

Thesis: Demon possession fascinates many. Through the interaction of the demoniac of the Gerasenes and Jesus, we are impressed with the power of Satan, the even greater power of God, and the power of personal evangelism.

Support: Mark 5:1-20

1. Greeting

- a. Good morning!
- b.

2. Introduction

- a. The day after Christmas in 1973, *The Exorcist*, the most famous horror movie ever produced, was released to an unsuspecting American audience.
 1. Legions of theatergoers waited for hours to see the film, only to find themselves fainting, and throwing up, and running out of theaters scared out of their minds.
 2. The manager of one theater complained, "My janitors are going bananas wiping up the vomit."
 3. One moviegoer in San Francisco became so concerned that he violently attacked the screen in an attempt to kill the demon.
- ii. Americans became swept up in "the exorcism frenzy."
 1. The book on which the movie was based sold nine million copies within first five weeks of the movie's release.
 2. The film grossed more than \$400,000,000 worldwide, making it the top-grossing R-rated film of all time, adjusted for inflation.
 3. The film earned ten Academy Award nominations, winning two.
 4. Multitudes of people supposed that they too were possessed with evil spirits-or that they knew someone who was.
 - a. Requests for exorcisms rose exponentially. People wanted them performed on loved ones, on houses, on pets, and even on their appliances.
 - b. Popular magazines and newspapers ran numerous articles about all these alleged experiences.
 - i. Even Newsweek magazine ran a cover story entitled *The Exorcism Frenzy*.
- iii. Because of this one movie, Americans were thrown into a panic; everyone was concerned about demons and demon possession.
 1. The mania has since subsided; however, people are still very interested in demons.
 2. In fact, one of our own requested a sermon on this topic.
- b. This morning we will honor that request and embark on a biblical study of demons. But before so doing, we need some background information.
 - i. Our English word demon is from the Greek word *daimōn* [dah'ee-mown].
 1. The history of this Greek word is somewhat obscure.
 - a. Vine suggests it comes from a root word meaning "to know"; therefore, a demon is "a knowing one."



- i. As such, wise men like Plato and Aristotle were referred to as demons; it was a title of honor like “reverend.”
 - b. Over time, the meaning of this word evolved.
 - i. New Testament writers use the word demon as “a hostile transcendent being w. status between humans and deities” (BDAG).
 - 1. Demons were evil spirits somewhere between human beings and the divine.
 - c. The Bible does not explicitly detail the origin of demons, so many theories have been advanced.
 - i. A common belief is that demons were fallen angels.
 - 1. The Greek scholar Mounce writes, “Demons are angels who sinned against God (2 Peter 2:4), thus losing their position of authority and even “their own dwelling” (Jude 6).”
 - 2. This certainly is a possibility.
 - ii. Another view, a view that I share, is that demons were the spirits of wicked dead men.
 - 1. Alexander Campbell so believed, citing the writings of Pagans, Jewish historians, and the so-called Christian fathers.
 - a. For example, Josephus wrote, “Demons are the spirits of wicked men, who enter into living men and destroy them, unless they are so happy as to meet with speedy relief.”
 - b. Justin Martyr said, “Those who are seized and tormented by the souls of the dead, whom all call demons and madmen.”
 - c. Brother J.W. McGarvey concluded, “In the Jewish usage of the term it applied exclusively to the departed spirits of wicked men. This usage was adopted by Jesus and the Apostles, and consequently all that is said of demons in the New Testament agrees with it.”
 - iii. In all likelihood, demons were the spirits of wicked dead men or, perhaps, fallen angels.
 - 1. They were evil spirits somewhere between human beings and Deity.
 - 2. Moreover, these evil spirits were allowed to temporarily leave Tartarus (**2 Peter 2:4**) in Hades (**Luke 16:23**) for the purpose of inhabiting certain human beings.
3. **With all of this serving as an introduction and as background information, let us turn to our main passage of study. Please open your Bibles to Mark 5:1-20. Mark records:**
- a. ¹ They came to the other side of the sea, to the country of the Gerasenes. ² And when Jesus had stepped out of the boat, immediately there met him out of the tombs a man with an unclean spirit. ³ He lived among the tombs. And no one could bind him anymore, not even with a chain, ⁴ for he had often been bound with shackles and chains, but he wrenched the chains apart, and he broke the shackles in pieces. No one had the strength to subdue him. ⁵ Night and day among the tombs and on the mountains he was always crying out and bruising himself with stones.



- ⁶ And when he saw Jesus from afar, he ran and fell down before him. ⁷ And crying out with a loud voice, he said, "What have you to do with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I adjure you by God, do not torment me." ⁸ For he was saying to him, "Come out of the man, you unclean spirit!" ⁹ And Jesus asked him, "What is your name?" He replied, "My name is Legion, for we are many." ¹⁰ And he begged him earnestly not to send them out of the country. ¹¹ Now a great herd of pigs was feeding there on the hillside, ¹² and they begged him, saying, "Send us to the pigs; let us enter them." ¹³ So he gave them permission. And the unclean spirits came out, and entered the pigs, and the herd, numbering about two thousand, rushed down the steep bank into the sea and were drowned in the sea.
- b. ¹⁴ The herdsmen fled and told it in the city and in the country. And people came to see what it was that had happened. ¹⁵ And they came to Jesus and saw the demon-possessed man, the one who had had the legion, sitting there, clothed and in his right mind, and they were afraid. ¹⁶ And those who had seen it described to them what had happened to the demon-possessed man and to the pigs. ¹⁷ And they began to beg Jesus to depart from their region. ¹⁸ As he was getting into the boat, the man who had been possessed with demons begged him that he might be with him. ¹⁹ And he did not permit him but said to him, "Go home to your friends and tell them how much the Lord has done for you, and how he has had mercy on you." ²⁰ And he went away and began to proclaim in the Decapolis how much Jesus had done for him, and everyone marveled.
4. **This morning, I submit to you three main points about this text detailing the interaction between the demoniac and Jesus Christ. First, Satan is powerful.**
- a. The opening verses of **Mark 5** introduce us to a man whose life has been completely destroyed by Satan.
- i. This man is possessed by demons; evil spirits have taken up residence within this poor man's body. As a result:
1. This man lived among the tombs.
 - a. Perhaps he lived here because society cast him out, and he had no where else to live.
 - b. Maybe he lived here because the evil spirits within him had an affinity for death and rotting corpses.
 - c. We don't know for sure; however, we do know that he lived in a cemetery.
 - i. He didn't live in a house filled with love and caring and nurturing.
 - ii. His family, if he one at all, had alienated him long ago; his friends were gone.
 - iii. His life was in shambles, and the people he surrounded himself with were either dead or themselves possessed by demons.
 2. This man had superhuman strength, compliments of the demons.
 - a. He had often been bound with shackles and chains, but he wrenched the chains apart and broke the shackles in pieces.
 - i. Maybe other people, at one time, tried to bind him so they could care for him.

- ii. Perhaps they tried to restrain him, so he wouldn't hurt himself or others.
 - iii. Maybe it was to punish him.
 - iv. In any case, by this time he was so strong, that he could not be bound or subdued.
- 3. This man was in agony.
 - a. He had no rest, night and day he cried out among the tombs and on the mountains.
 - b. Night and day, he cut himself with stones.
 - c. No sleep, constant tears, and intense pain were a part of everyday life for him.
 - d. Matthew's parallel account adds that he was "so fierce that no one could pass that way" (**Matthew 8:28**).
 - i. He was a violent man.
 - e. Luke records, "For a long time he had worn no clothes" (**Luke 8:27**).
- b. Satan and his demon minions destroyed this man's life.
 - i. They left him homeless, naked, friendless, suicidal, and screaming out in agony day and night.
 - ii. Make no mistake about it - Satan is a very evil and extremely powerful being.
- c. A compelling case can be made from the scriptures that we no longer have demon possession today; however, that does not mean Satan is powerless.
 - i. His power may be restricted in this way, but he still can employ temptation and sin to destroy peoples' lives and destine them for damnation.
 - ii. Sin destroys lives.
 - 1. Two weeks ago, Casey Johnson, one of the great-great-granddaughters of Robert Wood Johnson I, one of the founders of Johnson and Johnson, died.
 - a. She had everything, or so it seemed.
 - i. She was young and beautiful and rich, but she was also a bisexual party girl.
 - ii. According to the 911 call, she died alone in a guesthouse, drugged up, naked and scarred.
 - iii. By the time her "friends" found her, she was ice cold, and her hands were turning blue.
 - iv. Casey Johnson was not possessed, but clearly sin had taken control of her life.
 - v. Satan's power is somewhat restrained today, but he still "prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour" (**1 Peter 5:8**).
 - 2. Thomas Brooks, the Puritan preacher, once said:
 Satan promises the best, but pays with the worst;
 he promises honor and pays with disgrace;
 he promises pleasure and pays with pain;
 he promises profit and pays with loss;
 he promises life and pays with death.

- d. Our adversary is Satan, and he is a powerful being.
5. **Second, thankfully, God is even more powerful.**
- a. The naked, bleeding, demon-possessed man ran up, fell down before Jesus, and cried out, “What have you to do with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I adjure you by God, do not torment me” (**Mark 5:7**).
 1. He said this because Jesus was telling the unclean spirit to come out of the man.
 2. Did you catch the irony? - the demons, speaking through this man, invoked the name of God as they begged Jesus not to torture them.
 - a. Yet, they themselves saw nothing wrong with torturing this man day and night.
 - ii. Come to find out, this poor man was possessed, not with one demon, but with a multitude of demons.
 1. When asked by Jesus for his name, the demon responds, “My name is Legion, for we are many” (**5:9**).
 - a. This name is telling; a legion was a unit of the Roman army comprising about 6000 soldiers.
 - b. A vast multitude of demons had taken up residence in this man, and this multitude was torturing him.
 - iii. Legion knew Jesus was going to cast them out of this man, they understood God is more powerful than Satan, (**James 2:19** says, “Even the demons believe—and shudder!), so they had an unusual request.
 1. **Mark 5:10**, “¹⁰ And he begged him earnestly not to send them out of the country.”
 2. **Matthew 8:29** adds, “Have you come here to torment us before the time?”
 3. In **Luke 8:31**, he records, “³¹ And they begged him not to command them to depart into the abyss.”
 - a. Legion did not want to face their inevitable doom just yet; he did not want to return to the abyss, that waiting place of torment.
 - b. They preferred anything to that, so they begged Jesus to allow them to enter a herd of about 2000 pigs.
 - c. Jesus gave them permission, they entered the pigs, the pigs went nuts, rushed down the steep bank and drowned in the sea.
 - i. Undoubtedly, at that point, the demons returned to the abyss; they returned to the place of torture that they had been temporarily allowed to leave.
 - iv. Shortly thereafter, the scripture says in **Mark 5:15**, “¹⁵ And they [people from the city and country] came to Jesus and saw the demon-possessed man, the one who had had the legion, sitting there, clothed and in his right mind, and they were afraid.”
 1. This man, once demon-possessed, was now quietly sitting, clothed and in his right mind; God is more powerful than Satan.
 - a. Jesus was more powerful than demons.



- v. Don't we see similar transformations in the lives of Christians?
 - 1. With God's help, an alcoholic walks away from the bottle.
 - 2. With God's help, an adulterer quits cheating on his wife.
 - 3. With God's help, a thief quits stealing.
 - 4. Everyday, Christians overcome sin with the help of their God.
 - b. Satan may be powerful, but God is even more powerful.
6. **Third, there is power in personal evangelism.**
- a. After being cleansed of all of the demons, the scripture says:

[T]he man who had been possessed with demons begged him that he might be with him. ¹⁹ And he did not permit him but said to him, "Go home to your friends and tell them how much the Lord has done for you, and how he has had mercy on you." ²⁰ And he went away and began to proclaim in the Decapolis how much Jesus had done for him, and everyone marveled (**Mark 5:18-20**).

 - i. The demon-possessed man, it seems, was so grateful for what Jesus had done for him that he wanted to join Jesus on his travels.
 - 1. Jesus, however, had other plans for him; instead of having him join them in the boat, Jesus wanted him to share the good news with his family and friends.
 - 2. Which is exactly what he did.
 - a. He went around in the Decapolis and proclaimed how much Jesus had done for him.
 - b. His message got out.
 - ii. Jesus returned to the Decapolis sometime later (**Mark 7:31**).
 - 1. In Matthew's parallel account, he writes, "³⁰ And great crowds came to him, bringing with them the lame, the blind, the crippled, the mute, and many others, and they put them at his feet, and he healed them, ³¹ so that the crowd wondered, when they saw the mute speaking, the crippled healthy, the lame walking, and the blind seeing. And they glorified the God of Israel" (**Matthew 15:30-31**).
 - a. What a change.
 - i. After healing the possessed man in Mark 5, Jesus was asked to leave.
 - ii. Now, due in part to the testimony of that one man, Jesus was welcomed by hundreds, if not thousands, of people.
 - iii. They brought him the sick, and he healed them.
 - iv. And they glorified the God of Israel.
 - v. The personal evangelism of one man made a difference.
 - b. The same is true today.
 - i. Through Jesus Christ, each NT Christian here today has been cured of the disease called sin.
 - ii. We have within our possession something more valuable than the cure for cancer, something more valuable than the cure for Alzheimers, something more valuable than the cure for AIDS.
 - 1. We have the cure for sin, and we are called on to tell others about it.

2. Like this man, we ought to start with our family, and friends, and neighbors.
- c. Our evangelism will make a difference, because there is power in it.

7. Conclusion

- a. The study of demons and possession is intriguing.
- b. We learned this morning that demons were likely the spirits of the wicked dead or perhaps of fallen angels.
 - i. For a time these evil spirits were allowed to leave their place of torment and indwell human beings.
- c. During his earthly ministry, Jesus interacted with demons quite often. Through one such interaction, we notice:
 - i. The power of Satan.
 - ii. The even greater power of God.
 - iii. And the power of personal evangelism.
- d. None of us today has ever been demon possessed; however, many of us in this room, at one time, were under Satan's control. We were slaves to sin.
 - i. Now, however, our lives are evidence that God is more powerful than Satan; Because of Jesus Christ, we are now slaves to righteousness.
 - ii. Let us share the good news of Jesus Christ with our families, our friends, and our neighbors.

8. Invitation

- a. This morning, if you'd like to leave the domain of darkness and enter the kingdom of God's beloved Son, you now have an opportunity to do so.
- b. Obey the gospel for it is the power of God for salvation:
 - i. Believe in Jesus (**John 3:16**).
 - ii. Repent (**Acts 2:38**).
 - iii. Confess Jesus is Lord (**Romans 10:9-10**).
 - iv. Be baptized (**Mark 16:16**).
 - v. Live righteously (**Revelation 2:10**).
- c. If you'd like to put on Jesus today, we invite you to come forward as we stand and sing.
- d. Let us stand and sing.

