



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of Dan Duncan

Mark 5:1-20

Mark

“Legion, Liberty and Love”

TRANSCRIPT

[Message] We’re going to return to the gospel of Mark, so turn to Mark 5 and we’ll look this morning at verses 1 through 20. Our last lesson, if you’ll remember, the Lord and his disciples set off across the Sea of Galilee. In fact, verse 35 of chapter 4 tells us that when it was evening they left and so the events that took place on the sea took place at night, and most likely the events that we see in chapter 5, which are at the end of that episode on the sea, took place at night as well. You remember how they began to cross the sea going to the eastern shore and a storm suddenly broke and the Lord calmed the sea miraculously and delivered them from destruction. Well, with that in mind we read chapter 5, verse 1: “And they came to the other side of the sea into the country of the Gerasenes. And when he had come out of the boat, immediately a man from the tombs with an unclean spirit met him and he had his dwelling among the tombs and no one was able to bind him any more, even with a chain, 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. And constantly, night and day, among the tombs and in the mountains, he was crying out and gashing himself with stones. And seeing Jesus from a distance, he ran up and bowed down before him and crying out with a loud voice he said, “What do I have to do to with you, Jesus, Son of the most-high God? I implore you by God do not torment me.” He had been saying to him, “Come out of the man, you unclean spirit.” And he was asking him, “What is your name?” He said to him, “My name is Legion, for we are many.” It began to entreat him earnestly not to send them out of the country.

Now there was a big herd of swine feeding there on the mountainside and they entreated him saying, “Send us into the swine so that we may enter them.” And he gave them permission. Coming out, the unclean spirits entered the swine and the herd rushed down the steep bank into the sea, about 2,000 of them, and they were drowned in the sea. And those who tended them 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. And it 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. Those who had seen it described it and how it had happened to the demon-possessed man and all about the swine. They began to entreat him to depart from their region. As Jesus was getting into the boat, the man who had been demon-possessed was entreating him that he might accompany him and he did not let him, but he said to him, “Go home to your people and report to them hat great things the Lord has done for you and how he had mercy on you.” And he went off and began to proclaim in Decapolis what great things Jesus had done for him and everyone marveled. And the Lord bless this reading of his word and bless our time of study in it together. We have great

privilege not only to study the scriptures together, but also to enter into prayer together as a church, as a people of God and to intercede for those in need. And we do have people with special needs. Lawrence Bate is experiencing great difficulty right now. He is released from the hospital, but we need to remember him in our prayers, as well as others – others who are out of town, some out of the country ministering for the Lord at the present time. We want to remember them as well. So let's bow now in a word of prayer.

Father, we thank you for the privilege we have to come together, open our scriptures together and study them and born of You and born of our responsibilities before You and to one another, and we pray that as we do this that You would instruct us and You would prepare our hearts for the week to come and move us to be missionaries in this city wherever we are in word and in deed, and to carry the great message of deliverance of salvation that we have received. And we pray that to that end You would give us a sense of the gratitude that we should have as we consider the great work of deliverance You performed in the life of this man who is at the center of our passage this morning. Give us a sense of Your grace, of Your mercy and cause us to be a people that declare your truth to others. Thank you for the privilege we have to study. Thank you for the privilege we have to have our eyes opened to the truth of the scriptures because of your Holy Spirit who illumines our thinking and gives us understanding and applies the truth to our lives. We pray for that ministry this morning among us.

We also thank You, Lord, that we have the privilege to intercede for others and we do pray for those whose names are listed on the prayer list and we think of those who are sick. We think of Mr. Bate in particular and pray that You would extend mercy to him, to his wife. We pray Your blessings upon them and many others whose names are listed and those whose names aren't, and yet You know who they are and You know their needs and we pray that You would get relief and give encouragement. We pray that You would give encouragement to those with financial needs. We pray for the unemployed, that You might open doors of employment for them, make provision for them in the meantime and give encouragement. Thank you for the many things that You give us and pray that we will not become somewhat indifferent toward those blessings because they come so routinely. That should remind us of Your generosity, Father, and the consistency of Your care. So we thank you for the blessings that we have, the very life that we possess as a gift of You and we thank you for it.

We pray, Father, for this church and we pray for the decisions that we, as elders, will have to make in days to come and we pray for wisdom. We pray for wisdom to be given to the whole congregation and that you would guide us and direct us and bless us, and make the proper provision for us. Lead this assembly in the direction that You would have us to go. We pray for our relationship to the community and pray that we would be a light in this community and pray that you would strengthen us and build us up to that end. Bless our Sunday school teachers as they teach our children. Bless us in this present hour as we consider the text of scripture before us and build us up in the faith. Bless this land, Father, and we pray for our leaders, that You would give them wisdom – our political leaders – that they would guide and direct this country properly. Bless this land most of all with the principals of Your word, that they might take root and they might flourish and we might see many people come to faith. We pray that You bless us to that end, that we might be used of you in that way at this time. Build us up in the faith. We pray in Christ's name. Amen.

In our study this morning, it is entitled “Legion, Liberty and Love.” In 1921, a book was published written by J. Gresham Machen entitled *The Origin of Paul's Religion*. Machen was a New Testament scholar, who at the time of the writing of that book, was a professor at Princeton

Seminary and later became a founder of Westminster Theological Seminary. In his book he explains that the key to Paul's religion is Paul's relationship to Christ. He concludes his book by saying, “The relation of Paul to Christ is a relation of love and that love is rooted not in what Christ had said, but in what Christ had done. He loved me and gave himself for me.” There lies the basis of the religion of Paul. There lies the basis of all Christianity. The new life of the Christian, the Christian's eternal life, is grounded not in what our Lord said – as important as his teaching is – but rather in what our Lord did. It's grounded in the Lord's cross, in his sacrificial death in the place of sinners. It's there that all who believe in Christ were redeemed, were delivered, were liberated from sin, from Satan, and from judgment to come.

And it's as we understand what Christ did for us that we loved him, that our relation of love grows. That is beautifully illustrated for us in our passage this morning. It's not what our Lord says that's important – he says very little in this passage – it's what he does. He gives liberty to an enslaved and tortured man and in response the man becomes utterly devoted to our Lord. It's a picture of what every believer in Jesus Christ was at one time and what every one of us should become. The Lord and his disciples have just come through a violent storm on the Sea of Galilee in which our Lord demonstrated his power over nature by stilling the storm and calming the sea. And now he demonstrates his power over evil when the boat lands on the eastern shore and he is met by a man possessed by demons. As one writer puts it, the Lord moves from the wild seas to the wild man, and just as he calms the one, he calms the other and in so doing he demonstrates again that he is a mighty King, a conquering King. He is the Divine Son of God.

The region in which they landed is called the Gerasenes in verse 1. It was largely a gentile region, an area in which there were a number of Gentile cities located and a place where large herds of pigs were raised. And there was something very eerie about this place as the Lord and his disciples soon discovered. Having set out on the sea at night, it was the early hours before dawn when the boat reached the shore, and as they disembarked a man approached them out of the darkness. He was powerful. He was wild. Luke tells us that he was also naked. His body was covered with scars and with open wounds. He was a restless, tormented man who Mark says, in verses 3-5 was “living among the tombs.” And constantly, night and day, among the tombs and in the mountains he was crying out and gashing himself with stones. So he was a violent man and his violence was not only turned against himself, but it was turned against others as well. In verse 4 Mark describes how efforts had been made by those people in the region to restrain him with shackles and with chains, but he was so strong he would simply tear the chains apart and break the shackles and according to Luke's account, the demon in him would drive him out into the desert where he would live among the tombs.

He was able to do that, he was able to live among the tombs because in Palestine people were buried in natural caves or in tombs that were cut out of the limestone rock. Many such tombs have been discovered in Jerusalem and in that area. In fact, one such tomb was discovered on Mount Scopus on the campus of the Hebrew University. I would frequently walk by this tomb on my way to classes and bend down and look right in it and you would see the two chambers of this tomb that were cut out of the rock. This man round shelter in such tombs on the eastern coast of the Sea of Galilee away from the living, among the dead, having been driven from the society of men, a man in personal torment as a result of demons who hounded him day and night, driving him to self destruction. He's a pathetic man, but his condition of violence, of self destruction, his anguished cries in the night of unhappiness, of pain, of despair, loneliness. They give us a true picture of Satan's realm where all of the pleasures that the world and the flesh promise, realms that are dominated by Satan who is the prince of this age, for all of those promises, this man illustrates the true nature of life lived outside of Christ and outside of his influence. Men may find pleasure in sin,

and they certainly do. The scriptures are very clear about that. Personal experience is clear about that. The Lord testifies to that very point, that there is pleasure in sin. There's no doubt about it.

But as our Lord points out, giving a realistic perspective to it all, that pleasure is only for a season. The season may be somewhat long, it may be very brief, but it's only for a season. It doesn't last. The ultimate end of that life, of life outside of Christ, outside the light, life in the darkness is a life of cruelty, a life of shame, and a life of loneliness. That's life in the world. And as the apostle John tells us in 1 John, the whole world lies in the evil one. It lies under his control, lies under his influence, and the more a person departs from the Lord and his light, departs from his truth and moves into the world, the more he or she will become a victim of the world. The more worldly a society becomes, the more cruel and brutal the society becomes. This pitiful wreck of a man is a picture of all of that and what a contrast we see here between what Satan causes and what Christ gives. In contrast to the violent cruelty of the demons and the lack of compassion of the people, they sought to restrain him, not to help him but to help themselves and to remove that evil influence from them and the destructive influence that they brought. But in spite of their lack of compassion and their lack of ability to do anything for the man – had they had compassion they still couldn't change him – but in contrast to that we see the power and the kindness of our Lord, of Jesus Christ.

And we see it against this man's hostility as well because when he saw the Lord arrive, verse 6 states that immediately he ran up to the Lord, probably with violent intent and an attempt to defend himself and an attempt to drive the Lord away and out of his territory, but when he reached him the man fell down before him – not in an act of worship. If you have the King James Version, that's the way it is translated. But this is not an act of worship on the part of this man, it's rather an act of homage before a superior. He recognized that and the presence of Christ forced him to acknowledge his King and he falls down before him. In doing so, he cried out – crying out with a loud voice, shouting at the Lord he said, in verse 7, “What do I have to do with you, Jesus, Son of the most-high God?” That's very interesting. The demons know very well who the Lord is and these addressed him first by his personal name and then by his divine title. It's very clear. From what we see here and what we see in similar incidents in the gospels that the whole demonic realm was greatly shaken by the presence of Jesus Christ having come into the world and they were compelled to pay homage to him, to make a confession of his sovereignty over them. I think one of the things that we see in this passage is we see a foreshadowing of what's to come – and we'll make a point of this later in our lesson – but as we look at this it's a reminder of what Paul states in Philippians 2:10 that the day is coming when every knee shall bow to Jesus Christ and confess him as Lord, whether those be saved or unsaved individuals, principalities of the Heavens or on Earth, there will be a forced submission.

We see that here and this confession that they make, that the Lord is the Son of the most-high God, is more than simply an acknowledgment that he is the King, that he is the Messiah, it is a recognition of his deity. Sometimes critics charge that Jesus never claimed to be God. That's false, as such statements in John 8 make very clear: “Before Abraham was I am.” But notice our Lord's response here. If he was not the Son of God, the it would have been blasphemous not to immediately reject the title that they give to him, but he doesn't do that. He accepts the title. He doesn't reject it. And so his silence, his testimony to the truth of it, certainly testimony to the fact that he accepted it, that he assumed his deity, it's interesting to consider this confession by the demon in light of the question the disciples asked themselves after the sea was calm. At the end of chapter 4, if you'll remember, they were amazed at the Lord's authority over nature and they were asking themselves who, then, is this that even the wind and the sea obey him? And here, not long after that, just a few hours later, they received the answer to their question. He is Jesus, Son of the

most-high God. So the demon becomes the unlikely teacher of the disciples. As you read through the scriptures you find that the world is filled with some very strange teachers. Solomon, for example, tells the sluggard, tells the lazy person to go to the ants. The ants can teach us a great deal about industry, about hard work.

Our Lord tells his disciples to study the birds of the air and the lilies of the field because they can teach us a great deal about the providence of God and His provision for His people. He makes provision for the birds who don't even sow, how much more provision will He make for you people whom He loves? David writes that the Heavens are telling of the Glory of God. The whole natural order teaches us about the Glory of God. And strangely we can even learn a lot from the demons of Hell. They have more insight and respect for Christ than men today do, or many men today do and throughout history for that matter. Men will acknowledge anything about Christ before they acknowledge him as the Son of God and the Lord over their lives. But that's who he is and that's what he is. In the words of the apostle Paul in Titus 2:13, "He is our great God and Savior." Now Paul said that out of love. That was a confession of love from the apostle Paul, but here there's no love in the confession of these demons – only fear. They recognized him as their God and they recognized him as their judge. And by their confession, they give us another lesson, a lesson about knowledge. Of itself, knowledge is not enough. Knowledge is essential for us to progress, to come to know God and to develop in that relationship with God, but it is not enough of itself. Knowledge must be joined with trust, with faith in Christ as God and Savior.

So let me ask you a question. Where do you stand in relation to Christ? Are you coming to the conviction that he is the Son of God? Some of you young people, you've grown up in homes and you've heard that and you have learned not only from your parents but you've learned from your Sunday school teachers here that Jesus Christ is the son of God. You've come to the conviction that that's true. Well if so, that's good, but have you come to trust him as your Lord and as your Savior? Notice the text here. The demons, they believe that he is the Son of God. In fact James tells us that they believe a great deal about God. They believe in God and they shudder. These demons shudder. They recognize the deity and the lordship of Christ, but they weren't saved. They were doomed spirits and it's a reminder to us that it's not enough to believe certain facts to be proved, one must also trust in those facts. To be specific, one must trust in the personal work of Jesus Christ in order for those facts to become a reality and a blessing in one's life. Well they make a great confession here – a profound confession of truth. This identification of Christ as the Son of the most-high God is the one who has authority over them, is the one who is ultimately their judge, is then quickly followed by pleas for mercy from them.

The man cries out, "I implore you, by God, do not torment me." Now I find that very ironic, that here are these – this demon who is so viciously tormenting the man and now it begs not to be tormented itself. Matthew adds the question, "Have you come here to torment us before the time," a reference to the judgment of the Lake of Fire, the place of which the Puritan Thomas Watson writes, "Time will not finish it, tears will not quench it." It's endless torment, endless punishment, and so the demons were right to be in terror of it. There's another lesson for man in that from these demons. As vile as the demons are, they are honest with themselves about their future. That's more than we can say about so many people who pass through this world. They don't accept the reality of a future judgment whereas these demons, they don't deny the reality of future judgment. They understand it and they live in terror of it. But so many people deny that there's anything to fear in the future as though to blot it out of one's thoughts is to remove the reality of it all together, and yet that does not remove the reality. A great deal of wisdom in what the demons had to say and their perspective; they knew that judgment was coming. They knew they were doomed and they were in terror of that judgment to come.

So the demon was putting up a fight, resisting the Lord who, verse 8 states, had been saying to him, “Come out of the man.” So this was a command that he repeated – repeated more than once, a number of times – and the demon was repeatedly resisting the command of the Lord, but the Lord would not let the demon stay and that climactic moment came when the Lord asked him his name and in verse 9 the demon answers with the chilling response that his name is Legion, for we are many. Now Legion was a unit of the Roman Army consisting of over 6,000 soldiers. It generally broke down as 6,000 infantry and 120 horsemen. Now here it may not indicate the exact number of demons that had combined within this man to become one great force within him, but the sense is a great number were in him and the association of the name with the Roman legions may be intended to suggest the cruelty and the destruction of an army of occupation. It certainly brought cruelty and destruction upon this man. He was helpless. He was under the control of thousands of demons – thousands in this one man. He needed a deliverer and Legion knew that that deliverer had arrived in Christ and that meant its doom.

Verse 10 states, “And he began to entreat him earnestly not to send them out of the country. Luke writes, “They were entreating him not to command them to depart into the abyss” the place of confinement before the judgment. 2 Peter 2:4, Peter speaks of the pit of darkness where the angels are reserved for judgment. They don’t want to go there. They know that they can’t stay where they are, that they must leave this man, but they plead not to be put there in that abyss. Now there was a large herd of swine feeding on the mountainside, about 2,000 of them according to verse 13. Demons pleaded with the Lord to send them into the pigs hoping to forestall their punishment. And the Lord granted their request with the result that, we read in verse 13, the unclean spirits entered the swine and the herd rushed down the steep bank into the sea where they drowned. Now there’s something very fitting about unclean spirits entering pigs, which under the old covenant law were unclean animals. And the fate of the swine shows the violent nature of the demons. They are emissaries of the Devil and he is the destroyer. That was their intention for the man had the Lord not delivered him of these evil, unclean spirits. They were bent on destruction. And being deprived of the man, they destroyed the swine.

Now I suspect that the question you’re asking yourself, or you will ask, is the question that more than one person asked me afterwards, once the pigs drowned what happened to the demons? Were they free, then, to go inhabit some other poor soul in the region? The answer is we don’t know. The scriptures don’t address that. I suspect that that’s possible, that they could then have gone and inhabited some other person who was part of Satan’s realm. That’s what we can expect in Satan’s realm, this kind of thing. But if I were to be pressed to speculate on it, and I stress the fact that it’s speculation because the scriptures don’t expound on it for us, I would say that that’s not what happened. They were in fear of going to the abyss and they sought refuge in the pigs to avoid that. That was their haven. That was their escape from the abyss. But when the pigs were gone, they must have gone to the abyss, so that’s how I would explain it. But again, that’s not really the point and that’s not a detail that the scriptures really take up because the point is the man who was delivered. Nevertheless, this has become an interesting feature of discussion in terms of this passage, and this event has raised objections among some critics.

One famous 20th-Century skeptic was Bertrand Russell, a man who died some years ago but in his day was quite well known. He felt sorry for the pigs. Not that he believed this account to be a true story, but he used it to try to cast doubt upon the Christian faith in his work *Why I Am Not a Christian*. And there he writes, “It certainly was not very kind to the pigs to put devils into them and make them rush down the hill to the sea. He could always have made the Devil simply go away.” Now of course a careful reading of the text shows that the Lord didn’t put Devils into the pigs nor make the herd rush down the hill into the sea. He permitted the demons to enter the pigs

and the demons caused the pigs to rush to their destruction. But assuming that the Lord did cause this – and I don’t have a problem with that. I think ultimately He did. It was in His design of what is to transpire in this text. But assuming that He did do that, is that a problem? Well, I don’t know if Mr. Russell began his day with a good English breakfast of bacon and eggs – and he was an Englishman so I suspect that he did – or if he ate pork in the evening, but if he did that accepted pleasure of life involved the killing of some pig. Not the wanton killing of life, but killing for a higher good, for a higher benefit and the benefit of food provided from the pig justifies the killing. And here, too, any objection to what occurred ignores the blessing that followed from the destruction of the herd and the benefit of that herd’s destruction was great because by it, the Lord gave tangible evidence to the man and to the people of that region that the demons had been expelled from him. That the man who had terrorized them had been healed, that he was completely cured, that the scourge from their territory had been removed and a miracle had occurred and that the deliverable, the Messiah, the conquering King had come across the sea to visit them.

So there was a great benefit in the destruction of that herd and that gives justification in and of itself, but add to that the fact that as creator and sustainer of all things the Lord owned the 2,000 pigs just as he owns the cattle on a thousand hills. He owns all of creation, so he has the sovereign right to dispose of his possessions as he sees fit, which he always does wisely and he always does for a good end and a good purpose. And when a person recognizes that, any objection to what occurred here disappears. As Paul says at the end of Romans 11, “For from him and through him and t him all things to him be the glory forever. Amen.” But you see that’s precisely where the problem lies. Men don’t want to recognize Christ as sovereign, that he has a claim on all of his creation; that he has a claim on them. And so they seek to find shallow objections to our Lord and to his work. They seek to find various reasons to not believe in him, to resist that and to not subject themselves to him. Men do not want to come under the authority of Christ and that is illustrated further in the passage. Another aspect of this story that’s very important, if it was the Lord’s intention to publicize the miracle through the destruction of the herd, it worked because we read in verse 14 that when it occurred, the herdsmen ran and reported it in the city and in the surrounding countryside with the result that people from the region came out to see what had happened. What they saw amazed them. They saw the wild man, the man whom they could not restrain, sitting down clothed and in his right mind. And to underscore the amazement of this, Mark adds the very man who had had the Legion – that very man – was not calm, controlled. He was in his right mind. He’s clothed. Luke adds that he was sitting at the feet of Jesus.

What a blessing this was. The very man that had terrorized the region, who was uncontrollable, was completely cured and peacefully sitting at Jesus’ feet. The reign of terror was over and what was their response to this great miracle and this great blessing that had come to them? Mark writes in verse 15 they became frightened, not thankful. And their fear only increased as the herdsmen described to them, in verse 16, how it had happened to the demon-possessed man and Mark adds, as if to underscore this important point, all about the swine. Christ alone had both healed the wild man and had destroyed or permitted the destruction of the swine, and these people had never reckoned with power like that before. And as they considered what had happened to the man on the one hand and what had happened to the swine on the other, verse 17 states they began to entreat him to depart from their region. They cared more about the swine, more about their financial loss, than they did about the man and his healing. They were materialists and could only see Christ’s power as something that they could not control and as something that might strike their possessions again. If they could not control the wild man whom Christ controlled, they certainly could not control our Lord and they feared to be in subjection to him. Since they valued their material things more highly than spiritual blessings, they rejected the Lord. There are people like

that. The world is filled with people like that and perhaps we have some people in our congregation that are like that, that are like Esau who sold his birthright for a mess of pottage; a bowl of stew. People who hear the gospel and see it not as a blessing but as a threat – a threat to all that they hold dear in this life; possessions, prestige – a threat to the goals and the aspirations that they have set for themselves and so they reject the gospel, reject Christ so they can hold onto the things in this world as though they’re going to last forever.

That’s the same perspective that we see here among these people of the Gerasenes. It’s preferring pigs to Christ, preferring things to eternal life. That was their response to Christ, but notice Christ responds to them in verse 18 and the remainder of the chapter, he got in the boat. They asked him to leave and he left. One writer has observed that the saddest thing in the whole story is that the Lord listened to their request and left them. Then he goes on to state there are times when the worst possible thing for us is that the Lord grants our prayer. Contrary to popular ideas, sovereign grace, irresistible grace does not mean that God forces himself on people, that he makes them believe against their will. That’s a caricature. It’s not true. He irresistibly draws men and women to himself by changing their hearts and giving them a desire to come. No man, no woman comes to the Lord who is not drawn to the Lord by the Lord. The Lord makes that very clear in John 6:44. But all who come to him come to him because they want to. Their hearts have been changed. They have a new disposition. They have a desire to come to the Lord. Those who don’t have that desire, those who don’t want Christ and resist the truth, they won’t come to him and Christ won’t come to them. And the people of the Gerasenes experienced that. They begged him to leave and he left. But as he was leaving, the man who had been healed of the demons begged him to take him with him. His countrymen feared Christ, but he was devoted to Christ. He understood what the Lord had done for him. He liberated him from this terrible enslavement, this terrible oppression, this destruction, this enslavement to Satan. And because of what he had done for him he loved the Lord and so if Christ was leaving he wanted to leave too – just the kind of man you’d think the Lord would want to have with him. Take this man on his mission and take him to his various evangelistic meetings and set him before people and show what he had done and he could give his testimony, the kind of man that the Lord would want around him because he was loyal. We think he’d say, “Yes, get in the boat with me.”

He doesn’t. He refuses. Verse 19, “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. It’s not always a sign of favor when the Lord refuses – or rather it’s not always a sign of disfavor when the Lord refuses our requests. Remember, he granted the request of the demons. He granted the request of the people. Often when he grants a request it’s not a sign of favor. Often when he says no to our request it is because he has a better more useful purpose for us and as William Hendrickson suggests, in doing this, in not granting this man’s request but rather sending him back to his people, back to that whole region, the Lord was showing great kindness to the very community that had rejected him. He would leave just as they had asked, but he would also give them a witness, give them a missionary, in this man. And because he loved the Lord he obeyed the Lord. We read in verse 20, “And he went off and began to proclaim in Decapolis what great things Jesus had done for him and everyone marveled. It’s a reminder that as one writer puts it, true missionary activity begins at home but does not end there. We’re all missionaries wherever we go – at home, at work, when we travel. We’re missionaries and we’re to be engaged in that. This reminds us of that, but also the events that we’ve studied here, these events in the Gerasenes were a foreshadowing as we mentioned earlier, of what the Lord came to do and what he accomplished. As John writes in 1 John 3:8, the Son of God appeared for this purpose, that he might destroy the works of the Devil. And that is what he did at the cross. Through his sacrificial death, as Paul writes in

Colossians 1, God delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the Kingdom of His beloved Son in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

At the cross, Christ paid for all of the sins of all who believe in him so that they are constituted innocent before God, depriving Satan of any claim on them, depriving him of any power over them. Christ gives us liberty. He gives us liberty from Satan's power. He gives us liberty from sin's power. It doesn't mean that we don't face temptation, and that temptation isn't a genuine struggle and that sometimes wins out over us. There's no perfection this side of the grave. But the power that we have is a reality and the truth is that the power of sin and the power of Satan have been broken in a Christian's life and we are to realize that and we are to live in light of it. As Paul tells the Romans in Romans 6, they are to reckon themselves dead to sin. They are alive in Christ. The power of sin has been broken. The power of God lives within us and so in Christ we have life. He gives us liberty. He gives us eternal life. The proper response to that is love, the love that this man had for our Lord. Do you love him? If you are his, you do love him and you will grow in that love as you grow in your understanding and your appreciation of what he has done for you in loving you and giving himself for you. That's the essence of Paul's religion, a relation of love of Christ rooted in what he had done for him at the cross. The events of this chapter remind us of who Christ is and what he has done, but they also remind us of what happens when people refuse Christ, when they ask him to leave them alone. There's a story that has appeared in various forms – a story that you may have heard before, but one that illustrates the tragedy of this passage. It's about Aaron Burr.

The story of Aaron Burr is one of political tragedy and we're probably most familiar with him from that standpoint. He was a very gifted man; Vice President of the United States under Thomas Jefferson. He is best known as the man who killed Alexander Hamilton in a duel and was later tried for treason for his involvement in a conspiracy to establish an independent nation in the west. But for all of his notoriety, Aaron Burr was a man of great privilege. He was the son of very Godly parents and the grandson of Jonathan Edwards. He attended Princeton University and there he made a decision that was something of a crossroads of his life, a decision that I think is the source of all the tragedy that followed. While he was a student, a revival swept the university and he felt the need of mercy and forgiveness and he went through a great struggle of his soul. So one night Aaron Burr shut himself into his room and he resolved to decide the matter of his relationship with God. Finally he looked up to Heaven and he said, "God, if you don't bother me any more I'll never bother You." Later in his life he said God has kept his part of the bargain. He has never bothered me. That is the great tragedy of that man's life and if you're here this morning and you realize that you're a sinner, that you are in bondage to sin, that you're in bondage to Satan and you sense your need for forgiveness, don't ignore that. Don't resist it. It may be the Holy Spirit speaking directly to your heart and revealing to you your need. Don't be deceived by the things of this world and the promised pleasures of this world. Don't be deceived by a denial of future judgment, by the desire to achieve your own ambitions in this life. Don't resist the Lord and pray for Him to depart or ask Him not to bother you because He may answer that prayer, and what a tragedy that would be. Don't leave this place without trusting in Christ as the one who came to give life, not to take it, who came to destroy the works of the Devil and in its place give liberty and salvation. May God help you to do so. Shall we stand now for the benediction?

Gracious Heavenly Father, we thank you for what your son has done on our behalf, that he loved us and gave himself for us; not because there was anything in us that commended us to him, that commended us to Your everlasting love, because there's nothing in us. That's what is so amazing. There's nothing in this man that our Lord healed, that's why the Lord could tell him to go and tell people of the mercy that he had received. We have received mercy from you, Father, and

we acknowledge that and give you thanks. Help us, Father, to live in light of that, to live lives of gratitude, lives that are governed by that gratitude and love. May that be a key aspect of our relation with Christ, our relationship with you the Father. Love for You, may it compel us to live lives of service for You. Thank you for what Christ has done in dying in a place of sinners, obtaining life for all who believe in him. Help us to live in light of that and be like this man, missionaries who proclaim all the blessings, all that Christ has done for us. We pray these things in His name. Amen.