

Mark 5:2-5

*“When He got out of the boat, immediately a man from the tombs with an unclean spirit met Him, and he had his dwelling among the tombs. And no one was able to bind him anymore, even with a chain; because he had often been bound with shackles and chains, and the chains had been torn apart by him and the shackles broken in pieces, and no one was strong enough to subdue him.”*

Today’s society disregards most of our Christian fear regarding the influence of demons. We still watch movies or read novels that contain a supernatural evil residing in the populace to do harm in some arbitrary way. In their make-believe narrative, some seemingly indestructible “force” appears to transform into whatever shape is needed to destroy individuals and eventually the earth itself. This movie monster somehow has many extra lives enabling it to come back for the sequel by some man-made wizardry that allows the movie to end without fully resolving the problem.

The gospels present quite a different picture of the source of evil and how it is overcome. In the movies, humans have the power and the ingenuity to recognize and expel evil. Jesus reveals evil comes from a demonic source that preys upon human presumption of its own strength and ingenuity. Satanic influence isn’t something humanity can defeat on its own. It can only be overcome with something greater than ourselves — the power of God. Martin Luther was correct when he penned, “Did we in our own strength confide, our striving would be losing.”

The greatest proof of this striving against the wind are those who need the greatest deliverance. They often offer the greatest resistance to being set free from their captivity. People pay professionals for advice to change their lives but then resist any change required. We surrender to the demons we know because we are too afraid to live without them. I take great comfort from the persistence of Jesus against Legion. Jesus is not put off by the evasive tactics of the enemy or the people. He is willing to cross a stormy sea just to free this one man from the bondage of his tormentors and to reveal this truth to a community afraid of that deliverance.

Only in Christ can we find shelter from the blast of the enemy and the power to overcome demonic forces that swamp not only individuals, but entire nations. Only in Christ is there deliverance from the powers and principalities which we face in daily battle. This power is not based on the sheer might of Jesus, but in the mercy (5:19) God shows all who come to Him by faith and found only in Christ. We need to be a people who have met with Christ and allowed Him to transform our lives. And then have the courage to bring Jesus Christ to those who are still captive to this enemy of cruel hate. Again, as Luther wrote, “We will not fear, for God hath willed His truth to triumph through us.”

— Pastor Andrew Kikkert