



SERMON OF THE WEEK

First Presbyterian Church of Honolulu at Ko'olau
June 3, 2018
The Man in the Tombs (Hope Restored Series)
Pastor Dan Chun

It's the series called Hope Restored. And today's episode is an amazing one. Fasten your seat belts for a wild ride! It's one of the most exciting passages in the Bible that deals with Jesus, villagers, demons, a crazy man, and pigs! Thousands of pigs. Please stand as we hear the Bible reading from *The Bible Experience*.

Mark 5:1 They went across the lake to the region of the Gerasenes.

Mark 5:2 When Jesus got out of the boat, a man with an evil spirit came from the tombs to meet Him.

Mark 5:3 This man lived in the tombs, and no one could bind him anymore, not even with a chain.

Mark 5:4 For he had often been chained hand and foot, but he tore the chains apart and broke the irons on his feet. No one was strong enough to subdue him.

Mark 5:5 Night and day among the tombs and in the hills he would cry out and cut himself with stones.

Mark 5:6 When he saw Jesus from a distance, he ran and fell on his knees in front of Him.

Mark 5:7 He shouted at the top of his voice, "What do you want with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? In God's name don't torture me!"

Mark 5:8 For Jesus had said to him, "Come out of this man, you evil spirit!"

Mark 5:9 Then Jesus asked him, "What is your name?" "My name is Legion," he replied, "for we are many."

Mark 5:10 And he begged Jesus again and again not to send them out of the area.

Mark 5:11 A large herd of pigs was feeding on the nearby hillside.

Mark 5:12 The demons begged Jesus, "Send us among the pigs; allow us to go into them."

Mark 5:13 He gave them permission, and the evil spirits came out and went into the pigs. The herd, about two thousand in number, rushed down the steep bank into the lake and were drowned.

Mark 5:14 Those tending the pigs ran off and reported this in the town and countryside, and the people went out to see what had happened.

Mark 5:15 When they came to Jesus, they saw the man who had been possessed by the legion of demons, sitting there, dressed and in his right mind; and they were afraid.

Mark 5:16 Those who had seen it told the people what had happened to the demon-possessed man—and told about the pigs as well.

Mark 5:17 Then the people began to plead with Jesus to leave their region.

Mark 5:18 As Jesus was getting into the boat, the man who had been demon-possessed begged to go with Him.

Mark 5:19 Jesus did not let him, but said, "Go home to your own people and tell them how much the Lord has done for you, and how He has had mercy on you."

Mark 5:20 So the man went away and began to tell in the Decapolis how much Jesus had done for him. And all the people were amazed.

Okay, now you know why I don't eat pigs. Deviled ham! Actually, I don't eat pork, but not because I think they are demon-infested but because of my compassion for animals – specifically pigs cause they are so smart and sentient. But that is another sermon.

This is a most fascinating, real life story for so many reasons. There are several things I want to point out. And combined, these points are a focused presentation of how much God loves us.

This story shows how Jesus ministers to us spiritually, emotionally, physically. The first thing I want to say is that I believe the demons in this man were for real. There are actually real life spiritual beings that are on the side of evil. These are demons.

Yes, that might sound scary, but the good news for followers of Jesus is that, as the Bible says in a letter that the Apostle John wrote to new believers:

1 John 4:4 Little children, you are from God, and have conquered them; for the One who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world.

The Living Bible translation says this verse slightly differently:

1John 4:4 But you belong to God, my dear children. You have already won a victory over those people [*those who follow the Antichrist*], because the Spirit who lives in you is greater than the spirit who lives in the world.

What this means is that God, the Holy Spirit who is in you is far greater than the Devil and all of his evil spirits who are in the world. That's a promise from God. Hence, demons cannot possess followers of Jesus because the Holy Spirit is in us after we commit our lives to Christ. But demons can at times harass us, overwhelm us, and tempt us.

In this story, the man has just met Jesus for the first time, so he is not a Christian. So in this episode, this poor, isolated man lives in these rock tombs by himself. He's howling day and night and cutting himself with stones. He is filled with demons. He's kind of a scary guy. I wouldn't want to meet him alone at night, or daytime for that matter.

He has supernatural strength and can break off chains that were put on him. But somehow, in the midst of his confusion and torture, the demon-possessed man sees Jesus and senses that Jesus might be able to help him.

Picture this: Jesus has just gotten out of the boat when here comes this absolutely crazy, violent man who falls on his knees before Jesus. One of the spirits in the man recognizes Jesus, as I think all demons do, and says, "What do you want with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? In God's name don't torture me!"

Know that all demons know Jesus and they know He is the most powerful. That is why I say believing in Jesus is not

enough. That alone doesn't make you a Christian. Demons believe in Jesus but they are not Christians. What makes us Christians is the willingness to follow and obey Jesus.

When we exorcise people, we do it in Jesus' name because the demons ultimately fear and reluctantly submit to His authority. Hence, always remember that He who is in you—meaning Jesus—is more powerful than the demons in this world.

In our story, the demon is so scared of Jesus that he thinks Jesus is out to torture him. But instead Jesus, incredibly, asks for the demon's name, and the demon says "Legion" for there are a lot of them with him. Then Jesus casts them out into 2,000 pigs, at the demon's request, and the pigs run into the sea.

Why did the demons want to go into the pigs? It's unclear. Maybe it was their last chance before being sent to the bottomless pit of the Abyss, as described in the 9th chapter of Revelation, last book of the Bible. [Rev. 9:1-6].

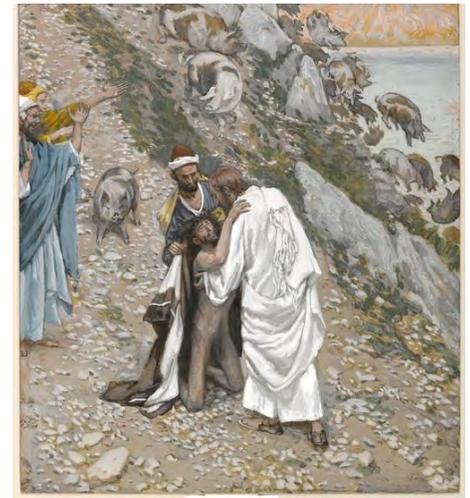
Or as Jesus described it in the Gospel of Matthew: "When an evil spirit comes out of anyone, it goes through arid places seeking rest and does not find it. (Matt. 12:43)

Apparently demons prefer being inside something, like a person or a pig. From this one fact of the demons going into the pigs springs three important points.

1) Jesus desires to heal us spiritually.

Jesus will do anything to free us from demonic forces to heal us spiritually. Do some of you remember the day of your conversion and how you were so grateful that Jesus would love you and forgive you and accept you?

Check out this 1886 picture by the French artist James Tissot called "The Swine Driven Into the Sea." (photo was shown)



Tissot had a revitalization of his faith and began painting many pictures from the Bible. Look at the healed man's face in the painting. He is so grateful for what Jesus did for him. And what did Jesus do to save this one man? Jesus, devastated a village's economy. Each pig was worth one month's salary. So if 2,000 pigs just died, that's 2,000 months worth of product. No wonder the villagers told Jesus to get out of there! He messed up their lives!

But the economic point, which in turn becomes a spiritual point, is this: Jesus loved this man so much that He was willing to spend anything to save just one soul. That should build our self-esteem. Jesus sees our salvation so important He will do anything to save people, whatever the price. Even be tortured and die for us. Christ is willing to obliterate a pig farm industry to save one man.

Hear clearly today: Jesus will do ANYTHING to show you His love for you, we just need to be aware of His presence in and all around us. He will do anything to strengthen you and free you from the demons of life. He wants you to have a spiritual friendship with Him.

But the healing process begins by running to Him and falling on our knees, as the demoniac did in our story, to recognize that He is indeed Lord, and then submitting ourselves to Him as Lord.

His love is so great for us. What other god do we know of (as you hear of so many other gods in this world) would come to this earth, live among us, suffer among us, and be crucified for us even though we are sinners, and we reject and betray Him? He loves us. There is no corporation, company, government, or world leader who will love us like Jesus. Where do we put our faith?

Christ desires an intimate friendship with us to make us spiritually whole. Which leads to my second point.

2) Jesus desires to heal us emotionally.

I have told you that I believe there are real spiritual demons. But I also believe that are emotional demons or psychological issues in us that prevent us from living the life that God wants us to. Let me explain it this way.

I am super fortunate in that my mom and dad raised me in a way that I knew they would do anything in this world for me. They loved me unconditionally. Yes, they disciplined and corrected me. They did not spoil me, but I never doubted that they loved me and would love me if I blew it in life.

Because of that foundation, that bedrock of unconditional love, I have a healthy self-esteem. It's not that I feel I am better than others, but rather, I know that I am loved. Hence, I rarely get defensive. I rarely get offended. I can take criticism.

I'm not saying I like criticism, so don't test me today, but I have this bedrock belief in me that I know I have been loved and valued by my parents, and so I have a healthy self-esteem.

I probably get criticized weekly. I know so hard to believe because I am so perfect, but it is true. I am humbled often. No way do I think I am better than I am. There are plenty of people who tell me that I am not perfect, so you don't need to pile on. But normally I don't get offended easily.

My point is this, I think many of us have not had the feeling that their parents love them unconditionally. Therefore, we have these emotional demons, not real ones, but emotional issues in us that tell ourselves that we are not good enough.

In place of self-esteem, we have this demonic self-talk that says "I am not good enough. I am not smart enough. I am not pretty enough. I am not handsome enough. I am not athletic. I'm clumsy. I'm slow. I'm stupid. I'm overweight. I'm underweight. Or I'm a sinner and God will never love me, so I must prove myself to God and to humans that I am worthy so I will work hard and achieve and seek fame and fortune to show I am lovable.

But here is my point: Though you may not have had an earthly father or mother who loved you unconditionally, the good news is that we have a heavenly father, God, and His Son Jesus, and the tender, loving kind Holy Spirit who do love us unconditionally. If we can only accept that and learn to fall on our knees before Him and full on all in get to know Him and be intimate with the Lord, our lives would change and we would be free. And our self-esteem would indeed be healthy.

God loves us so much we don't need to be defensive or have to prove ourselves. Be free. He loves us unconditionally.

3) Jesus desires to heal us physically.

This man in our Bible text went from a self-hurting person to one healed and then dressed and healthy.

In our story, the man who had a Legion of demons inside of him, lived in tombs. He was chained. He cut himself out of self-hate with rocks.

When we listen to those words and believe those words that we are not smart enough, pretty enough, or we are ugly and stupid then it is like cutting ourselves, hitting ourselves with rocks.

When the man met Jesus, he met pure aloha, pure love that's refreshing, accepting, affirming, and unconditional. He was free! No more tombs. No more cutting himself.

In modern day terms, we don't have to eat less or eat more or take drugs or drink to anesthetize the pain in our lives. We can be fully accepted by the God of the Universe, the one who really counts, and the one who really knows us.

The man was so blown away. He was not only spiritually and emotionally healed, he was also physically healed.

Our passage says that the people of the town saw him in his right mind. He was now dressed and not running around naked or scantily clad. He was now more normal. Incredibly, the people didn't like him healed and told him to leave. The man said, "I'll leave." But as Jesus was getting back into his boat, he begged the Lord, "Hey, Jesus, I want to follow You. I have to leave anyway. Can I join your party? Please....please.....please...I beg you." And this is what happened.

Mark 5:19 Jesus did not let him, but said, "Go home to your own people and tell them how much the Lord has done for you, and how He has had mercy on you."

Indeed, Jesus is so kind and merciful.

Now, if you had 2000 demons, and were acting crazy, howling day and night, hitting yourself with rocks and were naked and were chained for much of your life and then you were healed by Jesus, you bet your life you would tell people about Jesus. You would be bursting with gratitude. You would tell everyone. And he seemingly did.

In the next chapter in that same region is the feeding of 5,000 men by Jesus (not including all of the women and children), Jesus had not been to that nearby area before. Remember, He left because the village told him to scram and eventually He went to an adjacent Gentile territory.

So why was there such a big crowd there? Jesus had a new front man, a marketer, a PR guy. Who was that man? It was the former demoniac.

I think there's a huge crowd because of this demoniac-now-healed man who went to everyone in the region and told them about Jesus who healed him. People knew the demoniac was crazy and now they could see he was normal. He said Jesus healed him!

No wonder people showed up to the now-famous feeding of the 5000! They wanted to meet and hear this Jesus who performs miracles and loves people in an incredible, extravagant, merciful way.

Step right up! See the man who cast out not one, not two, not one hundred, not one thousand but TWO THOUSAND demons and decimate a village's economy of pigs! Come see not pork adobo but pork-oh-no-no.

So, here's a challenge for you. Reality check. If we have been helped, healed, blessed by Jesus, then deep in our hearts we should be like this man from the Tombs who once was a HOWLER in pain but then became a PROCLAIMER of Jesus. We too should be telling everyone about unconditional love of Jesus. If we do that, we couldn't build a door big enough to receive all these people who want hope and healing in their lives just as we do.

Now you may think, Dan, is this story too good to be true, too crazy to be true. A crazy man who lived in the tombs is touched by Jesus and changes that dramatically? Can a person be healed spiritually, emotionally, physically?

Okay, doubting Thomases. Let me do one more pass on this that we all might truly fall at the feet of Jesus and declare Him the Lord of our lives who can cast out our demons with His love and power. Let me close with this true story that happened 24 years ago. A story I once shared a while back maybe 6 years ago.

The place was not Gerasenes but Riker's Island in New York. There was a prisoner there who actually had the nickname of The Howler. The Howler had been part of the main cellblock for three years. The main cellblock was called The Stack. It was five rows of cells that opened up to a narrow atrium with a catwalk that went to each of those five rows. The Stack had another name: the Tombs.

The Howler was a violent man whose violence was given to Turrets Syndrome, which is uncontrolled swearing and foul mouth. And boy, could he swear at the top of his lungs. He would curse and when he got violent he would throw food at the bars. His cell, therefore, had bulletproof glass on the inside smeared with all sorts of stuff. It was foul. It was smell. It was stink. Ugly. Awful.

The area director for Prison Fellowship, Larry Jacobsen, visited the Howler regularly. This story was told to me by a former Prison Fellowship senior vice-president.

Everyday the Howler would take his normal stream of filth and lascivious words and go at full bore and it would echo as he yelled in the Tombs. Jacobsen and his volunteers would pray regularly for him and they would do a prayer walk outside his cell. Just walking, praying for this foul-mouthed convict. It kept up for over a year.

But one day an extraordinary thing happened. The Howler was very quiet. Jacobsen came up to his bars and he began to pray and suddenly...the Howler quietly asked, "Why are you here?" It was the first sane conversation the guards could recall since the man had been admitted.

Something happened at that point. The Howler listened attentively through the plastic shield and heard Jacobsen tell him about Jesus and that Jesus could give him peace. Amazingly, a month later incredibly the Howler received Christ as his Lord and Savior.

The Howler did not lose his psychological disorder. He began to shout again. But he no longer cursed and swore. Amazing! Instead, he used his loud voice to shout the name of Jesus. Jesus! Jesus!

The effect in a prison of a loud voice can be tremendous, because this yelling went throughout the prison echoing through the five rows of cells and up throughout the atrium. Jesus! Like the healed demoniac, The Howler was so appreciative he spread the gospel the best way he could in the area he lived.

What about you? Oh, you may not have a legion of demons in you; you may not have a syndrome that makes you swear and yell, but maybe you have a legion of troubles and anxieties.

Do you believe, can you believe, will you please believe that God will take care of you? That He will provide you with shelter? He will watch over you. And when you are breathless and tired, God is watching and will bring you out of darkness into the light.

Can you believe that Jesus Christ loves you so much, as much as He loved a demoniac in the tombs, that He would do anything FOR YOU, yes YOU, to bring you into a relationship with Him even if it means His death, which it did.

But the economic point which in turn becomes a spiritual point is this: as Jesus loved this man so much, He is willing to spend anything and everything for you. You are that precious, that priceless pearl that He desires.

I know some of you are going through a tough time. And so I want to close sharing a prayer author Thomas Merton wrote and included in his book *A Book of Hours*.

But I was created for Your peace and You will not despise my longing for the holiness of Your deep silence. O my Lord, You will not leave me forever in this sorrow, because I have trusted in You.

I will wait upon Your good pleasure in peace and without complaining any more. This, for Your glory.

Good Shepherd, You have a wild a crazy sheep in love with thorns and brambles. But please don't get tired of looking for me! I know You won't. For You have found me. All I have to do is stay found.

The Lord has found us, whether in the Tombs or out among the rocks. He wants to restore you. He wants to clothe you with His love. Accept Him. And to that we can all say, Amen!

While the elders and deacons are now getting ready for communion, I want to do this. I believe there are people here who today need the unconditional love of God our Father and of Jesus and the Holy Spirit. You may have a legion of troubles but are you willing to let the Lord take care of at least one of them?

If you want prayer right now for one thing, just one thing, maybe it is for something spiritual or emotional or physical, I am going to ask you in a moment to stand up right now. It's not to embarrass you. But I want to have prayers for you. God is tender and kind. Jesus knew you would be here today and He wants you to experience His love and healing. Please stand now if you would want prayer to receive God's healing and help.

And now I am going to ask those who are near them to stand and ask if you can gently put a hand on their shoulder and pray for them silently. You don't need to say anything in your prayers. Just silently let the Holy Spirit do the healing not you. And after a short while, I will say a short prayer and we'll close with an amen. And then we will take communion to be even closer to Christ.