

## **Mark 5:1-20**

### **Confronting Authority: Fear or Faith?**

Good evening and for those of you who I haven't met  
I'm Andy, one of the pastors here at Bundy  
I'm normally at the morning services  
But for the next 4 weeks I'll be preaching here in the evening

This time last year,  
Andrew and Chris began a series of talks from Mark's gospel  
And for these 4 weeks I will be continuing that series  
By looking at chapters 5 and 6 of Mark's gospel

Tonight in the first part of chapter 5

We'll be looking at the Confronting Authority of Jesus  
Next week we'll look at the Comforting Authority of Jesus  
And then in Chapter 6  
We'll be looking at a tale of two Kings – Herod and Jesus

If it helps you to follow along  
You can find an outline of the talk and a full transcript out in the foyer  
Or you can download it from the livestream page of the Bundy Website  
Most importantly, please keep your bible open  
So you can look at the verses we will be studying tonight.  
Let me pray for us

When I say the words "Confronting Authority"?  
I wonder who you think of?  
I wonder what situations you think of?  
For me I think of Mr Heffernan, the deputy principal of my high school  
I went to an all-boys high school  
And when you put enough teenage boys together  
You get a collection of morons  
And on one of these moronic occasions  
A large group of boys from our school who used go home by train  
Decided for a few days to have a fruit war across train platforms at South Yarra Station  
Boys were stockpiling fruit from home and bringing it to school for these battles  
From what I heard it was epic  
Unfortunately I caught the tram home and missed all the action  
Well that week after several complaints from the public  
Mr Heffernan marched our year level into our school hall  
And he absolutely ripped into all of us  
Most of the time, Mr Heffernan was congenial, friendly even  
But on this day he was the Hulk  
His normally fair Irish complexion turned bright red with pulsing rage  
Veins were sticking out at the side of his head  
And spit was flying out of his mouth  
He was absolutely furious with us  
This was for me – confronting authority  
In your face, frightening authority

I'm sure when you think of confronting authority  
You do have people in mind  
Situations, maybe ones that are painful to think about even years after

Normally when we think of "confronting authority"  
We never imagine that such authority would be a good thing for us  
It's usually a negative thing  
Like during lockdown  
When the police could fine you for doing too much exercise on your own  
Confronting authority is intimidating, scary, even abusive at times.

But could confronting authority ever be a good thing?  
I want you to keep that question in mind tonight

The context we find ourselves in Mark chapter 5  
Is that for the previous chapters  
Mark has been spending time painting a picture of the authority of Jesus  
His authority over sickness as he heals people of leprosy and other diseases  
His authority in teaching the Scriptures in comparison to the teachers of the law  
We've seen his authority over people's careers  
When Jesus tells people to follow him  
They immediately follow him and give up their professions  
We've seen his authority to forgive sins when he forgave the paralysed man

But by the end of chapter 4  
We see that the authority of Jesus has a confronting edge to it  
Jesus and the disciples are caught in a storm on Lake Galilee  
A storm so serious that even the four seasoned fisherman on the boat  
Were scared enough to think they were all going to drown

This is what happens after they wake up Jesus in their fear  
Verse 39

<sup>39</sup> He got up, rebuked the wind, and said to the sea, "Silence! Be still!" The wind ceased, and there was a great calm. <sup>40</sup> Then he said to them, "Why are you afraid? Do you still have no faith?" <sup>41</sup> And they were terrified and asked one another, "Who then is this? Even the wind and the sea obey him!"

The disciples see something of the sheer authority of Jesus  
They were once scared of the storm  
And now they are scared of the one who controls the storm  
I mean honestly, who can blame them?  
Who is this? They ask themselves  
The disciples are wrestling with this big question?

And maybe that's you tonight  
Maybe that's why you've come to this church  
Maybe you're wrestling with this question: Who is this Jesus?  
And if that's you, that is a good question to wrestle with

Well that is in part what I want to help you understand tonight

I want you to see the confronting authority of Jesus

We've seen Jesus' confronting authority over creation  
In that incident with the storm  
But in tonight's passage  
We're going to see Jesus' confronting authority over demons  
And by the end of tonight  
I want you to be able to answer two questions from this passage

**Who is this Jesus?**

**How should we respond?**

Well firstly who is this Jesus?

Let's set the scene

Verse 1

**1** They came to the other side of the sea, to the region of the Gerasenes.

Gerasenes was located on the east side of the lake of Galilee in northern Israel

In an area known today as Kursi

Verse 2

**2** As soon as he got out of the boat, a man with an unclean spirit came out of the tombs and met him.

This is not the first encounter that Jesus has had with someone possessed by an evil spirit

Back in chapter 1

Jesus meets a man in a synagogue with an impure spirit  
And he demonstrates his authority by driving out the spirit  
With a simple command  
But here in Gerasenes,  
This power encounter between Jesus and the demonic world  
As we're about to find out is many times larger than back in chapter 1

So let's look at the authority of Jesus in verses 3 to 16

And we're going to break it down bit by bit

The first thing I want you to notice is that

**The demons are powerful**

We're told in verse 1, this man has an impure spirit  
In verse 16 Mark refers to him as a demon possessed man  
There are forces that are clearly controlling him  
Such that he is completely powerless  
Behaving like a beast

Verse 3

**3** He lived in the tombs, and no one was able to restrain him anymore—not even with a chain— **4** because he often had been bound with shackles and chains, but had torn the chains apart and smashed the shackles. No one was strong enough to

subdue him. <sup>5</sup> Night and day among the tombs and on the mountains, he was always crying out and cutting himself with stones.

This sounds like something out of Stranger Things  
And you might be tempted to think this is a made-up story  
But I once met a missionary sharing about an incident he witnessed in a church in Indonesia  
Where a twelve-year old girl roared like a lion  
And it took four grown men to hold her down  
Due to the sheer strength of whatever was controlling her  
Demons it turns out are real  
And they are powerful

Next point **The people of the area are scared of this man**

This demon possessed man cannot live with people  
As far as the people are concerned  
They're afraid of him as a threat so they attempt to lock him up  
And they can't control him due to the strength of the demons  
As such, he lives amongst the dead  
Isolated, howling into the night, hurting himself  
It's a bleak picture isn't it?  
Think of him as once someone's son,  
Someone who lived in a community with friends  
And now there is no future for this man

**The demons know who Jesus is and are scared of Him**

Verse 6

<sup>6</sup>When he saw Jesus from a distance, he ran and knelt down before him. <sup>7</sup>And he cried out with a loud voice, "What do you have to do with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I beg you before God, don't torment me!" <sup>8</sup>For he had told him, "Come out of the man, you unclean spirit!"

Just as in chapter 1

This evil spirit knows the identity of Jesus  
He recognizes the confronting authority of Jesus  
And the spirit is terrified  
Kneeling before Jesus in some sort of fearful deference  
What do you have to do with me?  
I beg you?  
Don't torment me?  
This demonic presence from Satan is *scared* of Jesus

**You Jesus is stronger than the demons**

Verse 9

<sup>9</sup>"What is your name?" he asked him. "My name is Legion," he answered him, "because we are many." <sup>10</sup>And he begged him earnestly not to send them out of the region.

It turns out that there is more than one evil spirit within this man  
Legion is its name  
A roman legion contained between 5000-6000 soldiers

And we are not told exactly how many demons were possessing this man  
But clearly it was many, perhaps a couple of thousand as we will see soon  
And as powerful as these demons were  
Over this man's life  
*Jesus is stronger*

The spirits know that Jesus is stronger  
And that's why they plead with him not to banish them  
Because they want to stay in the region and infect another host

What happens next is perhaps the most confronting part of the passage  
The part that people focus on the most  
The part that troubles people the most

Verse 11

<sup>11</sup> A large herd of pigs was there, feeding on the hillside. <sup>12</sup> The demons begged him, "Send us to the pigs, so that we may enter them." <sup>13</sup> So he gave them permission, and the unclean spirits came out and entered the pigs. The herd of about two thousand rushed down the steep bank into the sea and drowned there.

Here are the questions that people have asked

### **If Jesus came to battle Satan and his evil spirits then why listen to the demons at all?**

We are not given the answer why  
But perhaps the pig incident was to demonstrate to the eye-witnesses  
just how significant this battle is between Jesus and the evil spirits of Satan  
A battle that was leading to a decisive victory on the cross  
And perhaps this battle was just a demonstration of the war that Jesus had come to fight

### **Well why the pigs then?**

There is no indication given why Jesus specifically allowed them to go into the pigs  
But remember Jesus didn't choose the pigs  
The demons chose the pigs  
But perhaps Jesus allowed this to demonstrate the sheer destructive force that was  
Taking place inside the man  
Imagine two thousand pigs  
That is a huge number of pigs  
We can fit 330 people in this auditorium.  
So imagine 6 times that number of pigs  
The eye-witnesses watching this incident can't see two thousand demons  
But they can see two thousand pigs  
And therefore they can start to realize the evil power that tormented this poor man

### **Does Jesus not like pigs because he's a Jew?**

Who will think of the pigs?  
Will no one think of the pigs?  
There is nothing in this passage that talks about Jesus' attitude towards the pigs  
And if you focus too much on the pigs  
You will lose the point of this incident  
Look at what the *demons* did to the pigs  
The *demons* rush the pigs into the sea of Galilee and they drown there  
Perhaps in a desperate attempt to escape from the presence of Jesus

If these demons could cause that much destruction to two thousand pigs  
Imagine what they were doing to this man  
And if you focus too much on what happened to the pigs  
You will miss what Jesus did for the man

Here's the important point

### **Jesus uses his authority for the good of the man**

Look at verse 14

<sup>14</sup> The men who tended them ran off and reported it in the town and the countryside, and people went to see what had happened. <sup>15</sup> They came to Jesus and saw the man who had been demon-possessed, sitting there, dressed and in his right mind; and they were afraid.

Stop thinking about the pigs

I know some of you are still

I want you to think about the state of the man

He is completely transformed once the legion has left his body

He was once wandering the tombs like a naked raging beast

Destroying himself, terrifying the people

And now he is sane, sitting down, ready to have a cup of tea with Jesus

The confronting authority of Jesus has changed his life forever

Why did Mark record this in his gospel account?

Because he is concerned that his readers are able to answer that first question

### **Who is this Jesus?**

And surprisingly the answer is found on the lips of the demon possessed man

As he kneels before Jesus in verse 7

*Jesus is the Son of the Most-High God*

Jesus is the Confronting Authority over all authorities

Even over Satan and his demons

Another way the bible puts it is this:

Jesus is Lord

Jesus is Lord over demons

And at this point this application seems a bit meaningless to us

### **I mean does demon possession even happen today?**

Absolutely demon possession still happens

Years ago I attended a conference with pastors and evangelists from all around the world

In my small group were two men who were evangelists from Nepal

I've blanked out their faces for security purposes

Their ministry consisted of walking from village to village

And their strategy was to share the gospel with people who would listen in each village

But their experience was that whenever they entered a village

Their first encounter would be with the local shaman, the witch doctor

who would be screaming at them to leave

even before they said who they were

Because the evil spirit residing in the shaman

Knew exactly why they came even before they spoke

And often their first activity was to drive out the demon from that witch doctor

Before they could start sharing the gospel

When they shared this with a group of us, it sounded much like what we read in the gospels

I believed these two humble, very rational Christian men  
They weren't trying to impress us with a made-up story  
They were just telling us what happened to them in their gospel ministry in their context

### **So if demon possession is possible, then why don't we see it much in Australia**

I believe it can still happen in Australia from my conversation with different people  
But I don't think it's the dominant way that Satan works here  
I found this article on the Gospel Coalition website that I thought might be helpful  
Written by a bible college professor called Chuck Lawless  
What a great name – Chuck Lawless

I think this is a helpful statement about the different ways that Satan,  
Referred to here as the Enemy works in different cultures:  
That, in fact, may be the major difference with the Enemy's work in animistic cultures:  
where he wants animists to fear him more, he wants Westerners to fear him less, if at all. If  
so, his strategy wouldn't preclude possession—and I've heard credible reports of demon  
possession in North America—but it also wouldn't emphasize it. Holding nonbelievers in the  
bondage of naturalism, independence, and idolatry makes more sense in much of North  
American culture.

You get what Chuck is saying is that in animistic cultures  
Like Nepal or Malaysia where I'm from or some of the other countries  
Where you're from  
Satan likes people to be scared of evil spirits  
Not to worship God  
But to live in fear and the need to appease the demons  
But in Western countries like America, England or Australia,  
Satan employs a different strategy  
He gets people to deny the existence of demons  
So that they put their trust wholly in themselves  
Or science and technology  
Or body image  
Or materialistic greed  
In these cultures people are not scared of demons  
But they're scared of all sorts of other things.  
And Satan has a hand in all these things  
Satan is smart you see  
His common goal in every culture is to draw people away from God  
Either through a fear of demons  
not believing in demons at all

This is what the apostle Paul says in Ephesians 2  
This is what happens when we sin against God  
Three things are at play in us

And you were dead in your trespasses and sins <sup>2</sup> in which you previously walked according  
to the ways of this world, that's the first thing  
according to the ruler of the power of the air, the spirit now working in the disobedient.  
That's another term for Satan, the second thing at work  
<sup>3</sup> We too all previously lived among them in our fleshly desires,  
That's the third thing at work – our own sinful nature.

carrying out the inclinations of our flesh and thoughts, and we were by nature children under wrath as the others were also.

Here is the unholy trinity at work when we sin

Part of it is the world

Part of it is Satan

Part of it is our own sinful choices

And here's the great achievement of Satan here in Australia

He's convinced us we're so free

Free to be whatever we want

Free to do whatever we want

And yet the end result of this we are slaves to our freedom

Tell me honestly

That after spending an hour scrolling on social media on your phone

That you feel better about yourself

Tell me that you aren't feeling guilt and shame about your body

Tell me that you aren't pangs of FOMO and jealousy at others living their best life

Tell me that you aren't angry at someone's post

Tell me that you aren't trapped in your insecure need to please people

Tell me that you don't feel the need to lie about how good your life is

Tell me that after ten straight hours of gaming you feel great about your life

Tell me that you feel incredible freedom after another hidden session of porn

Well done Satan

The Bible calls him the accuser, the tempter, the father of all lies

And he is working powerfully in Australia

Who are we kidding?

We're not free at all are we?

We are slaves, in shackles to our sin

Let me ask you that question from the start of my talk

Could confronting authority ever be a good thing?

Could the confronting authority of Jesus ever be a good thing in your life?

If the demon possessed man couldn't free himself?

Then who is going to free you from Satan's work in your life?

You

You think you're going to free yourself?

No you need someone who has the power to confront Satan

And Jesus is the only one

When Jesus died on the cross

He did a number of things

Look at Colossians chapter 2

Verse 13

<sup>13</sup> And when you were dead in trespasses and in the uncircumcision of your flesh, he made you alive with him and forgave us all our trespasses. <sup>14</sup> He erased the certificate of debt, with its obligations, that was against us and opposed to us, and has taken it away by nailing it to the cross. <sup>15</sup> He disarmed the rulers and authorities and disgraced them publicly; he triumphed over them in him.<sup>[c]</sup>

You see verse 15



On the cross  
Jesus disarmed the rulers and authorities  
He is talking about Satan and his evil spiritual forces  
Jesus has secured a decisive victory in the war against Satan  
And on the cross  
He has triumphed over Satan  
You can win this war against Satan  
Because Jesus can be your Champion

This is why you need the confronting authority of Jesus  
When no one else can help you he can?  
When you feel alone, helplessly trapped in a cycle of sin and shame  
When you feel accused and deceived  
When you feel the enormous burden of guilt  
Jesus, who died for you on the cross  
The only one willing to go into battle for you  
The only one who is not scared  
The only one who has the power to overcome Satan in your life

There are other questions people might have  
That I am happy to address is more length after the service  
Can a Christian with the Holy Spirit be possessed by an evil spirit?  
No  
Can a Christian still be attacked by Satan who prowls like a lion?  
Yes  
Can a Christian with the Holy Spirit resist the devil  
Yes

But let's continue  
Well how should we respond to the confronting authority of Jesus?  
Well in the passage we see two responses

**We see fear**  
**And we see faith**

The people who tended the pigs went and rounded up everyone they could find in the area  
Verse 15

<sup>15</sup>They came to Jesus and saw the man who had been demon-possessed, sitting there, dressed and in his right mind; and they were afraid. <sup>16</sup>Those who had seen it described to them what had happened to the demon-possessed man and told about the pigs. <sup>17</sup>Then they began to beg him to leave their region.

Mark is really clear here  
The people heard the eye-witness accounts  
They saw the evidence of the transformation of the man  
From raging beast back to self-controlled human being  
And the conclusion they reach  
Is that the confronting authority of Jesus *scares* them  
So they say no thank you

Please leave

You would think that if Jesus has the power to transform a person's life in that way  
That they would have gone back into town  
Gathered a huge number of people  
who needed the transforming power of Jesus  
Instead they say no  
What a missed opportunity  
And what's tragic is that Jesus gives them what they want  
He gets into his boat and leaves after the briefest visit  
And in Mark's gospel, we don't hear of him returning to Gerasenes

In the case of the people, fear leads to more fear  
At the start of the passage they were scared of the demon possessed man  
Scared enough to feel the need to chain him up  
And by removing the demons from this man  
Jesus has taken away the need to fear this man  
Instead they swap one fear for another  
We're not told exactly why  
Maybe it's their livelihood?  
"I know the guy who owns those pigs"  
"Is Jesus going to destroy my fishing business?"  
But what we do know is it boils down to fear.

How often do you make decisions because of fear?  
I would suspect that if you're anything like me – often  
Scared of what people will think of me  
Scared of what this is going to cost me  
Scared of change  
Scared of the consequences of making a wrong decision  
Are you saying no to Jesus because of fear?  
Like the people of Gerasenes?  
Is your fear just leading to more fear?  
Maybe you're wondering  
If I say yes to Jesus can I trust him with my future?  
If I say yes to Jesus will that cost me my friends at uni?  
If I say yes to Jesus will I have to give up my addictions?  
These are all very real questions  
But you just need to be honest that what's driving those questions is fear

When you look at Jesus tonight?  
Do you think your fear is warranted?

C.S. Lewis answers this question in *The Lion, The Witch, and The Wardrobe* when Mr. Beaver tells Susan that Aslan is a great lion. Aslan is the ruler of Narnia who is portrayed as the Christ-like figure in the story. Susan is surprised, since she assumed Aslan was a man. She then tells Mr. Beaver, "I shall feel rather nervous about meeting a lion." She asks Mr. Beaver if Aslan is safe, to which Mr. Beaver replies, "Safe? Who said anything about safe? 'Course he isn't safe. But he's good. He's the King."

There is a healthy fear of Jesus  
Where you realise, He is King and you are not  
He can calm storms and drive out thousands of demons

You would do well to remember that  
Jesus is not safe  
You cannot control him to make you feel safe  
And to follow the King may well cost you your life

But you should not be terrified of this King  
Because King Jesus is always good  
He uses his power for your good  
To heal  
To restore  
To forgive  
He demands your life but will give you much more in return  
You must bow before him but He will lift you up higher than you imagine

From what you've seen tonight about Jesus  
Will you say no to Him because of your fear?

In contrast to the fear of the people  
The formerly demon possessed man puts his faith in Jesus  
Verse 18

<sup>18</sup> As Jesus was getting into the boat, the man who had been demon-possessed begged him earnestly that he might remain with him. <sup>19</sup> Jesus did not let him but told him, "Go home to your own people, and report to them how much the Lord has done for you and how he has had mercy on you." <sup>20</sup> So he went out and began to proclaim in the Decapolis how much Jesus had done for him, and they were all amazed.

I love that line in verse 19  
"Go home to your own people"  
This man can return to his family now  
He can leave the tombs behind him  
He is now free to be with his community  
This is how Jesus changes people  
His chains are truly gone  
He has been set free  
Fear is now faith

And for this man  
What does faith look like:  
The man knows that his life has been saved by Jesus  
And so he wants to remain with Jesus to follow him wherever he goes  
Being a Christian means wanting to remain with Jesus  
Faith never forgets the mercy of God in our lives  
Being a Christian is never about our goodness  
But God's grace to us – His mercy in saving us through Jesus  
And lastly faith means sharing God's mercy with others  
The Decapolis were ten towns in the region that were predominantly non-Jewish  
And a group of people from the area have already said no to Jesus  
But Jesus in his mercy leaves these Gentiles with one single missionary  
And it was to be this man  
And he does as Jesus tells him  
He proclaims to anyone who will listen – the powerful work of Jesus in his life

And the people are amazed

Five years ago I went to Cambodia  
My aunty and uncle worked there for 18 years as missionaries  
And we were celebrating the completion of the New Testament translation  
In the language of the people group they worked with  
We went to visit one of the villages of this people group  
This people group were formerly animistic  
Living in fear of evil spirits  
Often offering animal sacrifices to these spirits  
They have come to believe the gospel of Jesus  
And have come to follow him  
And the driver of my bus said to one of the men in the village  
“Why do you follow Jesus”  
“Without any hesitation or embarrassment, the man replied  
“Because Jesus is more powerful than the forest spirits?”

No more fear just faith

Why do you follow Jesus?  
Because Jesus is more powerful  
Because Jesus is more powerful than....my dependence on alcohol  
Because Jesus is more powerful than....my desperate need to be liked  
Because Jesus is more powerful than....my abusive ex  
Because Jesus is more powerful than....my mocking lecturer  
Because Jesus is more powerful than....guilt and shame  
Fear can become Faith

Now if you're here tonight and you do have Faith in Jesus  
And you know what he's done for you  
Then be like the man in the passage tonight  
And be like this man from the Cambodian village  
Tell others about this Jesus and His power and His mercy  
Tello them about how he saved your life and transformed you.

Some of you tonight are on stepping out on a new chapter in your life  
You've moved to a new country, a new city, a new college  
You're about to start at uni or a new apprenticeship or a new job  
Maybe you're sharing a house for the first time  
I'm excited for you and what's ahead  
I'm glad you're here at this church  
I hope you will stay  
Because this is an important chapter of your life  
And based on the decisions you make in this chapter  
Your life could go in very different directions  
We want to help you figure out the most important questions in life and here they are  
Who is Jesus?  
The Confronting Authority who can transform your life for the better forever  
How will you respond to him?  
Fear or Faith?