



Stuff They Didn't Teach Me In Sunday School



Episode 109 - Time for a Little Smackdown (Mark 5)

Jesus Faces Off against Legion

When Jesus and His disciples stepped ashore after crossing the Sea of Galilee, a crazed, naked man came running up. This violent, demon-possessed man was well known to the locals. When their local authorities had been unable to confine him, they steered clear of the tombs and the wilderness he frequented.

- What thoughts might have run through the disciples' minds when they saw this naked man running toward them?

We might have assumed the demons would seek a physical confrontation with Jesus, but instead they throw their man facedown before Jesus.

- Judging by this prostration and begging how do fallen angels look at Jesus?
- What reassurance does it give you to see Jesus' total power over these demons?

When they begged Him, Jesus permitted the demons to enter the herd of swine. As soon as they entered the swine they revealed their desire to destroy God's creation by driving the herd off the cliff to drown. We see their destructiveness toward humans in verse 5 and in Mark 9:17-18, 21-22.

- Though they had made this man cut himself with stones, why were they unable to destroy him as they did the swine? (See Job 1:9-12; 2:4-6.)

Jesus eliminated a dangerous threat for the Gerasenes when He restored the man who had haunted and terrified them. But all the locals could think about was the economic impact of a herd being destroyed. They blamed Jesus and begged Him to leave their territory from fear He would destroy more herds.

- Who was really to blame for the destruction of the herd?
- What is wrong with the thought that Jesus shared responsibility for the herd's destruction when He knew ahead of time the demons would run them into the water once He drove them out?
- What similarity do you see between blaming Jesus for the herd's destruction and blaming God for the family we grew up in, natural disasters, crime and other things we suffer in this life?

Though he wanted to go with Jesus, the Lord made the restored man stay behind. He didn't want to let the demons have the last word and leave the Gerasenes the impression that Jesus meant only death and judgment for them. He commanded the healed man to tell everyone the good things He had done.

- When people suffer from natural disasters (often called "acts of God"), what are some ways we can show them God's goodness?

Jesus Takes On an Incurable Disease

Jesus honored the Gerasenes' request, got back into the boat and sailed over to the other side of the Sea of Galilee. There He was asked to go and heal the twelve-year-old daughter of the synagogue ruler. On the way to take care of this well-known and important family, Jesus was interrupted by an unnamed, bleeding woman.

The laws which describe this woman as ceremonially unclean are recorded in Leviticus 15:25-30. They begin, "If a woman has a discharge of blood for many days, not at the time of her menstrual impurity, or if she has a discharge beyond the time of her impurity, all the days of the discharge she shall continue in uncleanness"

- How do you think being ceremonially unclean for 12 years might have affected this woman's reputation in her community?
- What challenges would it raise for her personal faith in God?

Mark tells us she saw many physicians, spent all she had but only ended up in a worse condition. But when she heard about all the different diseases and sicknesses Jesus was healing, she believed He could heal her too.

- Why do you think she decided to touch His garments from behind, instead of asking Him to heal her face to face?
- Why do you think she trembled in fear when Jesus stopped and insisted on talking to her after she had been healed?
- What did Jesus consider more important than the restoration of her physical health?

Jesus Squares Off against Death

The woman's bleeding had started 12 years before—the same time the synagogue ruler's daughter was born. Undoubtedly her father waited anxiously while Jesus stopped to talk to the woman He had healed of her bleeding.

- In what situations do you find it difficult to be patient?

Along the way, news reached the father his daughter had died.

- What thoughts might have started to stir in the father's mind at the news?
- Describe a similar situation time you have faced an experience that sent you into a panic.
- What were your first thoughts?

Jesus immediately commanded him "Do not fear, only believe."

- What do you think Jesus meant?
- Why is it important to focus our attention on Jesus when disasters strike and our fear starts to rise?

When Jesus arrived at the ruler's house and met the crowd weeping and carrying on outside, He said something startling: "The child is not dead but sleeping." Jesus often described death as sleep (see John 11:11). But the same is true throughout the Bible (see Daniel 12:2-3 and 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18). Notice how Jesus carries on this sleeping theme as He enters the house. He raises the girl using the same kinds of words a mother would use when waking up her child in the morning.

- When you realize just how easy it is for God to bring the dead back to life, how does that affect your attitude toward death?
- What comfort do you find in Jesus' victory over death when you think of your own death or that of your loved ones?