

## “WHAT IS YOUR NAME?”

Mark 5:1-20

Key Verse: 5:9

*Then Jesus asked him, “What is your name?” “My name is Legion,” he replied, “for we are many.”*

In today’s passage, Jesus heals a man possessed by evil spirits. Some people deny the existence of evil spirits. But today’s passage makes it clear that evil spirits not only exist but they can cause a serious problem in a person’s life. When we do not follow the Spirit of God, we tend to allow evil spirits to control us. Only Jesus can set us free from the bondage of sin and Satan. Let us open our hearts and hear the voice of Jesus.

### I. A YOUNG MAN IN TROUBLE (1-8)

Look at verse 1. *“They went across the lake to the region of the Gerasenes.”* After struggling against a severe storm, Jesus and his disciples finally arrived in the other side of the lake, perhaps in the early morning. Gerasa was one of the cities of the Decapolis, located in the eastern side of the Lake Galilee. At one time, the Greeks occupied the land. And the fourteenth Roman legion was once stationed in the area.

When they finally arrived, the disciples must have been very happy to survive the fierce storm. They were also happy to have a vacation after all. Peter was excited thinking about eating and getting some sleep after the stormy night.

As soon as they landed, however, they heard a strange cry. It was like the cry of a wounded animal. The disciples became apprehensive. Soon, they saw a man coming out of the tombs to meet Jesus, shouting at the top of his voice. The host of their vacation was not hospitable. In fact, he was monstrous.

Look at verse 3. *“This man lived in the tombs, and no one could bind him any more, not even with a chain.”* What had possibly caused this young man to become like this? In verse 9, he claimed that his name was Legion, which was a regiment of Roman soldiers. Perhaps he had seen his father being killed by the cruel Roman soldiers. Perhaps his mind went haywire when he saw his own sister being raped by a soldier. We don’t know for sure. How does a young man’s mind go awry? In the mid 1980s, a young man named John Hinckley, Jr. shot President Reagan and almost killed him. He said that he liked an actress named Jody Foster who was in a movie called “Taxi Driver” which he saw 15 times, and wanted to get her attention by killing the president. One account describes Hinckley’s teen period this way: “During high school, John became increasingly reclusive. He rarely brought friends home and would spend hours alone in his room, strumming his guitar and listening to the Beatles. Although his parents attributed his lack of social interaction to shyness, his increasing withdrawal from society is evident from a classmate’s description of him as “a non-guy” in high school.”

Again how does a young man’s mind become twisted like this? We don’t know. However, we do know that traumatic experiences do not always make a person crazy. Joseph in Genesis had many traumatic experiences, but he grew stronger in faith

because he was with God. In other words, this man's problem was not his human condition. The problem was that he did not live a life of faith in God. He did not follow the Holy Spirit. He obviously lived according to his sinful nature. And as he followed his sinful nature, he gradually drifted away from God. He opened a door for evil spirits to come in and occupy him.

Look at verse 3 again. *"This man lived in the tombs..."* Obviously, this man wanted to escape from the society. He wanted to be free, doing whatever he wanted to do. When people told him what to do, he began to cut his relationships with them one by one. He hated even his mom for asking him to have a hair cut. He hated his dad for telling him to put on decent clothes. Finally, he had no one to be with. And as he tried to live his life as he pleased according to his desires, he became a troublemaker and a nuisance to people. Many people began to shun him. Then he would say, "Nobody understands me. Nobody cares for me!" He rebelled against everyone and everything. He knocked down his neighbors' mailboxes and set fire on some trash cans. He committed many petty crimes. He was considered a threat to society. People would lock him up behind bars. But by this time, this man had acquired a great strength from the evil spirits. He would break the chains and escape. No one was strong enough to subdue him. He was left alone.

How did his situation develop? Look at verse 5. *"Night and day among the tombs and in the hills he would cry out and cut himself with stones."* The man thought that he would be free if he stayed away from the mainstream establishment of the society. He thought that he would be free if he lived alone among the tombs, with no schools to attend, no work schedules to follow, no speed limits to keep, and no one to tell him what to do. He even took off his clothes to be really free from all binding things. He roamed around the tombs in his birthday suit. But he was not really free. First, many mosquitoes did not leave him alone. Second, the demons did not leave him alone.

Look at verses 6-7. *When he saw Jesus from a distance, he ran and fell on his knees in front of him. 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!"* According to these verses, this man really wanted Jesus to help him, but when he opened his mouth, only the words of hatred toward Jesus came out. When he saw Jesus, he came to the Lord and fell on his knees in front of him. At the same time, the demon inside him shouted at the top of his voice that he did not want anything to do with Jesus. He was in effect saying, "Jesus, I don't want to have anything to do with you. Leave me alone." This man had a split personality. He wanted to come to Jesus, and at the same time he didn't want Jesus to be with him.

As we know, sleeping is one of the joys we have as human beings. But this man could not sleep because of the torment of the demons. He roamed among the tombs, and ran up and down the hills in distress. He cried like a wounded animal because of the torment of the demons. He began to cut his body with stones trying to forget the pain in his mind. This man never imagined the cost of enjoying his sinful desires would be so high. Many young people today tried to escape from the harsh reality by indulging in various sinful activities. But there is no real escaping from the torment of sins without the forgiveness that comes from Jesus.

Some years ago, a young rock star died of a drug overdose at the prime of his popularity. The Nirvana singer Kurt Cobain apparently kept a diary to chronicle his agony in life in the midst of his success. According to his diary, he knew that people saw him as a self-destructive heroin addict and an alcoholic. He denied he would die of a drug overdose. But he also expressed his agony of life when he said, "I am the product of 7 months of screaming at the top of my lungs almost every night, 7 months of jumping around like a retarded rhesus monkey, 7 months of answering the same questions over and over..." We might say that he was suffering from his demons.

We cannot deny that there are evil spirits in this world. They are real. The demons or the evil spirits are the foot soldiers of Satan. We must also know that Satan's head was crushed by Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection. His fate has already been decided. But he still has some residual power in this world until the second coming of Christ. It is like an enormous boa constrictor that is fatally shot on the head can still use his tail to exert his power for some time. Jesus teaches us in John 8:44 concerning Satan: "He was a murderer and a liar from the beginning..." Satan always twists the truth of God in an attempt to tempt us with sweet lies. His intention is to pull us down to eternal condemnation. His purpose is to get us to turn away from God and join him in his rebellion against God. He wants us to join him in his eternal punishment in the bottomless pit. We must know about this enemy and his agents.

Jesus saw that this man's problem was not mental, but spiritual. Jesus saw his problem as demon possession. This man was suffering because of the demons occupying his mind. Jesus wanted to set him free and become a young man with hope for future. As soon as Jesus saw him, he ordered the demons to come out of the man. Demons are never afraid of any man, but they were really afraid of Jesus. They trembled before the Son of God. Yet, they did not want to release their prisoner without gaining something in return.

## II. JESUS HEALS THE DEMON-POSSESSED MAN (9-17)

Jesus had already ordered the evil spirits to come out of the man. Before setting him free, however, Jesus wanted to help the demon-possessed man personally. How did Jesus help him and what can we learn from Jesus who helped this confused young man?

**First, "What is your name?"** Look at verse 9. *Then Jesus asked him, "What is your name?" "My name is Legion," he replied, "for we are many."* Jesus asked the man, "What is your name?" What was his reply? He replied, "My name is Legion, for we are many." His answer indicated how troubled this young man was. A legion was a Roman military unit made up with 6,000 soldiers. His strange answer showed that this man was occupied by many demons.

Let's think about why Jesus asked the man the question "What is your name?" In the Bible, a person's name represents his or her character and identity. This man had lost his identity. He let the demons represent him. His answer, "My name is Legion, for we are many," indicates how confused he was. He did not even remember his own name. His neighbors probably did not call him by his name. Everyone called him simply "the crazy punk." But Jesus asked him "What is your name?" Jesus wanted to restore his identity as a person who was created in God's image. Jesus wanted to save him from the

demon possession so that he could be a blessing to others. Jesus wanted to help him to find himself. Above all, Jesus wanted to establish a personal relationship with the man by asking him his name. Jesus knew that this man had no relationship with anyone, and he wanted to be his friend. A source of true happiness is not things we possess or what we achieve. Happiness comes from our good relationship with others, especially with our Creator. Jesus wanted to heal this man's broken relationship problem.

There are many young people in our society who suffer from evil spirits, even as they deny the existence of evil spirit. Many of them have no identity. They may know their names, but many don't know that they were created in the image of God. They don't know that they are God's children. Many act as if they were the children of the devil. We must help them to come to Jesus and be healed so that they may be restored as children of God. Our prayer for young souls and our one-to-one Bible studies with them are very important in this respect. Let us pray that our Bible students may build a personal relationship with our Lord Jesus.

**Second, a man's life is worth more than 2,000 pigs (10-17).** When Jesus began to help this man, the demons in him realized that they were going to lose their prisoner. But they did not want to give him up easily. They wanted to be compensated. They looked around and saw a large herd of pigs grazing nearby. The demons demanded the 2,000 pigs as a ransom price for their prisoner. Jesus accepted their demand without hesitation. As soon as they got the deal, the demons entered the pigs. The greatest joy of pigs is eating. But when the demons entered them, the pigs lost their appetite. They lost their joy of life. Even the pigs could not endure the torment of the demons. They decided to commit a mass suicide. They rushed over the steep bank into the lake and were drowned.

The herdsmen fled to the town when they saw what happened to the pigs. They reported it to the townspeople. Then the pig owners came to inspect the situation. When they saw Jesus and the man, who had been possessed by demons, sitting there by Jesus, fully dressed and in his right mind, they were unhappy. They did not care about the young man. Instead, they were angry with Jesus because their bacon industry was ruined. To them, their pigs were more valuable than a person's soul. They asked Jesus to leave their region before any more of their properties was lost.

To Jesus, however, the life of one seemingly useless man was more valuable than the 2,000 pigs. To Jesus, one person's life is more precious than any amount of money. In order to save one helpless man, Jesus did not hesitate to use the pigs that belonged to someone else. But this was only foreshadow of what Jesus would do later to save people like you and me. Jesus sacrificed his own life on the cross to redeem us. Mark 10:45 says, "For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."

In order to save this man, Jesus was hated, rejected and abandoned by the pig farmers. He was forced to leave the town. And he was rejected and killed on a cross in order to save you and me from the bondage of sin and death.

### III. JESUS GIVES HIM A MISSION (18-20)

Look at verse 18. *“As Jesus was getting into the boat, the man who had been demon-possessed begged to go with him.”* Jesus did not let him, but helped him in two ways.

**First, “Tell them how much the Lord has done for you.”** Look at verse 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.”* Jesus told the man to remember God’s grace. In the past, he wanted to enjoy his sinful pleasures, and as a result he became a slave of Satan. His relationships with his family, friends and neighbors were cut off. He became a loner. But Jesus had great mercy on him. By the grace of Jesus, he was freed from his demon possession. Now he was at peace, sitting quietly, dressed and in his right mind (15). He used to look like a homeless man with his dirty hair and glazed eyes. But now he looked like Josh and Chris. He was no more a slave of sin and Satan. Jesus restored him to be a precious child of God. Jesus told him not to forget this grace.

To remember the grace of God is important. But it is not easy to remember the grace of God. This man could have run to his ex-girlfriend as soon as he was healed of his demon possession, forgetting the grace of God. When we forget the grace of salvation through Jesus, we begin to complain about many things in life. We cannot be happy when we complain all the time. We must remember the grace of God moment by moment and let our hearts be filled with thanksgiving.

The name Paul means “little.” But the Apostle Paul was a great servant of God. He never forgot the grace of God in times of good and bad. He said, “But by the grace of God I am what I am ...” (1Co 15:10)

**Second, Jesus restores his mission.** Jesus healed the man from his demon possession and sent him back to his hometown. He told him to testify how much the Lord had done for him and how he had had mercy on him. Jesus appointed him to be a gospel worker for the people of Decapolis. How did he respond to Jesus’ calling? Look at verse 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.”* He proclaimed the grace of God throughout the region. The formerly crazy punk became a man of mission! The more he told about Jesus’ grace, the happier he was. And the people were touched by his personal testimonies. We can be truly happy when we have a mission from God that gives us a clear purpose and meaning in life.

We learn from this passage how Jesus can change a trouble-maker into a man of God. Let’s pray that through our Bible study ministry, God may help many young people to come to God and have a personal relationship with him. Most of all let us remember how Jesus sacrificed his own life in order to set us free from the bondage of sin and Satan. May God help us to testify how much the Lord has done for us!