

Bible Stories for Adults

The Demoniac in the Decapolis

Mark 5:1-20

Opening

Gathering: What demons destroy the lives of people today?

Today's Focus: Jesus cast out demons from the life of a man who then served as a great witness to others.

Key Verses: *What do you want with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God?* Mark 5:7

Go home to your family and tell them how much the Lord has done for you, and how He has had mercy on you. Mark 5:19

Opening Prayer

Lesson

There's No Place Like Home (*Mark 1:21-34*)

Where did Jesus focus His ministry of revealing the good news of God's kingdom?

Luke 8:1 = He traveled from town to town, mainly in Galilee

Was there any particular place He frequented? = People knew to look for Him there

John 6:16-17, 24 = Capernaum served as a home base for Him

Why did He use Capernaum as a home base? Was He especially drawn to the lake view?

Mark 1:21, 29 = Peter had a home there

Come To Me (*Mark 3:7-10*)

Did He come to Capernaum to get an occasional rest in Peter's home?

Mark 2:1-5 = No, people packed in tightly to see Him (possibly Peter's house)

Did He find rest by taking peaceful walks along the shore of the lake?

Mark 3:7-8 = No, crowds followed Him from everywhere to wherever He was

Was the lake shore a good place since people could just sit on the beach around Him?

Mark 3:9-10 = No, they pushed to get to Him, He had a boat waiting

Did He have the boat waiting so He could get away quickly?

Mark 4:1 = No, it was ready to be used as a place from which to teach the crowd

Teachings From the Boat (*Mark 4*)

What did Jesus teach from the boat in our study two weeks ago?

Mark 4:2, 30, 33 (Matthew 13) = Truths about God's kingdom – in the form of parables

What did He decide to do after a full day of teaching in the boat?

Mark 4:35-36 = Sail to the other side of the lake, just as they were

What lesson about God's kingdom did Jesus teach His disciples during this journey?

Matthew 8:23-27 (Matthew 6:25-34) = To put their faith and trust in God for everything

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Gerasa, Gadara, Gergesa (*Mark 5:1*)

Where did Jesus and His disciples land on the other side of the lake?

Mark 5:1 = In the region of the Gerasenes

Gerasa was 36 miles southeast of the lake. Does Matthew give us a better location?

Matthew 8:28 = In the region of the Gadarenes

Gadara was 6 miles southeast of the lake. How did later scribes respond to this?

Matthew 8:28 (KJV) = Altered text to read *country of the Gergesenes*

Gergesa was on the eastern shore of the lake. Origen (3rd Century AD scholar) suggested Gergesa

Steep bluff south of Gergesa descended to a narrow shore

Area has lots of caves that were clearly used as tombs

The Decapolis (*Luke 8:26*)

Gerasa and Gadara were two of the ten cities of the Decapolis (Greek for *ten cities*)

Gergesa was a town in the Decapolis

Decapolis was region south and east of Sea of Galilee

Free Cities - Allowed to govern themselves during this time

Settled by Greeks after conquest by Alexander the Great - Kept Hellenistic (Greek) flavor

Captured by Jews in 2nd Century BC, then by Romans in 63 BC - Few Jews

The Gospels identify that Jesus landed in this region. What info does Luke add?

Luke 8:26 = Across the lake from Galilee (the Decapolis)

Welcome Party (*Mark 5:2*)

What time did Jesus likely arrive at the other side?

Mark 4:35 = At night – Left in the evening, sailed in dark

Although the journey was only around a dozen miles long, what likely slowed them down?

Mark 4:37 = The furious storm that Jesus calmed for them - last week's lesson

Was anyone around at this late hour?

Mark 5:2 = A man possessed by an evil spirit was there

Was this man by himself? = The one mentioned in Mark and Luke was especially vocal

Matthew 8:28 = Another demon-possessed man was with him

Demon Possession

The ancient world believed that evil spirits were everywhere looking for opportunities to harm people

The air was so full of demons that you couldn't poke a needle into it without hitting a demon

Some said that there were 10,000 evil spirits on each side of a man

God placed guardian angels over children to help protect them

How much of this do we know to be really true?

1 Peter 5:8-9 = Satan and his demons actively prowl for someone to devour

Demons were especially thick in unclean places (tombs) & where there was no cleansing water (desert)

They were very active at night, in the mid-day heat and in lonely places

Demons could enter a person through any of 36 places, including the mouth with food

They could take control of all aspects of the person – physical, mental, senses ...

Demons would produce all forms of illness trying to destroy God's perfect order and creation

To get rid of a demon, you had to call on the power of a greater spirit

Barclay - *If a man gained the idea that he was possessed by a demon, he would easily go on to produce all the symptoms of demon-possession. He could genuinely convince himself that there was a demon inside him.*

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Signs of Demon Possession (*Mark 5:3-5*) = List on board

What signs does Dr. Luke give that this man was possessed (or believed himself to be)?

Luke 8:27 = No dignity (naked), withdrew from society (no home), lived with demons (tombs)

What did Matthew add?

Matthew 8:28 = Extremely violent and dangerous

Besides noting that the man was out at night, what did Mark add?

Mark 5:3-4 = He had super-human strength

What final signs did Mark give?

Mark 5:5 = Possessed 24 hours/day, inarticulate speech, self-mutilation (out of control)

Demons React (*Mark 5:6-9*)

Truly demon-possessed or not, how do we see that the man had spiritual insight into who Jesus was?

Mark 5:6 = He ran to Jesus from a distance and fell down before Him

Why did he do this?

Matthew 8:29 = His demons were afraid that Jesus had come to torture them

What did the demon mean by the appointed time?

Revelation 20:7-10 = Satan and his legions will be tormented forever after he end times

How did the demon try to call upon a higher power to protect himself?

Mark 5:7 = He pointed out that Jesus was under (Son of) the Most High God

How does Jesus show us the extent of this man's demon-possession?

Mark 5:8-9 = Revealed that there were many demons inside the man

Legion - A Roman legion had up to 6000 soldiers – at least 4000

Appropriate Destination (*Mark 5:10-13*)

What was the demons' concern about what Jesus could do to them? = Abyss - from Greek: bottomless

Luke 8:31 (Revelation 20:1-3) = That He could send them to eternal punishment early

What alternative did they propose?

Mark 5:10-12 = That He send them into a bunch of nearby pigs

Why was this herd of pigs an appropriate destination for the demons?

Deuteronomy 14:3, 8 = Pigs were considered unclean and detestable to Jews

How did Jesus respond to their pleas?

Mark 5:13 = *He gave them permission*, they went and destroyed the pigs – around 2000

Don't Touch My Pig (*Mark 5:14-18*)

How did the night-shift swineherds respond to what had just happened?

Mark 5:14 = They ran and told others what had happened – Didn't want blame for the loss

What did the people find when they arrived? = Luke 8:27 says he had been possessed for a long time

Mark 5:15 = The man they had known to be possessed was now in his right mind

What other confirmation did the people get that the swineherds were telling the truth?

Mark 5:16 = Some others had seen it and confirmed the story

How did the people respond to this great miracle? = Afraid Jesus might further damage their status quo

Mark 5:17 = They did the unthinkable – They begged Jesus to leave

Have you ever done the unthinkable and asked Jesus to leave?

How did Jesus respond to this rejection?

Luke 8:37 = He left them as they asked him to do

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Share at Home (*Mark 5:19*)

What then happened to the formerly demon-possessed man? = His Web of Influence

Mark 5:18-19 = Jesus told him to stay and be a witness to his friends and family

Oikos – Greek for extended family – Relatives, friends, neighbors, coworkers ...

How is this different than what Jesus told others?

Mark 3:11-12 = He told others not to tell who He was

Why did He say this to others, but not to this man?

John 6:14-15 = Jews would try to make Him a political king, this man was in a Gentile area

Web of Influence (*Mark 5:20*)

What did the man do?

Mark 5:20 = He became the first Christian witness to this area of non-Jews

How effective was this man's witness? = Feeding of the 4000

Mark 7:31; 8:1, 9 = Six weeks later, 4000 men + in the Decapolis came to see Him

How effective can we be as we witness to Jesus in our Web of Influence?

Matthew 13:23 = God can produce through us a crop of 30, 60 or 100 times

Spiritual Multiplication (From *Each One Reach One* Devotions)

A museum in Chicago had a fascinating display that demonstrated the power of spiritual multiplication. It showed a checkerboard with 1 grain of wheat on the first square, 2 on the second, 4 on the third, then 8, 16, 32, 64 and so on until the seeds could no longer fit on a square.

Then it asked the question, "At this rate of doubling each successive square, how much would you have on the checkerboard by the 64th square?"

You could punch a button at the bottom of the display to find out. The answer? "Nine sextillion — enough grain to cover the entire subcontinent of India 50 feet deep." Incredible!

If each of us leads just one person to Christ each year, and each of those persons leads one to Christ each year, the harvest would soon be enormous. It's happening in some parts of the world. It can happen here.

Closing Prayer

Response - Consider and meditate on one each day this week

1. When have I felt attacked by the powers of Satan?
(*Mark 5:2-5; Luke 5:5-10; 8:12; James 4:7; 1 Peter 5:8-9; 1 John 3:8-10; Revelation 2:10*)
2. When have I felt God's protection from Satan's attacks?
(*Mark 5:15; 2 Kings 6:16-17; Job 1:6-10; Psalm 91; 1 Corinthians 10:13; Hebrews 2:14*)
3. How have I ever asked Jesus to leave? Why?
(*Mark 5:17; Isaiah 6:5; Matthew 26:31-35, 69-75; Luke 9:51-56*)
4. Who is in my *oikos*, my extended family, my Web of Influence?
(*Mark 5:18-20; Matthew 9:9-10; 12:46-50; John 1:35-51; 4:28-30; Acts 8:4*)
5. When have I seen God produce a crop from my witness?
(*Mark 5:18-20; 4:26-29; 8:1-13; Matthew 13:23; John 4:39-42; 15:8*)