

Sermon Title: "Going from Miseducation to Liberation"

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Date: October 23, 2022

Mark 5: 1-20

1 They went across the lake to the region of the Gerasenes.[a] 2 When Jesus got out of the boat, a man with an impure spirit came from the tombs to meet him. 3 This man lived in the tombs, and no one could bind him anymore, not even with a chain. 4 For he had often been chained hand and foot, but he tore the chains apart and broke the irons on his feet. No one was strong enough to subdue him. 5 Night and day among the tombs and in the hills he would cry out and cut himself with stones. 6 When he saw Jesus from a distance; he ran and fell on his knees in front of him. 7 He shouted at the top of his voice, "What do you want with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? In God's name don't torture me!" 8 For Jesus had said to him, "Come out of this man, you impure spirit!" 9 Then Jesus asked him, "What is your name?" "My name is Legion," he replied, "for we are many." 10 And he begged Jesus again and again not to send them out of the area. 11 A large herd of pigs was feeding on the nearby hillside. 12 The demons begged Jesus, "Send us among the pigs; allow us to go into them." 13 He gave them permission, and the impure spirits came out and went into the pigs. The herd, about two thousand in number, rushed down the steep bank into the lake and were drowned. 14 Those tending the pigs ran off and reported this in the town and countryside, and the people went out to see what had happened. 15 When they came to Jesus, they saw the man who had been possessed by the legion of demons, sitting there, dressed and in his right mind; and they were afraid. 16 Those who had seen it told the people what had happened to the demon-possessed man—and told about the pigs as well. 17 Then the people began to plead with Jesus to leave their region. 18 As Jesus was getting into the boat, the man who had been demon-possessed begged to go with him. 19 Jesus did not let him, but said, "Go home to your own people and tell them how much the Lord has done for you, and how he has had mercy on you." 20 So the man went away and began to tell in the Decapolis[b] how much Jesus had done for him. And all the people were amazed.

Summary and Commentary

A man from the tombs (an economically depressed community) exhibiting signs of mental illness, a man who had been chained, who also engaged in self-mutilations, sees Jesus from a distance, runs to him and falls at his feet. He responds to Jesus in his role as a religious leader and requests that Jesus "not torture him." It seems that this man with the conditions that he presents hadn't gotten any compassion from the religious leaders. Religion and faith are two different things. Religion upholds systems; faith pushes them aside. After asking the demon to come out of the man, Jesus asked the man his name. He responds that he is "Legion, for we are many." He responds not with his name, but with his condition. Legion is the Roman word for 10,000. Romans were oppressors of the Jewish people, so the demons this man is being consumed with are the policies that the Roman Empire has placed upon the Jews. Yet when Jesus expelled the spirit from the man, he emerged "clothed and in his right mind, and the people were afraid." They ran Jesus, the liberator of the demon-possessed man, out of town. When those who have been oppressed become liberated, those engaged in the system of oppression must expel the liberator lest others get free. Jesus sent the man back to his own town so that his own people could see what the Lord had done for him. When you have been delivered, you must go back to your own people so that they too know that you are free.

Reflection Questions

1. What limiting ideas have been placed upon you that have kept you from being all God has called you to be? How have you or can you get beyond those limiting ideas?
2. What “church hurt” might you be carrying?
3. How has the church further stigmatized those who are already marginalized? What can we do to address this?
4. “Religion and faith are two different things.” Discuss the differences as you understand them.
5. From what oppressive policies do our communities need to be liberated? How can the church work to change such policies?
6. From what has God liberated you? How can you be a witness to liberate others?