

**SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS**  
**Commentary by Michael Sigler**  
**October 11, 2009**

**Recognizing Jesus**

Mark 5:1-13, 18-20

**Key verse: “Go home to your friends, and tell them how much the Lord has done for you, and what mercy he has shown you” (Mark 5:19)**

C.S. Lewis had something very insightful to say about the subject of *the demonic*: “There are two equal and opposite errors into which our race can fall about the devils. One is to disbelieve in their existence. The other is to believe, and to feel an excessive and unhealthy interest in them.”

Today’s text tells the story of Jesus’ encounter with a demonized man in “the country of the Gerasenes,” a predominantly Gentile area on the eastern side of the Sea of Galilee. For Mark, the gospel writer, almost every story of Jesus’ earthly ministry is to be interpreted in light of Mark 1:14-15: “Jesus went into Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God. ‘The time has come,’ he said. ‘The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news!’”

All that follows this proclamation serves as a *tangible demonstration* that, in Jesus, God’s kingdom has come near. These demonstrations, or signs, of the kingdom include Jesus healing the sick, forgiving sins, calming the stormy sea. And in this text, Jesus’ ministry to the demonized man demonstrates that Jesus is Lord over the bondage and brokenness that sin brings.

I am reminded of an experience that illustrates, for me, how sin can take us on a diabolical ride from excitement and fun to bondage. When I was a kid, one of the most exciting times of the year was in the fall when the county fair would come to our town. I remember the first time my parents let me go without them to ride the rides at the fair.

For the first time ever, I got in line with my friends to ride the Tilt-a-Whirl. It looked like so much fun. Little did I know what I was about to experience. For the first few minutes, we laughed as the saucer-shaped cars began to spin around and around. It didn’t take long, however, until I began to feel queasy.

Just as I was looking desperately for a way to stop the ride and get off, the Tilt-a-Whirl went faster. My spinning body was plastered against the car, and there was no way off. I felt sicker and sicker. I remember looking pleadingly at the carnival

ride operator every time I sped by him. It seemed to me that, if he noticed my plight at all, it only made him speed up the ride.

For what seemed like hours, I went round and round on the Tilt-a-whirl, while my stomach protested more and more vigorously. When, finally, the ride stopped, I stumbled to the exit, bent over the rail, and lost my lunch. My “friends,” of course, thought that was hilarious. A sickly shade of green, I was sidelined from riding any more rides for the rest of the day.

Here’s the point. Satan can take us on a devilish ride that starts out being fun, but eventually turns into bondage. Our habits and hang-ups have us going around in circles, helpless to stop the ride and get off. We need a deliverer. We need a savior.

The good news is that Jesus is Lord over the bondage and brokenness of sin! This poor, demonized man in Mark 5 is a vivid picture of sin’s bondage. His desperate life, before Jesus steps in, consists of wandering in torment through the graveyard, chained and shackled and tormented (Mark 5:2-5).

What a picture of sin’s bondage! The Bible says, “whoever commits sin is a slave of sin” (John 8:34). But the wonderful promise of God is: “If the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed” (John 8:36). Jesus set free the demonized man, transforming him so that he was “clothed and in his right mind” (Mark 5:15).

Our heritage as Methodists is one that celebrates the transforming power of Jesus Christ to set people free from the bondage and brokenness of sin. Having experienced that transforming power, Charles Wesley wrote a song about it and we Methodists have been singing it ever since: *“O for a thousand tongues to sing my great Redeemer’s praise, the glories of my God and King, the triumphs of his grace! He breaks the power of canceled sin, he sets the prisoner free; his blood can make the foulest clean; his blood availed for me.”*

Today’s lesson ends with one final important point. As Jesus was leaving that place, he said to the former demoniac: “Go home to your friends, and tell them how much the Lord has done for you, and what mercy he has shown you” (Mark 5:19).

Still today, the good news of the kingdom spreads most effectively when those whom Jesus has changed tell others about Him. Someone has said that *evangelism* is nothing more than “one beggar telling another beggar where to find bread.”

Every Christian should be looking for opportunities to tell others “how much the Lord has done” for us. That doesn’t require an eloquent sermon or a brilliant exposition of Scripture—just a willingness to tell others about the difference Jesus has made in your life.

This week, would you pray daily, “Lord, give me the opportunity to tell somebody about what you have done in my life”?

*Keep the faith by giving it away!*

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