

Misery, Mercy, Madness - radio

Salvation is of the LORD

The scripture for our sermon today is in Mark chapter 5:

“And they came over unto the other side of the sea, into the country of the Gadarenes. 2 And when he was come out of the ship, immediately there met him out of the tombs a man with an unclean spirit, 3 Who had his dwelling among the tombs; and no man could bind him, no, not with chains: 4 Because that he had been often bound with fetters and chains, and the chains had been plucked asunder by him, and the fetters broken in pieces: neither could any man tame him. 5 And always, night and day, he was in the mountains, and in the tombs, crying, and cutting himself with stones. 6 But when he saw Jesus afar off, he ran and worshipped him, 7 And cried with a loud voice, and said, What have I to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of the most high God? I adjure thee by God, that thou torment me not. 8 For he said unto him, Come out of the man, thou unclean spirit. 9 And he asked him, What is thy name? And he answered, saying, My name is Legion: for we are many. 10 And he besought him much that he would not send them away out of the country. 11 Now there was there nigh unto the mountains a great herd of swine feeding. 12 And all the devils besought him, saying, Send us into the swine, that we may enter into them. 13 And forthwith Jesus gave them leave. And the unclean spirits went out, and entered

into the swine: and the herd ran violently down a steep place into the sea, (they were about two thousand;) and were choked in the sea. 14 And they that fed the swine fled, and told it in the city, and in the country. And they went out to see what it was that was done. 15 And they come to Jesus, and see him that was possessed with the devil, and had the legion, sitting, and clothed, and in his right mind: and they were afraid. 16 And they that saw it told them how it befell to him that was possessed with the devil, and also concerning the swine. 17 And they began to pray him to depart out of their coasts. 18 And when he was come into the ship, he that had been possessed with the devil prayed him that he might be with him. 19 Howbeit Jesus suffered him not, but saith unto him, Go home to thy friends, and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee, and hath had compassion on thee. 20 And he departed, and began to publish in Decapolis how great things Jesus had done for him: and all men did marvel” (Mark 5:1-20).

I’ve entitled this message, “**Misery, mercy and madness.**” By this man, by Christ casting satan out of him and by the reaction of the people of that country, we see three things. First, a man in his misery. Second, the Lord Jesus Christ in His mercy. And third, a world in its madness. Consider these three points with me

First, a man in his misery

He could not control himself. He was a slave to the devil. No man could control him. No man could tame him. A legion of devils had taken him captive. Thousands of demons controlled his thoughts and words and actions. The devils set him on a path of self-destruction. He spent his days doing harm to himself by self-inflicted injury and pain. He was in misery night and day, crying and cutting himself with stones. He was among the tombs, with the dead. Death was his only prospect. He could not escape his inner captor. He could not deliver himself from the devils inside of himself. No man could help him. All attempts by men to control him only made his captivity and helplessness more apparent and hopeless. He was on track to end his own life, bent on destroying himself, and would have done so, but for the preserving mercy and grace of God! He was in the misery of despair because of his own helplessness against the enemy of his soul, in hopelessness because the devil was too strong for him.

This man is a picture of every sinner without Christ. Nothing gives us greater misery than to know that what we are and what we do is opposed to all that we should be. How many times I have felt this misery in myself!? Sinners cannot think right about God. Sinners cannot make themselves right. Sinners do not know how to be free from the great enemy of their souls. And

sinner are in misery because they oppose God and their own life. We are helpless to free ourselves; we are helpless to improve. No man can help. All of man's restraints are only external¹. They provide no help on the inside. Man tries to help by self-improvement, by self-denial, by religious rules, and by the terror of God's law. Men promise rewards of God's favor, blessing and even eternal life if we can only do what is right. But really bad sinners pluck off all of these restraints as if they were nothing. Religion and God's law have no power to help sinners. Religion and God's law have no power to deliver sinners from Satan's power because God's law and human religion are all dependent upon men! We cannot satisfy God for our sins. We cannot fulfill His righteousness by all that we do.

God's law threatens sinners with eternal damnation. God's law promises life to the righteous. In our madness we think we can do what is required to earn God's favor and obtain eternal life. But a truly uncontrollable sinner quickly comes to the end of himself. Men who do not know God in Christ, try to control and improve sinners by God's law and their religion. But a truly wicked sinner finds no hope in all of the restraints of religion, because religion is nothing more than man doing something to please God. Like an elastic squishy toy that pops out when you squeeze it, our sin only grows worse under the legal

¹ The law cannot help us. It cannot remove our guilt. It cannot remove our sinful nature. . We can neither satisfy God nor fulfill His righteousness by keeping the law.

compression of God's holy law. God's law outside of us makes the evil inside of us break out in our thoughts, in our words and in our works (Mark 7:21-23; Rom. 5:20; Rom. 7).

We are therefore in great misery. Our only expectation is that we will remain lost and suffer eternally. We will suffer eternal misery because we will destroy ourselves by the evil of our nature and the sin that we constantly commit! There is no greater misery than to know that I do what I do because I am what I am and cannot help myself or change what I am. I cannot make myself right. I cannot do what God requires. No man can help me. I am in misery and despair because my case is hopeless!

Scripture finds everyone to be like this man. As this man, God says of everyone of us: "*Destruction and misery are in their ways, and the way of peace they have not known*" (Rom. 3:16-17). Our attempts to control ourselves to set ourselves in the right way, to do God's will, and all of the restraints of man's religion, leave us in "*the broad way that leads to destruction*" (Matt. 7:13).

Question: Why does God allow satan to take men captive and control them on the inside; to cause men to harm themselves, and set them on the road to self-destruction? Can I free myself from his power? Can I free myself from his deception? If I

cannot free myself from captivity to satan, can some man set me free by gradual steps, by processes, by religious works, by doing something to make what Christ did work for me?!

Why does God allow satan to deceive men, to bring them into bondage and hold them there? Why does God allow satan to keep men in the bondage of unbelief, in bondage to their hatred of God and in terror of His just wrath? **The answer is, because of our sin.**

Satan works through deception and temptation. But he can only deceive the spiritually blind. Satan can only tempt sinners. Therefore, satan has power over us because of our sin.

Satan had no power over Jesus because Jesus had no sin. Jesus said, “*the prince of this world cometh and hath nothing in me*” (John 14:30). The devil “*had nothing*” in Christ because Christ is without sin.

Q: Why does God allow satan, the enemy of our soul, to have power over us by deception and temptation?

A: Scripture says, “*...To whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness*” (Rom. 6:16)? Jesus said, “Whoever commits sin is the servant of sin” (John 8:34).

In His justice, God puts us under the master we obey. Though the devil is the enemy of our soul, God brings our enemy against us because we yield allegiance to him in disobedience to God.

Satan has power over us because we are sinners. We have yielded ourselves to sin. We have obeyed satan in our mind and by our good works (Isa. 64:6; Eph. 2:2-3; Titus 3:3; 1 Cor. 6:9-11). By His justice, God has put us under the dominion of our enemy. Our enemy is stronger than we are. We cannot deliver ourselves from his power. No man can help us.

But how does this help? How does it help me to know that the devil has power over me because I am a sinner? How does it help to know that satan is my master because I have yielded myself to sin? How does it help to know Jesus had no sin and therefore satan could have no power over him?

I cannot deliver myself. Neither can any man deliver me. I cannot undeceive myself. I am held captive to satan by God's judicial judgment for my sin. I cannot free myself from the deceiver and the tempter of my soul because I willingly yield to his rule. The consequence of our sin and unbelief is that we are servants to sin and satan.

Just like this man in his misery, we cannot reverse the process. We cannot get reverse our course to get ourselves out of the pit

we fell into by sinning. We became slaves to sin and satan by our disobedience. We cannot get out of that slavery by our obedience. We cannot set ourselves free from sin because sin is the prison of our own making. Neither remorse, nor resolve, nor our will, nor our works can free us from our bondage to sin and satan.

Q: How does it help to know that I am helplessly held captive to my own sin and satan's deception, and that my path is the path of self-destruction? How does it help me to know that neither religion nor God's law can help me?!

A: It helps because it leaves our pride shipwrecked on the island of God's mercy and grace. When we are guilty and enslaved to sin, Christ becomes our only hope. I cannot do one thing to deliver myself. God must save me in spite of me!

We cannot save ourselves. No man can save us from our sin, from death, from the devil and from the wrath of God. There is only One who can deliver from satan's power. Only Jesus Christ the Lord², the God-man, has authority over devils and commands them to do His will. The Lord Jesus alone has power over the devil, because by His death He destroyed the works of the devil, took away the guilt and condemnation of our sins, and therefore took away all accusers and the sting of death.

² Jesus - Savior from our sins (Matt. 1:21; Luke 2:30); Christ - anointed to save us from our enemies and rule over us to deliver us from them (Luke 1:68-75); Lord - because He is exalted and given all authority and power because He conquered the enemies of God and His people in the humility and obedience of His incarnation, life and death.

When this man was in misery, when none could help, when man had given up all hope for him, God's mercy to helpless sinners appeared! This is the second point taught here...

The Savior in His mercy!!

God's only mercy to sinners is in Jesus Christ the Lord. Sin is the root cause of our bondage. Sin is the reason why God in His justice has allowed the devil to take us captive by deception and temptation. Our sin is the reason we serve sin and satan. But the Lord Jesus is our great God and Savior. He came to save His people from their sins. And He accomplished what He came to do. He came to deliver His captive people from satan, their captor. *"24 Shall the prey be taken from the mighty, or the lawful captive delivered? 25...thus saith the LORD, Even the captives of the mighty shall be taken away, and the prey of the terrible shall be delivered"* (Isa. 49:24-25)?!

Though we got ourselves into this pit, and though by all attempts we cannot reverse our course to make ourselves acceptable to God, and though satan is far stronger than we, yet the Lord Jesus Christ came to deal with the root cause of our captivity. He came to deal with our sins! Christ has power to deliver from satan because by Himself, He alone has purged our sins (Heb.

1:3). He laid the axe of His sin-atonement death to the root cause of our misery, the tree of our sins against God!

The Psalmist said, *“Iniquities prevail against me: as for our transgressions, Thou shalt purge them away”* (Ps. 65:3)! Our sins are our enemies. They prevail against us. Satan has power to deceive and tempt us. There seems no hope. But Christ delivered us. He purged away our transgressions before God (Heb. 1:3)!

God will not release a lawfully imprisoned sinner unless full payment for his sins has been made to God. God must have His due. Sin must be punished. Compensation must be made to God’s justice! Honor must be given to God’s law. Christ Jesus the Lord came to do that for His people! He was made sin. He bore our sins before God and died in obedience and full satisfaction to God in the place of His people. By His sin-atonement death, Christ forever put away the sins of His people before God. *“Who His own self [bore] bare our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness, by whose stripes ye were healed”* (1 Pet. 2:24).

Jesus Christ obtained victory for us by His death. In His death. Christ answered God’s law in the court of heaven (Rom. 8:34). Heaven’s court therefore judged Satan (John 12:31). The Lord Jesus therefore takes His people from Satan’s kingdom. He takes

from satan all those God chose to eternal life, those purchased and justified by Christ's own blood. Therefore, because Christ presented Himself in the court of heaven as the Lamb of God slain for this man, and because heaven's court received all from Christ that was required for His people, Christ's people were justified. Judgment was passed upon satan. Christ therefore came to cast satan out of this man.

We are set free from our captor because Christ shed His blood, because satan the accuser was cast out of heaven, and because Christ commands His Gospel to be preached to us with power (Acts 26:18; 2 Cor. 4:6; Col. 1:13). When the Gospel of Christ's accomplishments in the court of heaven by His death for His people is preached, and Christ is exalted as Lord of all, with all power in heaven and earth, then by that Gospel, Christ comes to take possession of His purchased people, setting them free from their captor. The Lord Jesus enters His blood-bought people by His Spirit. He lives in us. We therefore live by Him and to Him. We live by faith upon Him who saved us from our sins and from satan by His sin-subduing (Micah 7:18-19; Luke 1:68-75), death-conquering (Hosea 13:14; Rom. 5:21), satan destroying (1 John 3:8; Heb. 2:14-15; Col. 2:14-15) death on the cross (Heb. 9:26). We live by the faith of the Son of God (Gal. 2:20).

When the man possessed by devils saw Jesus, he ran to Him. This was the invisible hand of Christ that did what neither

chains nor fetters could do. When he saw Jesus, he ran to him and worshipped Him. **If Christ works in us to cry for deliverance, He will finish the work He started. He will save us and deliver us (Php. 1:6).**

Because Christ's Spirit is in us, we are in our right mind. We know Christ and live upon Him by faith (John 17:3). Christ won the war against satan by His death on the cross (Rev. 12:10-11; 1 John 3:8; Heb. 2:14). His Spirit has shown Christ to us in the victory of His death and in His sovereign rule in heaven as Lord of all (Rom. 4:25; Heb. 1:3; 8:1; Zech. 6:5; Acts 10:36). Like this man, when we see Christ in the Gospel by the faith He gives us by His Spirit (1 Pet. 1:22; 1 Cor. 2:14; John 3:14-15) we are called by Him, and compelled by grace, to run to Him and worship Him for who He is as our God and Savior (John 20:28; Isa. 6:5ff).

The point of this passage is to bring Christ near to sinners and by a sight of Christ given to them in the Gospel, to cause sinners to run to Him, bow to Him and worship Him. Christ is brought near to us and we see Him in the preaching of the Gospel of His grace that tells how He saved His people from their sins by His own blood. Christ casts out satan and puts sinners in their right mind because He put away our sins and is set down at the right hand of God in sovereign power over all things as the Lord of heaven and earth, to save His people, to give them eternal life (1

Pet. 3:22; Acts 5:31; John 17:2-3). When there was no hope from within, when there was no hope from man, when we were in the misery of our destruction and despair, then Christ came. He made atonement for our sins to God. He spoke His Gospel in command to set us free. He comes by His Spirit who takes Christ's sin-atonement death and justifying righteousness and shows to us all that Christ did as our great Savior! Then we are in our right mind! Then we sit at the feet of the Son of God, in peace, in quiet rest, because He has saved us by His grace by His work alone! God has justified us for what Christ did, for Christ's sake (Rom. 3:24-25; 5:9; 8:34; Titus 3:5-7).

Third, a world in its madness

All those whom Christ saves sit at His feet in quiet submission and rest. Christ has come to them. He has made Himself known to them in the bright light of His saving grace. He lives in them by His Spirit. For the first time, they are in their right mind. They see that they were helplessly bent on self-destruction by the pride and lust and ignorance that was in them. But God has given His Son to be the Lamb of God for them. God accepted Christ for them. God thinks of them as He thinks of His Son. Seeing this, they have abandoned their foolish pride and rebellion against God. They have abandoned and hate all of their former thinking, that they could be more acceptable to God, or in some way better than others, by something they do or

something found in them. Hearing of Christ as all of their salvation, hearing that He is Lord of all and able to save to the uttermost by His power, apart from my worth and works, but by His sin-atonement of satisfaction and honor to God in all of His perfection, they want to be with Him. They are at rest because He has accepted them by His grace and provided all for them in Christ. But those who, in their pride and opposition to God's sovereign salvation, see no need of Christ, no need to be saved by grace alone, all these are afraid of the Son of God. They love darkness rather than light. They cannot bear the thought of being exposed naked in their sin, laid bare in the shame of their lust and pride before the eyes of Him with whom we have to do (Heb. 4:12). When the men of that place saw what Jesus had done, they were afraid and asked Him to leave them.

Though they knew about the man possessed by devils; though they knew the devils were strong, fierce and many; though they knew Jesus alone had power to command devils to depart, power to save men from the devil; yet they did not appeal to Him to save them from that enemy of their souls! But rather, they were afraid because Jesus saw the evil in them. They begged Jesus to leave them that He might not execute against them the judgment of God's wrath. They were afraid they would lose their fortune in this world. They feared they would lose much if they had only Christ! And they were afraid of their Judge. They could not sit at peace in the presence of the Son of

God because they did not find Him to be their Savior! In their pride, they did not come to Him to be delivered from their sin and from satan. This proved them false.

More than the man who was out of his mind when he was possessed with devils, these men were under the complete dominion of sin and satan, because unlike him who ran to Christ and worshipped Him and found Him to be the only Savior, they begged the Savior to depart from them! They were blind to Christ's saving grace to needy, helpless and hopeless sinners!

This is madness! It is madness to see what the legions of hell do to a man, and think I can escape them by keeping God's law or following man's religion. It is madness to see Christ's power over the legions of hell, His power to save a helpless captive of satan because of his sin, and yet not beg Christ to save me, but rather, to beg Him to leave!! This is the madness of this world. They want to be free of Christ rather than to be free of sin and satan that they might be with Christ!

When the devil controlled the man, they were in peace. But when the devil was cast out of the man and Christ controlled him; when the man sat at Jesus' feet, clothed and in his right mind; they were afraid and begged Jesus to leave them.

These men raised pigs. They were pig farmers, pig overseers, taking care of unclean pigs as shepherds take care of clean sheep. Pigs wallow in the filth of their own excrement. They are happiest in the filth of their own mess. Pigs can live on what men and sheep cannot eat. Therefore, these men correspond to all who make their living feeding spiritually unclean food to spiritually unclean men. Pig overseers are preachers and teachers of free will works religion. They feed men the lie that they can go to heaven by their response to Jesus, by something they do, by their will and by their works. No believer can live on such teaching. Believers are sheep. Sheep can only eat one food: God's testimony of Christ and Him crucified, how by His sin-atonement death He saves sinners by grace alone and rules as Lord of all. Sheep can only live if they hear and know that Christ is their only Savior and the Lord of glory. But pigs will eat anything, and do.

Pig farmers therefore correspond to preachers of spiritually proud unbelievers who love to hear what they can do to make themselves better before God and men. False teachers hate Christ and are afraid of Him. They are afraid they will lose the praise of men and the profit that comes from teaching false gospels. They are afraid because Christ knows their hypocrisy and He is their Judge. They are afraid the truth because it puts Christ on the throne in sovereign control, and puts man in the dust.

Jesus allowed the devils to enter the pigs. Jesus saves men by casting devils out of them. He does so by His Spirit. The preaching of the Gospel of His almighty saving grace is His command to His light to shine into our darkness. Jesus Christ is the Savior and the Judge. He saves His people but He judges the unclean, those who live on free-will works religion, the food of pigs. Devils are subject to Christ. He cast them out of the man, but sent them into pigs. He gives devils permission to enter those who love to wallow in the filth of their good works. Are you helpless before your sin and satan and death? Do you see that God has provided and accepted His Son for sinners? Do you see that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, able to save to the uttermost all who come to God by Him? If you love Christ because He saved you from your sins by His sin-atoning death without any help from you; if you love God because He received Christ and looks to His Son and finds in Him all that He requires of sinners, and if you rest in quiet submission to Him as Lord of all, then you are Christ's sheep. But if you prefer freewill works religion to salvation by Christ alone, if you prefer your own proud heart to the glory of Christ who save sinners from the devil and death by saving them from their sins, if you are afraid of Christ as Judge and do not appeal to Him to be all of your salvation, then you are unclean and filthy before God. Run to Christ! Call upon Him. See that you have nothing in yourself to answer God or free yourself from your sin and the horrible

consequences of it. Look to Christ alone. Ask Him to save you, to show you His saving work and His sovereign rule, that salvation is of the LORD!