LESSON *four*

AN INCIDENT IN GADARA

Mark 5:1–43

Getting Started

What is the most amazing thing you've ever seen Jesus do in someone's life?

Setting the Stage

In Mark 4, Jesus demonstrated His power over nature by calming a storm on the Sea of Galilee. Mark 5 details the rest of that journey. The light of day was gone when Jesus and His disciples finally reached their destination. The sky was probably pitch black when they landed at Gadara, a village on the eastern shores of the Sea of Galilee. Steep limestone hills rose sharply from the water. Carved into the rock were tombs where the people of Gadara buried their dead.

In many respects, Gadara was an alien place for Jesus and His disciples. Its inhabitants were Gentiles, who were considered to be "unclean" by the Jewish people. Large herds of swine, which were also considered unclean, roamed the hillsides. But the most unclean thing about Gadara was the man who greeted Jesus when the boat landed.

The man emerged from the tombs on the hillside. It would be hard to imagine a more frightening sight. He was possessed not by a *single* demon but by a *legion* of them. The people of Gadara had tried to subdue him with shackles and chains, but he was too strong and broke them in pieces. Day and night, he roamed the tombs of Gadara, crying out and cutting himself with stones. He was cut off from society, uncontrollable, unrestrained, untamed, wild, violent, and supernaturally strong. He was a threat to himself and those around him.

The people of Gadara were helpless to do anything about the man. But Jesus knew that He could help him. After all, He had already demonstrated His power over the forces of nature. In Gadara, He would now demonstrate His power over the forces of evil.

Exploring the Text

Jesus Encounters a Demon-Possessed Man (Mark 5:1–10)

[1] Then they came to the other side of the sea, to the country of the Gadarenes. [2] And when He had come out of the boat, immediately

there met Him out of the tombs a man with an unclean spirit, [3] who had his dwelling among the tombs; and no one could bind him, not even with chains, [4] because he had often been bound with shackles and chains. And the chains had been pulled apart by him, and the shackles broken in pieces; neither could anyone tame him. [5] And always, night and day, he was in the mountains and in the tombs, crying out and cutting himself with stones.

[6] When he saw Jesus from afar, he ran and worshiped Him. [7] And he cried out with a loud voice and said, "What have I to do with You, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I implore You by God that You do not torment me."

[8] For He said to him, "Come out of the man, unclean spirit!" [9] Then He asked him, "What is your name?"

And he answered, saying, "My name is Legion; for we are many." [10] Also he begged Him earnestly that He would not send them out of the country.

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1. "The other side of the sea" refers to the eastern side of the Sea of Galilee, which was inhabited by Gentiles who did not worship the God of Israel (see verse 1). What was the significance of Jesus traveling to this place to perform a miraculous healing?

2. How did the man respond when he encountered Jesus (see verses 6–10)?

The People Beg Jesus to Leave (Mark 5:11–20)

11 Now a large herd of swine was feeding there near the mountains.
12 So all the demons begged Him, saying, "Send us to the swine, that
we may enter them." 13 And at once Jesus gave them permission.
Then the unclean spirits went out and entered the swine (there were
about two thousand); and the herd ran violently down the steep
place into the sea, and drowned in the sea.

14 So those who fed the swine fled, and they told it in the city
and in the country. And they went out to see what it was that had
happened. 15 Then they came to Jesus, and saw the one who had
been demon-possessed and had the legion, sitting and clothed and
in his right mind. And they were afraid. 16 And those who saw it told
them how it happened to him who had been demon-possessed, and
about the swine. 17 Then they began to plead with Him to depart
from their region.

18 And when He got into the boat, he who had been demon-
possessed begged Him that he might be with Him. 19 However, Jesus
did not permit him, but said to him, "Go home to your friends, and tell
them what great things the Lord has done for you, and how He has
had compassion on you." 20 And he departed and began to proclaim
in Decapolis all that Jesus had done for him; and all marveled.

3. In other places where Jesus traveled, the people usually swarmed Him after He performed a miraculous healing. Why do you think the people didn't do that here (see verses 11–17)?

4. What did Jesus instruct the formerly demon-possessed man to do? Why didn't Jesus allow the man to go with Him (see verses 18–20)?

A Woman Seeks Healing (Mark 5:21–34)

21 Now when Jesus had crossed over again by boat to the other
side, a great multitude gathered to Him; and He was by the sea.
22 And behold, one of the rulers of the synagogue came, Jairus
by name. And when he saw Him, he fell at His feet 23 and begged
Him earnestly, saying, "My little daughter lies at the point of death.
Come and lay Your hands on her, that she may be healed, and she
will live." 24 So Jesus went with him, and a great multitude followed
Him and thronged Him.

25 Now a certain woman had a flow of blood for twelve years,
26 and had suffered many things from many physicians. She had
spent all that she had and was no better, but rather grew worse.
27 When she heard about Jesus, she came behind Him in the crowd
and touched His garment. 28 For she said, "If only I may touch His
clothes, I shall be made well."

29 Immediately the fountain of her blood was dried up, and she
felt in her body that she was healed of the affliction. 30 And Jesus,
immediately knowing in Himself that power had gone out of Him,
turned around in the crowd and said, "Who touched My clothes?"

31 But His disciples said to Him, "You see the multitude thronging
You, and You say, 'Who touched Me?' "

32 And He looked around to see her who had done this thing.
33 But the woman, fearing and trembling, knowing what had hap-
pened to her, came and fell down before Him and told Him the whole
truth. 34 And He said to her, "Daughter, your faith has made you well.
Go in peace, and be healed of your affliction."

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5. The woman who had been bleeding for twelve years convinced herself that if she could just touch Jesus' clothes, she would be healed. How did this woman develop such a strong faith in Jesus (see verses 27–28)?

6. Why do you think Jesus wanted the woman to know that *He* knew what she had done (see verses 32–34)?

Jesus Raises a Girl from the Dead (Mark 5:35–43)

35 While He was still speaking, some came from the ruler of the synagogue's house who said, "Your daughter is dead. Why trouble the Teacher any further?"

36 As soon as Jesus heard the word that was spoken, He said to the ruler of the synagogue, "Do not be afraid; only believe." 37 And He permitted no one to follow Him except Peter, James, and John the brother of James. 38 Then He came to the house of the ruler of the synagogue, and saw a tumult and those who wept and wailed loudly. 39 When He came in, He said to them, "Why make this commotion and weep? The child is not dead, but sleeping."

40 And they ridiculed Him. But when He had put them all outside, He took the father and the mother of the child, and those who were with Him, and entered where the child was lying. 41 Then He took the child by the hand, and said to her, "Talitha, cumi," which is translated, "Little girl, I say to you, arise." 42 Immediately the girl arose and walked, for she was twelve years of age. And they were overcome with great amazement. 43 But He commanded them strictly that no one should know it, and said that something should be given her to eat.

7. This passage has similarities to the story of the raising of Lazarus (see John 11:1–44). Why did Jesus wait until Jairus' daughter had died before He did anything?

8. Jarius had demonstrated faith by coming to Jesus, but with the child's death it appeared his actions were in vain. How did Jesus encourage Jarius to not lose hope (see verses 36–39)?

Reviewing the Story

In the Gentile region of Gadara, Jesus encountered a demon-possessed man who terrorized the local people with his unpredictable behavior. The demons inside the man recognized Jesus' power and begged Him not to

send them to hell. Instead, they asked Him to let them enter a nearby herd of pigs. Jesus agreed, and the demons promptly drove the pigs into the sea and drowned them. The owners of the pigs were upset over their lost revenue and asked Christ to leave. Jesus then crossed to the other side of the Sea of Galilee, where He not only healed a sick woman who had suffered for years but also raised a girl from the dead.

9. How do you think the demons knew more about Jesus than some of His followers did (see Mark 5:6–7)?

10. The former demon-possessed man of the tombs may have been Jesus' first missionary to the Gentiles (see Mark 5:20). How do you think people responded to this man's testimony?

11. Evidently, the woman with the issue of blood had heard about Jesus' miracles and believed in Him (see Mark 5:27–28). So why do you think the people outside of Jairus's house responded with ridicule instead of faith when Jesus said, "The child is not dead, but sleeping" (verse 39)?

12. After Jesus raised the twelve-year-old girl from the dead, He told the parents not to tell anyone (see Mark 5:43). Why didn't He want anyone else to know about it? How do you think the girl's parents responded to Jesus' command? Explain.

Applying the Message

13. Jesus told Jairus, "Do not be afraid; only believe" (Mark 5:36). Why are those words so hard to live by?

14. If you made a commitment to live by those six words, "Do not be afraid; only believe," what might you dare to do?

Reflecting on the Meaning

The people of Gadara had written off the demon-possessed man as a lost cause. He was too far gone to be helped. His situation was hopeless. The demons inside him were too powerful. He had no future. But then Jesus arrived . . . and everything changed.

The shortsightedness of the Gadarenes was understandable. Nothing about the man suggested he *could* be changed. He struggled not just with one demon but with a host of them. He gave no indication he was strong enough to overcome them. He was at their mercy. He violated social norms. He spent his time in the worst places imaginable. People avoided him because he scared them. He was a danger to himself and others.

Sound familiar?

You may not know someone who is possessed by literal demons, but chances are good you know someone who wrestles with figurative ones. It may be a family member—a parent, child, sibling, uncle, aunt, or cousin who has been labeled a "black sheep" and written off as unredeemable. It may be a friend who has betrayed people's trust too many times. It may be someone at school or work who embraces a destructive lifestyle.

Before you turn your back on that person for good, consider the demon-possessed man's encounter with Jesus. Consider, too, that we worship the God of the impossible. If He can work in the life of the tomb-dweller of Gadara, He can do the same in anyone's life.

So don't stop praying for your family member, friend, or acquaintance just because you see no hope in that person's future. Deliverance may not

be far away. It is available to anyone who has a battle in his or her soul. It comes when Jesus lands on the shores of our lives and we choose not to send Him away.

Journaling Your Response

What is the best thing you can do right now for a "lost cause" person in your life?