

Don't Prioritize Pigs Over People-Mark 5:14-20

We talked last week about how Jesus cleansed the demoniac of the many demons inside the man, who insisted on being called by the group name Legion, instead of giving Jesus their right name, as they were asked to. When the demons left the man, at Jesus command, we see Mark 5:12 **And the demons begged Him, saying, "Send us into the pigs so that we may enter them."** The demons beg Jesus to send them into the herd of pigs. **and the herd rushed down the steep bank into the sea, about two thousand of them; and they were drowned in the sea.** The demons had been harming the man for years, torturing him, causing him to scream day and night, making him cut himself, isolating him among the dead, stripping him of his name, his clothing, and his sanity, driving him more and more insane—whatever humanity was left in him was being devoured by the demons. 2,000 pigs dying instantly in this way wasn't collateral damage of Jesus' miracle, it was a demonstration to anyone who wanted to understand of Jesus' power.

14 Their herdsmen ran away and reported it in the city and in the countryside. And the people came to see what it was that had happened.--Mark spends an unusually long time in discussing the reaction of the swineherds and the "crowd reaction" of the people of the 10 cities of the Decapolis to this miracle. A lot of people assume that if they saw a miracle with their own eyes, that it would automatically strengthen their faith, or push them toward a closer relationship with God, but that's not always the case. Miracles themselves don't seem to change the character of the soil of the heart very much by themselves. Not only were the people from the countryside gathered to see if this miracle had taken place exactly as they had been told, but the people of all of the cities in the region were coming out to see what had happened to the formerly demon-possessed man. The immediate reaction of the swineherds, at this very obvious exhibition of supernatural power, was fear. The result of their fear is that they seem to have scattered in their flight, some to the cities, and some to the country nearby, so that the news was very quickly heard both in the 10 cities of the Decapolis, as well as the surrounding countryside.

15 And then they came to Jesus and saw the man who had been demon-possessed sitting down, clothed and in his right mind, the very man who had previously had the "legion"; and they became frightened.--They see something quite astounding: the infamous demoniac is in a wholly altered state, "sitting there, dressed and in his right mind." That is a picture of discipleship and salvation: a restored individual sitting at the feet of Jesus. They should have been rejoicing and praising God.

Compromising with the World--The Jews living in the Decapolis sharing of culture that tended to lean toward more Hebrew people taking on foreign and pagan practices--they were compromising with the world, and becoming more worldly. There are many warnings in both the Old and New Testaments against compromising with worldly values. In particular, the life of Daniel is an example of remaining true when surrounded by spiritual darkness in a foreign, pagan land. Daniel 1:8 **"But Daniel resolved that he would not defile himself with the king's food, or with the wine that he drank."** This is a good summary statement of the way that Daniel lived his life, and he was commended by God. Later, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego (Daniel's friends) faced the king's command to bow to a golden image. Daniel 3:16 shows their response: **"O Nebuchadnezzar, we have no need to answer you in this matter."** They refused to compromise their worship, and God delivered them from the fiery furnace. We see the same commitment in the lives of Abraham, refusing to follow the pagan gods of his fathers, Joseph (Genesis 39:9), who refused to sin with Potiphar's wife, and Nehemiah, who resisted political pressure to abandon the rebuilding of Jerusalem's walls, David who refused to take revenge on Saul, because he was God's anointed, and many others. Think about it—if the Jews had compromised on what God had told them to do, they would never have remained a separate people, and God's fulfilled promise to send the Messiah Jesus through the line of Abraham, Judah, and David would never have been recognized. Non-compromise was, and is essential. In the New Testament, Jesus said **"No one can serve two masters."** In Matthew 6:24 James 4:4 is very blunt **"You adulterous people, don't you know**

that friendship with the world means enmity against God?" The Bible says, **"For what partnership has righteousness with lawlessness? Or what fellowship has light with darkness? What accord has Christ with Belial? Or what portion does a believer share with an unbeliever? What agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God"** (2 Corinthians 6:14b-16a). Romans 12:1-2 **Therefore I urge you, brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship. 2 And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.** In other words, conforming to the world, or compromise with it is the opposite of what God wants for us. Instead, we should allow God to transform our mind, and renew it into a mind like Christ's who only wanted to do God's will. And, if we will do that, then we will not only be able to see for ourselves what the Will of God is in this world, but it will shine forth and be obvious to all. And we'll only be able to do that if we continually give God the permission to use us as His willing instruments—His living sacrifices, just as Jesus did. There will always be temptation to compromise. But this is resist-able when we keep our prior commitment to our Master Jesus. James 4:7 says – **"Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you."** We are in a spiritual battle, and the time we spend in deepening our relationship with God, instead of compromising with the World prepared us. Ephesians 6:10-11 **Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power... put on the full armor of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes."**

Lack of Prior Preparation--Their reaction is fear. Both the disciples at Jesus calming the storm, and the crowds seeing the demoniac reacted with fear to Jesus' display of spiritual power. The same, or similar emotion in two groups of people can be very different, and produce very different things spiritually, depending on the condition of the heart. The same sadness that can drive an unbeliever further from God, or even cause them to despair of life, can drive a Christian closer into God's loving arms. Paul recognized this in 2 Cor 7 when he describes how his chastisement of the Corinthians in his previous letter was used by God to produce a sorrow in them that brought them closer to God, saying in verses 9-11 **9 I now rejoice, not that you were made sorrowful, but that you were made sorrowful to the point of repentance; for you were made sorrowful according to the will of God, so that you might not suffer loss in anything through us. 10 For the sorrow that is according to the will of God produces a repentance without regret, leading to salvation, but the sorrow of the world produces death. 11 For behold what earnestness this very thing, this godly sorrow, has produced in you: what vindication of yourselves, what indignation, what fear, what longing, what zeal, what punishment of wrong! In everything you demonstrated yourselves to be innocent in the matter** So, the condition of our hearts determines our reaction to sorrow and fear—whether it will drive us toward a Godly sorrow and fear, which He can use to draw us still closer to Him, or a resistance to His will, and a sorrow or fear which will drive us still further away from Him when we experience life's inevitable challenges.

16 Those who had seen it described to them how it had happened to the demon-possessed man, and all about the pigs. 17 And they began to beg Him to leave their region.

As soon as the local people were convinced that the demoniac had been truly healed, they shared in the same fear. When they had heard from eyewitnesses what had happened to the demoniac and to the swine, they begged Jesus to leave their area. To their terror was now added the thought of the financial loss, possibly mixed with uneasy consciences, if they really were Jewish pig-breeders. The pigs who had killed themselves were probably not the only swine herds in the area. Two thousand pigs represented an enormous livelihood, and their loss an economic catastrophe. Yet, both Jesus and Mark pass over the obvious plight of the swineherds without comment. Why? Because the plight of the man, and his immortal soul were much more important. But in the opinion of the townspeople, it was a very different matter. And that's the way it is when you compromise with the world—whatever part of your life has been compromised with the world has to be torn down for you to have the relationship with

God that you should—and that's going to result in loss if you have compromised—which is why so few come to Christ—they are afraid to **count the cost** they fear what they have to lose. Paul gives us the correct priority in Phil 3:7-8 **7 But whatever things were gain to me, these things I have counted as loss because of Christ. 8 More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them mere rubbish, so that I may gain Christ,** The residents of the Decapolis did not come to this same conclusion, and they resented the intrusion of Jesus into their region and ask him to leave. Such is the response of those people without a prepared heart to Jesus. They feared Jesus more than they did the demoniac, and cared more for their pigs than for another human being. Their priorities were wrong.

18 And as He was getting into the boat,

The saddest thing in the whole story is that Jesus granted their request, and left them. The Gerasenes wanted only to be left alone by this frightening supernatural Jesus. And so, they condemned themselves. This is described in John chapter 1. John 1:5 **5 And the Light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it...** 10 **He was in the world, and the world came into being through Him, and yet the world did not know Him. 11 He came to His own, and His own people did not accept Him.** And again in John 3:19-20 **19 And this is the judgment, that the Light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the Light; for their deeds were evil. 20 For everyone who does evil hates the Light, and does not come to the Light, so that his deeds will not be exposed.** —they loved darkness rather than light, and their worldly profit and compromise more than God. So, Jesus did leave them, and there is no evidence in the Gospels that He returned to this area for any later ministry.

the man who had been demon-possessed was begging Him that he might accompany Him. 19 And He did not let him, but He said to him, "Go home to your people and report to them what great things the Lord has done for you, and how He had mercy on you." 20 And he went away and began to proclaim in Decapolis what great things Jesus had done for him; and everyone was amazed.

But, Jesus did not leave Himself without a witness in the area. Although the formerly demon-possessed man begged Jesus that he might accompany Him as a disciple that traveled with him, Jesus had another mission for him. He was to **Go home to your people and report to them what great things the Lord has done for you, and how He had mercy on you.** And, although the people were amazed, we are not told that the amazement of the people of Decapolis resulted in any following Jesus in that area. And, that means that we have to look at ourselves and see how we react to life's adversities? Do we tend to draw closer to Jesus, or do we resent Him, and consider the cost of following Him to be too great? Where are our priorities? On the here and now, or on eternity? Our first priority cannot be both, we cannot **serve two masters.**