

# **A Man with Many Spirits, Part 1 -- Mark 5:1-1**

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Our story today is about a caveman. I don't know if you realize it or not, but cavemen still walk the earth. Maybe not in Old Man's Cave here in Ohio.... There is a cave in Southern California. It is located on Mount San Jacinto, which has an elevation close to 11,000 ft. A young man, only 16 years old, moved into this cave. Over time he grew long hair and a beard. He was rough person in character as well as appearance. He lived a life of lying, stealing, and drugs. He was surprised to find a Bible in the cave he was staying in. He didn't pay much attention to it, though. He never intended to read it, until he met some Christians and decided he needed to prove them wrong from their own book. As he read the Bible, he became convicted. He realized he was a sinner. And he realized that Jesus was a Savior for people like him. So, he accepted Christ in the cave. He went on to become a very successful evangelist. Some of you have probably listened to him on TV, watched him on a video, or read his Bible study lessons. His name is Doug Batchelor. And he is the president of Amazing Facts, a radio and TV ministry of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

The caveman in our story today experiences a similar transformation. Today we will cover only the first part of his story. Next week will be part 2.

Let's now consider a summary of our story today:

*Immediately after coming ashore, Jesus was met by a man with many unclean spirits. He lived in the tombs up in the mountains. Jesus commanded the unclean spirits to come out of him. But they begged Jesus not to send them out of that country. Jesus allowed them to enter a herd of pigs nearby. The entire herd then rushed down the steep slope into the sea and drowned.*

We'll begin today by considering what Jesus experienced in this story. First of all, Jesus experienced coming ashore. In Mark 5:1 it says Jesus and His disciples "came to the other side of the sea". This was quite an accomplishment. They made it to the other side of the Sea of Galilee in spite of a terrible windstorm. We covered that in our time last week. And we learned that Jesus has come to this eastern side of the Sea of Galilee in order to rest and be restored. Mark refers to this area as the "country of the Gadarenes". There are two other names mentioned in other accounts of this same story. One is "Gerasenes" and the other is "Gergesenes". All three names have quite a bit of evidence in their favor. So, we won't try to distinguish today which of these names is more plausible. It is possible that the area was known by more than one name. But we do know that it was in the region of Decapolis, an area that included ten ancient cities.

Second, Jesus experienced a terrifying sight. In Mark 5:2 it says "a man with an unclean spirit" met Jesus. Later on, in verse 9, it will mention that there were actually "many" spirits possessing this man. In verse 5 we learn that this man lived in tombs that were up in the mountains. The mountains were likely made of limestone, a relatively soft stone. Some of these mountain caves may have been naturally hewn, while others may have been man-made. In either case, they were often used to store the bodies of the dead. So, this man lived in a kind of cemetery. Verse 5 also mentions that he was "crying out and cutting himself" there in the tombs. So, as he came running down the mountain towards Jesus, he must have been a hideous sight, covered with scars and sores from head to toe. He probably looked more like a wild beast than a person. Jesus had just endured the terror of the storm and now he is confronted with a different kind of terror.

Third, Jesus experienced being recognized. In Mark 5:6 it says that this man "ran and worshiped Him". This simple statement reveals a sudden change. This man had been running towards Jesus undoubtedly to cause Him harm. But then he is moved by the presence of Jesus. He recognizes Jesus' authority and feels compassion exuding from Him. He recognizes that this Man is different from anyone else he has ever met. He is convicted that Jesus is more than human and is one who can set him free from his slavery. Jesus is also recognized by the unclean spirit. In verse 7 the unclean spirit acknowledges Jesus as the "Son of the Most High God". He realizes he is in the presence of One greater than he.

Fourth, Jesus experienced resistance. When Jesus stepped ashore He entered the enemy's territory. This area is a stronghold of Satan. Jesus has come to establish the kingdom of God in people's hearts. But in this region Satan has established his kingdom in the hearts of the people. Jesus recognized the unclean spirit as the one in control of this man and commanded the spirit to leave. But He encounters resistance. The unclean spirit talks back to Him. He tells Jesus to swear to God that He won't "torment" or torture him. He is probably responding to being left without anyone to control. For this unclean spirit to not have anyone to torment would be torture for himself. In verse 9 of Mark 5 Jesus responded to this retaliation with a question: "What is your name?" And in the answering of this question the magnitude of the enemy's stronghold is revealed. This man is possessed by a "legion" of spirits. A legion was a Roman army division. When at full capacity it numbered 6,000. All these unclean spirits are loathe to leave their subject. So, they resist. In verses 7, 10, and 12 they repeatedly begged Jesus to not send them out of that country.

Last of all, Jesus experienced negotiating. In Mark 5:12 the demons beg Jesus to allow them to enter into a herd of pigs nearby. Mark calls them "a large (mega) herd of pigs" that numbered 2,000. Jesus agrees to the negotiation. He allows the demons to enter the herd of pigs. So, in verse 13 it says, "the unclean spirits went out and entered the swine." They left the man and entered the pigs. Jesus set the man free. And yet He allowed the death of 2,000 pigs. We will learn more about why Jesus allowed this in our next story. We will also learn why the demons wanted to enter the pigs. But for now we can understand that this region was a difficult territory with difficult decisions. This area is a stronghold for Satan. And in order to reach the people in this area, it required Jesus to make a difficult decision. I don't believe for a moment that He enjoyed seeing those pigs drown in the sea. He made a hard choice for a greater good.

What about the man with the unclean spirits? What did he experience in our story? First of all, he experienced isolation and desperation. In Mark 5:3, 4 we discover that this man was incompatible with society. His townspeople had tried to tie him up. No one was able to control him. Mark mentions "shackles and chains" in verse 4. These would have been used to secure his hands and feet as in a jail. But he was not fit even for a jail. So, he was isolated and forced to live alone in the "tombs" up in the mountains. (Matthew records there were two men). Verse 5 of Mark chapter 5 says that "day and night" this man could find no relief. He was there in the tombs "crying out and cutting himself" in desperation. Perhaps he was trying to cry out for help. Maybe he was cutting himself in order to bleed to death and end his misery. Just the same, his life one of isolation and desperation.

Second, this man experienced an unusual visit. According to Matthew 8:28, because of the fact that he couldn't be controlled, no one went by there anymore. It had probably been a while since this man had seen anyone travel that way. Mark 5:6 says that he "saw Jesus from afar". From the height of the mountains he could see the boats as they approached the shore. While they were still off in the distance, he began running wildly down the mountain towards Jesus, intending to harm them. But as we have mentioned, as he approached Jesus, his intentions changed.

So, third, this man experienced barriers to freedom. According to Mark 5 verse 8 Jesus had given him hope. Jesus had responded to his desire for freedom by commanding the spirit to leave him. But in verse 9-12 the spirit causes a delay. While the demons negotiated with Jesus, the man waited for his freedom. In verse 10 it says that the unclean spirit "begged [Jesus] earnestly". This could also be translated "begged repeatedly". While the demons begged, the man waited. He experienced barriers to freedom.

Last of all, the man with the unclean spirits experienced deliverance. The freedom he hoped for finally came. Mark 5:13 says the unclean spirits went out of the man and entered the pigs. Like so many before him, he experienced deliverance. Mark has already recorded another man with an unclean spirit being delivered during a Sabbath service in a synagogue. And just the night before the disciples had experienced deliverance. Over and over Jesus set people free. Again and again people experienced deliverance. And now the unclean spirits are gone. This man was free at last. And yet his freedom is coupled with the drama of a stampede. His freedom meant demon-possession for the herd of pigs. Likely the first experience of this man as a free child of God was watching these pigs race down the mountain to their death. Certainly it would have been a disconcerting scene, but the joy of freedom at last by all means outweighed the drama of the pigs.

This story has been recorded and preserved for us. We have a record of Jesus' actions so that we might know what a healthy and dangerous Christian looks like. There are two ways in which Jesus is revealed as our Example in this story. First, He awakened a desire for freedom. The man was running down the mountain intending to harm Jesus and His disciples, but when he came into Jesus' presence, he stopped and prostrated himself in worship. He sensed that Jesus was different from everyone else he had known. He realized that Jesus didn't want to tie him up or control him like the people in his town had. Being in Jesus' presence awakened a desire in him to be free from the unclean spirit. He was given hope where there had been no hope.

And so a healthy and dangerous Christian is someone who awakens a desire in others to be a better person. When people are in the presence of a Christian, it invokes comments such as, "I want what you have." We all carry a certain presence with us. When we enter a room, everyone else feels this presence. It can be a good or bad thing. For a healthy Christian, it is an ennobling presence. Just by being in their presence people feel a desire for a better way of life. I remember an experience on a framing crew in Pennsylvania. This was my first introduction to framing a house. It was also my first, full exposure to the construction culture. Most people in the construction world are pretty rough characters. But I remember one college student who seemed to be an exception. He was clean cut and courteous. I remember at the end of the summer his last day at work before he went back to school. He came over and talked to me before he left. He surprised me by what he said: "I respect you a lot. I've noticed how you have never gotten upset with the guys on our crew. You always stay calm and are nice to everyone. You've made me want to become a better person." I was surprised. I had no idea he felt that way. That's the example Jesus set for us. He awakened a desire in the man with evil spirits. As a result of being in Jesus' presence, this man was filled with a desire to be free again. In the same way, a healthy and dangerous Christian awakens a desire in people to become a better person.

The second way Jesus is revealed in this story as our Example of a healthy and dangerous Christian is that He was not threatened by resistance. When He commanded the unclean spirit to come out of the man, the spirit talked back. He resisted Jesus' command. But in spite of this retaliation Jesus stayed calm. He even asked the spirit a non-threatening question: "What is your name?" Jesus dialogued with the spirit and even negotiated with him. Meanwhile He maintained His focus on setting this man free. And He did just that in the end. But He didn't act threatened by the spirit's resistance. So, we learn that a healthy and dangerous Christian is someone who is not threatened by resistance. Often when someone questions or opposes us or our ideas, we get

offended. We say things like, "Fine, if you don't like my idea, do it yourself." Or if we are a strong type A personality, we might say, "This is the way it's going to be. If you don't like it...tough!" Parents who feel threatened by their children's resistance to their commands often say, "Don't you talk back to me. Go to your room!" But a healthy and dangerous Christian remains calm when met with resistance or opposition. There have been times when I have felt the Lord directing me in my sermon preparation. I have been inspired and ask my wife for her feedback. She responds by giving some constructive criticism: "You should change this." Or "You need to leave this part out." And at times I think, "You're tearing apart my hard work!" But Jesus shows us that resistance to our plans or ideas is not something to be threatened by. Often constructive criticism is one of the greatest sources of success. In the face of opposition a healthy and dangerous Christian does not feel threatened. They remain confident, yet flexible. Knowing that if their ministry or idea is of God, then it will ultimately prevail. Not even the powers of hell will be able to stand against it. It may not happen the way we planned. The Lord may have a better way of doing it. And He may use someone's opposition to bring that to pass.

Our lives are filled with delays. We wait in the doctor's office. We wait for returned phone calls. We wait for answered prayers. The man in our story had to wait to be delivered. It a while before the unclean spirit left. We don't know how long Jesus dialogued with the spirits, but it may have been a while. The spirits were "begging earnestly" for Jesus to not send them out of that country. The word translated "earnestly" may also be translated "repeatedly". And while this went on, the man waited for the reality of deliverance.

Some of us here today may be waiting...for deliverance. We all wait for the soon return of Jesus Christ. He has promised to come. But there's been a delay. Some of us are waiting for answered prayers. We have prayed for someone to accept Christ for years. But there has been a delay. Others may be waiting for reconciliation with a family member or a church member. Waiting is a part of life. There's no way to get around it. The question, though, is, "What do I do while I wait?" Often I have gotten irritated in the delay. I may doubt that God will answer. Satan will bring in thoughts such as, "Why did I even ask for deliverance? God's going to do whatever He wants anyway."

There's a song entitled, "While I'm Waiting" by John Waller. It answers the question, "What am I supposed to do while I wait?"

"I'm waiting.  
I'm waiting on You, Lord.  
And I am hopeful.  
I'm waiting on You, Lord.  
Though it is painful,  
But patiently, I will wait."

"I will move ahead, bold and confident,  
Taking every step in obedience.  
While I'm waiting,  
I will serve You.  
While I'm waiting,  
I will worship.  
While I'm waiting,  
I will not faint.  
I'll be running the race,  
Even while I wait."

The man in our story was eventually set free. One day our waiting will be over. We will experience the deliverance we have been waiting for. So, while we wait, let us thank Him now for the deliverance that will surely come:

Father, today we wait. We wait for deliverance from this sinful world. We wait with unanswered prayers. We wait for order to come to our chaotic lives. We wait for revival and reformation in our own lives and in the church. While we wait, we thank You for the deliverance that will surely come. As surely as Jesus lived, died, and rose again, You will one day bring our waiting to an end. And we give thanks for that. Amen.