

Mark 5

Background:

Jesus' exorcisms contain some elements which are typical of exorcism accounts from the Jewish literature of this period: (1) Dramatic confrontation with the spirits; (2) Formulae and commands to expel—e.g. naming; (3) Transferral of the demons to an object or animal; (4) exorcism at a distance; (5) violence.

Perhaps more important are the unique features of his exorcisms: (1) No devices are used (read Tobit 8:1-3); (2) Jesus doesn't pray; (3) Jesus doesn't invoke any other power or authority (read Acts 19:13-17); (4) He never "charges" / "binds" / "adjures" by another authority (see also Acts 16:16-18).

Legion

Read Mark 5:1-20

1. Name the things in this story which are unclean. **(Pigs, Gentiles, tombs, demons.)**
2. Mark records events in vv. 6+ slightly out of order. What does this suggest about Mark's theme for this passage?
3. How does Jesus first try to expel Legion? How does Legion respond? What does Jesus do then? **(1. Jesus: "Come out of the man, you unclean spirit." 2. Legion: "What have you to do with me, Jesus... I adjure you by God, no not torment me." 3. Jesus: "What is your name?")**
4. Paul in Ephesians emphasizes the importance of recognizing spiritual forces as our real foes: "Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms" (Eph 6:11-12).

Paul then describes the armor of God: truth, righteousness, readiness to spread the Gospel, faith, salvation, the word of God, and prayer (6:14-18).

In what ways are these forces active in our lives? What does Jesus' encounter with Legion suggest about how we might respond when we suspect that we are facing spiritual resistance? (Cf. James 4:7-8.)

5. There is a change of strategy here for Jesus. He has usually asked those he has healed to keep quiet about it (e.g. 1:44; 3:12); why does he change his policy here? [This question from David Hewitt, *Mark* (Grand Rapids: Baker) 1995.]
6. Why do you suppose Jesus allowed Legion to inhabit the swine herd? **(See quote in DJG 4.3.1 par. 4, sentences 3-5.)**

The healings of Jairus' daughter and the woman with the hemorrhage

Read Mark 5:21-, Lev 15:19-30

7. This passage forms another Mark sandwich with the account of the woman with the hemorrhage (WWH) splitting the healing of Jairus' daughter. Why did Mark link these?
8. How does Jesus' willingness to confront (even more) uncleanness in both the WWH and the dead daughter of Jairus reflect Jesus' understanding of Hosea 6:6, "For I desire mercy, not sacrifice, and acknowledgment of God rather than burnt offerings."

The rabbis of Jesus' day debated the relative importance of compassion and purity. This is a repeated theme in Jesus' ministry, e.g. in his willingness to spend time with "sinners", and especially in his Sabbath controversies with the pharisees. Is there any place in your life where these two are in tension?

9. How does Jesus respond to being interrupted when dealing with Jairus' problem? Henri Nouwen once wrote, "You know... my whole life I have been complaining that my work was constantly interrupted, until I discovered that my interruptions were my work." ¹ Discuss.
10. Is Jesus lying when he tells Jairus that his daughter isn't dead, but sleeping? Lamar Williamson says "His words are not to be taken in such a way as to suppose that the girl only appeared to be dead. The text intends to affirm that in the presence of Jesus and under his authority death itself, real death, is but a sleep." ² Do you agree?

¹ Henri Nouwen, *Reaching Out*, p. 36.

² Lamar Williamson, Jr., *Mark* (Louisville: John Knox) 1983.