

## A Tale of Two Cities

### ~Other Speakers S-Z: Gleanings From the Word:

In Mark Chapter 5 we see a visit of Jesus to a Gentile area southeast of the Sea of Galilee called the country of the Gerasenes or the Decapolis. This is an interesting tale in two parts with another part in-between.

Let's take a look at this story.

(Mark 5:1 NASB) And they came to the other side of the sea, into the country of the Gerasenes.

(Mark 5:2 NASB) And when He had come out of the boat, immediately a man from the tombs with an unclean spirit met Him,

(Mark 5:3 NASB) and he had his dwelling among the tombs. And no one was able to bind him anymore, even with a chain;

(Mark 5:4 NASB) because he had often been bound with shackles and chains, and the chains had been torn apart by him, and the shackles broken in pieces, and no one was strong enough to subdue him.

(Mark 5:5 NASB) And constantly night and day, among the tombs and in the mountains, he was crying out and gashing himself with stones.

(Mark 5:6 NASB) And seeing Jesus from a distance, he ran up and bowed down before Him;

(Mark 5:7 NASB) and crying out with a loud voice, he said, "What do I have to do with You, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I implore You by God, do not torment me!"

(Mark 5:8 NASB) For He had been saying to him, "Come out of the man, you unclean spirit!"

(Mark 5:9 NASB) And He was asking him, "What is your name?" And he said to Him, "My name is Legion; for we are many."

Here we see Jesus on a divine appointment to this area. Who was he to meet? A king or a prince of the people? Perhaps a leader or a religious priest of their religion was to meet him? No just a man in trouble. How our God looks at things is far different than how we look. Here was a man tormented by demons, an outcast of society, greatly feared by the people, in utter misery. Jesus didn't run away from him, he didn't laugh and point. His great compassion flowed from Him again and healed and restored.

I recently was in another city in a restaurant by the hotel where I was staying eating dinner rather late. A man came in and sat at the counter acting very strange. He had Tourette's syndrome as well as many other problems. He was scaring the other patrons and the waitresses. Others were repulsed at him, but the compassion of Jesus filled my heart for this poor tormented man. I ended up giving him a ride home late that night to a town about 30 miles away. On the ride I told him of the love of Jesus and how the Holy One could release him from his torment. He was not ready to receive that but he wondered about me and how I would reach out to him and not fear him. I know that I was the first to plant seed in his heart. Perhaps another will cultivate and another harvest. One day I will sing the song of the redeemed with him in heaven. His name is Chuck and I am praying for him, as I know there is no one else in this world who is doing so.

It is interesting how the demoniac, full of demons, saw Jesus from a distance and ran to Him and bowed down. I'm sure there was something in the man who saw Jesus and knew from the demon knowledge in him that here was one who could release him from this living hell. He ran to Jesus for help and healing. The demons also recognized Jesus. They called him "Jesus, Son of the Most High God" and they acknowledged His supreme authority and power by bowing down to Him.

(Phil 2:9 NASB) Therefore also God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name,

(Phil 2:10 NASB) that at the name of Jesus EVERY KNEE SHOULD BOW, of those who are in heaven, and on earth, and under the earth,

(Phil 2:11 NASB) and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Yes these knew their Lord even the demons. Does your knee bow and do you confess his Lordship in your life?

Now let us continue this intriguing story.

(Mark 5:8 NASB) For He had been saying to him, "Come out of the man, you unclean spirit!"

(Mark 5:9 NASB) And He was asking him, "What is your name?" And he said to Him, "My name is Legion; for we are many."

(Mark 5:10 NASB) And he began to entreat Him earnestly not to send them out of the country.

(Mark 5:11 NASB) Now there was a big herd of swine feeding there on the mountain.

(Mark 5:12 NASB) And the demons entreated Him, saying, "Send us into the swine so that we may enter them."

(Mark 5:13 NASB) And He gave them permission. And coming out, the unclean spirits entered the swine; and the herd rushed down the steep bank into the sea, about two thousand of them; and they were drowned in the sea.

Jesus knew this was a demonized person and was telling the spirit to leave. Do we have Jesus's eyes and heart? Do we see the world as He sees it? Do the things that break His heart break ours? I know as He breaks and breaks me and I yield more and more to His Spirit the more my eyes look at the world and weep and the more my heart aches for the poor and downtrodden to come to Him, their Healer, Redeemer and Saviour.

Jesus asked the demon's name and he, or more accurately they, answered "we are legion". A Roman legion is about 6,000 men. But whatever the number, this man was loaded with every horrible, vicious and perverted demon he could hold. It is interesting how the demons seem to gain some kind of pleasure from the tormenting of a human they live in. They operate by deception and lying to gain entrance and many times present themselves as good and beneficial. Once they get a grip on the soul the torment grows. Like the hostage syndrome where the hostage starts to identify with their captors and even take on their persona, the person starts to accept the torment as normal and even needed.

Tal Brook in his book *Riders of the Cosmic Circuit* tells about his initiation into Sai Baba's Hindu mystic group in India. He relates how each step in the initiation became more and more horrific. Sai Baba told him that was necessary to get him used to both sides of God, the good and the evil. This is the complex dualism inherent in Hinduism. Tal writes about his final initiation step that was to usher him into the exalted levels of the mystic society. He was brought (in the spirit) into a terrifying temple of images so horrible he could not look directly at them. He also knew they were alive and watching him. He had to go through the temple to a door behind which was something so horrible and terrifying he felt he could not enter. Just as he was to open the door a voice from the heavens stopped him and he ran out of the temple and back to sanity. His road to Christianity started at that voice of the Holy Spirit that saved him from a most horrible fate. The demons had convinced Tal that the torment and mental and even physical torture he faced was necessary for his continued growth. These demons gave real power too. The demoniac was extraordinarily strong.

So Jesus sent the demons into the swine. The swine didn't like it either and all ran over the cliff to their deaths. Even the animals don't like the unholy presence of a demon. Many people tolerate them because they are deceived.

Let us continue the story. It gets better.

(Mark 5:14 NASB) And their herdsmen ran away and reported it in the city and out in the country. And the people came to see what it was that had happened.

(Mark 5:15 NASB) And they came to Jesus and observed the man who had been demon-possessed sitting down, clothed and in his right mind, the very man who had had the "legion"; and they became frightened.

(Mark 5:16 NASB) And those who had seen it described to them how it had happened to the demon-possessed man, and all about the swine.

(Mark 5:17 NASB) And they began to entreat Him to depart from their region.

Now this is very interesting. The pigs all ran into the sea and died and the herdsmen, bereft of their income ran to tell the city fathers. The city fathers came and saw the man whom they had feared clothed and in his right mind. You would think they would have rejoiced because a great danger to their community had been removed. Or maybe they would be glad to see a man who was an outcast now all clean and ready to be a productive part of their society. But no, they became frightened and asked Jesus to depart from their region. Such are many people today. Jesus comes near and they become frightened. Many people in churches today talk much about revival and lament its non-arrival. Some even pray for revival and when a good service or two come they become satisfied. We are a proud and satisfied church. Revival will break that. Revival is a hammer and a fire to break and burn. Revival will upset our status quo like it did the Gerasenes. They didn't like the status quo to change. It might have been bad but the unexpected, the new, might be worse. This Jesus, who had demonstrated more power than they could all muster, was someone to fear more than the demoniac and so they begged Him to leave. And leave He did, but he left something behind.

(Mark 5:18 NASB) And as He was getting into the boat, the man who had been demon-possessed was entreating Him that he might accompany Him.

(Mark 5:19 NASB) 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."

(Mark 5:20 NASB) And he went away and began to proclaim in Decapolis what great things Jesus had done for him; and everyone marveled.

Of course the man wanted to stay with Jesus. He had never met someone like that. How his heart must have fallen when Jesus told him he had to stay. But look at what Jesus told him to do. Go home to your people and tell them what great things the Lord had done for you, and how he had mercy on you. Oh, the mercy of our Lord! How great it is, how wonderful. That same mercy should flow from our hearts in even a greater measure today. I believe Jesus gave the man power to go forth for he went out and told all Jesus had done for him and the people marveled. He was a stealth bomb, sent under the radar of their fear to disarm them with mercy.

On the surface it appeared a defeat. The enemy had lost a person, but fear drove the Holy One away.

Now we look at another city.

(Mark 6:1 NASB) And He went out from there, and He came into His home town; and His disciples followed Him.

(Mark 6:2 NASB) And when the Sabbath had come, He began to teach in the synagogue; and the many listeners were astonished, saying, "Where did this man get these things, and what is this wisdom given to Him, and such miracles as these performed by His hands?"

(Mark 6:3 NASB) "Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary, and brother of James, and Joses, and Judas, and Simon? Are not His sisters here with us?" And they took offense at Him.

(Mark 6:4 NASB) And Jesus said to them, "A prophet is not without honor except in his home town and among his own relatives and in his own household."

(Mark 6:5 NASB) And He could do no miracle there except that He laid His hands upon a few sick people and healed them.

(Mark 6:6 NASB) And He wondered at their unbelief. And He was going around the villages teaching.

Jesus on his way home had crossed over to the Galilee side and performed two great miracles. He healed the woman with the 12-year hemorrhage and raised Jairus's daughter. But then he came home. On the Sabbath he taught in his home Church so to speak. They were duly astonished at his teaching for it was from God, but they couldn't bring themselves to believe. They thought they knew Him. Why he's the carpenter, you know, Mary's son. Even his brothers and sisters live here. Who does he think he is!?

But they didn't know him. They didn't recognize the day of their visitation. This most remarkable statement is made. He could do no miracle there because of their unbelief. Oh beloved we have too many Churches like Nazareth, they profess the name but don't believe He can or will do very much. We live like Christian atheists going to Church but denying the power of God. Jesus, who searches the soul and knows the heart of man, even

wondered at their unbelief.

So here is strike two. This doesn't look too good, the enemy is working overtime and appears to be ahead in the count. But do you remember the stealth bomb?

(Mark 6:53 NASB) And when they had crossed over they came to land at Gennesaret, and moored to the shore.

(Mark 6:54 NASB) And when they had come out of the boat, immediately the people recognized Him,

(Mark 6:55 NASB) and ran about that whole country and began to carry about on their pallets those who were sick, to the place they heard He was.

(Mark 6:56 NASB) And wherever He entered villages, or cities, or countryside, they were laying the sick in the market places, and entreating Him that they might just touch the fringe of His cloak; and as many as touched it were being cured.

Now Gennesaret is in the same area as Gadera and was one of the Decapolis or ten cities. The man Jesus had sent forth to tell all the Lord had done for him had been around. The stealth bomb had exploded and instead of hot shrapnel, mercy and grace spread faith through the people. When Jesus arrived the people were like grass before a fire. They knew the day of their visitation and they had prepared for it. Out came the sick, out came the demonized, and out came the lame, the blind. Any and all who came were healed, even those who just touched the hem of his garment. The people ran to gather the sick. Oh, how merciful is our God. These people had faith; this is where miracles could happen. The faith of the people met the power of God and an explosion of healings occurred. That is what it takes. Someone to tell of the mercies of God and how they had been touched, that stirs up faith in another and another and soon God blesses with miracles. Beloved, which town are you living in? Is the vital power of God coursing through you so that he can have his way? Are you going from glory to glory and being conformed into His wonderful image? Oh bless our God, for His mercies are new every morning. This story makes my heart sing! I love to see a people run with faith. What happened there can and will happen again today. Are you ready for it? Are you living in the city of faith or the city of unbelief?