

Touched by Jesus- Demoniac

All the world could be categorized into two groups those who have been born again and those who have not. But among those who have yet to come to saving faith in Christ, there is a wide smattering of degrees of distance from salvation. There are those who are totally ready. They just need someone to share the gospel with them and as soon as they hear it they are gloriously, eternally saved.

Then, there are people, like our character today, who definitely had to be way down on the end of the line. He was so far from Jesus that if he was any farther he would already be in hell. This man was not only severely lost. He was full of demons.

We are in Mark's gospel today and we will be looking at a very troubled individual who was truly touched and changed by Jesus.

During the night, Jesus and the disciples had gotten into a boat with the intention of crossing to the other side of the Sea of Galille. They did this quite a few times throughout the course of His ministry. I'm sure they did this because it was the most direct and practical way to get to towns on the other side of the Sea of Galilee. It also gave them a time of retreat from the constant press of the crowds as well as some much needed rest. In fact, on this particular boat trip, Jesus was asleep in the back of the boat. But this time there was a storm, panic, the abrupt awakening of the Master, and the sudden miraculous calming of the storm.

Read Mark 5:1-20 (HCSB)

1 Then they came to the other side of the sea, to the region of the Gerasenes. Mark 5:1 (HCSB)

Gerasenese= Gadarenes, Gergasenes. They are all similar names or words used to describe the residents of Gerasa or Gergesa. The variations come from manuscript copies and translations when the copiers and/or translators attempt to translate and identify the biblical region or city with that which was currently known. The variations arise because names and spellings of cities and regions change, sometimes several times, throughout their history. (ex. Seville, Sevilla- two pronunciations and two spellings even today)

The region of the Gerasenes bordered the eastern shore of the Sea of Galilee. There are steep cliffs at the shore of the lake in this region that support the events of the story.

2 As soon as He got out of the boat, a man with an unclean spirit came out of the tombs and met Him. Mark 5:2 (HCSB)

An unclean spirit is a demon. A former angel evicted from heaven with Lucifer upon his rebellion before man was created. Hell was created for Lucifer and his dirty spirits but they were and are still today allowed to roam the earth destroying, deceiving and in many cases inhabiting vulnerable human beings.

The habitat of this man, the tombs, reveals that this unclean spirit had taken control of him in a severe and powerful way. But he came out of the tombs and met Jesus. Why? Did the demon have that much control over the man and did he prefer to confront Jesus? Or, did the man still have enough control over his own faculties that he wanted to meet the stranger? Was he drawn to Jesus?

3 He lived in the tombs. No one was able to restrain him any more—even with chains—
4 because he often had been bound with shackles and chains, but had snapped off the chains and smashed the shackles. No one was strong enough to subdue him. **5** And always, night and day, he was crying out among the tombs and in the mountains and cutting himself with stones. Mark 5:3-5 (HCSB)

Horrorific state of this man:

Lived in the tombs

Could not be restrained- supernatural strength

Cried out night and day (like a wild animal?)

Cut himself with stones

This was no normal, or even abnormal, man. He was inhabited, possessed, controlled, and afflicted by demons. His fate, as it was, was absolutely hopeless and helpless.

How did he come to such an inhuman, beastly state? We don't know specifically, but we do know, according to scripture, that anyone who is not born-again is particularly and especially vulnerable to the influence and even habitation of demons within their physical bodies. It all comes down to sin. And it seems the more sin, the more rebellion against the things of God, the more susceptible and vulnerable a person is. **Fact:** Demons, though very powerful, work within the permission and authority of God.

31 “Simon, Simon, look out! Satan has asked to sift you like wheat. Luke 22:31 (HCSB)

So it is obvious that the more sinful and rebellious a person is, the more likely that demons would be granted permission to possess that person. Why would God do that? One, He is giving the person what he thinks he wants. Two, His desire is that in their greater misery that they would turn to Him.

I would strongly suggest that, not all, but much of the extreme and senseless violence, abuse, perversion and craziness in the world today is influenced by the work and possession of demons. If you believe the events of today's story to be true, then you must believe that demons are still at work destroying people's lives.

6 When he saw Jesus from a distance, he ran and knelt down before Him. **7** And he cried out with a loud voice, "What do You have to do with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I beg You before God, don't torment me!" **8** For He had told him, "Come out of the man, you unclean spirit!" Mark 5:6-8 (HCSB)

This man possessed by demons:

Knelt before Jesus

Correctly identified Him

Begged for mercy

This wasn't the man doing this of his own knowledge and strength. It was the demons in him. Notice the demons of hell know and acknowledge Christ (Jesus, Son of the Most High God) and they tremble in His presence. (James 2) Jesus had complete authority over them and they knew it. All they could do was grovel. They didn't even try to run, argue, or resist.

9 "What is your name?" He asked him. "My name is Legion," he answered Him, "because we are many." **10** And he kept begging Him not to send them out of the region. **11** Now a large herd of pigs was there, feeding on the hillside. **12** The demons^[5] begged Him, "Send us to the pigs, so we may enter them." **13** And He gave them permission. Then the unclean spirits came out and entered the pigs, and the herd of about 2,000 rushed down the steep bank into the sea and drowned there. Mark 5:9-13 (HCSB)

We can learn much about the nature of demons from this encounter with Jesus.

They are beings with names, personalities and purposes

More than one can inhabit or possess a person

They prefer to inhabit people as opposed to roaming the earth

They can and do possess living animals

They are totally submissive to Christ

Jesus tricked the demons in allowing them to enter the herd of pigs. I presume it was Jesus who drove the pigs to their gruesome death. As soon as the pigs ran off the cliff, the demons were left without habitation so they had to roam the earth and find someone or something else to possess. Why did Jesus do that? The Gerasenes were not a predominantly Jewish community (or there probably wouldn't have been a major pig farm nearby.) They were primarily gentiles of Greek or Roman descent, an independent community, and part of the Decapolis. Having a major source of the town's food destroyed would add to the impact on the people of the town. Maybe the people would at least come check out what happened.

14 The men who tended them ran off and reported it in the town and the countryside, and people went to see what had happened. **15** They came to Jesus and saw the man who had been demon-possessed by the legion, sitting there, dressed and in his right mind; and they were afraid. **16** The eyewitnesses described to them what had happened to the demon-possessed man and [told] about the pigs. **17** Then they began to beg Him to leave their region. Mark 5:14-17 (HCSB)

The man was delivered of the demons. The pigs did some high-diving. It made the front page of the grapevine news and much, if not all, of the town came out to see for themselves. When they got there, there were no pigs and the demoniac, of whom I'm sure they had all been terrified of and warned their children to stay away from, was clothed and acting normal..... All the people were so excited that they invited Jesus and the disciples to town for a BBQ (chicken). And, they all repented and became devout followers of Christ.

No! What happened? "They were afraid." After hearing the details of what had happened from the eye-witnesses, they began to beg Jesus to get back in the boat and leave. Why? Fear. Fear of what? Fear of change? Did they not want to lose any more pigs? Was it their own sin, their own demons they were afraid of giving up? It's "funny" that they were more afraid of Jesus than they were of the demoniac.

18 As He was getting into the boat, the man who had been demon-possessed kept begging Him to be with Him. **19** But He would not let him; instead, He told him, "Go back home to your own people, and report to them how much the Lord has done for you and how He has had mercy on you." **20** So he went out and began to proclaim in the Decapolis how much Jesus had done for him, and they were all amazed. Mark 5:18-20 (HCSB)

If anyone ever was, this man was changed by Jesus. Not only was he clothed and in his right mind, he wanted to follow Jesus. He wanted to get in the boat and go with Him. He begged.

But, Jesus commanded him to go back home and tell them what God had done for him. Why? They knew him and could see the miracle that had taken place. This would open up the door for the man to proclaim the good news. And, that's exactly what he did it throughout the Decapolis, a ten city region.

The people didn't even want to listen to Jesus but we read that as the former demoniac told his story, people were "amazed" and probably some turned to Christ because of his witness.

Touched by Jesus:

You are not hopeless If the demoniac wasn't hopeless, you're not hopeless. Jesus died for all your sins. John 3:16 World? Whosoever?

Resist evil and demons They are real. They are powerful, even today. Don't think for a moment that you're too good or nice of a person to worry about evil influences in your life. Be on your guard. The demoniac was an exception. Most of the time evil spirits work covertly to carry out their master's schemes and we never see them or outward manifestations of their destructive, deceitful work. They are masters of disguise, deceit, destruction and death.

8 Be sober! Be on the alert! Your adversary the Devil is prowling around like a roaring lion, looking for anyone he can devour. 1 Peter 5:8 (HCSB)

Accept change Look forward to it. God is in the life-changing business. If you haven't been changed, you've not been born again. And change is part of the daily process of God working in us.

The Gerasenes, at that time, completely rejected Jesus without even hearing Him. They probably did so because they didn't want any more change in their community. They liked their pigs. They liked their way of life. They liked their sin.

17 Therefore if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation; old things have passed away, and look, new things have come. 2 Cor 5:17 (HCSB)

Tell your story Can you believe that Jesus sent the former demoniac back to his own people to tell his story. A brand new convert. He didn't even get to spend one full day with Jesus.

My guess is that the man was successful by the fact that the scripture says the people were amazed.

You can, you must tell your story. Just tell what Jesus has done for you. What has He done for you?

18 Now everything is from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: 2 Cor 5:18 (HCSB)