

Power Over Human Nature

Mark 5:1-20

December 3, 2017

DAY 1: Hitting the “bottomest” of the bottom

1. The story we’ll look at this week is not just a story of a man hitting bottom. It is worse than that. It is a man who hardly even knows he needs to hit bottom.

2. The story begins as Jesus and His disciples cross the Sea of Galilee from the more populated area on the western side of the sea to a more remote side on the eastern coast.

Mark 5:1 They went across the lake to the region of the Gerasenes.

² When Jesus got out of the boat, a man with an evil spirit came from the tombs to meet him.

Mark 5:3 This man lived in the tombs, and no one could bind him any more, not even with a chain.

3. Where was the man currently living?

4. We get something of the man’s past in verse three. What had the people of the town tried with him? Why do you think they tried to bind him?

Mark 5:4 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.

5. How effective had the efforts of the people been to control this man?

Mark 5:5 Night and day among the tombs and in the hills he would cry out and cut himself with stones.

6. What else do we learn about the man?

7. What do you imagine he “cried out?”

DAY 2: The startling care of Jesus

1. We continue our story of “the man of the tombs.”

Mark 5:6 When he saw Jesus from a distance, he ran and fell on his knees in front of him.

2. If you had seen this man running down out of the hills toward you, his chains clanking as he ran, and quite possibly naked, what would you have done?

Mark 5:7 He shouted at the top of his voice, "What do you want with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? Swear to God that you won't torture me!"

3. Mark tells us that the man fell at the feet of Jesus and shouted at the top of his voice.

4. What does the man think he knows about Jesus?

5. What does he seem to believe Jesus will do to him?

6. Jesus had diagnosed one of the major problems in the man.

Mark 5:8 For Jesus had said to him, "Come out of this man, you evil spirit!"

Mark 5:9 Then Jesus asked him, "What is your name?" "My name is Legion," he replied, "for we are many." ¹⁰ And he begged Jesus again and again not to send them out of the area.

7. If you had been a professional counselor, what would you have recommended for this man? What would you have told the people of the town to do with him?

8. Why did Jesus engage with the man? List several reasons.

DAY 3: The power of Jesus to deal with the human hearts

Mark 5:11 A large herd of pigs was feeding on the nearby hillside.

¹² The demons begged Jesus, "Send us among the pigs; allow us to go into them."

Mark 5:13 He gave them permission, and the evil spirits came out and went into the pigs. The herd, about two thousand in number, rushed down the steep bank into the lake and were drowned.

Mark 5:14 Those tending the pigs ran off and reported this in the town and countryside, and the people went out to see what had happened.

Mark 5:15 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.

1. In the secular western world, this story would be laughed at. That is, it would be laughed at by people who haven't been very successful at helping someone like this.

2. Yet, scoff as some might at this story, the proof of the pudding is in the tasting. When the people of the town come out to see what has happened what do they notice about the man?

3. If you had been a townsman, and had had numerous failed experiences trying to help the "man of the tombs" what would have been your response to Jesus' "methods?"

4. Perhaps you've had some experience with a family member, friend, or co-worker that seemed like never "hit bottom," though there were many times when you thought, "this time, they'll hit bottom." What was your response when the person failed to hit bottom and continued in their downward spiral?

5. Have you ever dealt with someone in worse shape than the "man of the tombs?"

6. Have you ever looked at your life and given up on yourself?

7. Have you ever had someone refuse to give up on you?

DAY 4: The state of the townspeople.

1. While we have focused on the desperate need of the “man of the tombs,” the story also tells of the desperate plight of the “normal” people, as some would think of them.

Mark 5:14 Those tending the pigs ran off and reported this in the town and countryside, and the people went out to see what had happened.

2. Upon hearing of the dramatic change in the “man of the tombs” the townspeople traveled out to see this odd story for themselves.

Mark 5:15 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.

3. What did they observe about the man?

4. One might assume that the townspeople would be thrilled for the “man of the tombs” and for his family. Such was not the case. What was their response?

5. Mark tells us that their prime response was fear. Of what things do you imagine made them fearful?

6. Apparently they cared about several other things more.

Mark 5:16 Those who had seen it told the people what had happened to the demon-possessed man--and told about the pigs as well.

7. After seeing the “man of the tombs” dressed and in his right mind, they are then told of the odd and wild story of the stampede of pigs off the cliff and into the Sea of Galilee.

8. If you had been a townsman or townswoman, and heard both stories—about the “man of the tombs” and the stampede of pigs into the Sea of Galilee, what would have been your likely response?

Mark 5:17 Then the people began to plead with Jesus to leave their region.

9. What reasons could have prompted them to “plead” with Jesus to leave, not just their vicinity, but their “region”? What does this say about their real values?

DAY 5: A new life, a new identity and a new purpose.

1. The story reaches its climax in these last three verses.

Mark 5:18 As Jesus was getting into the boat, the man who had been demon-possessed begged to go with him.

2. What benefits could the former “man of the tombs” had by going with Jesus and the disciples?

3. The story takes some very surprising and astounding turns at the end! Instead of telling the man to join the little band of disciples, Jesus tells him he has something even more important to do!

Mark 5:19 Jesus did not let him, but said, "Go home to your family and tell them how much the Lord has done for you, and how he has had mercy on you."

4. This sudden and remarkable decision by Jesus tells us a lot about the gospel. Three big ideas strike me.

a. New life: What does Jesus’ decision say about the new life the man has received?

b. New identity: The man had been the “man of the tombs.” He now bears some new identities! Place a check by any of the ones that strike you:

My past is forgiven.

I’ve been given a clean slate, a new start in life.

Guilt, regret, shame and failure need not be what identifies me any longer.

c. New purpose: the man had orbited the most central part of his life around himself. Now his life would orbit around God’s purpose for his life!

My life matters.

I have stories of life change to tell.

I can testify to the power of God in someone’s life, no matter how low their life has sunk.

Mark 5:20 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.

5. What was the response of the people to the man’s testimony?

