

## WHAT IS YOUR NAME?

Mark 5:1-20 (Key Verse: 5:9)

"Then Jesus asked him, 'What is your name?' 'My name is Legion,' he replied, 'for we are many.'"

In the previous passage we saw how Jesus calmed a scary loud storm. In today's passage Jesus calms down a man who was possessed by a legion of demons. Jesus authority and His divine nature is yet again revealed in this passage. Man is created in the image of God, to live a dignified meaningful and purposeful life before God. However, this man with a legion of demons was robbed of a dignified life, he could not contribute any value to society instead, he brought fear and despair. However, such is the society we live in, mankind is losing God's image. God's image is being distorted by demons of pleasure seeking life, hearts that are unrepentant before God, humanistic values that are devoid of God. Such that even to say a person is a man is becoming offensive. We cannot heal our society or anyone. However, Jesus can. In today's passage Jesus heals a man who was possessed by a legion of demons. Day in and day out this man was tormented by demons. He lived in tombs where the dead live and was excluded from society, was a danger both to himself and to society because of the demons. However, Because of Jesus this precious soul was saved and could return to normal life. Even better, he became a missionary of the gospel. Jesus not only freed him from a legion of demons but also gave the man a glorious meaning and purpose in life. I pray that we may receive one word of God today, that we may never deviate from serving and following Jesus. Jesus has authority over all things, may we serve him and follow him with all our hearts. Amen!

Jesus and the disciples arrived In the region of Gerasenes [1]. The disciples had just come out from a terrible storm which Jesus calmed down in the end. Look at verse 2, "As soon as Jesus got out of the boat, He was met by a man with an unclean spirit, who was coming from the tombs." As soon as they landed they were met by a man who was demon possessed. The bible says he had an unclean spirit. Verse 3 tells us that he had been living in tombs and could no longer be restrained even by chains. From the way he lived we can see how the unclean spirit was manifest. He lived in tombs not in a house or at least on the streets, but in tombs. What do we find at the tombs, the dead, those who are not living. This could signify something, the unclean spirit is the spirit that leads to death not life. Though the man was alive, the unclean spirit made him dead. He could not participate meaningfully in society.

In fact, because of his abnormal behaviour, he probably troubled the society. Either he would break some windows and chase people on the streets. He would do strange things that caused society to have a meeting on him. Verse 4 reveals some of the things society did in order to restrain him. Look at verse 4, "Though he was often bound with chains and shackles, he had broken the chains and shattered the shackles. Now there was no one with the strength to subdue him." While the towns people tried all kinds of things to tame this man, to get him under control. It seems he actually had some super-natural powers, he had broken the chains and shattered the shackles. There was also actually no one with the strength to subdue him. And so he was probably chased away from the town and then started to live in tombs.

He desired to have some freedom instead of being constantly troubled by the community and so he began to live in tombs. However, did he really obtain freedom and peace of mind at the tombs? look at verse 5, "Night and day in the tombs and in the mountains he kept crying out and cutting himself with stones." It seems he did not because he kept crying out night an day in the tombs even cutting himself with stones. By cutting himself seems he was hating himself, because he seriously tortured himself. Generally people think, if we could go to a place where there is I nobody, where we are not known or where we will not be accountable to anybody. We will be free and have some peace of mind. Some depend on the use of drugs in order to have freedom. However, though they may live in a quiet place where nobody is there, though they live as they want, they ultimately do not achieve the freedom and peace they wanted. Unless, they come out of themselves, the more they act as they want, the more crazy they become, torturing and hating themselves.

The demon possessed man ran around in the hills, crying out. He also afflicted himself, taking off his clothes and crying out night and day. He still did not have his freedom and he could not even find much rest at night because he used to cry out night and day. Look at verse 6, "When the man saw Jesus from a distance, he ran and fell on his knees before Him." Somehow this man saw Jesus from a distance, and as he saw Jesus, he could not just ignore Jesus. What did he do? He ran to Jesus. What is interesting is that Jesus did not go to the man but rather when the man saw Jesus, he ran to Jesus and fell on his knees before Jesus. He did not come walking to Jesus but rather he ran to Jesus. As if to prevent Jesus from continuing to enter the region the demons where freely enjoying. Look at verse 7a "7a And he shouted in a loud voice, "What do You want with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God?" the demons knew exactly who Jesus was. However, though they knew who he was, they did not worship Jesus as their lord and king. They only new about Jesus and His power.

What was their request? Lets look at verse 7b -8, "7b I beg You before God not to torture me!" 8For Jesus had already declared, "Come out of this man, you unclean spirit!" By this time Jesus had already commanded the demons to come out of the man. And so the demons requested Jesus not to torture them. Torture here meant to be exterminated or destroyed. Because demons need a living subject (animal or person) to exist. However, when Jesus declared they come out it was an extreme measure of torture for them because it meant they would die if they out of the man.

Unlike the town's people, when Jesus saw this man he saw demons working on his inside. Jesus saw that he was a precious being created in the image of God, who was suffering from demon-possession. Not only this man, but also anybody could be possessed by demons more or less as they live in this sinful world. The seriousness and symptoms might be different. But because of demons, people cannot have true freedom but rather, suffering and agony. Man's fundamental problem is an inward one. Many live with the illusion that, they have to have something from this world in order to find peace and freedom. The common one is money, if I can have lots of money I will be free and happy. And so many young people most especially because of black tax, aim to have lots of money in order to free their family from suffering. While it is good to help others with our possessions, material things do not solve our fundamental problem. Some say in their hearts, If I can have that girl, I would be the happiest man alive. Some think if I can join that group of friends I will truly be happy and free. If I can find a job or join that company, the list goes on and on. The point is, our fundamental problem is inward, it is spiritual and within ourselves. It has little to do with external things or people. When we see ourselves and also others, we should not be quick to judge by their outward circumstances. Indeed, outward behaviour is a good indication of what could be happening within. The outward behaviour is a sign that points to something. We should rather first seek to know their inner struggles and acknowledge the power of an evil spirit on their inside.

However, dealing with what is within our own hearts and those of others, is the most difficult thing in life. In fact I think it is impossible for any person to change a heart that is sold out to sin and lives with a unclean spirit. Let us see how Jesus helped this man? Let us all read verse 9, "What is your name?" Jesus asked. "My name is Legion," he replied, "for we are many." Legion refers to a Roman region which was composed of as many as 6000 soldiers. He was then actually ruled by a good number of demons, self torturing demon, a despair demon, a demon of lust, a pleasure demon, jealousy demon, a lying demon and so on. However, why did Jesus ask his name? in order to let him look at himself who was under such a number of demons. In the Bible one's name represents his essence. John Milton, an English author who wrote, "The Lost Paradise", said that Adam gave animals their name because he understood the essence of each animal. Likewise, I think the reason Jesus asked this man his name, "what is your name?" was also because he wanted to let him take a good look at his essence.

Up that point, the man had probably been given various names by others. The man also had probably tried to find out what his problem was from the outside, such as his surrounding circumstance or the people who had chained him. But Jesus let him look at himself, especially his inner being. In that way, Jesus let him see demons on his inside, so that he could find out what is his problem was, and what he had to fight against. This is because only after he found himself to be seized by demons, could he have a desire to fight against them. This means that he was now ready to receive Jesus' help.

Telling our name, that is, confessing honestly ourselves is utterly hard and painful. On top of that we do not know much about our true self. But when Jesus asked the man his name, his demons were revealed, saying "My name is Legion, for we are many." Then the man could see how many demons were ruling over him. Everything is revealed if it comes before Jesus. In the book of Hebrews we read, "Nothing in all creation is hidden from God's sight everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of Him to whom we should give account" (Heb 4:13).

Demons are powerful but they are only children of darkness. Demons can wield power only in hidden, dark parts. Their attributes are to work secretly, hiding themselves. Thus sins are always plotted secretly and corruption occurs in the dark hidden places. People say that the real problem is their environment, system or other people, but they fail to see demons which are at work secretly, hiding themselves. However, just like germs, when they are exposed to the sunlight, they become helpless. Likewise, when demons are revealed before Jesus, they become powerless. That is why Jesus also asks us today, "What is your name?" if we honestly say our name, that is, confess our true self on the inside, sin and Satan cannot subdue us any more.

In verse 10, the demons realising they could not work in the man any longer. Begged Jesus again and again not to be sent out of the area. A large herd of pigs was feeding on the nearby hillside. The demons begged Jesus to allow them to go into the pigs [11]. Though the demons had been powerful enough to make the man insane, break out of chains with their super powers. They were nothing to Jesus even though they were many. They could not even go into the pigs without Jesus permission. When Jesus permitted their request, the demons came down into the pigs. It was a herd of 2000 in number and it began to go insane. Since the demons mad ethe man torture himself, the pigs also under torture could not cope any longer. In the end they rushed down into the lake and committed a mass suicide.

Now the man came back to himself. In verse 15 we read that, they saw the man who had been possessed by a legion of demons sitting there, clothed and in his right mind. But the townspeople could not be happy. They had just lost a huge amount of money in the pig business. Look at verse 17, "And the people began to beg Jesus to leave their region." For the financial loss was just too great for them. They were not interested in the man's salvation. They just thought about their financial loss, looking at the herd of pigs which drowned. The people of Gerasense were thinking of pigs as more precious than a man. It is no wonder the demons even requested not to be removed from the area. Gerasene was the best area for demons to play around.

Lets look at verse 18, "As He was getting into the boat, the man who had been possessed by the demons begged to go with Him." The man had been living even worse than an animal but now he was saved. Naturally, he wanted to follow Jesus and serve him. But Jesus gave him a mission. Look at verse 19, "But Jesus would not allow him. "Go home to your own people," He said, "and tell them how much the Lord has done for you, and what mercy He has shown you." How much has the lord done for him? Jesus said a soul is more precious than the whole world (Matthew 16:26). To save a soul, Jesus came to the world in order to lay down his life on the cross for sinners. At this time Jesus drove out demons from the demon possessed man. Jesus had mercy on him and saved him with his power. Now Jesus established him as a missionary who would preach his love and power in Gerasene. For we read in verse 20, "So the man went away and began to proclaim throughout the Decapolis how much Jesus had done for him. And everyone was amazed." Is not that beautiful and wonderful, for now he was finally free and at peace. Moreover, he could be used preciously by God. Amen!

Growing up as a young man, I still remember how I was loved by my parents. This was because I knew what they liked and how they wanted me to behave. So around them I would behave very well, and loved it whenever they would say am such a good boy. Most especially I was wanted to please my father, I never wanted to disappoint him. And so even when I started reading the bible, learning that I am a sinner and that Jesus died for me on the cross I really struggled. This was because, I saw myself as a good boy, so though I believed I was Christian, I could not still understand how Jesus died for my sin. Since I was such a well behaved good boy. When I came to vacity, I then had a girlfriend and later fell into sexual immorality with her. It was for the first time that it dawn on me that indeed I was a sinner who needed Jesus saving power. I believe I could realize am sinner because I had now committed a sin that I too knew was serious sin before God. Whereas other sins like not loving God the way I ought, I would not regard as serious. So now this time around I had no excuse, it was as though Jesus had asked me what is your name, am my only response was a sinner who needs your salvation. I believe it was because what Jesus did for me on the cross that I could confess my sin before God and God's people. Jesus continued to be at work in my heart through His word (Bible study and testimony writing), later on he would reveal to be my sin of humanism. Humanism, mean to live for pleasing people over God. Through this revelation I could also realize how I committed sexual immorality, it was because I was so eager not to disappoint the lady but please her. However, in so doing chose to please man over God. Through God's word over time, I could learn the source of my humanism, that it came from my upbringing. When I lived for pleasing my father, never wanting to disappoint him. Though it looked good outwardly, the truth is that I am born a sinner. And leaving to please my father could not solve my fundamental sin problem. However, through the word of God, I could hear Jesus ask me, "what is your name?" not that I am perfect how, am thankful that Jesus has power to piece through my heart and reveal my life of sin. And so, I really pray that God may continue to have mercy of me, that his word may never stop to rebuke and reveal sin in me. I thank Jesus and his finished work on the cross, for through Jesus I am saved and could be called to serve in His work. Amen!

**In conclusion**, in today's passage Jesus asked, "What is your name?" the man responded by saying "Legion". However, this was the demon's name not his name. His real name is man. Who is man? We read in Genesis 1:27-28, "So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him, male and female. God blessed them and said to them, be fruitful and increase in number, fill the earth and subdue it...." God was happy with what he created (Gen 1:31). Man is a dignified being who was created in the image of God. Man is a precious being whom God loves. Man is a blessed being who can be fruitful and increase in number, enjoying happiness within God. Man also has a mission given by God, man loves God and his neighbours. Man loves the words of the truth, filled with the light of life. This is the true image of man and true ego of man.

However, when mankind leaves the lord and lives by Satan's words, then he comes to lose himself and become enslaved by demons which he himself does not even know. We may not understand much about demons. But one thing is clear, demons prefer some areas. Demon's found hospitality in the areas like Gerasene where pigs are regarded as more precious than human soul and a place where people think they can subdue a person in chains. If we accumulate hidden sins, ignoring the warnings and the word of God and only indulging ourselves in pleasure seeking life, our hearts become harder and harder to live in our own ways. Trusting only in what we feel and think. Then before we know it we can become pray to demons and the dark world. We need to be care of the company we keep and what our hearts desire, are we in an environments that encourages living for truth and pleasing God. Or are we mostly dominated by seeking what pleases us. Who is really our lord and king?

In order to heal us from demon possession, we should struggle with the word of God, either through bible study and testimony writing. We will then hear Jesus asks us, "What is your name?" to answer this we should look within us and confess any work that is not pleasing to God. Then once we put our hearts to the light, we extinguish the power of Satan, who loves secrets works in the dark. This passage also reveals the character of our lord Jesus, He is mighty and nothing including legion of demons have a chance against Jesus. Indeed Jesus is our hope and the hope of our world to redeem and save mankind so that we may live, lives of meaning and purpose which God created us for. Amen!