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Sermon Summary #14

Restoration! Mark 5:1-20

Why do people reject the reality of Satan and demonic spirits?

The reason can't be biblical. It isn't because some other theological truth in the Bible denies Satan's existence or rules out the reality of demons. There's nothing theologically incoherent about the idea of a Devil. Neither can it be scientific. No discovery in the realm of physics or biology or astronomy or geology or any other discipline has disproved the existence of Satan. Neither is it due to some argument from the realm of politics, philosophy, the medical field, sociology, or psychology. Rather, people reject the existence of Satan and demons **because they fear the ridicule of others**. Or, to put it more positively, they **crave** the recognition and respect of people which they would surely forfeit if it were discovered that they believed in such things. To admit that one believes what the Bible says about Satan and demons is to expose oneself to ridicule and laughter and scorn. It is to suffer the loss of academic and professional respectability.

If you are a Christian and you insist that spiritual beings such as Satan and demons don't exist, don't kid yourself by insisting that you have solid scientific or philosophical grounds for doing so. **Your problem, dear friend, is a combination of pride, selfish ambition, and the fear of man.**

I say all this because if ever there were a story in the Bible that had the potential to invite the ridicule and scorn of unbelievers, it is Mark 5:1-20. No story in Scripture is more vivid in its portrayal of the demonic than Mark 5:1-20. No episode in the life of Jesus more graphically describes his conflict with the demonic than does Mark 5.

This story isn't primarily about demons or a crazy man or pigs. It's about the authority and mercy of Jesus. It's about the hope of restoration. It's about the good news that in Jesus you can find wholeness and peace and joy no matter how jacked up you may be, no matter how addicted you've become, no matter how embarrassing and shameful your life has been to this point in time. In fact, the two most important verses in this story are v. 15 and v. 19.

“And they came to Jesus and saw the demon-possessed man, the one who had had the legion, sitting there, clothed and in his right mind, and they were afraid” (v. 15).

“And he did not permit him but said to him, ‘Go home to your friends and tell them how much the Lord has done for you, and how he has had mercy on you’” (v. 19).

The story . . .

This may be the most jacked up, dysfunctional human being ever encountered in Scripture. This guy was **homeless**: he lived in the graveyard, in the tombs. He probably rarely if ever **bathed**. The smell must have been unbearable. Luke (8:27) tells us he was **naked**. He was probably **malnourished** and in horrible physical condition, yet he displayed a supernatural strength. Neither chains nor people could control or subdue him. He would take sharp stones or pieces of pottery and **cut** and gash himself. He was unwashed, unclothed, bloody, and abusive. All through the night people everywhere could hear him screaming and crying out aloud. This **self-mutilating maniac** was a constant nuisance and potential threat to the people who lived in the area and they were helpless to do anything about him. His problem wasn't treatable by normal methods. His problem wasn't chemical or biological or social or psychological. Neither drugs nor counseling would do any good. He was demonized!

The terminology of “demonization” -

Simply put, to be “demonized”, as was the case with this man in Mark 5, is to be inhabited or indwelt by one or more demonic spirits who exert varying degrees of influence over your thinking, speaking, and behavior.

All sorts of questions cry out to be answered.

(1) For example, **why does Jesus ask his name (v. 9)?** Most likely it was to let everyone present know the full extent of the demonic power he was confronting. By asking for a name it is made known that this man was under the influence of a virtual army (a “Legion”) of demons!

(2) Another question is **why the demons begged Jesus not to send them “out of the country” (v. 11) but asked that he send them into the pigs (v. 12).** The most likely answer is that this is further evidence that **demons are hell-bent on destruction.** They hate God’s creation, whether it be human or animal. Their aim is always to destroy and damage and disrupt. **Do not tinker** with the demonic! **Do not toy** with the occult! **Do not treat this as a game!** This is deadly business. Demons want only one thing: to destroy you, to derail your spiritual growth, to do whatever they can to interrupt and corrupt your life in God.

(3) **Why did Jesus permit this wholesale destruction of the pigs?** After all, this represented someone’s economic livelihood! I don’t know why Jesus was complicit in this destruction of animal life. I do know he is Lord over all of life, both human and animal, and he can do with us and with them whatever he pleases. Clearly, though, “in the eyes of Jesus, the rescue and restoration of one person is more important than vast capital assets. Compared to the redemption of a human being, the loss of the swineherds, considerable though it is, does not rate mentioning” (James Edwards, 159).

(4) **Why did the crowds react as they did?** Stunning! The crowds go out to observe what has happened. But they don’t seek out Jesus to learn more of him. They don’t celebrate the deliverance and restoration of this man who had been a life-long embarrassment and nuisance to them all. They don’t give thanks that he is now clothed and in his right mind. They don’t ask Jesus to come into the town and heal and deliver others who were suffering in similar ways. No. They are “afraid” (v. 15). And they “beg” Jesus to leave! Get away! Depart from us!

Don’t think that all people need is to see a miracle and they will instantly convert to Christ. Sometimes yes. Most times no.

(5) **What does this tell us about Jesus?** **First**, it displays his absolute, unchallenged **authority** not only over all mankind and nature, but over the demonic as well. **Second**, it puts on display his **mercy**.

Let me close by looking again at the two most important verses in this story.

“And they came to Jesus and saw the demon-possessed man, the one who had had the legion, sitting there, clothed and in his right mind, and they were afraid” (v. 15).

“And he did not permit him but said to him, ‘Go home to your friends and tell them how much the Lord has done for you, and how he has had mercy on you’” (v. 19).

V. 15 – That’s what it means for the kingdom of God to come! That’s what happens when Jesus makes an appearance: the formerly naked and bloody and smelly are “clothed”; the formerly deranged and deluded and demonized are restored to their “right mind”! Here is the good news of the gospel of the kingdom of God: Jesus restores people to their right mind! Jesus brings freedom! Jesus clothes the naked! Jesus confronts the loud cry of despair and replaces it with peaceful songs of joy and healing.

V. 19 – Go and tell everyone how much the Lord has done for you, and how he has had mercy on you!

Conclusion: