latin word Adventus, which means coming or arrival.

And so Advent is the time in the church calendar where we especially remember the arrival or the birth of Jesus. And we start singing Christmas carols. So I've mixed up a couple of titles of Christmas carols.

I'm going to say them and see if you can guess which ones they are. Here we are. Angels sing Herald Hark. Yep. God's gentleman, Mary Restu.

[1 : 00] Well done. Joy. I thought someone was going to say Joy McGrath. She's not a Carole Mill. Yeah, joy to the world.

And in fact, one of them actually speaks of our topic today. It's on the next slide is the first verse.

From God Restu, Mary, gentlemen, let nothing you dismay. For Jesus Christ, our Saviour, was born on Christmas Day to save us all from Satan's power when we had gone astray.

Oh, tidings of comfort and joy. And so what we're going to be doing this Advent series is we're going to be looking at pictures from Mark's gospel that show what the arrival or the advent of King Jesus was all about.

So hence on our title slide there, the advent or arrival of the King Kul, as we saw from our carol, will save us from Satan's power.

Or from the Bible, actually, on the next slide, from 1 John chapter 3. The reason the Son of God appeared, that's Christmas, was to destroy the devil's work.

[2 : 08] Jesus came to save us all from Satan's power. And as I said, Mark's gospel gives us a picture of him doing just that, where he saves a man visibly under Satan's power.

So point 1 in your outlines and verse 1 in your Bibles. And we're going to work through this passage reasonably quickly, but then we'll need to think about a bit harder about how it applies to us.

So we'll have to do a bit more work after the passage. So verse 1. They went across the lake to the region of the Gerasenes. When Jesus got out of the boat, a man with an impure spirit came from the tombs to meet him.

This man lived in the tombs, and no one could bind him anymore, 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. Here is a man who is the epitome of unclean or impure.

[3 : 15] At first, he lives in the Gerasenes, which is a Gentile region where there were many unclean things for Jews, like a herd of pigs that we'll meet in a moment. Second, he lives among the tombs where there are dead bodies, which were also unclean for Jews.

In fact, Luke's account even adds that he was naked. And third, and most of all, he had an impure or literally an unclean spirit in him, which, as we'll see, was a legion of demons.

And although it meant, as one of the guys in my Bible study group put it, he could be like the incredible Hulk and just snap all the chains, it was also he lived a life of torment and agony.

Do you notice verse 5? Night and day he cut himself with stones and cried out. It was a hell of a life for him. But it's this man, verse 2, who runs to meet Jesus.

And can you imagine being there, one of his disciples? You've just stepped out the boat only to see this violent, naked, insane man hurtling down the hills towards you?

[4 : 25] If it was me, I'd be saying to Jesus, oh, Jesus, I think I left something back in the boat. But verse 6. 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? In God's name, don't torture me. For Jesus had said to him, come out of this man, you impure or unclean 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 a nearby hillside. The demons begged Jesus, send us among the pigs, allow us to go into them. He gave them permission.

And the impure or unclean spirits came out and went into the pigs. The herd was about 2,000 in number. And they rushed down the steep bank into the lake and were drowned. Now, Mark's purpose at this point of his gospel is for us to see Jesus' identity.

[5 : 30] To see that Jesus is the Christ, the King, the Son of God who has God's power. And it's quite obvious here, isn't it? Do you notice all the ways that indicate that Jesus is the more powerful one than this man that no one else was strong enough to subdue?

Verse 6, the Legion falls on his knees before Jesus to acknowledge that Jesus is the greater one.

Or verse 7, the Legion acknowledges Jesus as the Son of the Most High and pleads not to be tortured, even though he'd been torturing this man night and day.

In verse 10, they beg Jesus again and again not to be driven out of the area. Or in Luke's account of the same event, not to be sent into the abyss, which is the prison for Satan and demons.

And in verse 13, they need permission, did you notice, from Jesus. It's clear, is it not, who the more powerful person is.

It's Jesus. Jesus is the King, the Son of God, who has God's power over Satan. And he has come to save people from Satan, like this man.

[6 : 46] So verse 14, those sending the pigs ran off and reported this in the town and the 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.

This man who was once violent, naked, and tormented, is now sitting dressed and in his right mind. It's a complete reversal, isn't it?

His life is now restored, and the people are afraid. They had tried to control this guy with chains before, but no one was strong enough, we were told.

And then comes this guy called Jesus, who not only controls him, but cures him with just his words. I mean, if we saw such divine power in a person, then we too would be wary, we'd be a little bit cautious, wouldn't we?

And so this fear of Jesus in itself isn't a bad thing, for it recognises that Jesus is no ordinary person.

[8 : 00] And he isn't, is he? That's what Mark wants us to see. So the fear isn't bad. What is bad, though, is their response that follows. Do you see verse 16?

Those who'd 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 beg with Jesus to leave their region.

It's a sad state of affairs when people beg God to leave them alone. It seems these people would have preferred to have this man with the evil spirits living amongst them than to have their lives changed and suffer loss, in this case financial loss, with the pigs.

And it's the same, sadly, today, isn't it? People seem to prefer having evil in their lives rather than have God change their lives and perhaps cause them to suffer.

And not pigs, but perhaps persecution, you know, from colleagues or friends or family. But the one who had been saved from his hell of a life has a totally different response.

[9 : 12] Do you see verse 18? 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 own people 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. While the people begged Jesus to go away, this man begged Jesus to let him stay, didn't he?

To go with him, to follow him. Now at this point in Jesus' ministry, he had more work to go to the Jews first. And so Jesus says, No, go home and tell what the Lord has done.

By which, you know, people would have thought, Lord God, but then the man goes home and tells what Jesus had done because he knew Jesus was the Lord. That's quite a response, isn't it? But the question now becomes, how does it apply to us? Because this picture of Jesus saving someone from Satan's power is not really how he saves us from Satan's power, is it?

[10:22] I mean, we were not demon-possessed like this man, were we? Some people I know say that mental health issues are demon possession, but that's not true because even Christians can suffer from mental health issues and we cannot be possessed.

For we have God's spirit who is clearly stronger than Satan. And I don't think this sort of thing happens as much in our society here in Melbourne today as it did in Jesus' society in his day. Though, if people play around with the occult and invite evil into their lives then they will get it, I suspect. But for several reasons it's not as common in our society here in Melbourne today as it was in Jesus' day.

So, how were we under Satan's power? Point two. Well, in the Bible Satan's power is mainly twofold. First, he has the power to lead people away from God into sin and spiritual death.

So, for example, in Revelation on the next slide chapter 12 verse 9 we are told how the devil leads the whole world astray. Or on the next slide in Ephesians chapter 2 it tells how we were spiritually dead in sin.

[11:38] Why? Well, because we follow not just the world but the ruler of the kingdom of the air that is Satan who is still at work in those who are disobedient, non-Christians keeping them in sin and spiritual death.

But how does Satan lead us away from God into sin and spiritual death? Well, you know it's by deceiving people and tempting people. This is what we saw in our first reading from Genesis isn't it? Remember how Satan subtly deceived Adam and Eve saying did God really say you must not eat from any tree in the garden? when God actually said you are free to eat from every tree except just one.

He's twisting God's word you see deceiving and he said you won't surely die when he knew full well when they sinned they would spiritually die.

you see he deceives and twists God's word and he tempts or appeals to people's desires like saying when you eat from it your eyes will be open and you'll be like God who doesn't in our world today want to be like God you know God of their own lives in control of everything lots of people do appeals to people's desires in fact even in Genesis 3 we were told when Adam and Eve saw the fruit as desirable for gaining wisdom like God that's when they took it and ate it Satan appeals to people's desires tempting them in fact he could have even used peer pressure I saw this cartoon on the next slide where the serpent is the green guy up the top left corner and it says to Adam every single person in the world has tried it but you there's only one other person in the world at that time it was Eve it's a slow burn joke point is he'll deceive and tempt he didn't have to use peer pressure in this case he'll do what he can to lead people away from

[13:42] God and into sin and spiritual death and that's why Adam and Eve had to leave the garden because they were now spiritually dead to God he succeeded in his mission and Satan continues to do the same work today he whispers in people's minds oh God can't be true look at all the injustice in the world or what will your friends and family think if you go to church or look how much more fun and freedom you can have without God in your life or surely love means you can pursue any type of relationship or look you're lonely or jobless or you're suffering does God really work for your good now I can show you from the Bible that they are all lies and I can show you from life that they are not a better way to live but this is how Satan leads and keeps people away from God and in sin and spiritual death now I need to add that people willingly believe his lies of course yeah you know people often say the devil made me do it well he deceived and tempted but you happily went along this is his first power to lead us away from

God into sin and spiritual death and then once he does he doesn't look after those he's led astray he then accuses us and demands our judgment that's his second power so on the next slide we read in Hebrews chapter 2 that the power of him who holds the power of death is the devil the power of Satan is the power of death that is he has the power to demand our eternal death he's like the prosecutor in the courtroom who accuses us of sin and demands our judgment which is eternal death what the Bible calls hell now people have all sorts of ideas about hell when we were talking with our family about heaven and hell some time ago my youngest daughter Megan said for her hell is a busy playground with only one swing but sadly it's actually much worse than that

Jesus described it as a place of weeping and gnashing teeth and we've been going through the book of Revelation at our Wednesday service and have a look at how Revelation describes it it's pretty full on on the next slide it says that those who reject God will drink the wine of God's wrath poured full strength into the cup of his anger and that person will be tormented with fire and sulfur in the presence of his holy angels and in the presence of the lamb and the smoke of their torment goes up forever and ever and they have no rest day or night it's much worse than the demon possessed man who was tormented day and night isn't it he lived a hell of a life under the power of Satan's demons but those who willingly follow Satan's deceptions and temptations will face an actual hell of a life which is terrible and it's why Christmas is such good news because at Christmas we remember the advent or the arrival of the king who was born on

Christmas day to save us all from Satan's power when we had gone astray how well this time it's not by his word like with the demon possessed man but by his death the rest of the verse from Hebrews on the next slide says since the children have flesh and blood Jesus too shared in their humanity there's Christmas so that by his death Easter he might break the power of him who holds the power of death that is the devil Jesus was born as one of us so that he could grow up and die in place of us and in his death he took our judgment he suffered hell instead of us and now that our sins have been paid for now that our judgment has been taken then Satan no longer has any power to demand we suffer it it's already being dealt with I have a confession to make actually a couple of months ago

I was visiting someone in Richmond hospital and I misread a parking sign and got hit with a parking fine I thought I had parked correctly so much so that I actually rang the council up to complain but when I went back and checked they were right I had sinned and so the fines department of the council had every right to demand that I pay the fine but imagine if the mayor of the council stepped in and paid my fine for me I said imagine wishful thinking I know but if he did the fines department could no longer demand that I pay it you see because the mayor had already paid it in my place well with Jesus it's not wishful thinking he stepped into our world at Christmas time to grow up and pay for our sins at Easter time taking our judgment in full and so now Satan no longer has any power to demand our eternal death to demand our judgment his power is broken this is how [19:21] Jesus saves us from Satan's power when we had gone astray and it ought to bring us great tidings of comfort and joy wouldn't it and yet that's not all by paying for our sins Jesus also brought us back to God as Peter says on the next slide Christ died for sins once for all the righteous for the unrighteous to bring you to God or in Ephesians chapter 2 on the next slide where we were dead in sin well God in his great love for us made us alive with Christ gave us new spiritual life even though we were dead in transgressions see Satan had led us away from God into sin and spiritual death but God's great love gave God's only son to pay for our sins to bring us back to a life restored like the demon possessed man he was sitting dressed in his right mind and so now we can have a mind that rightly knows

God as our heavenly father and we can have a mind that knows rightly how to live in this life as his precious children with contentment and joy we can even have help to resist Satan's ongoing deceptions and temptations and what's more this restored spiritual life now comes with the guarantee of restored physical life later which we'll look at more next week but you see this is how Satan saves us from Satan's power when we had gone astray he enters our world to pay for our sins to suffer hell in our place so that we need no longer fear death and judgment but can instead be forgiven and restored to life with God that is if we trust in Jesus instead of being like the townspeople who told him to go away and so do you trust in Jesus do you believe in him have you prayed to

God something like I believe you gave your son to save me from my sins help me to follow Jesus as my king it's as simple as that for those who have then we had to do what the man wanted to do that is follow Jesus and did do tell of all the Lord Jesus has done for him we are to continue to follow Jesus as our king who saved us and tell others what he has done for us whether it's by getting a Christmas card and sending it to a neighbour or family or friends perhaps putting a verse in it just by the by there's Christmas cards of sale after the service let me finish with a story it's true story it happened in May this year two French nationals along with a South Korean woman were in a safari park in Africa when they were kidnapped by terrorists and taken to Burkina Faso the French government sent 20 commandos in to rescue them two of the commandos on the next slide

Cedric on the left and Alan on the right you've got to hear it in French accent but they actually died in the process of saving the French nationals at the press conference the nationals on the next slide along with the South Korean lady told of all these soldiers did for them in rescuing them from what they called hell so the headline on the next line reads hostages rescued from Burkina Faso hell that's what they called it and they praise fallen French commandos Jesus is not a fallen French commando for he has risen but he did die to save us from Satan's power to rescue us from an actual hell to restore our life with God and so how much more ought we to tell of all he has done for us to sing his praises as the carol God rescue

Mary gentlemen goes on to say the last verse says now to the Lord sing praises all people in this place let's pray and then let's do that and sing our gracious heavenly father we do thank you that at this season we remember the advent the arrival of the king who came to save us from Satan's power when we had gone astray and to restore our lives back to you spiritually now and physically later help us therefore to tell of all the Lord Jesus has done for us and to sing his praises for we ask it in his name Amen