

Don't Mourn the Pig!

The War is Real

Mark 5:1-20

Last week...we looked at this truth: 'what God is up to is more important than anything we can lose or gain.' God is in the business of saving souls. God is in the business of purity, honor, what is right, truth, love, faithfulness, humanity experiencing His presence and provision, freedom from the tyranny of evil, a good future, and so much more. But, as we also see, there is a dark side to creation that wages war against God, and the casualty is creation.

War is real in the physical world and in the spiritual world. War is an issue of pride looking for control. The spiritual war over us is no different. There is an enemy that wants to capture us and keep us enslaved to the things that so easily entangle us, the things that keep us from knowing and experiencing the presence of God in our lives and the joy that comes because of it. We have an enemy that wants us to treasure in our hearts the things of this world more than treasuring a relationship with the God of the universe. We have an enemy that desires for us to doubt how good the Creator of the universe is and how great His system is.

This week we are going to dive in to this passage and pull from other parts of scripture to gain understanding of who our enemy is. Next week, we are going to look at the truth that through Christ a person's life can really change. When we have an encounter with Jesus and receive His forgiveness and then walk in His ways a person's life is changed for the better.

There are 3 points this morning:

1. The extent that sin and evil can take you
2. There is a spiritual war going on
3. What the goal of the enemy is

Let's pray.
Mark 5:1-20

1. Verses 1-5 reveal the extent that sin and evil can take you.

First though, we are going to get rid of what some may see as a discrepancy in scripture. Mark and Luke mentions there was one demon possessed man where as Matthew mentions two. Are these two different events? Probably not since there are so many similar details. Is there a contradiction here? No. I could tell you about someone in my family. Does it mean there are not other people in my family? No. I just wasn't mentioning them.

The locations mentioned between the gospels is another issue. Matthew mentions the region of Gadarenes and Luke and Mark mentions the region of the Gerasenes. Gadara was a town near the burial tombs. These areas were basically the same place. It's like saying I live in the country of Roseburg versus I live in the country of Glide.

Sin has no bounds. It can be constrained to a degree, but it has no bounds when unconstrained.

Evil has an intent, and that intent is to separate and destroy and feed the selfish mentality. It separates us from God and loved ones. It fights for control over us. It seeks to bring disunity to the body of Christ. Not the kind of control that brings healing or fulfillment or love, but bondage, unhappiness, and hatred. Look at the garden of Eden. When Adam and Eve sinned. What happened? They ran from God. They hid from the One who gave them everything, created them, cared for them and made them whole. Instead, they became separated from God, blaming another, conflict arose between the two, and now all of creation from that point forward was inflicted and conflicted from sin.

Evil brings harm. It bring harms to others through words or deeds. We see this all over. All the way from the kindergarten playground, to fights amongst siblings, to broken marriages, inappropriate relationships, to a mentality of 'I deserve'. Evil pushes towards fear that I am not going to get what I want and so we act out in self-centered ways instead of ways that look towards loving others and putting their needs first which is the very picture of Christ going to the cross.

Satan is the originator of sin. When mankind chose [keyword: chose] to follow Satan instead of God, mankind was left with a hunger for sin. Sin,

when it is given room, will lead us to do things we thought we would never do. I am sure the demoniac didn't wake up one morning and say, "I want to be possessed. I want to hang out in the burial caves amongst the dead. I want to be crazy, violent, and cut myself. I don't want people to like me. I want to be ostracized." I believe what probably happened what James 1:14 says, "Temptation comes from our own desires, which entice us and drag us away." Please understand I am not saying if you sin, you will be possessed by a demon. But, I am saying that as humans we definitely can open ourselves up to evil's control upon us.

The greatest attack of evil is to distort the image of God. Genesis 1:27 says we are 'made in the image of God.' When we are not reflecting the image of God, we are reflecting something. We are placing glory somewhere else; either upon ourselves or another created thing. We make much of ourselves and less of God. Our pride steps in and says, "God, I know better." "God, Your commands aren't good." "God, Your will isn't best." "God, you are not enough. There is something more for me, so I will search for it."

God alone deserves the glory.

Psalms 96:8-13 says, "Give to the LORD the glory he deserves! Bring your offering and come into his courts. Worship the LORD in all his holy splendor. Let all the earth tremble before him. Tell all the nations, "The LORD reigns!" The world stands firm and cannot be shaken. He will judge all peoples fairly. Let the heavens be glad, and the earth rejoice! Let the sea and everything in it shout his praise! Let the fields and their crops burst out with joy! Let the trees of the forest sing for joy before the LORD, for he is coming! He is coming to judge the earth. He will judge the world with justice, and the nations with his truth.

Revelation 4:11 says, "Worthy are you, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they existed and were created."

2. Verses 6-10 reveal there is a real life spiritual battle that goes on.

In Ephesians 6:10-12, Paul is giving his final statements to the church in Ephesus and he says, "A final word: Be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. [So we know where we are to find our strength] Put on all of God's armor so that you will be able to stand firm against all strategies of

the devil. [So the devil has a plan, an intent] For we are not fighting against flesh-and-blood enemies, but against evil rulers and authorities of the unseen world, against mighty powers in this dark world, and against evil spirits in the heavenly places.”

Pretty much everyone believes in good and evil. But, where the issue is “Who is the originator of each?” God is good. Satan is evil. In Luke 18:19 Jesus says, “No one is good—except God alone.” 1 John 3:8 says, “But when people keep on sinning, it shows that they belong to the devil, who has been sinning since the beginning.”

Satan means “an adversary, one who resists, an accuser.” Some say Satan is just a persona for evil. He isn’t a real being. According to some Barna research I read a while back, almost half of American Christians don’t believe Satan is real. About half believed the Holy Spirit is also only a symbol. Interestingly enough however, most believe there is a supernatural force. That is exactly what this enemy wants for us. To believe in falsehoods. Because when we can begin to doubt scripture, we now will doubt God and His goodness.

Listen to something C.S. Lewis wrote, “There are two equal and opposite errors into which our race can fall about the devils. One is to disbelieve in their existence.” The first is to disbelieve in their existence.

Satan is mentioned over 18 times in the O.T. and 36 times in the N.T. We need to understand he is a real being. He is out to destroy the image of God in mankind. His intent is to get us to doubt God, to lay blame on God or somewhere else. Go back to the garden of Eden again. Remember what Adam said to God after Adam sinned, “It was the woman YOU gave me.” Blaming God. Eve’s response was “The serpent deceived me.” Blaming someone else. They both had a choice. We also have a choice, it isn’t God’s fault.

Satan is called a ‘liar’, ‘father of lies’, ‘adversary’, ‘the enemy of God’, ‘tempter’, ‘deceiver’, the devil, the serpent, Beelzebul, ruler of the world system, the prince of the power of the air, the evil one, murderer from the beginning, the prince of the world, and more. Those aren’t uplifting descriptions.

This prince of the world opposes in a hateful way the proclaiming of the gospel, because it reveals who he is and shows how good God is.

Scripture says this enemy “masquerades as an angel of light.” Light in scripture represents that which is good. A masquerade is where one pretends to be something they are not. Satan as the prince of this world aims to make his system of living a system that looks good. It’s only a masquerade that brings destruction and death. Like any prince though, there is a king over him, who is Jesus.

Jesus said He saw “Satan fall (a better word would be thrown) from heaven like lightning.” Isaiah 14, Ezekiel 28, and Revelation 12 refers to this also. The Isaiah passage says, “How you are fallen from heaven, O shining star, son of the morning! You have been thrown down to the earth, you who destroyed the nations of the world. For you said to yourself, ‘I will ascend to heaven and set my throne above God’s stars. I will preside on the mountain of the gods far away in the north. I will climb to the highest heavens and be like the Most High.’ Instead, you will be brought down to the place of the dead, down to its lowest depths.” Ezekiel 28:12-15 says, ““You were the model of perfection, full of wisdom and exquisite in beauty. You were in Eden, the garden of God. Your clothing was adorned with every precious stone — red carnelian, pale-green peridot, white moonstone, blue-green beryl, onyx, green jasper, blue lapis lazuli, turquoise, and emerald— all beautifully crafted for you and set in the finest gold. They were given to you on the day you were created. I ordained and anointed you as the mighty angelic guardian. You had access to the holy mountain of God and walked among the stones of fire. “You were blameless in all you did from the day you were created until the day evil was found in you.”

What prideful and arrogant statements. “I will, I will.” Satan wanted his own control. Don’t we do the same thing? When we seek our own control of our lives, we do the same thing.

When Satan was cast out of heaven, other angels were cast out as well because they “did not stay within the limits of authority God gave them.” Some roam the earth to tempt, destroy, and possess, and some are locked up in chains (2 Peter 2:4) for that day when God will throw Satan and the rogue angels now called demons into the abyss.

An interesting note to be made about our passage, in Mark 5:11, the demons asked Jesus not to send them into “some distant place”. Luke says, “the abyss.” The enemy of God knows their fate. Their fate, found

in Revelation 20 is this: “Then the devil, who had deceived them, was thrown into the fiery lake of burning sulfur, joining the beast and the false prophet. There they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.”

Can they read minds? NO. But, they have been around long enough to know humanity and how humanity works, possibly hearing our conversations.

Can they tempt us in a way that begins to get the thoughts rolling in our mind? YES.

Do they know the future? Only where God has told them. They are not Omniscient like God.

Can they manipulate things to work out in a way similar to what they desire? To a degree.

Do they have great power? YES. But, only that which God allows, and they are no match for God. 1 John 4:4 says, “But you belong to God, my dear children. You have already won a victory over those people, because the Spirit who lives in you is greater than the spirit who lives in the world.” God is greater than Satan. We don’t fear Satan, but God alone.

Can they possess a Christian? NO. They can tempt us, cause us to struggle, but not possess us. The Spirit of God possesses us. But, in that we can grieve the Spirit of God by choosing sin over righteousness.

Do we put our efforts towards fighting Satan and demons? YES and No.

The second part of what C.S. Lewis said was “The other [equal and opposite error] is to believe, and to feel an excessive and unhealthy interest in them . They themselves are equally pleased by both errors, and hail a materialist or a magician with the same delight.”

Deuteronomy 18:10-12 says, “For example, never sacrifice your son or daughter as a burnt offering.” We could stop there, and pretty much all of us would say ‘that is ridiculous’, we aren’t going to do that. But remember, sin left unchecked can take us to really bad places. Well, ‘I would never.’ You probably wouldn’t. But, because of being born with a hunger for sin, we are wicked people. We are capable of some pretty horrible things. Deuteronomy goes on and says, “And do not let your people practice fortune-telling, or use sorcery, or interpret omens, or engage in witchcraft, or cast spells, or function as mediums or psychics, or call for the the spirits of the dead. Anyone who does these things is

detestable to the Lord.” Why? Because it is powered by Satan. It is evil. It moves us away from God, not towards Him.

The point of this passage written to Israel was so they would not be intrigued by these things, because they will fall into it. They will begin to put weight into those things I just read. And guess what? Israel didn't stay away. And guess what? Israel was judged for it. As fun as these things can seem to be or as helpful, don't let your curiosity lead you... because it will lead you away from God.

The battles that the Israelites fought in the Old Testament were just as much spiritual battles as physical battles. The nations surrounding Israel worshiped other gods. These other gods were demons (Deut 32:16-17). This is why we see Israel either winning or losing a battle parallel to their trust and obedience to God. Israel is God's chosen people. To tempt or fight Israel was to destroy God and His plan.

Worship of idols was characterized by destructive practices such as the sacrifice of children, inflicting bodily harm on oneself, and cult prostitution. Worship of demons will regularly lead to immoral and self-destructive behavior to some degree.

Our first and foremost calling is to lift the name of Jesus for all to see and hear. That is our goal. Our power and strength and freedom is in Jesus alone. We keep an eye out for the work of Satan, but it doesn't take our focus. We don't seek them out. Satan masquerades his power. When we seek it out what we get is a hunger for power that never satisfies; he masquerades his strength but it ends up destroying you. Satan masquerades as freedom to do what you want, but it only brings slavery to torment, brokenness, unhappiness, and unsatisfaction.

Instead, seek truth. As we seek truth, the lies of Satan will reveal themselves and at that time, we deal with them. But how? the Truth, known as Scripture, God's Word. How do we go through this war? We walk in faith and go to scripture. The only offensive tool Paul mentions in the passage to the church in Ephesians about spiritual warfare is the 'sword', God's Word. The rest are pieces of armor that help against an attack. We let God's Word do the fighting. The enemy of God can't stand God's Word being understood and used correctly. A side note: worldly wisdom finds its roots in Satan. That's why I don't mention looking for

wisdom in this world. James tells us to ask for God's wisdom. Scripture gives us God's Wisdom.

Do we know how a non-believer becomes possessed? NOT REALLY. Scripture doesn't really explain that. But, we do know this. It happens. I do believe in order for this happen, though, you do have to open yourself up to it and in some way invite them in to have a controlling power over you. It is more than just the controlling power of sin that we are all born with, it is a controlling demonic power that is invited in.

One of the greatest ways I think Satan works to destroy the church is through those that claim Jesus as Lord, fleshly or carnal Christians. Christians that doubt the gravity of sin and take it lightly. Christians who pick and choose in scripture what they will adhere too and throw out what they don't. Christians that don't pray except when they are in need or are in a church atmosphere. Christians that only look at scripture when there is a sermon. A Christian that thinks you act a certain way while in church and can act differently outside church. A 'Christian' that chooses the pride of mastering their own life saying, "I will decide when I want to look like a Christian", "I will decide what I want to obey", "I will decide how I am going to use the resources and abilities God gave me", "I will...". Sounds all to familiar to the pride of the one thrown from heaven. Let's not tell Jesus to leave, but let's choose God.

There is a real spiritual battle going on all around us. Satan, as prince of this world, wants to thwart God's plan. He knows the victory has been won on the cross, and he has to do whatever he can to keep us from knowing how great it is to reflect the image of God.

Why doesn't God do something about Satan now?!? you might ask. It isn't time. God's timing is perfect. There are things that have to happen still, but there is a day coming. In the mean time, there are people that need to hear the story of God and receive His grace so they can be freed from the grasp and destiny of Satan. 2 Peter 3:9 says, "The Lord isn't really being slow about his promise, as some people think. No, he is being patient for your sake. He does not want anyone to be destroyed, but wants everyone to repent."

3. Verses 10-17 reveals to us what the goal of the enemy is: steal, kill, and destroy.

1 John 3:8 says Jesus came to 'destroy the works of the devil. What are they? Sin and death; to keep us away from God through sin and to reap sin's ultimate consequence of physical death and suffer spiritual, eternal death.

For the person who does not have a saving relationship with Jesus, Satan's goal is to keep that person engrossed in the 'fun' of sin, the addiction of sin. Satan steals the seed of the word of God, the gospel, the Truth of God from getting planted in the heart so that their eyes can be opened to the peace it can bring, the wholeness it will bring, the deep seated joy and hope that rests upon the shoulders of a weary soul. For some, it will be no need for a 'God' who saves, I don't need saving.' For some, it will be God will not accept me. I have done bad things. I am not worthy enough to be saved. For some, it will be, I am so far gone, God cannot save me. He can. He did for the demoniac. He did for the thief on the cross next to him. He did for a guy named Saul that went around looking for Christians to throw in jail or kill. He can save you.

For the Christian, Satan's goal is to destroy your testimony. To keep you walking in sin by getting you to doubt how damaging sin is. To keep you in disobedience. How does he do this? Separates us from other believers so that we don't have the encouragement to look towards God and walk in His ways. He does this by getting us focused upon other 'good' things. He does this by using guilt and shame so that we will hide our sin, rendering us powerless in our walk, disheartened, weak in our prayer life, to convicted or uninterested in reading and hearing God's Word, and distant from God. He tempts us to gossip, because it divides.

When we choose to walk in evil, we ask Jesus to leave and we invite the enemy of God to have a foothold in our life.

How do we resist the enemy? James 4:7 **Draw near to God.**

When confronted by a hunger to sin, or even a demonic attack?
First, we recognize that the work of Christ on the cross is the ultimate basis for our authority over sin and demons.
Jesus took on flesh and blood, "that through death He might render powerless him who had the power of death, that is, the devil" Hebrews 2:14

At the cross God “disarmed the principalities and powers and made a public example of them, triumphing over them in him” Colossians 2:15
Second, our membership as children in God’s family is the firm spiritual position from which we engage in spiritual warfare. “For in Christ Jesus you were all sons of God, through faith” Galatians 3:26.

Romans 6:6 says, “We know that our old sinful selves were crucified with Christ so that sin might lose its power in our lives. We are no longer slaves to sin.”

This truth gives us authority to successfully wage war against sin and Satan defeat him.

We do not need to fear demons if we encounter them, for that is what they want. Because, to fear them is the opposite of faith in God.

2 Tim 1:7 says, “God did not give us a spirit of timidity but a spirit of power and love and self-control.” Instead, we can overcome the tactics of the enemy trusting that “He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world.” 1 Jn 4:4. Our power to stand our ground against the tactics of the devil comes from knowing our weapons and armor “have divine power to destroy strongholds.” 2 Cor 10:4. That power is in Christ alone.