

Mark 5 pt. 1 v1-24

V. 1 - Following Jesus calming the storm on the Sea of Galilee during their transit they arrive in a region called the Gadarenes, also called the area of the Gerasenes or Gergesenes.

This is part of what is also called Decapolis - a term which we will see later which means 10 cities.

It is situated to the south east of the Sea of Galilee and would have had a mixed population of Jews and Gentiles, although much has been made over the fact that this region would have belonged to the tribe of Gad from the time of Israel's moving into their inheritance (hence Gadarenes).

V.2-5

Jesus doesn't even really have time to get out of the boat.

Remember Mark's gospel is characterized by the use of this word immediately, jumping from one event to the next. The exact amount of time is unknown but certainly this interaction occurred and developed quickly.

It's quite a disturbing occurrence if we're being honest.

Out of the frying pan into the fire as it were - from one storm on the Sea to a deeply unsettling interaction with demonic beings in or at least near a graveyard.

None of these things move Christ to fear. He has power over life and death, angels, demons, and all creation.

We also know from the other gospels that there were two men that were afflicted by these unclean spirits but Mark only records the one. Perhaps he was the more violent of the two.

What a sight this man is - untameable, uncared for, haunting the mountains and the tombs, living on the edge of society, written off by his community, resorting or compelled to self-harm - literally cutting himself with sharp stones. What a poor sight!

He has an appointment with the Lord of all creation.

This pays real credence to Jesus' teaching on a shepherd who having 100 sheep, if one goes missing, will leave the 99 to seek out the one lost sheep.

In this instance there is no discernible multitude crushing about the tombs in such a great lather ready to see Jesus work on this wretched, afflicted soul. Perhaps their fear keeps them back, perhaps they have already written this man off as “unsaveable.”

Watch Jesus work!

V.6-13

This possessed man rushes to worship Jesus - how confounding!
What is going on here?

JFB offer a good explanation: “...not with the spontaneous alacrity which says to Jesus, “Draw me, we will *run* after thee,” but inwardly compelled, with terrific rapidity, before the Judge, to receive sentence of expulsion.” (Jamieson, R., Fausset, A. R., & Brown, D.)

No being is so strong as to resist Christ as Lord forever. And these beings, having seen those invisible things in heavenly places, certainly understand the power that is Christ's.

One day this will be revealed to all mankind - believers and unbelievers alike.

[Phi 2:9-11 NKJV] 9 Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, 10 that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, 11 and [that] every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ [is] Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

This poor man, possessed by many demons, is not himself, as we will see, and these demonic beings are using him and find themselves face to face with their maker and their judge - as we all will one day.

They know their end as well, as Jude explains:

[Jde 1:6 NKJV] 6 And the angels who did not keep their proper domain, but left their own abode, He has reserved in everlasting chains under darkness for the judgment of the great day;

[2Pe 2:4 NKJV] 4 For if God did not spare the angels who sinned, but cast [them] down to hell and delivered [them] into chains of darkness, to be reserved for judgment;

So Jesus has a conversation with this host of wicked angels that have tormented this man. It's almost surreal the level of even-handedness we see with Jesus.

He is not terrified, he is not swayed by their words (as we will see), their destruction is at hand.

Jesus is far more focused on delivering this man from this terrible darkness than bantering with demons.

We also see that these demons are not free to do as they please. When Jesus enters their area they are under His command. They don't have an option to flee, to possess somebody else, or anything like that. They have to ask permission for their next move.

Their request is a strange one, one we may not fully understand but I propose to you one perspective.

Swine were considered by the Jewish people to be unclean. And whether or not this was an illegal Jewish operation meant to make money off of their gentile neighbors is unknowable. What we do know is that swine are considered unclean animals by the Jewish people in accordance with God's law and so this appears to be great poetic justice that Jesus casts/permits these unclean spirits to occupy these unclean animals.

It's as if He is saying, "the unclean for the unclean."

Now - Christian - take heart and take hope. You are clean, washed by the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ and His word. You don't ever have to fear the unclean spirits. Only one Spirit lives within you - the Holy Spirit of God. You are already possessed - By Him, as His treasured possession!

The clean for the clean.

[1Jo 4:4 NKJV] 4 You are of God, little children, and have overcome them, because He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world.

V.14-20

We find here a puzzling response, but not an entirely unexpected response to Jesus saving this man.

The community is not overjoyed or overflowing with praise and gratitude.

To see this man who had been cast off by society clothed, and in his right mind - a new creation! - inspired fear in them but not necessarily a reverential, worshipful awe.

Also, this work of Jesus had cost somebody a ton of money! But...was Jesus concerned with that over this man? No. Not one bit.

This man mattered to Jesus and that is the message we preach to all people - you matter to Jesus!

Far from declaring Jesus their Lord and seeking to learn and grow and sit at His feet like this healed man - the community rather ask Him to depart from them.

Not everybody will receive Jesus how we would desire, even under remarkable circumstances.

In a way this community was more comfortable with this man roaming the mountains and tombs cutting himself than they were with seeing him at Jesus' feet. The cost for them was too high. The miracle was too grand. The healing was too certain.

So what is next for our new creation? Naturally he wants to follow Jesus, regardless of what his community says. BUT, Jesus instructs him to stay where he is and go tell others "what great things the Lord has done for you."

Our testimonies are that - what great things the Lord has done for us in making us new creations!

Jesus does not allow this man to obscure his past, dark as it is, (as some would prefer to do) but to use it as a demonstration of God's vast grace.

This is amazing! Also, we must not forget that on other accounts Jesus asks people specifically to keep quiet about their miracle. But not this man, this man is let loose to go and spread the gospel.

This might challenge our notion of discipleship and kingdom work.

We might sometimes prohibit individuals from evangelizing or teaching or whatever because they're "new."

This man was sent out by Jesus upon conversion. Why? Well, we can trust in Jesus' foreknowledge and we can trust in His grace and we can trust that this man's conversion was more than superficial.

This isn't the case for everybody but it is the case for some.

Also, notice that this isn't necessarily what this man WANTED to do - he wanted to get in the boat with Jesus but Jesus sent him out that

others might benefit from the good message - that the Lord had compassion on him.

And what a message that is, and I wonder if we sometimes forget that part of the message - the Lord has had compassion on me.

This man, newly converted, was obedient to the call. Enough so that Mark records for us the results of this man's work.

What did he know before he went out to the 10 cities and began to preach? Theology? Homiletics (preaching)? A certainly didn't have the New Testament. What he had was his immovable first hand knowledge of the person and work of Christ. He had Jesus Christ set firm now as the bedrock, the very foundation, for who he was.

V.21-24

Jesus crosses back over to the region of Capernaum where he is met by a great multitude again.

Over the remainder of the chapter we are going to see two miracles, intertwined with one another.

The first is a man, a ruler of the synagogue, begging Jesus to come and heal his sick daughter who is at the point of death.

The second actually occurs as Jesus is on the way to this man's house - Jesus, incidentally, heals a woman who had a terribly taxing medical condition.

Some people have coined this interaction as divine disruption.

But back to our ruler of the synagogue. This is a man who is secure in his office, he is a religious leader, we might call him the "pastor" of the synagogue.

ἀρχισυνάγωγος - a simple gloss might read: "leader of the synagogue" - "It was his duty to select the readers or teachers in the synagogue, to examine the discourses of the public speakers, and to see that all things were done with decency and in accordance with ancestral usage..." (Thayer's Greek Lexicon)

Jairus was this man's name. I always love when Biblical authors include names of people, it humanizes them beyond a faceless person who happened to be interacting with Jesus. It marks them as a historical person who bore witness to Jesus and His ministry.

This man is desperate, as desperate as any parent who is on the verge of losing a child.

We know that not many of the religious leaders believed in Jesus, many shunned him, but a few did believe.

We know that when Jesus taught in a synagogue in Nazareth, his own home town, that: “[Luk 4:28-29 NKJV] ...all those in the synagogue, when they heard these things, were filled with wrath, 29 and rose up and thrust Him out of the city; and they led Him to the brow of the hill on which their city was built, that they might throw Him down over the cliff.”

This man Jairus comes to Jesus. Jesus does not question him about his doctrine, or anything really - what we read is that Jesus went with him.

Jesus is patient, compassionate, and gracious to people. And he doesn't speak “I told you so's”, accusations, or sick-burns at people in need.

But, even as Jesus goes with Jairus, Jairus' faith, and patience will be tested on the way.

Why? Because somebody else needs Jesus!

This is a perfect reflection of humankind. Many, many people need Jesus! We are not the only one's who need the Lord!

And when we are walking with the Lord, certain that He will fix whatever is broken, heal whatever illness plagues us, remove any stumbling block in our way. When we, so desperate in our need, have our Jesus moment disrupted we find ourselves greatly challenged.

That is what we find here with Jairus.

AS they are on the way something remarkable happens. A woman, equally desperate, unclean by society's standards, in very real pain, reaches out to touch Jesus. She needs him so much she is willing to reach out to Him.

Jairus' rush to healing is disrupted, and Jesus asks the question - "Who touched my clothes?"

Now what Jesus? Now what Jairus? Now what desperate woman?

How do we handle disruptions in our walk with Jesus? Are we willing to push the desperate person out of the way for our own needs? What

about to save our own child? Whose pain is more real, more valuable, more urgent? What does Jesus want to do in that situation?

All questions for further consideration and meditation.