

SET FREE AND READY TO SERVE

Mark 5:1-20/ "Yeshua" §68
12/15/19

Freedom. What a powerful and wonderful state of being. I can distinctly remember when my wife and I had been set free from our student loans. We had saved and scrimped and had prioritized our spending in such a way that we could pay down close to \$80,000 in student debt in as short a time as possible. I was working multiple part-time jobs and Anne was working full-time and we devoted the vast majority of our resources to our financial freedom. It felt so wonderful to be free from that debt. But with that freedom came a very important question, What were we going to do with our extra money now? What were we going to do with this new freedom?

There are countless things that people have been set free from. Alcoholism, slavery, destructive behavior patterns, anxiety, pornography, narcotics, and the list goes on. As believers in Christ, we all have been set free from punishment for our sins. In today's study, we will see a man who was set free from a life of death and destruction, and we will be challenged by what he chose to do with his new found freedom.

MOVING INTO HOSTILE TERRITORY (5:1-2)

As we have seen through our study, at the very best, Jews disregarded Gentiles, and at the very worst they absolutely despised them. Following the calming of the storm, Jesus and his band of disciples land on Gentile shores. The east side of the Sea of Galilee, the "other side of the tracks". This is unclean and hostile territory for any Jewish rabbi, but we see Jesus is unaffected by the cultural expectations and prejudices. Not only is this place gentile territory, but it is the region where an army of demons had decided to set up shop and bring their destruction. Though it was a hostile and demonic place, this was the time and place that Jesus had decided to extend his direct ministry to the Gentile nations.

MEETING THE PRISONER (5:2-7)

When Jesus and his disciples stepped ashore they were immediately confronted with a man who was under the possession and control of a legion (or army) of demons. He was not in control of his actions, he had been cast out of the town and was living in the place of the dead, he was under severe torment and was using rocks to cut himself crying out night and day. People had tried to intervene, even to the point of binding and chaining him up, but the strength of these demons would snap bonds and chains and they would continue to have their way with him. He was a prisoner, cast into solitary confinement, with the worst and most abusive captors imaginable. This man was hopeless.

However, something strange happened when he saw Jesus on the shore. He ran to him. Whether compelled by the demons, or by some sense that this man could help him, we do not know. But nevertheless, this wretched prisoner found himself at the feet of a Jewish rabbi, who was completely unknown to him, but was absolutely known to the demons who had enslaved him.

MAKING ODD ACCOMMODATIONS (5:8-13)

We see a very odd exchange take place as Jesus begins to cast out these demons, who identified themselves as "Legion, for we are many". There is no doubt they knew who Jesus was as they addressed him as "Jesus, Son of the Most High God". They seem terrified that Jesus was there to torment them, to cast them out of their region and punish them then and there. So they ask if they can go

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into a nearby herd of pigs. The request itself isn't that odd, as it would appear that demons do not like to be dis-bodied and displaced (See Matthew 12:43). What *is* odd is Jesus' response. He allows them to enter into the pigs, which in turn drives the pigs mad with fear and causes them to stampede down into the sea and drown. The text doesn't give us any clues as to why Jesus would accommodate this odd request, nor regarding the great financial loss that had just been incurred. So we are left to merely speculate the reasons for it. One thing is clear though, Jesus had complete authority over the demonic world regardless of the number of demons confronting him. If the transformation of the man wasn't enough evidence of the exorcism, the mass suicide of the swine would leave no doubt.

MORE REJECTION (5:14-17)

The news of this event quickly reached the neighboring cities and towns and the people come out to see what is going on. They saw that the demonized man had been set free and was at the feet of Jesus assumedly listening and learning along with the other disciples. They heard the accounts of the thousands of pigs that had drowned, and they were filled with fear of this Hebrew man from across the sea. In their fear they began to beg that Jesus leave them, and go back across the sea. They did not want him there. Jesus honored their request, humbly accepting their rejection, and turned to load everyone back into the boat to head across the sea again.

THE MAKING OF A MISSIONARY (5:18-20)

As Jesus stepped into the boat we see another request. The man who Jesus had just set free, begged him to be allowed to follow him, to join with the other disciples in their journey with Jesus. But this request was denied. Jesus had a different plan for this man. This man became the first missionary commissioned by Jesus. Jesus was not welcome to go into the Decapolis, but this man was. Those were his people. And he had a testimony to share about how the Lord had set him free. Jesus' parting commission to this man was "Go home to your friends, and tell them how much the Lord has done for you, and how he has had mercy on you." The man obeyed, using his new found freedom to serve the One who had set him free. And this mans mission would bear fruit, for the next time Jesus comes into this region, he will not be met with rejection, but with acceptance and expectation. (Mark 7:31-37)

Grace Family Needs, News and Notes

CHRISTMAS EVE CELEBRATION SERVICES

3:00 & 4:30pm

There will be a time of fellowship and refreshments at 4 PM

so please bring some cookies or a treat to share.

VOM DONATIONS FOR DECEMBER: Fleece Blankets & Jackets (plain, no logos) & Hair Brushes

Drop off at the VOM cabinet in the foyer