

**Authority Over Spirits**  
**Mark 5:1-20**

We return this morning to the book of Mark, and we'll be looking in chapter 5 now, and to setup where we have been and how it ties in to where we are today, we need to understand that Jesus has been doing some teaching. Back in the beginning of chapter 4, we really saw the beginning of Jesus' teaching in a new manner and a new way through parables about the kingdom of God. He began to explicitly and in detailed fashion unfold the mysteries and the truths about God's kingdom, and He did this through parables so as to both reveal the truth to those that were sincerely following Him and then conceal it from those that were just following for the sake of seeing new and eventful things or even those that were looking to try and trip Him up in what He might say or do. But Jesus, nonetheless, was teaching these bold truths about the kingdom of God, and it was after He concluded this, or at least Mark concludes what Jesus said on this, that we have the question arise, who is Jesus to make such claims? How dare He, really. How dare this man Jesus come about and start to speak about such a meaningful and profound topic for the Jewish people as the kingdom of God; something they were longing for, looking intently for, and Jesus can just waltz onto the scene and start teaching about the kingdom? What gives Him the right to do that? What gives Him the authority to do that?

This is where we see Mark transition us in, and as we saw last time at the end of chapter 4, Mark began to show how Jesus has such authority in the account where He calmed and stilled the storm and the seas. We saw Jesus' authority over nature, over the stormy seas, and what took place there in the boat with His disciples as they were attempting to get away from the crowds. You all remember when Jesus was teaching, there was so many people, He had to put out in a boat so that all the people could be on the shore and He could speak in the parables to them. After this time of teaching in these crowds, Jesus decided with His disciples let's get out of here. "Let us go across to the other side [of the Sea of Galilee]." Let's try to get away, find some rest, so that way we can withdraw and be together - and thus, the boat trip overnight that turned into the stormy sea, that Jesus used as a display of His authority and Mark records for us; to see that Jesus does have the authority, the ability, the right to teach about the kingdom of God because He has the authority over all nature as the Creator and Sustainer of all things.

This morning, we continue to see Jesus' authority come out as we see His authority over spirits in the spiritual realm, and we've seen this a little bit before. We've seen Jesus interact with people that are demon possessed, briefly, and Mark giving us a short account of how Jesus cast the demon out and dealt with these people with mercy and grace, but this morning is a unique story that is potentially familiar, but it's very unique for Mark's gospel. In Matthew and Luke, you have the same story recounted, but not at all with the detail that Mark gives, which is very different for Mark. Mark has already been very shortened and condensed in what he's said. When he does tell stories that are similar to other gospel writers, he seems to give you the short version at times, but this morning that's not the case. We get the full details, the vivid imagery and display of Jesus clashing with the spirits here and the spiritual realm and demonic forces in our text.

So, look with me at Mark 5:1-20. We'll read through the whole account and see the detail that Mark gives us in the story. Mark 5, starting 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, 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 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.” This fascinating and detailed account of Jesus’ authority over spirits that we find here, a most amazing kind of encounter - one of the grandest that you do find in all of Scripture regarding angels and demons and the spiritual realm that we have, given the amount of demons involved in this text and Jesus the Messiah.

As we work through our text today, we’ll start with this initial encounter that takes place in verses 1-5, the encounter that begins it all. As we are reminded in verse 1, they’d finally come to the other side of the sea. After the long night of the storm and the raging of the sea and finally the calming of it, they are able to slowly make their way across a calm and placid sea to the other side and finally land. In this landing in verses 1-2, we’re introduced to this character, the demonic - the demonic in verses 1-2. As we are reminded, “They came to the other side of the sea, to the country of the Gerasenes.”

Before we get to the demonic, we’re reminded of where they were going. There was one side of the Sea of Galilee, and if you’re on that (the western side of the Sea of Galilee), you were primarily dealing with the Jewish population. That’s where Jesus had been. That’s where He’d been teaching in parables. That’s where He’d been doing a lot of His ministry, healing people, primarily Jewish people - Jewish people expecting the Messiah, watching and observing Jesus, following Him to see what He would do. Now, “They came to the other side of the sea...,” and that’s the eastern side which is not Jewish. The eastern side is known as the Decapolis or, really, a Gentile region - just think of it as a non-Jewish region. You come over there and you can see the Decapolis isn’t just the eastern side of the Sea of Galilee, but it even spreads down - and Decapolis stands for ten cities, and they’re basically ten Roman cities, almost all of them on the eastern side of the Jordan River. So, they come across to the eastern side trying to get away.

If you go to this Gentile side of the Sea of Galilee, it’s an expectation that there’ll be some quiet and calm because Gentiles aren’t looking for a Jewish Messiah, and they’re not even going to know and care very much. Even if

they have heard about Jesus, they're not interested; potentially, that's the hope. There's an interesting note (just to point out to you) in our text; it says the Gerasenes. If you have a different version, or if you look in Matthew, he says the Gaterines, and you kind of start to think, well, which one is it? Is there a contradiction going here? Is it Gadara? Is it Gerasa? Is it Gergesa. There's these different speculations as far as where we're exactly talking. Well, all three of the potential locations are on the eastern side of the Sea of Galilee so it doesn't change it too much, but more than likely with Mark writing to a Roman audience who's not as familiar with the region of Israel, he uses Gerasa or the Gerasene, which as you can see is way, way down south and not really close to the shore of the Sea of Galilee but more well known as the region that would touch the Sea of Galilee. So, for people that were in Rome or people that were foreigners or not used to the land of Israel, Gerasa would make a little more sense. Matthew, with a Jewish audience in mind, can use a more specific location like Gadara, and that's what he does, which is the closer one as you can tell to the Sea of Galilee. Either way, we're still dealing with the same location, and they're not in contradiction.

Jesus with His disciples land on the eastern side of the Sea of Galilee, seeking some rest and quiet, expecting a Gentile population that would just simply be apathetic and not care about them landing there. As we can tell in our text, that's not the case. We look back to verse 2, and we see, "...when Jesus had stepped out of the boat, immediately..." (one of Mark's favorite words) "...immediately there met him out of the tombs a man with an unclean spirit." Right when they'd landed and they were attempting to actually take a step out of the boat, immediately, they meet someone - not the quiet and calm they were hoping for and expecting. This man comes out of the tombs, and we see Mark describe him as "...a man with an unclean spirit." As we learn from the rest of our text and from other places in Mark, this is just another way of saying he was demon-possessed. This man was demon-possessed. As we've seen before in the synagogue when Jesus cast them out and other people brought their sick ones and demon-possessed people, or people with an unclean spirit, it's a kind of a synonymous phrase.

In our text, we're just noting one person. If you were to look at Matthew's account, you see two that show up. And once again, people start to argue this is a contradiction. Matthew mentions two. Mark says one. They don't agree. That's not the case; there were, in fact, two people. Mark just chooses to focus on the one that had the greater possession and the greater need in our

account. He focuses on one of the men, and he doesn't even mention the other guy. It doesn't mean there wasn't another man. Matthew says there was, but Mark just focuses on this one man. So, they're not in contradiction if you read Matthew's account in conjunction with this. Mark does an interesting thing; he doesn't just say that there's this demon-possessed man that rushes them coming from the tombs as they get out of the boat, he gives us this massive description of this guy in verses 3-5. You read on, and you start to see, wow, this guy sounds like an interesting character, one that I'd like to stay far away from. In verse 3, "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." Wow! This is a character, one that's living among the tombs. We find another outcast in the life of Christ.

As Christ has dealt with lepers and people that have been socially or physically ostracized from society, we find another one, another outcast as far as society's concerned living in the tombs. This one's an outcast because of how he was just simply uncontrollable. There was no controlling this man. In fact, any attempt to do so was just futile. It didn't amount to anything. He could shatter and break any chain that was tried to bind him. They obviously gave up on rope and anything else they could do. He's a madman. He's always calling out and crying out night and day, yelling, and he's really the town maniac if you will. As we learn later on in our text in verse 15, he's described as clothed after Jesus interacts with him, giving us the indication that here he's naked. He's a naked madman that is absolutely uncontrollable, kind of amazing super-strength, as he's demon-possessed. He's also very disturbed as he's cutting himself with stones and doing this physical harm and injury to himself, essentially scaring everyone off from the city. Matthew adds the detail that he was "...so fierce that no one could pass that way." And if there was a road that went by the tombs or that cemetery, the people didn't even go near it. They warned their kids and said don't even think about it. We don't even joke about going over there because that is a crazy man, and you don't know what might happen - a dangerous disturbed man.

You wonder... the society had no answer for him - what to do with this man. In our day, we might think, what would you do? When these types of people

surface from time to time, they seem uncontrollable. They seem absolutely disturbed in every way. What do you do? I mean, now days, there's different techniques of putting people in straight-jackets, putting them in padded cells, just loading them up with drugs and medication to alter them and numb them so to speak, just saying they need a lot of therapy, give them more therapy, more therapy. That's what they need, this intense therapy over and over and over. Clearly, we know that those people and this man in our text have a greater problem. They need more than drugs in these chemical imbalances. They need more than therapy upon therapy. What they really have is a problem of being blinded and veiled by Satan. They need Christ to set them free. That's the simple solution for this man. He needs Christ to set him free, this disturbed man.

We learn of the interaction between Christ and this man in verses 6-13. We find the exchange - the exchange that takes place in verses 6-13; "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.' " This initial interaction here in verses 6-9 - not your typical interaction that Jesus has with demon possessed people. It's a little more extended and a little more conversational even as we see it. So, in verses 6-9, we see the deliberation going back and forth as they dialogue almost. Notice that we've already seen that he's rushing them from the tombs, and Mark has given us a full description of this man, and if you're a disciple, you're pretty much terrified. You're hiding behind Jesus, and you in... you know, you're kind of in a ball on the ground at this point. Right? This man is rushing, and you see the fact that no chain can hold him, but notice, even with all these demons that we learn that he has, how does he approach Jesus? He runs down, rushing Him, and falls down. The word "falls down" is actually... it's like the word for worship. He bows down. He comes and simply worships. He comes and simply bows down. He can't help... even this man full of all these demons, can't help but bow down and recognize who he's dealing with. It's Jesus the Messiah. This is the approach he takes as he comes and tries to rush who would be, maybe, his next victim so to speak.

It's interesting, too, to note what he says, not only coming to Jesus and falling down and bowing down - what he says. He says, "What have you to do with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God?" Once again, just as a reminder, demons seem to have a pretty good theology, not that they believe it, not that they actually follow it, but they have a pretty good understanding. It's very accurate. No one else in, really, the gospel of Mark thus far has said, Jesus, you know what? After seeing some of these things, I think You're the Messiah. You're the Son of God. No, all we've seen is demons saying it so far, and they're right. Demons are pretty smart they have a good theology they recognize, just as we see here, "Jesus, Son of the Most High God." A term even from the Old Testament drawing on knowing exactly who Jesus is, not just Jesus the miracle worker, alright, or Jesus the strong one or the mighty but Jesus the Son of God. There's no question the demons knew who they were dealing with.

And yet, we have this strong statement that comes next. Not just addressing Him correctly as "... Son of the Most High God." ...in verse 7 at the end, we see, "I adjure you by God, do not torment me." You read that and you think, who's he think he is? You're going to implore, you're going to adjure Jesus, by God that He not torment you and torture you. What gives you the right to do that? As we look at parallel passages, we find once again this is just a consistent statement with the fact of their theology being pretty accurate. When we look at these passages in Matthew 8:29 and Luke 8:31, we learn a little more information and see the demons knew. They knew more than just that Jesus was the Son of God. In Matthew 8, we find out they say "What have you to do with us, O Son of God? Have you come here to torment us before the time?" A clear reference here that demons are aware that there is the time that is coming when they will be tormented, this is an expected thing, this is something they actually knew about, and they're addressing this. Jesus, what're You doing here? We know we're going to be tormented. We know what we're doing is wrong, and we're kind of having our way until that time comes, but I don't think the time's now. They're addressing Him.

In Luke 8:31; "And they begged him not to command them to depart into the abyss." They're aware. They're aware of where they deserve to go. They deserve to be locked up into the abyss just like the demons, the fallen angels of Genesis 6, who came down and intermingled and mixed with people on the earth, thus causing the need for the flood because of how sinful man had

become. Those demons, as we learn in 2 Peter and the book of Jude, that are cast into the abyss and locked up until their final judgment. Demons aren't dumb. They're smart. As they're addressing Jesus, they know that there is a time for their torture and tormenting, but they even know enough that's it's not now. They say hold on; I'm even certain that I can tell You this isn't the time. This isn't the time that You're here to torment us, the time for our judgment to come. Even the demons knew there was an appointed time in store for them when they would be judged.

Jesus decides to... Rather than snap His fingers and have the demons be gone, He engages. He decides to have a discussion with this man and with this legion of demons. This is what we see when we look back in our text. In verse 9, "... Jesus asked him, 'What is your name?' He replied, 'My name is Legion, for we are many.'" Legion. Legion is a kind of a Roman term for their army - is about six thousand, six thousand infantry men. Around six thousand men was a legion in the Roman army. So, that this man is now saying his name is legion, and we start to realize he's not possessed by just one demon. Right? There's several here, and it's not just a couple. We're dealing with thousands, not merely one demon but thousands of demons, and this starts to escalate a little bit. It starts to take the circumstances by which we're seeing this and bring it to a whole new level where we now have almost a battle forming if you will. You start to wonder what's going to happen next? This is an uncontrollable man, for obvious reasons because there's thousands of demons, and now Jesus's going to interact. What will take place?

This isn't your typical encounter. This seems to be on a whole new level. What is going to happen? We find out a little bit more as we jump into the next verses, verses 10-13. It's pretty clear. We see the drowning. As this quickly becomes one of the greatest spiritual battles even recorded in all of Scripture with thousands of demons and the Messiah interacting. I find it fascinating what happens in verse 10. After this little back and forth, "What is your name?" ...and the response of Legion. Verse 10 reads, "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, and they begged him, saying, 'Send us to the pigs; let us enter them.'" This demon-possessed man with thousands of demons inside of him, and you think, what's going to happen next? How are they going to defend themselves? What're they going to bring out? Maybe they'll bring out the big guns, something bigger and

greater than we've seen yet at all as far as the demonic rebellion against God, and the best that they can do is beg Jesus. Beg, it's, actually, probably the smartest thing they could do as well, but they beg. They simply... the big guns for them is begging Him earnestly, "...not to send them out of the country." There's some animals, just "Send us to the pigs..." They're begging the Messiah. They have nothing greater they could do.

Now at this point, Jesus has options. How will Jesus respond? What will Jesus do? He could say forget it, I've given you enough time. I'm even letting you speak this much. You're gone... and sent them straight to their destruction and torment, or He could have done like He's done with other demons and locked them up into the abyss and say you're done on this earth. You're now locked up in the abyss until the time comes where you will receive your judgment, or how about just kicking them out of the land, get them out of this town, get them out of this place, send them to some desert, some wasteland, where there's actually nobody inhabiting the place. Jesus doesn't do any of these things. You think these are pretty good options. Man, if I was Jesus that... that's perfect. Yeah, let's get rid of these guys. Let's do something really cool here and make it really well-known. Instead, Jesus has something greater in mind. We look back at our text, after they beg Him to "Send us to the pigs...", verse 13; "So he gave them permission." What? He let them have it? He gave in? "So he gave them permission." He granted their request. Man, why wouldn't He just destroy them immediately? This just sounds so counter-intuitive. Why would He do this?

The short simple answer, and it tends to be an answer often in the life of Christ and the workings of God, that is that Jesus has something greater in mind here. Yes, He could do that. He could destroy them. Yes, He could lock them up in the abyss, but there's a greater ambition and agenda at hand and that is to bring glory to God, the most glory to God possible. Jesus has His desire to use this situation, and not just the immediate but also the long term, to bring the most glory to God. This is exactly what Scripture affirms over and over again. In Colossians 1:16, we have this promise, really, when you think about it. Speaking of Jesus Paul writes, "For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and..." Notice this last phrase, "...for him." All things created not just by God, by Christ, but for Christ. All the angels, yes, even the ones that rebelled, even Satan, and all the demons, yes - created by God for God,

created by Christ for Christ. Even this moment where you have thousands of demons is a moment that is serving a greater goal, that is more glory to Christ, more glory to come to God in this situation. Obviously, that's what God's doing; otherwise, He would have destroyed Satan a long time ago. He wouldn't deal with this. Yet, God knows exactly what He's doing. He's setting it up perfectly in His sovereignty over all of creation, the good and the bad, using it perfectly to bring glory to Himself in a magnificent and marvelous display. We just sometimes forget, but Satan is merely a pawn in God's hand. Let's not go crazy and think that there's some battles that we get back and forth - oh, Satan won that time. Oh, God won this time and Satan... That's not at all how the Bible depicts it. That's not true. Satan's a pawn. God knows exactly what He's doing.

He's in complete control in this situation, and if you doubt that at all, just think of the wording again of verse 13; "So he gave them permission." It doesn't say, so they escape into the pigs. They got away. That's not at all what happens. Jesus gives them permission. That's the only way anything was going to happen at this point. He's the one who gives them permission, and what takes place? The result is that about two thousand pigs rushing into the sea and drowning. Verse 13 specifically says, "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 drowned in the sea." ...amazing display of how bad the situation really was. Start to think about it, and you go, why? Why does this take place? Why demons into pigs, and then, why pigs into the water and drowning? This is odd. So weird. Well, it does a few things; one, it demonstrates how terrible the condition this guy was in. It shows how bad off he was that he had literally thousands of demons inside of him, and the pigs are the evidence of it - thousands of demons in the man. He was terrible... in a terrible situation. Also, it becomes a visible manifestation and validation of what Jesus had done. Jesus had actually cast the demons out of this man. The pigs are the evidence. Look at the pigs. You can tell that all these demons were inside this man, and rather than Jesus waving His hand and then disappearing into thin air, the pigs show that all of this had shifted, and Jesus had casted them out.

Also, as we think, and we jump ahead in the story, this man will go on to be a herald, one proclaiming on behalf of Christ, one proclaiming the good news, and now he had tangible evidence. He can say that he was demon-possessed, and all the dead pigs in the Sea of Galilee, the thousands of pigs

there, are evidence of the demon-possession that he was under when Christ set them free. We don't know what the demons did next at this point. Why they ran into the sea and then drowned themselves is kind of beyond me. I don't really know the mind of demons, not sure what was happening and... we do know though that a scene like this would get attention. A scene like this would continue to prop up and display the glory of God, the glory of Christ and His power and, once again as we're seeing, His authority over and over again.

This very scene gets the attention of the locals, and we see what their response is next. As we look at verses 14-20, we find the exit - verses 14-20, the exit. Reading in verse 14; "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." We see their desire. As the word gets out here, these herdsmen, the people watching over the pigs, noticing that they're all now drowned in Sea of Galilee in this massive stampede that's just taken place, absolutely unaware of why this's taking place, they go and tell everyone in the town, everyone in the city. It's, potentially, possible that the people in the city and the towns nearby had an investment in this. This was like a town or a village means of investment, a way of raising funds financially for them, being known to have pigs and raise them up. They come back and imagine the shock upon them returning to the scene; first of all, running and actually coming to the Sea of Galilee and seeing that many pigs in the water. It's pretty amazing, thousands of pigs drowned and just dead in the water.

Then, the town's crazy man that everyone was steering clear of, everyone was trying to avoid as much as possible, the naked guy that was insane and a maniac is there. He's sitting there, and he's got clothes on. There's a sight. He's actually wearing clothes, and this is incredible, and he's normal. He's sane. Right away, people are coming up and they're seeing Jesus, and they're starting to connect dots in their mind. Mark even kind of emphasizes this, not just the one that was demon-possessed, the one who had the legion. Remember that guy, the one that had thousands of demons? That guy (just making sure we're on the same page), that guy sitting there, totally normal,

restored back to full health. The witnesses go on to explain the story, exactly what happened with this demon-possessed man, and what then happened with the pigs as they all drowned, connecting all the dots and putting the story together. And you wonder, how are these Gentiles going to respond. This is an incredible display of this super-natural ability. How will they respond? Will they engage in begging as well, just as the demons were begging Jesus to stay in the country, and they begged Jesus to go into the pigs, and He let them? Now, these people beg Jesus to leave. Get out of here. This is too much for us. This is way too much, more than we can handle. You need to leave. “And they began to beg Jesus to depart from their region.” We see that this really isn’t a response of faith but instead a response of fear that these people have.

So, how would Jesus respond to this rude request of the people, seeing that here’s a life that has now been restored, a man that is now back to normal, and they care nothing about it? They want Jesus gone. In verses 18-20, we find the declaration - the declaration that comes of this. We think, okay, Jesus let the demons stay and go into the pigs, but, surely, He’s going to justify and vindicate Himself now, and He’s going to say, hold on, let me tell you who I am. I know you’re Gentiles, but you need to know something about me. Alright? I am the Jewish Messiah, but I’m going to impact the whole world, and you’re going to get saved through Me, but He doesn’t do that. When we look at verse 18; “As he was getting into the boat...” He leaves. He simply embraces it. He concedes. Just like He said, okay, demons you can go into the pigs, He says, okay, I’ll leave. I’ll leave your region.

Then we have more begging take place in verse 18. We still have “...the man who had been possessed with demons begged him that he might be with him.” This man whose life had been completely altered and changed for good, coming up to Jesus begging Him let me go with You. I see you have disciples. I want to come with You in the boat. I want to be with You. I want to follow You. You think, now this is, finally, a reasonable request. This is a good request, a good instance of begging Jesus, and you think, Jesus will surely say, if He said okay to the other things, He’ll say okay to this. No. Verse 19; “And he did not permit him...” Jesus does “...not permit him...” Instead, He says, “Go home to your friends and tell them how much the Lord has done for you, and how he has had mercy on you.” Verse 20 tells us, “And he went away and began to proclaim in the Decapolis how much Jesus had done for him, and everyone marveled.” What an amazing thing. Jesus

decides to deny his request. After giving the demons the okay and the Gentiles the okay for them to leave, He then tells this man, that sincerely wants to follow Him, no. Why?

Jesus has a greater goal in mind, a greater agenda. With His authority, He wants to display and let the glory of God be made known. He turns this man into the first missionary, the first ambassador that would go forth and bring this message to people. You go, really, the first one? He hasn't even sent out His disciples yet to give a little a test run. He hasn't even sent out His disciples to go to the Jews and the nation of Israel. This is the first time, and you see Him sending this man, saying go and tell people all that God has done for you, how God has had mercy on you. You can start to doubt Jesus's strategy at this point, start to think come on Jesus, what does this guy know? First of all, think about a big strike against him - he's a Gentile. He's not even a Jew. What does this guy really know? What is he going to be able to tell people? How much can he say? It's of no concern at all. What can this guy say? He was demon-possessed. Christ set him free. That's good news. That's an amazing message. That's a life changing message, and he gets to go and now proclaim it to these Gentiles in the Decapolis. He gets to go, and go from town to town, from city to city, and inform people of Jesus and how He changed his life. This man who had been possessed with thousands of demons, no longer enslaved and in bondage to Satan.

It's amazing to see how simple it is. We have an amazing message. We have the good news. We understand it. We study it more and more. We try to memorize it. We have classes for it. And at the same time, we come up with as many excuses as possible. We love to justify and vindicate ourselves for not sharing this message. You understand, I was tired, and I was busy. I didn't, really, have time, and, you know, it was a relationship there so, you know, down the road, we'll get some chance to talk about some things that are of some substance. It's amazing. We're so good at coming up with excuses, and one of these excuses is I just need to know more. I haven't been a Christian for that long. I haven't read the whole Bible yet. I haven't taken Evangelism Explosion. So many things I haven't done. I'm just a baby Christian.

What a perfect example for us to see. No matter how immature or mature you are, if you are in Christ, you have a story like this. If you are in Christ, you can point to how you were once a slave to your sin. You were once on a

path that was leading to serving self and destruction, and God turned you. God took your life, and He completely pointed you in a different direction. God opened your eyes to see the glory of the gospel in Jesus Christ. God helped you see that your sin was washed away by the blood of His Son. God helped you to experience that peace and His Spirit coming upon you when you believed in Christ. If you're in Christ, you have this story. If you're in Christ, you have all you need to proclaim and declare this message. Training is wonderful. Discipleship and knowledge is great, and we need to pursue it, but that does not substitute the clear and most obvious command and way that we can be obedient as Christians. We simply go, and we simply tell people what God has done in our own life - how God has had mercy on us.

This, also, could be hard for some of us for other reasons; that is some of us might not be in Christ. Some people here today still might not even have an understanding of the gospel, still don't know God's mercy in your life, and if that's the case, I'd encourage you, come to Christ. Don't remain in the darkness any longer. Don't stay in this place that is just so humdrum of seeking and serving self and seeing what the world has to offer next. That's all Satan's operation, and you can fall for it over and over and over again until the day you die, only to be disappointed to meet Christ the One who offered Himself for you, who gave up His life, who shed His blood, who bore the wrath of God that you and I deserve, who lived a life that you could never live, the life of perfection, and die the death that you deserve to die, who came back from the dead to prove that He was who He said He was and is now seated at the right hand of God. He is your high priest, your advocate, your intercessor. Halleluiah! You can approach God now. Don't wait. Today is the day. If you do approach God now, if you find this grace and express and place your life and faith in Christ, you'll have an amazing message to take to the world. I'd encourage you, join us in proclaiming this message of Christ to those that need it.