

## **“My Name is Legion”**

Mark 5:1-20  
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Welcome & Ushers distribute Bibles

Introduction:

Super Bowl Sunday last weekend. Very clear winners and losers. (Vikings fans felt like they won already when Green Bay didn't make it...). I've been an athlete most of my life: winning and losing have often seemed pretty clear. But there have been other times when it's not so clear.

We're learning today from a story in Jesus' life that raises a bigger question. It's a story of conflict between the power of God in Jesus and the power of spiritual evil at work in someone. It's a story of God's victory over evil, and it makes me ask the question, "What does it look like when God wins?"

Read the passage.

Orientation to the finding the story in the Bible.

Read Mark 5:1-2. **They went across the lake to the region of the Gerasenes. When Jesus got out of the boat, a man with an impure spirit came from the tombs to meet him. Mark 5:1-2.** This is like the pregame warm-ups and maybe even the opening kickoff. It's setting the scene.

Jesus is outside his box. Good Jewish prophets don't go there. Notice in the story there's no evidence that the disciples got out of the boat!

These verses are there to set the scene for the real action of the story. But they already tell us that when God wins, when his will is done in the world, it is likely to happen on offense, in unsafe places, out of your comfort zone.

My college roommate and best friend was someone that most of my Christian friends were suspicious of. He wasn't a Christian and didn't always act like one. Of course, not all Christians do either, but that's another matter. My friends warned me about this friendship. It's easier to get dragged down than to get pulled up, they would say. That may be true, but this story would suggest that God's win happens when God's people dare to go places that seem unclean.

(Got to know your weaknesses when you cross boundaries, and not every Christian is called to every ministry, but the community of God's people does need to go where Jesus goes.)

**Read Mark 5:3-5. This man lived in the tombs, and no one could bind him anymore, not even with a chain. 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. Night and day among the tombs and in the hills he would cry out and cut himself with stones. Mark 5:3-5.**

Jesus is up against a strong force.

The townspeople tried to chain him! They had given up on him. He was not human anymore. He was just evil. That's all. Jesus doesn't see it that way. He sees a human being who is dangerous but still human. He is a tool of an evil force, but he is also a victim of an evil force. Jesus never takes his eyes off the prize. Who have you given up on? People for whom you don't hope for good things. People you wouldn't even think to pray for. If there are people in your life that are just wicked, this story challenges you not to forget their humanity.

The passage also challenges us to think about ourselves in that man's situation. Some people worry that they are beyond God's reach. Sins too great to forgive. Mistakes too great to fix. Hurts too deep to heal. (Compared to this guy, at least you have clothes on...). Jesus never takes his eyes off you as a person. His desire is to heal and restore you.

**Read Mark 5:6-10 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? In God's name don't torture me!" For Jesus had said to him, "Come out of this man, you impure spirit!" Then Jesus asked him, "What is your name?" "My name is Legion," he replied, "for we are many." And he begged Jesus again and again not to send them out of the area. Mark 5:6-10.**

This is a spiritual conflict. It has other sides too. No doubt he had medical and emotional issues. These were legitimate sides to his problem. But his problem had an undeniable spiritual dimension. In this particular case, it was clearly the root of all the other problems.

Main point is that Jesus has power over spiritual evil. He is stronger than the powers that seek to do us harm.

This says two things to us: (1) This is still true. The world is not up for grabs. The victory is God's. (2) The passage challenges us to consider the spiritual dimension of our challenges. Many of us are still bound. Maybe different forms now. Anger, addiction, unforgiveness, bitterness. These are bondages from which Jesus can set you free. And he invites you to hand them over. In this story, Jesus gains power over them when they are spoken out loud. Invite you to do that too. Maybe in prayer to God. Just name it. Maybe to a trusted friend. Tell them.

Summarize 5:11-17. Jesus heals him. He saves him. He sets him free. And the guys sits down, totally sane, fully clothed, like he's there for afternoon tea. Jesus allows the evil spirits to run into a herd of pigs (another signal of the uncleanness of this whole situation), and the townspeople want to run him off.

**Read Mark 5:18-20. 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 said, "Go home to your own people and tell them how much the Lord has done for you, and how he has had mercy on you." 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. Mark 5:18-20.**

He has a story to tell. Jesus sends him home, which might be the hardest place in the world to be sent. Go tell how much the Lord has done for you.

What story do you have to tell? Think about it. How has God's grace, love, healing, and hope "won" in your life? Be read to tell that story because God may very well be preparing for a similar victory in someone else's life. (If you're in a CG, you can talk about this with other folks in your group. It's one of the questions in the study guide.)

#### A final observation

Lots of parallels between this story and the story of Jesus' death. Lots of parallels between the suffering of this man and the sufferings that Mark tells us that Jesus experienced. Cut off from the community, bound, cut by stones, exiled to the place of the dead. This story has a lot of parallels to Jesus crucifixion. Jesus didn't just hit this guy with a lightning bolt of healing out of the sky, he actually walked his path.

*This is a strong statement of Jesus' love for us in our deepest pain. Turning to Jesus isn't just turning to a teacher or a leader or even a miracle worker. Turning to Jesus is turning to someone who's been where you are, who knows the pain you face, the fear you face, the things that bind you. He's been there and won the victory. And having walked your path, he invites you to walk in his.*

*This is the model that Jesus gives us to follow as his disciples. To keep our eyes spiritually wide open to the people around us and to see them in their pain. Whether it's screamingly obvious like it was for this guy or whether they hide it better. It's to turn away from the avoidance strategy and the chain somebody up strategy and to walk with them, love them, and pray for them. And to know that the victory is in God's hands.*

#### PRAY