

Christ Community Covenant Church
The Gospel of Mark – Power over principalities in heavenly places
Pastor Dave Scherrer - January 4, 2015

Introduction: Mark, a gospel of action and purpose, that we might know Christ the King.

Mark 5:1-20

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 cutting 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 drowned in the sea.

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.



I saw this image of the Gerasene demonic and was struck by the graphic agony of this image. The intent of the demons is to destroy and this man's life is raw destruction.

However Mark would have us understand that the good news for this man and for us is that the King has come and the Kingdom of God has arrived!

The King has come and the Kingdom of God has arrived!

As I mentioned before this theme of the Kingdom of God breaking into our world is critical to understanding the gospel of Mark. Remember Jesus' words? "Repent for the kingdom of God is at hand" and how he taught "the gospel of the Kingdom." The Kingdom of God has been ushered in by the advent of Christ and we are now in the last days awaiting the second coming of Christ and His final judgment of evil and His calling of all things to Himself and to His authority. The Kingdom of God has different values than this world and therefore causes us to behave differently than the world if we have embraced those values. And it is the coming of the King that establishes the Kingdom. It is based on His character, His personality, His glory, His truth, His authority, His purposes, His will.

What's going on here? A Lot!

Christ has gone across the Sea of Galilee to the Roman side of the country, to the Decapolis. In the preceding pages of Mark's gospel the action has been intense and fast moving. As I have mentioned from

the pulpit before, Mark skips a lot of the narrative speeding through huge chunks of Jesus' life and ministry. Then he slams on the brakes and tells a detailed account so that he can make his main point; that Jesus Christ is God in the flesh.

This is a story of power, real power. It is a story of redemption; it is a story of misplaced priorities as we see the locals more concerned about their pig profits than they are about their ever living souls. Mostly *it is about a story of war*. Spiritual warfare!

Spiritual Warfare - A cosmic battle between good and evil

This is the story of an exorcism – and a very vivid and detailed account. This is the longest and most descriptive account of the expelling of a demonic presence from a person in all of scripture. From this account we see that personal evil spiritual beings exist and that given certain circumstances they can dwell inside human beings. We can also see what they can do to the people they inhabit and who has authority over them.

It won't be possible to get into the richness of this text this morning or even into the subtleties of all the doctrine associated with spiritual powers and principles. But let's get started a bit and then we can refocus.

Some people say that in this day and age, believing in demons is illogical and irrational. The idea is that science has replaced the belief in demons. However, the Bible speaks of all kinds of spiritual beings, some who have yielded to His authority and some who have not.

Ephesians 6:12

For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.

2 Corinthians 10:3-4

³ For though we walk in the flesh, we are not waging war according to the flesh. ⁴ For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh but have divine power to destroy strongholds.

For those that think that people of the first century were simple and confused and didn't know the difference between mental illness or demons we can see from scripture otherwise:

Matt 4:24

²⁴ So his fame spread throughout all Syria, and they brought him all the sick, those afflicted with various diseases and pains, those oppressed by demons, epileptics, and paralytics, and he healed them.

I suppose if you have by faith decided there is no God then you by faith can decide that there are no demons. Interestingly, *I know far more people who would say they believe in demons though they don't believe in God than I have of those who say they believe in God but not demons*. It seems our world displays evil in all kinds of forms and serves as a pretty persuasive argument for itself. They don't talk about the problem of goodness, only the problem of evil. Evil exists and most of us don't need convincing that this evil is personal and alive.

These evils are singular and corporate. There are acts of evil conducted by lone individuals (Columbine, the Aurora Theater shooting, Sandy Hook, etc.) and they are also systematized and incorporated into world views:

- Hindu caste system that identifies whole strata's of people as untouchable is evil,
- The evils of fascist Nazi Germany and communistic/dictatorial Stalinist Russia,
- I believe the world is seeing a new expression of evil in the extremist near east movement of the ISIS militant Muslim.

But let's be clear, spiritual warfare is not just against demonic beings that inhabit people popularized in horror movies, though I must admit I don't like those movies because they are nearer to the truth than most know. But these powers and principalities find their forms in the values and behaviors of the world as well. It

takes us back to Mark's idea that we have warring Kingdoms now that Jesus has come and established His authority. You might be saying, "How do we combat unseen forces and principalities? How are we to fight against things we cannot see?"

How are we to fight back against things we cannot see?

We have to define our terms some more. What exactly is this spiritual warfare? What are these things that we are warring against? Just evil spiritual beings or does it include evil people? Evil ideas? Evil systems? I would say yes but we will be on the edge of missing Jesus' point and priorities. We will not defeat evil by railing against these or by killing all who we have determined are evil, not by destroying abortion clinics or liquor stores or gambling parlors or whatever is the evil de jour. No, the evil and warfare is inside us, just as the kingdom of God is inside us:

"If only it were all so simple! If only there were evil people somewhere insidiously committing evil deeds, and it were necessary only to separate them from the rest of us and destroy them. But the line dividing good and evil cuts through the heart of every human being. And who is willing to destroy a piece of his own heart?"

— Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, *The Gulag Archipelago 1918-1956*

There is a battle going on inside you and me moment by moment. This is why Paul has invited us to put to death the old self, because that old self was evil and there is still a vestige of that evil left over in us, even when we have invited Christ to save us as Lord. And it takes various invisible spiritually evil forms: Like . . .

Pride, Anger, Covetness, Lust, Unforgiveness, Judgment

Last week I spoke of the Christmas message, a message of humility and considering others more important than ourselves – a decidedly counter-cultural notion from this fallen world. I spoke of my own fight against pride and I have known what Paul wrote of in 1 Timothy where we read that pride is a trap of the devil. In Philippians we see that bitterness or holding a grudge is an influence of the devil. Anger, Covetness, Lust, Unforgiveness, Judging - these are the tools of the evil one in spiritual warfare. These are the things we battle against.

1 Peter 5:6-9

⁶ Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may exalt you, ⁷ casting all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you. ⁸ Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. ⁹ Resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same kinds of suffering are being experienced by your brotherhood throughout the world.

If we are to prevail in this spiritual warfare we need to first soberly recognize that we (and those we love!) are in the battle of our lives. Secondly we need to recognize who has the power in this fight. Go back to verse 6 and let's review;

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.

Do you see what is happening here? The evil Legion recognizes Jesus for what He is – "the Son of the Most High God." In the presence of Jesus there is no struggle or argument, evil falls before Jesus on his knees and pleads for mercy. Jesus does not break a sweat; He does not roll up his sleeves. Like the storm,

Jesus merely must utter a word. "Be still, come out." Jesus does not have to appeal to a higher power, He is the higher power!

So we recognize that we are in a battle, and that Jesus has authority to win that battle for us. But day by day there are still casualties of this war and we would be best served to be ready for the engagement rather than indifferent or cavalier. We need to put on our armor:

Ephesians 6:10-18

Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. ¹¹ Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. ¹² For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.

¹³ Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm.

¹⁴ Stand therefore, having fastened on the belt of truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, ¹⁵ and, as shoes for your feet, having put on the readiness given by the gospel of peace. ¹⁶ In all circumstances take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one; ¹⁷ and take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, ¹⁸ praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints,

I want to draw your eyes to the final words of this passage; ***praying at all times in the Spirit with all prayer and supplication.***

Praying at all times in the Spirit

It is not enough to simply have the right armor, we have to stay connected to this power source, to the King Himself, and that is done by staying close to Him. Do not even think about facing this evil alone. Even if you have your armor on, without Christ at our side, indwelling our hearts and minds, we are defeated before we open our mouths to brag of how strong we are. But with Christ and a humble spirit of awareness we are armed and ready. Ready to extend the Kingdom of God together as our mission statement directs us at 4Cs. We join Paul as he testified of his own purposes before King Agrippa:

Acts 26:18

to open their eyes and turn them from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God, so that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in Christ.'

Armed and ready!

And we can only say that because of what we celebrate at this table. A table of victory of good over evil and life over death.

A table of victory of good over evil and of life over death

Death and sin, the ultimate weapons of the Evil One, have been defeated by Christ. Ironically, ***Jesus and this man trade places at the end of the book of Mark. Jesus is naked and Jesus is crying out in anguish. Jesus feels the separation from His heavenly Father. It is Jesus who is bleeding and Jesus who is driven to the outskirts of town and forced to the tomb.***

(prayer of confession, communion elements, offering, final worship song)

Benediction verse

1 Peter 5:10-11

¹⁰ And after you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you. ¹¹ To him be the dominion forever and ever. Amen.

Communion

1 Corinthians 11:23-29

²³ For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, ²⁴ and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, "This is my body which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me." ²⁵ In the same way also he took the cup, after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me." ²⁶ For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

²⁷ Whoever, therefore, eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty concerning the body and blood of the Lord. ²⁸ Let a person examine himself, then, and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup. ²⁹ For anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the body eats and drinks judgment on himself.