

Hogs or Lost Men?

Mark 5:2

“And when He had come out of the boat, immediately there met Him out of the tombs a man with an unclean spirit.”

Imagine with me the Sea of Galilee like a huge teacup of blue water nestled in the Galilean hills. Go with by boat to the middle of that sea and look around.

To the north you see Mount Hermon in the far distance, snow-capped the year round. The little streams from those snow caps feed the Sea of Galilee and the Jordan River.

To the side is Capernaum, the center of Jesus’ Galilean ministry. Look westward to the modern city of Tiberius, a Roman capital in Jesus’ day. To the south the Jordan River flows into the Jordan Valley and on to the Dead Sea.

To the southeast, among the cliffs and hills is the land of the Gaddarenes. Somewhere in those hill is the city of Gadara. Archaeological remains include three large theatres, a basilica, a temple, and a colonnaded street.

Now Jesus came to the coast of Gadara by sea from Capernaum. As their boat touched the shore and they started up the cliffs into the highlands, there came rushing out of the caves a crazy man, naked and bleeding. He had cut himself with sharp stones. He shrieked and screamed out to everyone that passed by, and the people in that area were terrified of the **“Wild Man from Gadara.”**

Mark 5:2 tells us, “And when He had come out of the boat, immediately there met Him out of the tombs a man with an unclean spirit.” Matthew describes this man as “exceedingly fierce.” Mark tells us that he was “a man with an unclean spirit, who had his dwelling

among the tombs; and no one could bind him, not even with chains, because he had often been bound with shackles and chains. And the chains had been pulled apart by him, and the shackles broken in pieces; neither could anyone tame him. And always, night and day, he was in the mountains and in the tombs, crying out and cutting himself with stones.”

There were many people who worked in the land of Gadara, but I think the farmers who plowed and sowed their seed did so with dread.

There were lovely flowers that God had painted and fringed with His glory, but I think many of them were never gathered.

Psychologists today read this story and say this man was a “schizophrenic.” All the elements were there: the withdrawal, the hostility; but above all, this split personality divided into many cells boring and battling against each other.

The people must have sit around and told stories about the things this “wild man” would do. He had broken all the chains and ropes the men of the city had used to tie him down. They must have talked about the blood that flowed down his arms and legs as he went around cutting himself with broken pottery.

But look again at verse 2, “...there met him...a man...” There are times when we meet people it would have been better for us not to have at all.

Samson should never have met Delilah. David should never have met Bathsehba. Ahab should never have met Jezerabel.

But it was a glorious thing for the “wild man of Gadara” to meet Jesus. Here was darkness meeting light, soap meeting water, love meeting response, and heaven meeting hell.

All the terror and all the horror of being tormented night and day by the demons was soon coming to a close, for now the Master had arrived on the scene. Isn't that just like Jesus? He always shows up when the "storms" of life come howling.

What has been told in verse 9 that Jesus pushed aside all of the events surrounding this case and went directly to the person with this question, "What is your name?" The man stuttered, he had a name once, the name he was called by his wife and his children, a name he was called by those with whom he worked, his neighbors, his friends. Yes, he had a *name* once.

But he could not say his name. Something on the inside was tearing him apart and finally the words came out, "My name is Legion; for we are many."

As we come to verses 10-13 we will see at least four things that will help us to better understand this miracle of healing. The confession, the choice, the consent, and the choking, "Also he begged Him earnestly that He would not send them out of the country. Now a large herd of swine was feeding there near the mountains. So all the demons begged Him, saying, Send us to the swine, that we may enter them. And at once Jesus gave them permission. Then the unclean spirits went out and entered the swine (there were about two thousand); and the herd ran violently down the steep place into the sea, and drowned in the sea."

What was the confession? It was the confession of the demons themselves. They confessed Christ's power over them when they begged not to be sent away. Although they had this *man* under their control, they recognized the fact that they could not reign and rule over Christ, for He was God incarnate.

What was the choice? The demons said, "Send us into the swine..." What does that teach us? The Devil's second choice is a hog. Demons would rather live in the body of the lost person, but if

that lost person were to get saved by faith in Christ, the demon's second choice is the hog pen.

My friend, the house and the tenant are well matched, for the devil's playground is the slimy, muddy, filthy, "hog pens" of this world.

What is the consent? Mark says, "Forthwith Jesus gave them leave..." Luke says, "And he suffered them to go..." Matthew tells us, "And he said unto them, Go..." In other words, He did not forbid, or restrain them; he let them do as they had a mind to do! God deliberately gave His consent for them to have their own way, which led to destruction. The Bible tells us in Proverbs 14:12, "There is a way that seems right to a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death."

What was the choking? Luke tells us, "And the unclean spirits went out, and entered into the swine; and the herd ran violently down a steep place into the sea, and were choked in the sea." Somehow, that which was in this man, tearing him apart, came out. And nearby was the herd of 2,000 pigs. As the demons left the man, they took up their abode in the pigs. In a crazy-like frenzy, these pigs began to run back and forth, and suddenly, as though fleeing for their lives, they ran straight down into the jaws of death. They fled down the hill into the water and were drowned. Every one of them was killed.

There the hogs were – choked in the sea, all because they had become the victim of Satan. Sin and Satan are twin killers.

Now we come to the most important part of the story, as seen in verses 14-17, "So those who fed the swine fled, and they told it in the city and in the country. And they went out to see what it was that had happened. Then they came to Jesus, and saw the one who had been demon-possessed and had the legion, sitting and clothed and in his right mind. And they were afraid. And those who saw it told them how it happened to him who had been demon-possessed, and about the swine. Then they began to plead with Him to depart from their region." The herders, wild-eyed and amazed, saw the man seated at the feet of

Jesus; the very same one as they knew as the “wild man of Gadara” who lived in the caves; the one they threw stones at to drive him away; the one they feared so; they now saw him normal, like he was before being possessed. They went running back to the town and told all they had seen and heard.

The indication is that a great multitude came out from the town to see what had taken place! They Mayor came along and the City Council. The Chief of Police and the bankers came along. Everybody came out to see what had happened.

When they talked to Jesus, they might have said something like this: “Now, don’t misunderstand us, we are not against preachers. We have a lot of fine ministers in our city. We are not against churches. Oh, we believe in church; we have some of the finest churches to be found anywhere. We are good people. We have the best town on earth. We are find people – don’t misunderstand us, we believe in high ideals, and we believe in the sort of thing you are doing. But, Lord, would you just leave our coast? Would you please just quietly pick up your things and get back in the boat and leave us alone? We really don’t want you here with us anymore.”

The city of Gadara simply voted Jesus out. I mean, you have heard of cities voting liquor in, or voting gambling out, but here is a city where Jesus was voted out. I wonder, if our city had the opportunity, would they vote our Lord out of their lives. Many are.

I can hear someone say, “Wait a minute, look at what He has done. He has changed this man, what a glorious thing. This is the ‘wild man of Gadara’ and he can go home to his wife and children. He can go back to his job. He can come back and be a responsible citizen of our city. Look at what He has done.”

Then someone else answers, “Yes, I know, and all of that is wonderful. We believe in people being saved and all of that. I mean, we are glad about what has happened in this man’s life. But look down there

in the water. There are somewhere in the neighborhood of 2,000 dead pigs floating in the sea. Those are our pigs. I've lost my ham and sausage for the winter. I have lost the money that I would have gotten at the sale. And all of this is because of this 'preacher.' here"

You might be thinking, "What does this story have to do with us here *in this church?*" Simply this – the Bible tells us in Hebrews 13:8 that "Jesus Christ (is) the same yesterday, and today, and forever." **It is still the ministry of Jesus to take broken and divided lives that are at war within themselves**, that which is within you, which says, "I know what is right, but I want to do that which is wrong." But it is Jesus that comes to us and says, "Come to me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart, and you shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."

You see, that is what life is all about. Life is ultimately a matter of **decisions** and **priorities**. It is a matter of whether we are more concerned over **sausage** or **souls**.

You might be thinking, "We would never do anything like that." Listen child of God, Sunday after Sunday there are churches all over this land that are **dismissing the presence of Jesus Christ from their midst**.

Whenever a church gets so absorbed in itself that it gets its eyes off the spiritual needs of those around it, then it has dismissed the presence of Jesus Christ.

The church that says, "Let us alone, we have our own little church, we have such fine folks, we have such good things going on, we like our preacher, we are doing all right for ourselves just the way we are. Don't start this and don't start that to get more people, because we are all right just the way we are." That church has **already dismissed the presence of the Lord**.

The Sunday School class can become this way. A class can say, “We have such a wonderful class. We enjoy our fellowship so much. We just sit around and enjoy each other; we just know each other so well.” And pretty soon when the visitors no longer come and those members that never come are no longer their concern, they too have dismissed the presence of Jesus Christ from that class.

But there is more, for you see Jesus comes to each of us as individuals. There are only two answers: we can allow Him to take control of our lives, or we can simply send Him away.

Notice with me the attitude of a changed heart. Look at verses 18-20, “And when He got into the boat, he who had been demon-possessed begged Him that he might be with Him. However, Jesus did not permit him, but said to him, Go home to your friends, and tell them what great things the Lord has done for you, and how He has had compassion on you. And he departed and began to proclaim in Decapolis all that Jesus had done for him; and all marveled.”

This man was commissioned to be a living, walking, demonstration of what Christ can do for mankind. Our glory must always not be what we can do for Christ, but what Christ has done for us! You see, drunks win drunks, dope addicts win dope addicts, young people win young people, and every believer has someone in their life that only they can reach for Christ. **Child of God, 2 Timothy 1:9 reminds us that Christ** “has saved us, and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began.”

The “wild man of Gadara” was to be the first seed, which in time was to become a mighty harvest in the Decapolis. As far as we know, Christ never went that way again, but because of this once insane man, the Gospel was spread throughout that area.

Today, the time has come for each of us to decide what we are more concerned about – sausage or souls. Oh, child of God, we have been told in Romans 5:8, “But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.” **Today, have you taken your eyes off the One who died for you?** Have you given more place in your life for your **sausage** than you have for **souls**? Are you more concerned about **your property, your rights, your stuff**, than you are about telling someone about the Good News of Jesus Christ?

If you have never been saved, why not today?

Everyone please stand for prayer.

Father,

Your Word is true. Thank you for loving me and giving me the opportunity to share with others what you have done for me. Give me the courage, this week, to get my priorities in place when it comes to sharing my faith. In Jesus’ name. Amen.