

To the Jews first and also to the Gentiles

Read Mark 5.1-20; 7.24-37

MAKING THE CONNECTIONS & SETTING THE CONTEXT

1/ In our last three lessons [[Lesson 1](#), [Lesson 2](#), [Lesson 3](#)], we have emphasized Mark's purpose and themes for writing this Gospel account: to give us vignettes in which Jesus declares and demonstrates that He is **the Son of God**, and to **proclaim the Gospel of the Kingdom of God**. This **Gospel of the Kingdom** is God's covenant purpose to come in the Person of Jesus Christ to inaugurate, introduce, and begin the fulfillment of His eternal **Kingdom**, establishing His sovereign rule over all His creation – redeeming, reconciling, and restoring it back to His originally-intended order.

2/ Jesus Christ begins to exercise His **Kingdom dominion** and rule over every element and force that opposes His sovereign Lordship ... all the while preaching the **Gospel** that calls us all to **repentance from our sins** and **following Him** - placing our total faith, trust, and the submission of our lives in His substitutionary death He will die for us on His Cross.

3/ We want to follow Mark's 'authorial intent' and scheme as closely as we can as we make our way through these few lessons. We're having to do a whole lot more 'skipping around' certainly than I prefer to do. I would rather follow the Gospel account chapter by chapter, paragraph by paragraph, in the order in which Mark wrote it; but our course schedule doesn't allot us that many weeks.

4/ So, what I do want to do is still highlight some of the prominent themes Mark wants to publish to the world here in this Gospel account. We have already drawn our attention to some of those themes:

- **GOSPEL: Lesson 1** highlighted some of Mark's distinctive characteristics and descriptions of the Gospel
- **KINGDOM: Lesson 2** attempted to define more clearly and fully what Jesus and the Scriptures mean by 'the Kingdom of God'
- **AUTHORITY: Lesson 3** presented a collection of connected vignettes in which Mark gives us accounts how Jesus demonstrated His Kingly and Kingdom authority over all the powers and elements He confronted during His ministry:
 - over the Old Testament Scriptures and history
 - over the teachings and teaching of the Scripture
 - over Satan and his temptations to sin
 - over the wills and lives of those whom He calls to follow Him
 - over 'unclean' demonic spirits ... and all the forces of evil and darkness
 - over sicknesses and diseases
 - over our human bigotries, prejudices, and biases against others
 - over the Sabbath Day [and all the Old Covenant laws]

5/ Now, with this Lesson 4, I want to point out how Mark begins to highlight another one of his themes: that is, *how Jesus came to preach His Gospel to 'all the nations,' and not just to the Jews; and how He came to include in His Kingdom and rule believers from 'all the nations,' and not just the Jews.*

- We are all familiar with Paul's words in **Romans 1.16: For I am not ashamed of the Gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.**
- And we thrill at the prospects of the future multi-nationality population of the Kingdom of God in **Revelation 5.9-10: And they sang a new song, saying, "Worthy are you to take the scroll and to open its seals, for you were slain, and by your blood you ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation,¹⁰ and you have made them a kingdom and priests to our God, and they shall reign on the earth."**

6/ So what I want to do in this lesson is follow Mark as he continues to develop the theme of Jesus' outreach to more predominantly-Gentile cities and regions here in his Gospel account. NOTE: how Mark has already

told us that Jesus' reputation has spread far and wide among all the surrounding regions – both predominantly Jewish and Gentile: **...and a great crowd followed, from Galilee and Judea and Jerusalem and Idumea and from beyond the Jordan and from around Tyre and Sidon. [ch 3.7-8].**

7/ We'll look at three more vignettes in this lesson. They all have a common theme: *they are accounts of Jesus' Gospel ministry among Gentiles – those who were not Jews*. He had come to save them, too, and Mark wants us to see how Jesus set out immediately, very early on in His ministry, to reach out to the neighboring cities, towns, and villages that were populated predominantly by Gentile peoples. Because they, too, were sinners and lost. And He had come to seek and save those who were lost. So He must go to where they are, seek them, confront their sins and unbelief, and call them to repentance from their sins to believe and trust in Him.

- **ch 5.1-20:** The first of these three vignettes is not connected in the storyline with the other two which will follow – but it is connected by theme and geographical location [Decapolis] ... as we shall see...
- **ch 7.24-30:** We know this story as 'The Syrophenician Woman' and her significance to the Gospel ministry of Jesus is in just *that* – that is, *where she is from*...
- **ch 7.31-37:** This account of the deaf-mute man will return us to the Decapolis region where the demoniac story took place. So these two stories are related after all: because the demoniac began to preach Jesus in all the region where he lived, and by the time Jesus returned there some time later, the way had been prepared for Jesus to perform more Kingdom works.

I / ch 5.1-20 / The demoniac who lived among the tombs in Gergesa: '...sitting, clothed, and in his right mind'

1/ v 1 / **"They came to the other side of the sea, to the country of the Gerasenes."** In each of these accounts, we need to consult the map to see where each incident takes place. The people who inhabit the region where this demon-possessed man lived are known by at least three names: Gadarenes, Gergesenes, and Gerasenes. The differences in various manuscripts may be accounted for by different local names they may have been called by, or by variations in spelling. But they were located in a small village on the NE shore of the Sea of Galilee, just below Bethsaida.

2/ What is significant about this region is that it was predominantly Gentile-inhabited. How do we know that? Because we're going to find out they are big-time pig farmers [see vv 11-13]. A Jewish community would never have a pig-farm economy. Pigs [swine] were 'unclean' animals in the Jewish law and culture. 3/ v 2 / As Jesus disembarks the boat after sailing from the regions around Capernaum, He is met 'immediately' by this deranged, demon-possessed man. NOTE: Satan is an equal-opportunity destroyer. Satan is committed to enslaving, corrupting, and damning every person in the world. Jesus has already demonstrated numerous occasions of having superior power and authority over Satan, and He will do again here with this Gentile.

4/ vv 3-5 / All the physical conditions this poor man suffered from are also symptomatic of his spiritual lostness: he was 'unclean,' wild, untamable, self-destructive – yet the demons also gave him extraordinary physical strength. **Verse 4** makes you think of The Incredible Hulk! But Satan's whole purpose in possessing this man was 'to steal, kill, and destroy' his physical and spiritual life.

5/ vv 6-8 / Jesus had come to give him life – and life to the full! The man recognized who Jesus was and ran to beg Him for deliverance. You have to read v 8 from the beginning of the encounter: **For He was saying to him, 'Come out of the man, you unclean spirit!'** You almost get the idea that the poor demoniac realized his possession by Satan and was begging Jesus to deliver him. Of course, the demons will protest and hold on to their prey to the full extent of their ability to possess.

6/ vv 6-7 / The demons began screaming at Jesus to leave them alone. They know His supreme authority and sovereign power over them. They protest as they have done before [ch 1.24] that they and Jesus have no common interests: **"What have You to do with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God?"** Meaning, *'You have no interest in what I am doing, my business.'* Oh! But Jesus does have an interest in what you are

doing, Demon! **“The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil!” [1 John 3.8].**

7/ vv 9-13 / So, Jesus requires the demon spirits to identify themselves. This man was full of demon spirits: **“My name is Legion, for we are many.”** Jesus commands them to come out of the poor man. They know they have to obey Jesus’ superior power and authority. But they don’t want to be disembodied. That’s when they asked Jesus’ permission to enter the herd of pigs that were grazing nearby. Jesus gave them permission. They did. The pigs were so tormented by the demons that they rushed headlong over a precipice into the sea to their death.

8/ vv 14-16 / When the herdsman ran into the city and country to report what had just happened, the people all rushed to the scene to see for themselves. Everyone from around there knew this man and all about him. But when they arrived at the place of deliverance, **‘the one who had had the legion’** was there – except he’s different now! He’s been delivered from his demons! He’s been transformed! They found him **‘sitting there, clothed and in his right mind.’**

9/ vv 17-19 / When the pig-farmers saw that their livelihood and economy had just drowned in the sea, they asked Jesus to depart from their region. When Jesus consents to leave, the delivered man begs Jesus to go along with Him and His disciples. Instead, Jesus tells him he can be the most effective witness by going back home to those who knew him before: **“Go home to your friends and tell them how much the Lord has done for you, and how He has had mercy on you.”**

10/ v 20 / Now, NOTE how the next line sets us up for Jesus’ next visit which we will consider a little later: **“And he went away and began to proclaim in the Decapolis how much Jesus had done for him, and everyone marveled.” [see ch 7.31-37]**

II / ch 7.24-30 / The Syrophenician woman: **“...yet even the dogs under the table eat the children’s crumbs”**

1/ v 24 / **“And from there He arose and went away to the region of Tyre and Sidon.”** This next event will take us in the opposite direction – from the NE shore of the Sea of Galilee up NW to the Mediterranean coast. Centuries before, when the Israelites first entered Canaan and allotted it to the twelve tribes, this region had been settled by the tribe of Asher. Over the centuries, it had changed hands numerous times. Now, it was occupied by the Gentile descendants of the Phoenicians. This woman is clearly identified in v 26, **Now the woman was a Gentile, a Syrophenician by birth.** The ‘Syro’ part of the name comes from this portion of the country having been historically known as Syria.

2/ vv 24-26 / Jesus’ desire for going to this relatively secluded part of the country was two-fold: [1] He wanted to preach the Gospel of the Kingdom to these predominantly Gentile regions also; and [2] He wanted to do so in a more restful environment – where He wouldn’t be known so well, recognized, and followed so closely by the multitudes of those needing to be healed, etc. But, Satan has been at work here also. And Satan has come to oppose and withstand Jesus’ Kingdom in Gentile Tyre and Sidon also.

3/ Here is a poor, humble, believing mother of an oppressed little daughter. She has heard of Jesus – His ministry has preceded Him. So when she learns He is in the house where He was lodging, she came to Him with her urgent, passionate request: **‘And she begged Him to cast the demon out of her daughter.’**

- Matthew will add some dimension to her recognition of Jesus and her faith in Him: **“Have mercy on me, O Lord, Son of David; my daughter is severely oppressed by a demon.” [Matthew 15.22].** She is recognizing Jesus’ Divine Kingly Kingdom authority!

4/ Jesus’ initial response to her may seem, on the surface, to be insulting, mean-spirited, and even derogatory.

- If you read Matthew’s account again, at first, He seemed to not even acknowledge her: **But He did not answer her a word.**
- The disciples seemed to take Jesus’ silence as ignoring her, considering her a pesty nuisance: **And His disciples came and begged Him, saying, ‘Send her away, for she is crying out after us.’**
- **He answered, ‘I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.’ [Matthew 15.22-24].**

- In truth, what Jesus is stating here is the priority of His mission and ministry. Yes! His first priority in order was to go to **‘the lost sheep of the house of Israel.’** But, here He was, wasn’t He, in the land of Gentiles?
- On a deeper level, Jesus was testing her faith and trust in Him – her belief in His willingness to reach out to her and give her the grace He had been granting down in Galilee and Judea.

5/ vv 27-28 / So He issues this final test of the genuineness of this Gentile mother’s faith by comparing His ministry among the predominantly-Jewish regions as feeding the ‘children,’ and then His ministry here among the Gentile regions as among ‘dogs’: **And He said to her, “Let the children be fed first, for it is not right to take the children’s bread and throw it to the dogs.”** This word that Jesus uses is not referring to the wild, feral dogs that roamed the open countryside – rather, Jesus refers to the ‘little dogs’ the Gentiles commonly kept as house pets. Though they weren’t prioritized as the children were, yet they were fed with treats and favors. **But she answered Him, “Yes, Lord; yet even the dogs under the table eat the children’s crumbs.”** And with that, she confessed that she was willing to take some of the crumbs of Jesus’ grace that fell from the Jews’ table – and be happy to receive it!

6/ vv 29-30 / Jesus rewarded this Gentile believer’s faith: **And He said to her, “For this statement you may go your way; the demon has left your daughter.” And she went home and found the child lying in bed and the demon gone.**

III / ch 7.31-37 / The healing of the deaf-mute in Decapolis: ...when Jesus sighed...

1/ v 31 / **Then He returned from the region of Tyre and went through Sidon to the Sea of Galilee, in the region of the Decapolis.** So now, Jesus is re-tracing His path back to The Decapolis where He was earlier in **ch 5.1-20 of this lesson.** He had exorcised the demons Legion from the crazed man who had lived among the tombs. ‘The Decapolis’ means ‘The Ten Cities.’ This was an enclave of predominantly Gentile cities here on the east side of the Jordan River and Sea of Galilee.

2/ When we last saw the crazed tomb-dweller whom Jesus had delivered from his demons, Jesus had told him to go back to his family, friends, and neighbors, and tell them what great things Jesus had done for him. **And he went away and began to proclaim in the Decapolis how much Jesus had done for him, and everyone marveled [ch 5.20].** Now when Jesus returns, those who have heard these reports are anxiously awaiting his arrival.

3/ vv 32-34 / This deaf-mute man couldn’t advocate for himself at all. He couldn’t hear what was going on; and he couldn’t speak for himself because he didn’t know how to pronounce and say words he couldn’t hear. But his friends brought him to Jesus, and Jesus had compassion on him. Jesus didn’t do His works to show off or grandstand – so He took the deaf-mute off where just the two of them could interact without distraction. [1] Jesus looked eye-contact with the deaf-mute so he could see that Jesus was the source and actor of all He would do; [2] Jesus put His fingers into the needy man’s ears to show that’s where He would work; [3] Jesus then strangely applied His own saliva to the man’s mute tongue...again to draw attention to where He would work; [4] Jesus looked up to Heaven to bear witness that He was praying and appealing to God – whatever would be done would be the work of God through Him; [5] Jesus **‘sighed’** – this word is translated in other NT references as ‘groaning’ in spirit with grief, frustration, exasperation [**Romans 8.23; 2 Corinthians 5.2, 4**]. Surely with Jesus, it was His grief over the cursed effects of sin on the world – but He was here to establish His Kingdom and restore it all back to God; [6] Jesus commanded with His own authority over this needy man’s deafness and mute tongue: **‘Ephphatha!’** which is their speaking language, Aramaic, for **‘Be opened!’**

4/ vv 35-37 / Whatever Jesus commands to be opened, opens. **And his ears were opened, his tongue was released, and he spoke plainly. And Jesus charged them to tell no one. But the more He charged them, the more zealously they proclaimed it. And they were astonished beyond measure, saying...**

“He has done all things well. He even makes the deaf hear and the must speak!”