

***Recap of 6/18/23 message by Pastor Chris (Mark 5:1-20):***

- Jesus goes behind enemy lines to save those who are held captive by evil spirits. The man held captive is in such a deplorable state. He lives among the tombs, outcast by society as though he is a wild animal. He gashes himself with stones and screams day and night. It is a sad picture, and at first glance it may seem like a farfetched story. We tend to think that things like demonic possession do not still occur today, but indeed they do. Furthermore, our own condition apart from Jesus is not that different. Most of us will likely never experience demonic oppression such as this, yet we all were situated among dead, alienated from God, taken captive by evil forces and under the influence of a kingdom of darkness (Eph. 2:1-9; Col. 1:13-14, 21-22). We are up against supernatural powers that oppose God, destroy life, deface it, defeat it, and deform it.
- Jesus displays His power in freeing the one held captive. The demons recognize who Jesus is and His power when they call Him "Son of the Most High God." This is the answer to the question the disciples had just a little while before this when they asked, "Who is this that even the wind and sea obey Him?" Jesus saves this man who is held captive by freeing him from the demons. When the demons go into the pigs, the herd runs into the sea drowning themselves. Jesus did not consign the animals to destruction in the sea. The demonic spirits ignited the rampage that led to their destruction.
- The response to God's power displayed here is seen in two ways. First, the townspeople respond by pushing Jesus away. They fear Him and ask Him to leave, possibly due to the financial cost of losing such a large herd. David Garland notes, "They are more comfortable with the malevolent forces that take captive human beings and destroy animals than they are with the one who can expel them. They chase off the source of their deliverance and salvation. People can tolerate religion as long as it does not affect business profits." Conversely, we see the man who is freed respond in a way that all disciples are asked to respond. He desires to be near Jesus, and when Jesus commissions him to share what the Lord has done for him, he is joyfully obedient. He goes to the cities, declaring the amazing things God had done for him.
- We must ask ourselves if we push Jesus away. Do we regulate Jesus to a corner of our lives and treat Him as one we only draw near to when it suits us. If Jesus begins to affect our lives in ways that affect our pocketbook, principles, or relationships do we say that's enough, and push Him back into the corner? Or do we respond as the man does, desiring to be with Jesus, to follow Him, and excited to share what the Lord has done with any and all who will listen? It is important that we remind ourselves of who God is and what He's done regularly as we proclaim the good news of Jesus Christ.