

# The Divine and the Demonic

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Preacher: Chris Trousdale

[ 0 : 00 ] Mark chapter 5, beginning in verse 1. They came to the other side of the sea, to the country of the Gerasenes. And when Jesus had stepped out of the boat, immediately there met him out of the tombs a man with an unclean spirit.

He lived among the tombs, and no one could bind him anymore, not even with a chain. For he had often been bound with shackles and chains, but he wrenched the chains apart and he broke the shackles in pieces.

No one had the strength to subdue him. Night and day, among the tombs and on the mountains, he was always crying out and cutting himself with stones. And when he saw Jesus from afar, he ran and fell down before him, and crying out with a loud voice, he said, What have you to do with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God?

I adjure you by God, do not torment me. For he was saying to him, Come out of the man, you unclean spirit. And Jesus asked him, What is your name?

He replied, My name is Legion, for we are many. And he begged him earnestly not to send them out of the country. Now a great herd of pigs was feeding there on the hillside.

[ 1 : 10 ] And they begged him, saying, Send us to the pigs. Let us enter them. So he gave them permission. And the unclean spirits came out and entered the pigs and the herd, numbering about two thousand, rushed down the steep bank into the sea and were drowned in the sea.

The herdsmen fled and told it in the city and in the country. And people came to see what it was that had happened. And they came to Jesus and saw the demon-possessed man, the one who had had the legion, sitting there, clothed and in his right mind.

And they were afraid. And those who had seen it described to them what had happened to the demon-possessed man and to the pigs. And they began to beg Jesus to depart from their region.

As he was getting into the boat, the man who had been possessed with demons begged him that he might be with him. And he did not permit him, but said to him, Go home to your friends and tell them how much the Lord has done for you and how he has had mercy on you.

And he went away and began to proclaim in the Decapolis how much Jesus had done for him. And everyone marveled. Let's pray. Oh, Father, take your word right now by your spirit and apply it to our hearts.

[ 2 : 26 ] Help us to see and understand the great display of the power of Jesus in this story. It's in his name we pray. Amen. If you spend a good deal of time in the Bible, you will begin to realize pretty quickly that the thought world of the writers of the Bible is a very different world from that which we live in today.

They just don't see things the way that we see things. They don't understand things. They don't evaluate the things around them with the evaluations that we would give to them, or that our culture at least would give to them.

And that's the case in this passage as well. In fact, I mentioned last week, as we finished out chapter 4, and we studied the passage in which Jesus calms the sea as he stands there in the boat, and he speaks to the sea and says, Peace be still in the great windstorm.

I mentioned that that story and the story this week, and then the second half of chapter 5, all sort of go together. All three of those stories go together. They hang together.

And all of them are meant to teach us about the authority of Jesus, about the divine sovereignty that Jesus possesses over the entire world.

[ 3 : 50 ] So that last week we saw a display of Jesus' divine authority over the natural world and over natural disasters. And then in this story this week, we see Jesus' divine sovereignty over the demonic realm.

That he is sovereign over demons. And then next week we're going to see a story in which Jesus displays his sovereignty over both disease and death. And when you see how these three stories are linked together in the Gospel of Mark, what you see is that right here in the middle of his Gospel, Mark wants us to understand that Jesus has all authority.

He is sovereign over everything. And that is a part of the biblical way of looking at the world. That God himself is in control of all things.

You know, we have really sort of two ways of looking at the world that are really predominant in our culture today. And one is what we might call sort of the materialistic view.

And that view is that the world operates according to universal principles and laws. And everything happens by cause and effect because of those laws.

[ 5 : 07 ] And so things fall down because of the law of gravity. You know, all of these physical laws that are in place are the only things, according to materialism, that control our world or that direct its course.

And then there is another view that is very dominant today that says, well, really the destiny of the world is determined by what we as human beings do.

That we uniquely possess the power to control the world around us and to do things with it. You might call that the humanistic view of the world if you want to.

And in reality, though, I think most people kind of mishmash those together. Don't they? Most people, when it comes to knowing just basic things about the world, would say that, well, the world operates according to these sort of scientific laws and these laws of nature.

But then when it comes to how they actually feel about things and what they really think when they're making value judgments, they don't want to make value judgments based upon some universal law or standard.

[ 6 : 08 ] They want to make value judgments based upon what they think so that ultimately they are in control of determining whether or not this course or that course is the right course to take, whether or not this way of living is a good and right way to live or is a bad way to live.

So that for most people, they compartmentalize their minds. So they think of some areas of life are governed by absolute laws, or science they might say. But when it comes down to their own decisions and what they decide to do and what they love and value and how they evaluate what other people do, it really just comes down to the individual and what the individual thinks is right. So you have materialism on the one hand and you have the humanistic view or relativism on the other hand, and they just kind of mishmash in our minds and in our lives. But when you come to the Bible, you come to a third way of viewing the world.

A way that says that God determines reality. That God decides why events unfold the way that they do. God decides what is right and true.

He is in control of every aspect of His universe. And it is His. I'll read you a good quote that I came across a while back and I thought would be appropriate to summing up this biblical way of viewing the world.

[ 7 : 30 ] It's by Charles Spurgeon. He says this. He says that world events are not tangled, confused, or perplexing to God. His power is apparent from the least to the greatest, for God rules in all and rules all.

He guides the grain of dust in the march wind and the planets in their immeasurable pathways. He steers each drop of spray beaten back from the face of the rock.

He leads the North Star. He is the dictator of destinies. He appoints both the ideas and the end. He is the king of kings, ruling rulers, and guiding counselors.

He is the same in the crash of battle or in the hush of peace. He is the same in famine or in the joy of an abundant harvest. He is the Lord. He does according to His will, not only in heaven, but among the inhabitants of this lower world.

The storm may rage, he says, but all is well, for our captain is the governor of storms. He who trod the waves of the Galilean lake is at the helm, and in His command the winds and the waves are quiet.

[ 8 : 41 ] Courage, Spurgeon says, dear friend, the Lord, the ever-merciful, has appointed every moment of sorrow and every pang of suffering. If He ordains the number 10, it can never rise to 11, nor should you desire that it shrink to 9.

God controls everything from every particle of dust to the circling of the planets around the sun. From the smallest to the greatest, God exercises absolute sovereignty and control. That is the biblical way of viewing the world around us. And I think that Mark wants us to go even a step further than saying that God is sovereign over the world.

I think Mark wants us to see that this absolute authority resides in Jesus Himself. That Jesus is not something other than God.

As we saw last week, we looked at the Old Testament and saw over and over that the Old Testament says that only God can control the weather and the world by His command. And yet Jesus speaks a command, and the natural world obeys.

[ 9 : 56 ] We see the same thing in this morning's passage in regard to the demonic realm. That when Jesus commands and when Jesus speaks, Satan and the demons have no choice but to do as He commands.

He is sovereign over even the demonic. And if we believe that, and if we trust in Him to be that kind of a Savior, it will transform the way that we face our suffering.

So let's take a look. In our passage, we are initially confronted with, you might say, three main characters. There is a man who is in misery, and then there are demons who are in distress, and then ultimately we see Christ who is in control.

So let's take a look here at the setting for these three characters to come into contact with one another. Verse 1 tells us that they, that's Jesus and the people on the boat with Him, and we learned that there were other boats that traveled across the lake with Him.

It says that they came to the other side of the sea, to the country of the Gerasenes. So initially they were in Galilee, Jesus' home country, and they sailed to the other side of the sea of Galilee, and now they're in a region that Mark calls the area of the Gerasenes.

[ 11 : 28 ] It's later on in Mark, he calls it the area that's called the Decapolis. Literally that means the ten cities. Because there were ten cities in this part of the world, nine of them on this side of the Sea of Galilee and the Jordan River, only one on the other side.

But these ten cities were fairly close together, and they had travel routes between them all, and they had sort of a common governing structure among them, and they were primarily Gentile. Now that's going to be important in a little bit. Jesus has traveled from Jewish Galilee, now across the sea, to a primarily Gentile Decapolis, or the area of the Gerasenes.

And right as he lands on the seashore, we learn that there comes running to him a man. Verse 2 tells us about this man. It says, When Jesus had stepped out of the boat, immediately there met him out of the tombs, a man with an unclean spirit.

He lived among the tombs, and no one could bind him anymore, not even with a chain, for he had often been bound with shackles and chains. But he wrenched the chains apart, and he broke the shackles in pieces.

[ 12 : 33 ] No one had the strength to subdue him. It says that night and day among the tombs and on the mountains, he was always crying out, cutting himself with stones. So here's a man whose life has been devastated by demonic powers.

Absolutely devastated. There's not an area of his life that was sort of safe from the influence of these demons. I mean, you can see it. I mean, he's socially ostracized because of the things that the demons are causing him to do.

He's living out in these caves that they use for tombs. He's not in the city. The people have driven him out of the city. They're trying to keep him away from any other human contact because he's dangerous.

So that socially, he's completely ostracized. Psychologically, he's just a mess. He's just all torn up here. And then physically, he's cutting himself up with rocks.

He's doing damage to his body. He's experiencing almost every form of misery, social, psychological, physical, that we might sort of dream up.

[ 13 : 40 ] He's in absolute and total misery and despair. That's the kind of man that Jesus meets as he lands on the shore of the land of the Gerasenes.

It's an almost hopeless situation. It's so hopeless that the people of the town, I'm not sure that they're completely without compassion for him.

I mean, imagine if you were one of these townspeople for a minute because sometimes we read a story and we immediately become judgmental of people. But imagine if you're one of them.

What would you do if there's a guy who appears to be completely insane? He's hurting himself. He's a danger to everyone around him. What would you do about it?

There's not like a mental war to take the guy to. And that's not his issue anyway. He's not a patient to be cured. He's a man with spiritual forces that work on him.

[14:37] What would you do if you had children who played in the streets of your town? Well, you wouldn't want this man around. I wouldn't want him around my kids.

So they drive him out of town and they try. They do the best that they can to chain him up. Is that to keep him out in the tombs? I don't know. He seems to be staying out in the tombs on his own.

Maybe is it to keep him from hurting himself? I don't know. But they do everything they can to try to keep him out there, keep him away, and nothing seems to subdue him.

No chains will hold him. The shackles just don't work. He keeps breaking free. He keeps breaking free and going crazy and roaming. You know, he's that scary guy out there by the graveyard.

And you just stay away from the graveyard because you don't know what's going to happen to you. But if you're the man himself, you're in misery.

[15:32] All this misery caused by demons. Now there's another part of a biblical worldview that gets neglected today. If we saw this man today, we would immediately assume that he was crazy and that if we gave him the right kind of therapeutic treatment and we found the right sort of drugs that he could probably live a semi-normal life.

And I think that's probably the case for a lot of people. I'm not denying that there are people with genuine psychological issues that can be helped to some degree. But that's not always the case. And that's certainly not the case here. This guy is suffering because of the work of demons. We can't just skate over that and skip over that and move on as if he's got any sort of other ailment that somebody else might.

This is a specific issue and this is not an issue that our world is immune from. It's not at all. In fact, I want you to turn over. You may know this passage well.

You may have heard it. But I want you to turn over to Ephesians because this is so important for us to understand about how the world actually really works. In Ephesians chapter 6, in verse 12, the Apostle Paul says this.

[16:47] He says, We do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.

There are real, evil, spiritual beings at work in the world the Bible calls demons or unclean spirits. They are real.

And Paul says, Not only are they real, but they are our true enemy. It's not some governmental system that is your enemy. Okay?

It's not that crazy neighbor who keeps doing things that's your enemy. It's not your boss that's your enemy. Your enemy is not flesh and blood at all, Paul says.

Your enemy is Satan and the demonic hosts. And that's drawn out clearly here in Mark chapter 5. Peter says that the devil prowls around like a roaring lion seeking someone that he could devour.

[17:52] Jesus says that he's come to steal and to kill and to destroy. That's what they do. They steal, kill, and destroy.

They have stolen this man's life away from him. They are destroying everything that he has and everything that he is. Now, I realize that if you're a genuine follower of Christ and if the Spirit of God lives within you, then you don't have to be afraid of demon possession.

You just don't. If the Spirit of God lives within you, a demon cannot come and demonize you and possess you. It's just, it's not possible. But that doesn't mean that their work is done with us.

It doesn't mean that they say, well, we'll just, I guess, you know, we can't really control all their actions and we can't, you know, so we'll just leave them alone. That's not the case at all. Otherwise, why would Paul say that we have a battle against them?

Why would Paul say that they're our true enemies if we don't have to worry about them at all? No, even as believers, we have to face the reality that the demons are there and they're there to do us harm.

[19:02] And if you're not a believer, you are in grave, grave danger. There is nothing but the sheer mercy of God that has kept you from becoming like this man if you're not a believer.

You've got to understand that. He's a man in absolute misery. Now, I know that all of that sounds strange to us because we just don't think a lot about these kind of demonic, spiritual things. And I'm not sure that that doesn't bother Satan at all. I don't think that Satan minds if we live and act and think as if he's either not a problem or he doesn't exist at all.

C.S. Lewis said this. This is a great quote and I think it's true. He says that there are two equal and opposite errors into which our race can fall about the devils.

One is to disbelieve their existences. The other is to believe and to feel an excessive and unhealthy interest in them. And then he says, they themselves are pleased by both errors and they hail a materialist and a magician with the same delight.

[ 20 : 25 ] It doesn't matter if you choose not to believe in demons because Satan will use that to impact your life and to cause you misery. Two dangers we face here and I don't want us to fall into either of those.

I want us to be biblical and say, well it says there's demons? Okay, there's demons. But I don't want us to go the other way that C.S. Lewis says and I don't want us to go off the deep end and be obsessed with demons and understanding everything about them and wanting to know everything because all we can know about them is what the Scriptures say and we end there.

They're our enemy. We fight against them. But there is, of course, more than that. Because look at exactly, look at the demons themselves.

Take a look in verse 7. It says, crying out with a loud voice, he said, so this is the demon speaking through the man. Okay. What have you to do with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God?

I adjure you by God, do not torment me. Now, Matthew tells us this same story in the Gospel of Matthew in chapter 8. And Matthew includes something that Mark doesn't include here.

[ 21 : 33 ] Matthew tells us that the demons also ask Jesus, have you come to torment us before the time. These demons are afraid of Jesus.

They are terrorized by Him. And the primary reason for that is they know who He is. The demon identifies Him.

Jesus, Son of the Most High God. They know who He is. Now, isn't it interesting, if you've been paying attention as we walk through Mark, every other time so far in the Gospel of Mark that a demon has identified Christ and sometimes even before they're able to say anything, Jesus shuts them up.

Have you noticed that? Every other time so far in the Gospel of Mark that Jesus has encountered demons, He has not allowed them to identify Him. They try and every time He shuts them up. Literally, the text says He muzzles them. But He doesn't do that here. He doesn't do that. He doesn't tell them to stop speaking at all. They identify Him clearly as the Son of the Most High and He doesn't do that. Why?

[ 22 : 38 ] What's going on here? What has changed from all the previous chapters up to now, the first four chapters, to now chapter 5, Jesus allows them to openly identify? What's changed? Well, I think what's changed is that now He's in a Gentile territory.

You see, if He allows them to openly identify Him in Jewish territory, that they will try to make Him king. They will recognize Him as a Messiah and try to make Him king before it's time for Him to be king.

They will try to make Him a king after their own mold. And He won't have that. So He doesn't let the demons identify Him when He's in Jewish territory. But here in Gentile territory, that's fine.

You can say who I am. They know who He is. They have known it all along. And because of who He is, they are terrified.

Terrified that He has come to take them to their final destination. Have you come to torment us before the time? In other words, it's not time yet. It's not right.

[ 23 : 41 ] I mean, it's not the end of the world yet, is it? That's not the timeline we were given. Why are you here, Jesus? Because they know what happens at the end. Revelation chapter 20.

In Revelation chapter 20, they're all thrown into the lake of fire, into the bottomless pit, and they're closed in there for eternal torment and suffering with no relief. They know that's their future.

They know that's their destiny. And here comes the very one who's going to toss them in. And they're afraid. You haven't come to do that already, have you?

Don't we have some time left? They're so desperate. They appeal to God Himself. We injure you by God. What demon does that?

What demon says, listen, ah, in God's name, please don't do this to me. They are absolutely desperate. They are so terrified because they know.

[ 24 : 41 ] They know who He is. And Mark makes it clear to us who He is. Jesus tells us in verse 8 that Jesus was saying to the man, come out of the man, you unclean spirit.

And then Jesus asked him, what is your name? And He replies, my name is Legion, for we are many. Now the word Legion originally referred to a group, a company in the Roman army. It was, typically it was about 6,000 foot soldiers plus, you know, cavalry and other parts of the army. but you're dealing with thousands of soldiers when you're dealing with a Legion.

I'm not sure that we're meant to see 6,000 demons here, but we're meant to see thousands. The whole point is, this guy's not like all the other demon-possessed people that Jesus has encountered so far in Mark.

He's different. This is not a demon that has possessed this man. This is thousands of demons that have possessed this man. Now you begin to see how big of a problem this really is.

[ 25 : 54 ] And yet all of these thousands of demons are desperately afraid of what Jesus might do. My name is Legion, for we are many. And then verse 10, it says, He begged Him earnestly not to send them out of the country.

And then we get into the strange part of the story where they say, look, there's some pigs over there on the hill. Instead of sending us out of the country, or instead of tossing us into the lake of fire, how about this?

How about you let us go into these pigs? Now I'm going to be honest with you. I read a lot of commentaries this week. I did a lot of thinking and a lot of scratching my head over why in the world they'd want to go into pigs and why Jesus would let them go into pigs.

And here's my answer to that. I don't have a clue. I don't know why. I read lots of possible answers. You know, pigs are unclean animals according to the Old Testament law.

Some have even suggested, well, the demons needed some kind of body to dwell in, but we see in other places angelic beings that don't need a body at all. So I don't think that's quite right. I don't know why.

[ 27 : 01 ] My best guess is that they like this because they say, don't send us out of the country. They like this region. It's a region that, number one, has tombs.

So it would be an area that was rife with pagan rituals from all the Gentiles who lived in the area. It was, after all, an area filled with Gentiles, people who believed in false gods and worshipped probably these demons impersonating false gods so they received worship from many of these Gentiles.

It's a pretty pagan place where they are. and maybe they're just, they're surrounded by Jews everywhere else they turn.

They've got a desert on one side and if they go south or if they go west, they run into Jews who believe in one God. Not all the idol worship.

So maybe that's it. Maybe they just, they're comfortable where they are. It's easy for them to affect the people there. Maybe, I really don't know. But they want to stay in the area and for whatever reason they want to go into these pigs.

[ 28 : 11 ] It's a lot of pigs too. Later on we see that it's about 2,000 pigs. I didn't know this but a large herd back then was like 200 to 300. So this is huge.

This is, I mean these are a lot. This is a big herd of pigs. Alright? This is a big deal. And they ask him permission. That's telling.

That's telling. They're not able to enter even a pig without his permission. Which leads you to wonder could they have ever entered anyone without God's permission?

Could this legion of demons have ever entered into this man if it did not factor into the sovereign will of God? I don't think so. Just read the book of Job.

I don't think that there is anything that Satan or any of his demons can do without the permission of God. And I think that these thousands of demons inhabit this man and cause him all of this misery for this moment right here.

[ 29 : 27 ] so that Jesus might display his power. That's not a far stretch.

That's not a far cry. Do you remember in the Gospel of John the man that was born blind? And Jesus' disciples asked Jesus who sinned? This man or his parents that he was born blind?

And Jesus says neither. It's not because of this guy's sin or his parents that he was born blind. This guy was born blind so that the power of God might be displayed in him. So that I might gain glory right now in this moment by healing him of his lifelong blindness.

I think the misery of this man and the presence of this legion of demons I think all of it happens so that these people and so that we 2,000 years later reading this story so that we can see a picture of how great Christ's power over the demons really is.

It is unfathomable. Jesus merely speaks to them and they cower in fear. He speaks a word and they flee to the pigs.

[ 30 : 40 ] This is unprecedented power. It reminds us that there really is nothing that happens to us good or bad there really is nothing that happens to us that is outside the providential plan of God.

Nothing. We may be tempted to approach life with some other world view a world view that says that we are ultimately responsible for everything that happens to us or that someone else is ultimately responsible for what happens to us but the biblical world view is that God is responsible for the things that take place in your life the good and the bad and he intends it all for his glory and if you belong to him he intends it for your good.

Which leads me to the last two things that I see in this text. I see at the end here two responses two very different responses to this display of Christ's power.

First we see how the people in general that live in the area these Gentiles in the area how they respond because in verse 14 we're told that the herdsmen fled and told it in the city and in the country they're going all over the place I don't know why maybe they're afraid for their job they just lost 2,000 pigs that's a lot and they were in charge maybe they want to make sure everybody knows we didn't run them off the cliff I don't know maybe they're just amazed by what they've seen but they're out they're telling everybody and it says people came to see what it was that had happened they came to see Jesus and they saw the demon possessed man the one who had the legion sitting there now listen to this description clothed he's got clothes on now that's good that's an upgrade in his right mind but this is how they respond to this miracle they're afraid they were afraid that's how they respond to the display of Christ's power and authority that's how a lot of people respond today because we we are charged to take the gospel to them and in taking the gospel to them we have to declare

Christ's supremacy to people and it frightens people people don't say I'm afraid and I'm pretty sure these people didn't say we're afraid all right Mark tells us that they were afraid people don't admit that they're afraid but that's that's really the reason behind so much rejection of Christ because he makes if Jesus is who he claims to be and he really has this kind of power and he really did the things that the Bible claims that he did then he owns you then you owe everything to him there's not a little corner of your life that you get to reserve to do what you want to do he owns you that's a frightening thing for people who haven't trusted in him and who don't know if his goodness and his sweetness and the joy to be had in him it's a scary thing and that kind of fear I think unless the grace of God comes in to turn it around it leads to rejection of Christ that's exactly what happens here it says in verse 17 that they began to beg Jesus to depart from their region who asks

[ 34 : 03 ] Jesus to leave these people do because they're scared of him people that we see every day ask Jesus to leave them alone they don't want to be bothered by these kinds of claims fear of this authority of Christ can lead to this kind of rejection of him on the other hand though there is the demon possessed man or the formerly demon possessed man and look what he does it says in verse 18 that as Jesus was getting into the boat the man who had been possessed with demons begged him that he might be with him and he did not permit him but said to him go home to your friends and tell them how much the Lord has done for you and how he has had mercy on you and then look it says and he went away and began to proclaim in the Decapolis so that's all throughout this whole region of these ten cities he began to proclaim how much Jesus had done for him and everyone marveled you can respond to a display of Christ's power with fear and that will lead you to reject him or you can respond with faith and that will lead you to rejoice in him and spread the word about him that's how the man responds and that's how we should respond and it does by the way end up bearing fruit because if you move ahead to Mark chapter 8 the next time

Jesus crosses over to this area all of a sudden there are crowds who are flocking to see Jesus where did they come from because just before they're begging him to leave and now the next time he comes back the crowds are flocking to him to see the great things that he might do what's the difference the difference is a man who had been delivered by Christ rejoicing all over the

countryside and telling everybody what Jesus had done for him you need to understand that the kind of power that the Bible claims for Jesus is real it's real there's not a grain of dust there's not a star or a galaxy that spins or moves without his permission he upholds all things by the power of his word the Bible tells us it is a real absolute authority that he possesses and it is cause for rejoicing you're faced with a choice you can either run away from that go another way or you can trust in that and rejoice in that let's pray

Lord Jesus we're here because we want to see you we want to know you better we we want to be transformed by your power we want to be a people who rejoice in you and so I ask you to work in our hearts the kind of trust and faith that's necessary for the kind of joy that this man had that we would go out and tell that we would go out and proclaim the greatness of Christ to others help us help us never never to have our minds filled and our hearts directed by this world's ideas about reality but to be shaped and conformed to your word it's in Jesus name that we pray amen