

Don't Mourn the Pig!

Mark 5:1-20

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I have decided to break this passage up over the next few weeks. This week being more for getting our thoughts going, the next few weeks to dive in deeper to parts of this miracle that is one of, if not the most detailed and lengthy healings that we have recorded.

Some of you may find this title intriguing. Some of you may find it silly. And, it kind of is. But, here is one of the points I would like to get across this morning: **what God is up to is more important than anything we can lose or gain.** I think this is pertinent to our situation today.

In this story, the pig-herders lost 2,000 pigs, their business. They lost their livelihood. Don't get me wrong, that is sad. But, when God does something and we get caught up in what we lost or gained and get our focus off of what God is doing, we inevitably will ask Him to leave either blatantly or subversively.

A man's life was restored, and they were upset about what they lost. A man was changed by the power of God. A man that was in utter ruins, crazy, self-destructive, violent, and put off to the side because they could not handle him. A man that was absolutely out of his mind and out of control was now in his right mind and in control. The people were not excited for the man who got his life back, they were sad, really mad about their pigs. It was kind of a "What about me attitude."

Matthew 6:21 says, "For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."

This reminds me of the parable of the Prodigal son. The prodigal son chooses his inheritance over his father, his brother, and the life he had. It was a good life, but 'out there' looked better and more intriguing. He allowed 'what could be', what he was missing out on to dictate his direction for his life. He went and lived it up. He had sinned against his father. He squandered his inheritance on partying, woman, the high life... anything that made him feel good, being liked by others, and having fun. And what happened? He had nothing left and became something he

never imagined. A Jewish boy feeding pigs, and so poor he even ate what the pigs ate in order to survive. His kingdom came crashing down and now he was a nobody filled with shame and set apart living a miserable life. He runs to his father and his father restores him. And this is the part that seems similar to me in regards to the people and the pigs. The older brother. The older brother was angry that his younger brother was allowed back in. He was angry that he was going to lose out because the father was using more of what he had for the younger son. He was angry. Why? Because it was about him and what HE had and what HE was now going to miss out on. The older brother's relationship with the father was self-centered as well. He did the right things and someone who did the wrong things was celebrated before he could EARN the right to be celebrated. The older brother didn't celebrate a man getting his life back. He mourned the loss of something that one minute is here, another minute is gone. He was concerned more about himself.

The people in the Gerasenes cared more about their life being easy and simple and secure than they did about a man getting his life back. A man that maybe had a wife and was separated from her. A man that maybe had kids and was separated from them. A man that may have had a thriving business. A man that probably had friends. Can you imagine what it would be like for the wife and kids? The friends? The shame and struggle they probably faced. Maybe the questions and the looks on the street. Where was their happiness for him? Where was their happiness for them?

Maybe he went through something growing up and his bitterness and fear got the best of him. Maybe there was a bad patch in his life and he made a few mistakes that led him to where he was. Isn't it true that could be our story?

Ephesians 4 tells us 'not to give the devil a foothold.' When we hold on to anger, seek revenge, or withhold forgiveness we open ourselves up to the enemy of God being able to speak into our choices. Really, this is the case whenever we give into any sin and ignore the need to confess our sin, and follow where it goes. Our strength to say 'no' to temptation begins to weaken. Our ability to hear God's voice begins to get drowned out. Our care for others begins to shift to a 'me first', 'I deserve' mantra.

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We do need to acknowledge that the fear the pig-herders and the townspeople felt is somewhat understandable. They did not see what happened, they just knew that a guy who was violent and lived in a cemetery, howling, shrieking, naked, and doing things that is absolutely unnatural is sitting at the feet of Jesus calm, sane, and clothed. Would this guy relapse? Would he all the sudden go berserk on them? This guy had such immense power he was snapping chains! No one could restrain him. And this guy who got off a boat was able to overpower him simply by words!! Who is this guy? What kind of power does that guy have? They may have thought.

The answer is that He has the kind of power that can take what is uncontrollable and unsettling and chaotic by human standards and control it and settle it. He has the kind of power that can tell the winds and the seas to be "Silent. Be still" and they obey Him. He has the kind of sovereign power over creation to tell a fish to swallow a man and spit him out on the shore in the right location. He has the kind of sovereign ability to use a donkey to speak to a man. He has the kind of power to speak the world into existence. He has the kind of power to give up His life and then raise himself from the dead 3 days later.

Sometimes we get frightened and don't know what to do when the power of God is displayed in front of us, because we can't explain it, because we can't control it. But, what we do with that fear is everything. The people of the Garasene region told Jesus to leave. May we never do that.

We have made the leadership of our nation, science, reason, and our finances our place for safety. Our governor stated this week that "we will let science dictate our decision of re-opening the state." The scientist said they don't really have a good answer because they don't have enough information and won't for a long time. And this is true for so many answers in life for those of us that live in America. We trust the sciences for our answers. We put our hope in medicine. And if there isn't a clear answer, we fear. We put our hope in theories that science comes up with. Evolution is a theory at best, because much of it doesn't even adhere to the scientific process. There is another answer to where we came from, but if we choose that answer, then we may have to acknowledge that there is a God. If we have to acknowledge there is a God, we have to search the possibility of answering to that God. We put our hope in the financial stability (if you can call it that) of our country. And, now it is threatened.

There is talk of a great depression, meaning more lay-offs, great financial struggle. So we fear and worry about tomorrow. Essentially, when we put so much trust and hope in science, reason, finances, and our leadership, we tell God to leave.

We have put our trust in government to take care of us and to decide right and wrong. Essentially, we have told God to leave. In our educational system we told God to leave. How we as a nation view sex, we told God to leave. How we look at life, we have told God to leave. In the church, when we fight to make church the way we like it, we essentially have told God to leave, when we care more for something than what God cares about it, we tell God to leave.

Yes, God has given us those things. But, our hope is in God alone, not what those things can do for us. All of those things can be great one minute, and come crashing down the next. The only thing we have that is stable, trustworthy, sovereign, hope-filled, and constant is God and His word.

The people's comfortableness was disturbed, really turned upside down when Jesus freed that man. They got to see something that really was a miracle. A man's life was changed. God stepped in and did something amazing. There was an in-breaking of the kingdom of God and the people didn't want to receive it because it didn't fit their mold of how things ought to be. They did not trust Jesus. If this guy had such power over the supernatural world, could He have restored their livelihood? Could He take care of their needs? The answer is YES.

This brings up a question for me? Is a man's soul more important than our comfort? More important than our traditions? More important than our getting ahead in life? More important than our customs? I hope the answer is YES. "For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."

Is it possible that God is using this unprecedented time right now as a time of in-breaking? Often, when people go through really hard times they are more willing to reach out to God. Is it possible that God is using this time to reach people? Are you ready to be used by God? Have you prepared yourself to be used by God? Are you looking for ways to bring 'a hope and a future' to people that lack hope and are scared of the future? Is

another man's soul worth the discomfort and the effort we may experience for the next few months or even years?

The 'treasure of our hearts' is being revealed in how we are responding to what is going on in our nation today. Stop and reflect upon 'why' you have the feelings you do. Stop and reflect upon 'why' you say what you say about it. Stop and reflect upon 'why' you are responding as you are. Look deeply and thoughtfully into your motives and thoughts. We don't want to tell God to leave when we need Him so desperately.

Don't mourn the pig. Let's mourn the souls of people who are stuck in their own torment. Let's mourn the lives of people that are the down-and-outs, the losers, the crazies, those that seem spooky, that society wants to keep at a distance. Let's seek God's Kingdom. Let's seek His face for answers. Let's put our hope in Him. Let's invite God in. Let's live in such way that says we believe God can change a man's soul. Let's Let's give the touch of Jesus that needs His touch.