**Special Presentation**

Mark 5:1-20

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December 20, 2024

**Jeff:** Let’s pray. Our gracious God, we thank You and praise You. We delight in You and know that You are the God of heaven and earth. Father, we are thankful and we submit to You because even though we think Your thoughts after You, we think the thoughts that You have revealed to us after You. And Lord, it’s a thing of submission for us to say and for us to embrace, that our finite minds cannot contain Your mind which is infinite. And that’s a humbling thing, yet it’s a true thing. And it’s a thing that we must embrace before You in order to live our lives as faithful servants, which means that there are mysteries in this life that are beyond us. And so Lord, we pray that You would enable us to think Your thoughts after You as You’ve revealed them and to pursue those thoughts as far as we are able. And yet when it comes to the point where we are not able, we pray that we would submit to you and bow before Your authority.

And Father, we also pray that You will help us to offer our hands, our feet, our eyes, our whole selves in Your service. Father, we pray that we would give ourselves as instruments of righteousness in Your cause, and not continue to offer ourselves as instruments of wickedness when we were under sins’ dominion and living in that kingdom, the kingdom of darkness. And Father, we pray that You will make us mindful of the great blessing that You gave to us, enabling us to do this in revealing Your will to us by sending Your only-begotten Son into the world.

Father, it’s at this time of year that we reflect on the Incarnation and are thankful for it. We’re humbled by the thought of it, and it’s one of those things that we can’t get our minds around. Obviously Mary was with child from the Holy Spirit, that is, it was by His means. And yet, Lord, beyond that we fail to go in a forward direction with any fruitfulness. So we bow before Your majesty and before Your sovereignty, and we recognize that You sent Your only-begotten into the world and that He saved us from our sins.

And so, Lord, as we gather together on a day like this we ask that You’ll bless us as we open Your word and as we hear from You and as we seek to listen to this Word in order to think Your thoughts after You better than we did before we came here. Father, we ask all these things, but also mindful that we have brothers who are not well. And so we pray for Don Maurer and ask that You will bless him and strengthen him and make him well. We pray, Father, that You’ll always continue to be with our brother Bruce Bickel. And Father, we just ask that Your hand of mercy would be upon him and his wife. We ask all these things in the precious name of Jesus Christ our Savior. Amen.

**Brave Men:** Amen.

**Jeff:** All right. Well today we are looking. This is going to be a two-part series; we are looking today at Mark chapter 5. And I have a couple of reasons for wanting us to look at Mark chapter 5.

One of the things that I would remind you of is the last time we were together. And I talked to you about the text, and one of the things was that the structure of the text came out. And as we were able to look at the structure of the text, I think that was helpful. And my own conviction is that when I teach I may not teach you how to teach. But sometimes what I teach is caught, and so one of the things that I love to do myself is to look for the way in which the Holy Spirit, using the human authors, the way He structured the text. And He does structure the text in some really profound and subtle ways. And this is a text where we see some of that structuring, and I want you to see it.

The other thing that I want you to catch is that this chapter—chapter 5 of Mark’s Gospel—has a lot of ideas in it that I think we need to embrace. Just be reminded of some basic ideas. For instance, the basic idea here is one of faith, that is, absolute trust in the Savior, and that’s here. And we see it come before us in a wonderful way, and I want us to see that.

But here there is also an admonition not to fear. And one of the things that I think that we have a tendency to do is to maybe dismiss that as something that is a platitude. But it’s an impossible platitude because there is obviously fear in all of life. So I want us to find that there is a distinction in this text between what we might find as things that are fearful, and there being a fear that is a fear of paralysis that has everything in the world to do with undermining our faith in a sovereign God. And believe it or not the Bible talks about that kind of fear in distinction from the fear that is a general fear that could be classified as filial fear, and so on. That will be for the next time we’re together. But I’ll show you how those things are structured today.

But I want us to see some structure. I also want us to see some content. So first of all let’s open up to Mark chapter 5, and I’ll read verses 1-20. This is a story familiar to you; it’s the story of the healing of the demoniac. This is the word of God; listen to it.

T*ithe came to the other side of the sea near 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 wi4th shackles and chains. But he wrenched the chains apart and he broke the shackles in pieces. No one had strength to subdue him. Night and day among the tombs and on the mountains he was always crying out and cutting himself with stones. And 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!’ And Jesus asked him, ‘What is your name?’ And 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 two thousand, rushed down the steep bank into the sea and drowned in the sea.*

*“The herdsmen fled and told it to the city and in the country. And people came to see what it was that had happened. And they came to see Jesus, and saw that the demon-possessed man, 4the one that had the legions, sitting there, clothed 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 bet Jesus to depart from the region.*

*“As he was getting into the boat, the man who had been possessed with demons begged Him that he might be with Him. And He did not permit him, but said to him: ‘Go 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 in the Decapolis how much Jesus had done for him. And everyone marveled.”*

**Jeff:** All right. Now I want you to see that this text and the text following it, presents a story that’s going to follow. And that story that’s going to follow is the story of Jairus and his daughter. Now I want you to see that this story, the story of Jairus, is connected with this story of the demoniac.

How so? Well, there is a preamble, a precursor, a prolegomenon, to this story and to both of these stories. And that story which is something of a preamble starts in Mark 4:35. And this is the story of Jesus getting into the boat.

You all know this story. I think this is the story that so profoundly affects us when we think about how the disciples related to Jesus in these early days. And this particular story has Jesus sleeping in the stern of the boat. In fact Mark even remembers it so well that he describes Jesus as sleeping on a cushion. Remember, they had been fishing all day, and so Jesus is sleeping on this cushion. And the disciples wake Him in the midst of this storm. He says to the storm, *“Peace, be still!”* And the wind ceases. And it’s at that point that the disciples absolutely marvel; they are terrified.

But I want you to notice what it is that they say. Look at verse 39: *“Peace, be still!” “The wind ceased and there was a great calm.”* Verse 40: *“He said to them, ‘Why are you so afraid? Have you still no faith?’ And they were filled with great fear and said to one another, ‘Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey Him?’”*

Now one of the things that I want you to catch is this. The two questions that are posed here are interesting. There’s a question by Jesus and there’s a question by the disciples. And the question that is posed by Jesus is “Why are you so faithless? Why are you afraid?”

Now that’s going to set us up for what’s going to fall out as the story progresses. But what I want you to see is that not only do we have that question “why are you so afraid? Why is your faith so little?”, but there is another question, and it is the question that the disciples ask.

The disciples actually ask the question, “Who is this?” So while Jesus asks “Why are you so afraid?”, the disciples ask, “Who in the world is this?”

Now what I want you to catch is this. This story that we’re going to look at is going to answer the who question. And it’s given the answer by the demoniac who says, “You are Jesus, the Son of the Most High God.” And then “why are you so afraid?” is going to be answered in the story of Jairus. That woman is terrified and it’s a lesson to the disciples. We’re going to get to that.

But what I want you to see is this. It is a story that basically finishes off with these two questions. “Why are you afraid; why are you so faithless?”—one question. And “who is this?” begins the next two stories. And so basically you have written out a structure: a./b., b. prime, a.’ you have a chiasm here.

And so the text itself, at least in the way that Mark is telling us, is that this section is a section that is qualified by two questions. And those questions are answered in the following two stories.

Now you have to ask yourself why did he do that? Why does Mark do that under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit? Why does that sort of thing happen?

Well I’ll tell you: there is a functional reason for this. And that functional reason is that this, even though it’s a literary document to us, this was an oral document to them. And so the fact of the matter is that if you were telling this story and listening for these oral cues, we don’t listen that way. But if you were listening back then, and you knew that all you were going to take away from the telling of this story or the reading of this story by someone out there reading one document that everyone else didn’t have, the only way you were going to come away from it was by picking up on the oral cues that were in it, and so being able to memorize it.

For instance, I’ll tell you that the Sermon on the Mount is a lot like this. In fact the New Testament is like this. But there are oral cues in the Sermon on the Mount, for instance, that enable people to pick up on its structure, and so memorize it. For instance, when you think about the Sermon on the Mount, there are basically three points to it. They are enclosed by the Law and the Prophets; that’s where you know where the body begins and where the body ends.

When you look at those three points, you think that’s a massive amount of material, for instance, *“You have heard that it was said.”* But each one of those breaks down in4to two triads. And those two triads—two sets of three—mirror one another. And then in the middle there is one set of three. And the last point has another two sets of three. They are a kind of parable, and the parables match one another.

So there are these oral cues that Jesus uses and that Paul uses and that Peter uses. Even though it’s a literary document, it was literary but meant for an oral culture. We’re thankful that we have this document in our hands today. But they were writing something the people were going to hear. And if they were going to hear it they had to write it with this kind of mentality in mind.

So that’s what we have here. We have this literary document. But it’s basically an oral presentation of these ideas. So we have these two questions. These two questions are going to be answered.

The first question that we’re going to pick up is who is this? And the answer to that question is going to be a factor when it comes to thinking about why I should be afraid and why I should not be afraid. And that’s obviously going to give rise to that next story. I’ll pick up with that the next time.

But let’s look at “who is this?” Now first of all, what we have is what I’m calling a battle of words. I want you to see this battle of words, and I want you to see who it’s being fought with. Jesus is well rested at this point. He’s been sleeping in a storm, right? And so He calms the storm. They—the Gadarenes-- get to the other side. And just as they get to shore this demoniac comes rushing at them.

And you know, when you think about it this is the crazy thing, right? I wouldn’t do this personally, but my mind races to think in terms of a movie and how cinematic this would be: to run up onto the shore. The first scene would be the stern pushing into the sand. And then to have this crazy demoniac come flying at you, right? I mean, whose response wouldn’t be to run to the tail end of the Pope, right? *(Laughter)*

Not Jesus. Jesus climbs out of the boat and faces this demoniac. Now think about how this demoniac is described because this is really important.

First of all he’s described as “unclean”; he’s unclean. Now for us, we might think that he’s dirty. He’s been living in the tombs; he’s filthy; he’s like an animal. And that may be the case. But that’s not the point that’s being communicated to us.

If we were Jewish people and we heard the word “unclean” we would think ceremonially unclean. We would think that this man is not fit for living within the covenant community. And that is only emphasized by what comes next. He is possessed with an unclean spirit: not a holy spirit, not the Holy Spirit, not the Spirit that sets people apart from uncleanness. But he’s possessed with an unclean spirit.

He’s surrounded by pigs—unclean animals, animals that the Jews understood to be ceremonially unclean. And he dwelt among the tombs.

You remember the story of the good Samaritan. And you remember how both the Levite and the priest pass by on the other side of the road. Why do they pass by? Because they think the man is dead, and what are they going to do? I mean, the guy’s dead, or at least he’s near death.

What good is it gonna do for us to go over and help the guy? I’ll tell you what it’s gonna do for us: it’s gonna set us back, because we’re gonna have to go through the whole process of cleansing ourselves ceremonially and stepping outside the camp for a time and not being able to serve. They don’t pay us for that nowadays, so that means time-and-a-half and it adds a lot to the temple work, and so on.

And so this isn’t a man who didn’t just look to be dead; this is a man who dwelt among the dead. He was unclean; he had an unclean spirit. And think about it: he’s surrounded by an unclean spirit, surrounded by unclean animals, living among the dead which are unclean.

**Ted Wood:** He belongs to the Gentile dead; those are Gentile tombs.

**Jeff:** Absolutely, the Gentile dead. So we understand him to be outside the camp of God. And whatever else we say about the demoniac, we have to at least say that what Mark is communicating to us is that this person is outside of the kingdom of God.

Now here’s the fascinating thing that we read about him, and it’s in verse 4. *“No one had the strength to subdue him.”* Now I find that absolutely fascinating, because when we get into this story I think we see a contrast here that I think we have to pick up on. But no one had the strength to subdue him. Chains couldn’t subdue him.

I think the question that we have to ask ourselves is: What are we being told here? I mean, what’s being communicated in this particular section that we should pick up on from a previous section?

For instance, one of the things that I would like to think about with you at some point is that here, early in Mark’s Gospel, you have this whirlwind of activity. From chapters 1-3 it’s like Jesus lands. He has taken a beachhead of territory. He’s just like a berserker, the second Adam going in and re-taking what the first Adam relinquished to the devil.

And then all of a sudden in Chapter 4 He stops and He says, “Let’s take a break. Let Me show you what I’ve been using to conquer all this.” And He pulls out the Word, the sword. And He says, “Let Me tell you about this.” And He begins to talk to them about the Word.

And then at the end of chapter 4 He’s off again. And in chapter 5 He’s using the Word again. But it’s a fantastic portrayal of the power of the Word.

But what I want you to catch is that there is something mentioned now that was previously mentioned that should prick up our ears. No one was strong enough to subdue him.

In chapter 3 Jesus said that no one can enter the strong man’s house and plunder his goods unless he first binds the strong man; then he may plunder his house. So here we have Jesus basically telling us what needs to happen in order to plunder the strong man’s house. Here He is, being violent to the strong man.

Now if you go back to chapter 3 one of the things that you discover in chapter 3 is that Jesus is dealing with the blasphemy of the Spirit and the division of Satan’s kingdom. *“How can Satan cast out Satan?”,* and that sort of thing; He’s dealing with Satan. So the strong man in that story in chapter 3 is Satan. Here is the embodiment of Satan in this strong man, in this Gadarene demoniac; here is the embodiment of Satanic activity. John?

**John Gratner:** In the context of chapter 3 after calling His twelve disciples, the Scribes come from Jerusalem and say that Jesus is the One who is possessed.

**Jeff:** Yes, absolutely.

**John:** *(Unclear)* “You’re the ones possessed by Satan; that’s who you’re following!”

**Jeff:** Yeah. And in chapter 6 that’s when His family will come to Him and take Him home because they think He’s crazy, right? Ted?

**Ted:** No, you’re digging very deep.

**Jeff:** I thought you were signaling me.

**Ted:** Oh, no.

**Jeff:** So what we might expect in this encounter between Jesus and the demoniac is not what we see. In other words, I’ll tell you what I would expect if I looked at this encounter. What I would expect is that here is this unclean, outside-the-kingdom demoniac, rushing at Jesus. No one can subdue him with their own strength; not even chains can subdue him. I would expect that this guy runs to Jesus, picks Him up, takes Him over his knee, puts Him in the camel clutch and takes Him down, right? That’s what you would expect if you see something like this: physical strength versus physical strength.

You know, I want to tell you something. Nowadays that’s the way we think, and it’s wrong.

It has been about a year ago now that somebody posted the most ridiculous thing that I could possibly imagine. Somebody posted that there was somebody who quoted a redeemed Germanic tribesman. I can’t remember who it was during that time. But he said to the bishop, “Had I been there with my men, Jesus would not have been killed. We would have rallied around Him.” That’s the dumbest thing I’ve ever heard in my life, because we would still be in our sins.

**Brave Man:** Amen.

**Jeff:** The idea that we’re manly men, that we’re going to save Jesus, think about how dumb that is. But there’s a mentality of men like that out there today. That can’t be us. I mean, that’s not manliness, and we’ve got to realize that. If our automatic connection goes to “Here is Jesus; He’s off back here. You come over here; we’ll take you!”, we’re thinking in the wrong direction.

Notice what happens. The demoniac knows that’s not the direction that he should take with Jesus. *“What have You to do with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God. I adjure You by God: Do not torment me!”*

*“I adjure You.”* What does that word “adjure” mean? What does the Greek word *orkidzo* mean? It’s interesting. One of the things that you do when you interpret Scripture is that in this case you can use *Strong’s Concordance. Strong’s Concordance* will take you to all the word references. And it doesn’t matter how they are translated into English. It will take you back to the Greek. You can look at the Greek and you can find all the places in the Greek where this word is translated either the same or differently.

I teach my students in my interpretation of the Bible class that if they don’t yet know Greek I teach them how to use the concordance, because a concordance is a fabulous tool that has been eclipsed by the computer. But I’ll tell you what. If you want to go back to the days when you really immersed yourself in a lot of Scripture, go back to the concordance; I encourage you to do that.

But here we have “I adjure You by God: Do not torment Me!” Matthew 26:63: *“I adjure You.”* I *exorkidzo* you. Notice that this is just a preposition; there’s our word; the preposition is a fixture.

**Brave Man:** What version of the Bible do you use?

**Jeff:** I use the Greek Bible. *(Laughter)* It’s the ESV; the ESV says, *“I adjure You.”* What version are you using?

**Brave Man:** The New King James.

**Jeff:** What does it say?

**Brave Man:** It says, *“I implore You.”*

**Jeff:** *“I implore You.”* Okay.

**Ted:** Adjure is stronger than implore.

**Jeff’s Yes. Go back with me again to Matthew 26:63, and you’ll see why “implore: is not sufficient. In Matthew 26:63** notice what it says. This is Jesus before Caiaphas and the council. The testimony was that this Man is able to destroy the temple of God and rebuild it in three days. *“And the high priest stood up and said, ‘Have You no answer to make? What is it that these men testify against You?”*

Verse 63: *“But Jesus remained silent. And the high priest said to Him, ‘I adjure You by the living God: Tell us if You are the Christ, the Son of God?”* In other words, “I place You under oath.”

And that’s the idea here. When you think about “adjure,” it can mean “to cause someone to swear, to seek to place someone under oath, and to exercise superior power over another person.” That’s what *orkidzo* means. If you look at *orkidzo,* the high priest says, “I am placing You under oath. Tell us if You are the Son of the living God.”

Now notice: Here is the demoniac that no one can bind with a chain. No one can bind or subdue him; he has such great strength. And He chooses the weapon. The weapon of choice that He chooses is not the weapon of His physical strength, but it is the Word.

Now think about this. Jesus in chapters 1-3 is taking the kingdom back. And in chapter 4 He says, “Let Me tell you the weapon that I’ve been using to do this.” And He pulls out the sword of His word, and He talks to them about the Word. He gives them parable after parable in chapter 4 about the Word. And He talks to them about the person who hears the Word and what he’s like, and the person who doesn’t hear the Word and what he is like.

And then you get to this story. And the demoniac who is so strong that no one can bind him. He chooses the weapon of the word to fight Jesus with. And so what does he do? He knows that he has to beat Jesus with the Word. And so he says, “I bind You; I place You under oath! Don’t bother me anymore!” All right, that’s what he says: *“I adjure You.”*

Now notice in this text that “adjure” is set over against the word “beg.” “Beg” is used three times in this text. Mark is helping us here.

Look at what Mark does. He wants us to see that in verse 7 is *“I adjure you.”* But look at verse 12: *“And they begged Him.”* The demons begged Him.

Then look at verse 17. In verse 17 this is the townspeople. *“And they begged Jesus to depart from their region.”* And then notice the demon-possessed man in verse 18 begged Him, that he might be with Him.

In other words, there is a difference between “I place you under oath; I charge You by my authority; listen to me!” There is a difference between that and someone begging. And you see, Mark wants us to see that under the inspiration of the Spirit. Mark wants us to see that there is a difference between these two concepts that are going on here. I think this is fascinating, how these become battle words.

The demoniac sought to subdue the Lord with the word. And notice this: Jesus says, *“Come out of the man, you unclean spirit!”* And the fascinating thing is that when Jesus is saying this, it’s the idea that He’s continuously saying it. There’s the idea that He’s going, “Come out of this man!”, and that’s repeated. He’s charging this man.

Now I want you to see what the demoniac says. “I command you as one under oath: Do not torment me!” So Jesus is here saying, “Come out of him!” And the demoniac is saying, “I command You, I adjure You, do not torment me!” A battle of words commences. Yes, John?

**John:** Let’s go back to the part you were explaining. He refers to Jesus as “the Most High God,” and he does so by God’s power, right?

**Jeff:** Yes.

**John:** So he’s not saying that it’s in his power to bind Him with this oath, right? What are we unpacking here?

**Jeff:** So here is how I would unpack it. Do you know how Satan says to Jesus, “All of this I’ll give You,” right? As if it were his to give.

Now he has control over it to a certain extent. He knows that his control is under the supervision of God, right? That’s why in Job, when God is met by Satan at the throne, it says in the text, *“Have you considered My servant Job?”*, we almost read it like God is putting Job out. “I hear you’re looking for somebody to test. Have you thought about Job?” And you know, we all think about that. What in the world? He hated that test.

And what I realized is that in the Hebrew God is really saying this to Satan: “Have you been considering? Is Job on your mind? Have you been considering My servant Job?” And that’s really the idea. And the fact of the matter is yes; he has been considering Job. And so God allows him a certain reign.

And that’s the idea: that Satan offers Jesus all these kingdoms of the world; he’s tempting Him. But he knows that he doesn’t have ultimate power. And I think that’s what’s going on here; you find the same kind of parallel.

The demoniac is saying, “I adjure You by God.” He’s actually pulling out the trump card. The legion is a liar and a deceiver. And so he says, “I adjure You by God.”

Now here’s the Son of God. And the best way that I can think of it is like this. On a small scale what do we tell our kids? We say, “If I’m not home and somebody comes to the door, don’t open the door.”

And then you see this. What do you do if somebody comes to the door and says, “If you don’t open the door I’m calling the police?” They say, “I’d open the door.” What they’re trying to do is trick you into believing that they have an authority higher than your authority, which is your parent. And on a small kind of scale that’s the idea. There’s a duplicity, a deceitfulness of the demoniac saying, “I’m adjuring You by Your own Father,” that sort of thing. That’s the way I feel about it anyway. Okay, anybody else? Okay. So what isn’t it about and what is it about? Well this is what it’s not about. It’s not about loudness of voice, right? It’s not about volume. I would say that for Jesus and for the demoniac that it’s not about who can speak the loudest.

What is it about? It is about whose authority reigns, whose authority rules. And so what we find is, we find that Jesus is the authority here.

Now the question that we have to ask is: Why the pigs? You know, when you think about this, the legion of demons is saying, “Send us to the pigs.” Why the pigs? I mean, spirits don’t drown.

The critics love to remind us that this is one of the failures of the Bible, right? You know, spirits don’t drown. It’s as if first-century people didn’t know that spirits don’t drown; they were so dumb! We are moderns and we know spirits don’t drown. So what about your Bible? That’s the idea.

But do you ever stop to think that drowning is not the issue here? Drowning is not the issue; authority is the issue. That’s the issue, and so I want you to think about this for just a minute. Drowning is not the issue; where they can go is the issue.

And here is the point of this. The task of every gospel minister is to take up the authority of Christ.

I want you to think about it like this; just think about this with me for a minute. Jesus has the power to send these demons anywhere He so desires. The demons beg Him to send them to the pigs, and He sends them into the pigs. The demoniac now knows that Jesus is the One with the authority. So he goes to Jesus and he says, “Let me come with You,” because Jesus is the One with the authority who sends the demons into the pigs, or permits the demoniac who is now healed to follow Him. Jesus is the One with the authority.

Now I want you to think about this. Think about the comfort that this could bring. Think about the demoniac who knows that the legion of demons isn’t coming back because Jesus who has the authority sent them away. That brings an incredible amount of comfort to recognize not that demons can drown; this is about Jesus’ authority to send them away and the comfort that this brings to the demoniac, realizing that they can’t return; they are not permitted to return to him. Yes?

**Don Bishop:** So are we to believe then that by the pigs drowning they are trapped by Satan’s authority?

**Jeff:** No, I don’t see it that way. What I see is that them going into the pigs and the pigs coming into the water and the pigs drowning is a manifestation of Jesus sending them. It’s a manifestation of His authority. The spirits are trapped in the water. They’re free to go, but they’re not free to return to the man. Yes?

**Ted:** *(Unclear)*

**Jeff:** That raises the question: What’s next? What is God’s plan and purpose with the townspeople and the demon-possessed man? You know, this is an ironic thing. I feel like t4his is a thing we’re pondering and actually using in Biblical counseling situations, because the townspeople beg Jesus to depart, and He grants them their wish. And the demoniac—we would say the Christian, the believer in Christ—wants to be with Him, and Jesus says no.

Now when you think about this, think in terms that they are both prayers in one sense. The townspeople pray to Jesus and Jesus grants their prayer. They are unbelievers. The believer prays to Jesus and says, “Take me with you,” and Jesus says, “No.”

And I want to say, (a groan of frustration.) Because that’s Psalm 73, isn’t it? Psalm 73 says that the wicked prosper. They don’t seem to have any pains in their death and their lives are great. And the Psalmist says, “Life stinks! Things aren’t going the way that I would have them to go!” And there aren’t sinful things that I would like to see happen, but good things. So God’s plan and purpose that He reveals to us is not always our plan and purpose.

But I want you to notice what Jesus tells the man; it’s in verse 19. *“He did not permit him. But He said, ‘Go home to your friends and tell them how much the Lord has done for you, and how He has had mercy on you.’”*

In other words, “go share the gospel with your friends.” And then the next verse: *“And he went away and began to proclaim in the Decapolis what great things Jesus had done for him. And everyone was amazed.”*

Here is the man who everybody recognizes. And he’s going away and he’s telling people, and people hear it and are amazed.

Now you know, I want to say this to you. One of the things that I think the Christian community does is that it puts famously sinful people at the head of the pack too early, and makes an incredible mistake by doing that.

You may have read Rosaria Butterfield’s book on her conversion, how she basically came to saving faith in the Lord. And she came to saving faith because she was actually writing a book against Christianity while she was confronting evangelical ministers in Syracuse. She was the head of the gay and queer department at Syracuse University. She happened to meet a guy by the name of Ken Smith who invited her over for dinner and shared the gospel with her. That started a friendship with her. And she eventually came out of that lesbian lifestyle and gave her life to Christ.

And I’ll never forget this. Sometimes if you’re a part of a denomination, sometimes you’re really happy with the denomination and sometimes you’re really unhappy with how they handle things. This is one of those cases where I was really pleased with how the denomination handled things and how people in the denomination handled things. They protected that woman for a lot of years, and did not allow her to be put out there by others, and counseled her not to put herself out there.

And so for many years she was just trying to learn what it was like to live a lifestyle different from the one she was living. She ended up finding a husband and marrying him; she became a pastor’s wife. And it wasn’t until after she was a pastor’s wife and a home schooling mom that the started to write. And that’s when she started to get notoriety.

**Don:** She was here a few years ago for a seminar.

**Jeff:** Yes.

**Don:** And we had to have guards here, because a lot of times they demonstrate. And she made a speech.

**Jeff:** I tend to forget that she’s on the front lines of the culture war, and that brings with it a lot of difficulty.

**Ted:** Was it a PCA pastor?

**Jeff:** The one she married?

**Ted:** No, the man who took her in for dinner.

**Jeff:** It was an RP pastor.

**Ted:** Really!

**Jeff:** Yes.

**Gary Craig:** She’s a member of the RP denomination.

**Ted:** Oh, is she?

**Jeff:** Yeah. She’s married to another Reformed Presbyterian minister in Durham, North Carolina. Okay, the reason I say that is that this guy would be a notable fellow. Everybody knew this guy, right? This is the guy living with the Gadarenes among the demons. Your parents would say, “I’m going to take you to the Gadarene demoniac!”; that sort of thing, right?

Jump ahead to chapter 7. In chapter 7 Jesus returned. *“He went out from the region of Tyre and came through Sidon to the Sea of Galilee, within the region of the Decapolis.”* This is the demoniac’s home town.

*“And they brought to Him a man who was deaf and had a speech impediment.”* And listen now to what they do. *“They begged Him to lay His hand on him.”*

When He was in the Decapolis earlier they begged Him to leave. But this demoniac went back home to the Decapolis and told of the wonderful things that God had done. And then when Jesus returns to the Decapolis they bring out a deaf man, and they beg Him to lay His hands on him.

That to me is the fruit of that life. That to me is what happens when Jesus says no to your prayer. And it’s a good reminder to us that God has a plan and a purpose; He knows what He’s doing. And sometimes it doesn’t always appear that way to us. But He certainly does have a plan and a purpose, and it’s for our good. And it’s not just for our good, but for the good of others.

And so that’s a beautiful ending in itself. You know, you’re not flagged. It’s not like hey, do you remember the demoniac? It’s not like that. It’s subtle; it’s built into the text. But if you hear it you hear what’s going on, and it’s a beautiful thing. Next time we get together we’ll talk about the next story. That’s what I have for you today. So let’s pray and we’ll adjourn.

Gracious God, thank You for the love that You bring to us in the Lord Jesus Christ. Thank You, Father, that He possesses all power and authority to subdue the devil. And in fact He came to triumph over him. And we rejoice that his kingdom, the kingdom of the evil one, is abolished, even as the heel of the Son trampled upon it. Lord, we ask that You’ll bless us today as we go out into this world, as we have interactions with people. We pray, Father, that You’ll make us not to be afraid but to know who Jesus Christ is, and to be able to give that winsome answer to those who ask. And so we pray in Jesus’ name. Amen.

**Brave Men:** Amen. *(Applause)*