

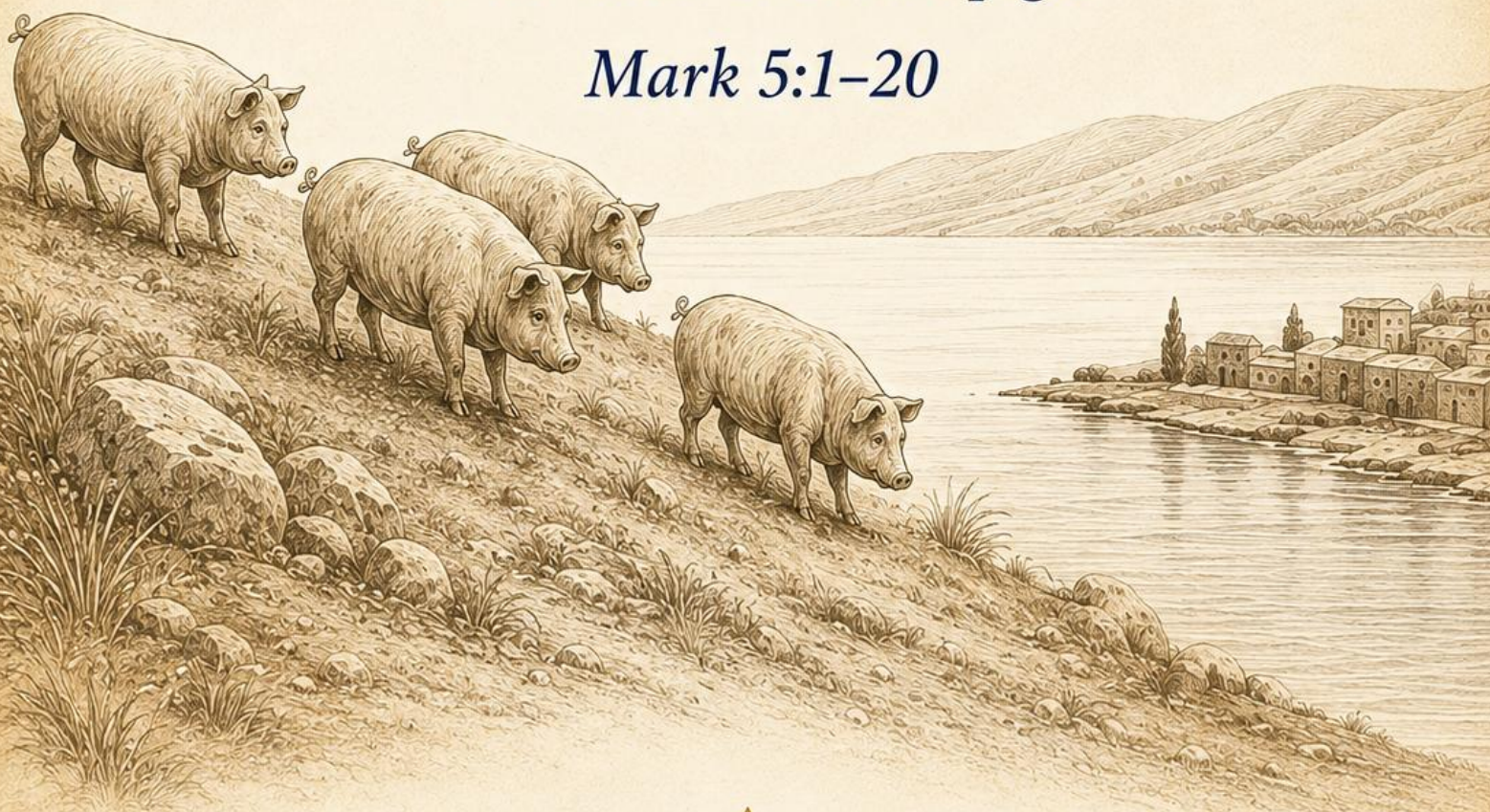


REASON TOGETHER CHURCH

Why the Pigs?

*Why did the demons ask Jesus
to let them enter the pigs?*

Mark 5:1–20



Sermon & Pastor's Commentary

Dr. Thomas W. Hawksley

Pastor & Teacher

REASON TOGETHER CHURCH

WHY THE PIGS?

RTS-029 Sermon Transcript

TODAY'S QUESTION

Why did the demons ask Jesus to let them enter the pigs?

Primary Scripture

Mark 5:1–20 KJV

by Dr. Thomas W. Hawksley

www.ReasonTogether.Church

*Bring your questions. Open your Bible.
Let's Reason Together the Word of God.*

Aloha, church family.

Welcome to Reason Together Church.

Whether you are sitting with us here today, joining us online or reading this study later, we are grateful that you have chosen to spend this time with us in the Word of God.

Today's question came to us from a faithful member of the Reason Together Church family.

It is one of those questions that comes from a Bible story many of us have heard since childhood, but it concerns a detail that we may never have stopped to examine.

Why did the demons ask Jesus to let them enter the pigs?

Most of us remember the herd running violently down the hill and drowning in the sea.

We remember the name Legion.

We remember the man living among the tombs.

But why the pigs?

Why did the demons request them?

Why did Jesus permit it?

And what does this unusual event reveal about Jesus, the demons, the people of that country and the man who was finally set free?

There are many theories surrounding this account.

Some are reasonable.

Some are imaginative.

Some are repeatedly preached as though the Bible states them plainly, even though it does not.

So today we are going to do what we always try to do here.

We will separate what the Bible clearly says from what the Bible reasonably suggests and from what the Bible never tells us.

Bring your questions.

Open your Bible.

Let's Reason Together the Word of God.

Let us pray.

Heavenly Father, we thank You for bringing us together today.

We thank You for Your Word, which is true, sufficient and trustworthy.

Give us wisdom as we examine this remarkable account.

Help us not to force the Bible to answer questions it does not answer.

Help us not to present our guesses as though they were Your words.

Show us what this passage reveals about the authority of Jesus Christ.

Show us His mercy toward people whom the world has abandoned.

If someone listening today feels bound, isolated, ashamed or beyond hope, let that person see that no bondage is beyond the authority of Your Son.

Open our minds, soften our hearts and help us reason together through Your Word.

In Jesus's name we pray.

Amen.

Before we read today's passage, I want to take just a moment to explain how giving works at Reason Together Church.

We do not pass a plate and we do not place visitors under pressure to give.

If you have a home church, we encourage you to remain faithful in supporting your home church.

Our members faithfully help us keep the lights on, maintain the ministry and make these studies freely available.

Any donations or love gifts are greatly appreciated, but they are never required to attend this church or to download any of our free online studies.

Your presence is a gift to us.

If you are visiting and would like to hear from us, our guest card asks only for your first name and email address.

We will not single you out, embarrass you or place you on a list you cannot escape.

After the service, please join us at the Reason Together Café.

The coffee is locally grown and freely served.

The coffee is free, and so are the refills on conversation.

Our primary passage today is Mark chapter 5, verses 1 through 20.

The account also appears in Matthew chapter 8 and Luke chapter 8.

Each Gospel writer includes details that help us understand what happened.

Mark chapter 5 begins:

“And they came over unto the other side of the sea, into the country of the Gadarenes.

And when he was come out of the ship, immediately there met him out of the tombs a man with an unclean spirit,

Who had his dwelling among the tombs; and no man could bind him, no, not with chains:

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.

And always, night and day, he was in the mountains, and in the tombs, crying, and cutting himself with stones.

But when he saw Jesus afar off, he ran and worshipped him,

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.

For he said unto him, Come out of the man, thou unclean spirit.

And he asked him, What is thy name? And he answered, saying, My name is Legion: for we are many.

And he besought him much that he would not send them away out of the country.

Now there was there nigh unto the mountains a great herd of swine feeding.

And all the devils besought him, saying, Send us into the swine, that we may enter into them.

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.

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.

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.

And they that saw it told them how it befell to him that was possessed with the devil, and also concerning the swine.

And they began to pray him to depart out of their coasts.

And when he was come into the ship, he that had been possessed with the devil prayed him that he might be with him.

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.

And he departed, and began to publish in Decapolis how great things Jesus had done for him: and all men did marvel.”

This is one of the most dramatic acts of deliverance recorded in the Gospels.

But before we look at the pigs, we must look at the man.

The pigs are not the suffering heart of this story.

The man is.

Mark tells us that this man lived among the tombs.

He was alive, but he had made his home among the dead.

He had been separated from normal human life.

He did not live in a house.

Luke tells us that he wore no clothes.

He was cut off from his family, his friends and his community.

People had tried to control him with chains and fetters.

They could not heal him, so they attempted to restrain him.

They could not restore him, so they tried to keep him at a safe distance.

But even their strongest chains could not hold him.

He broke them apart.

Human beings could restrict his movement for a little while, but they could not free his mind.

They could bind his hands, but they could not remove the spirits that tormented him.

Mark says that always, night and day, he was crying and cutting himself with stones.

That word always is heartbreaking.

There was no peaceful morning.

There was no quiet evening.

There was no night of restful sleep followed by a better day.

Night and day, he cried.

Night and day, he injured himself.

Night and day, he wandered among the tombs.

The people of the region knew where he was.

They knew what condition he was in.

They had probably heard his cries echoing through the hills.

But they had accepted that nothing could be done.

Then Jesus arrived.

Jesus crossed the Sea of Galilee and stepped onto the shore of a place where a tormented man was waiting.

The disciples had just watched Jesus exercise authority over a storm.

Now they were about to watch Him exercise authority over a legion of demons.

The storm could not resist Him.

The demons could not resist Him.

The man whom everyone else had abandoned had not been forgotten by God.

I want someone to hear that today.

Other people may see only your condition.

They may see your history.

They may see what you broke, where you failed or how far you wandered.

They may have decided that you are a problem to be contained rather than a person who can be restored.

But Jesus does not look at a person the way a frightened community looks at a person.

The community saw a dangerous man among the tombs.

Jesus saw someone worth crossing the sea to rescue.

When the man saw Jesus afar off, he ran and worshipped Him.

Then a voice came from the man and said, “What have I to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of the most high God?”

Notice that the demons knew exactly who Jesus was.

Some of the people around Jesus were still trying to understand His identity.

The disciples were still growing in their knowledge of Him.

But the demons did not have to ask who had stepped onto the shore.

They called Him Jesus.

They called Him the Son of the most high God.

They recognized His identity, His authority and their own helplessness before Him.

James chapter 2, verse 19 says:

“Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble.”

That verse reminds us that knowing certain facts about Jesus is not the same as trusting Jesus.

The demons possessed correct information.

They knew He was the Son of God.

They knew He had authority.

They knew judgment was coming.

But they did not love Him.

They did not surrender to Him in faith.

They did not worship Him with willing hearts.

They believed and trembled.

Saving faith is more than acknowledging that Jesus exists.

Saving faith receives Him, trusts Him and rests in what He accomplished through His death, burial and resurrection.

The demon spoke through the man and begged, “I adjure thee by God, that thou torment me not.”

Matthew records the question this way:

“Art thou come hither to torment us before the time?”

That brief statement tells us a great deal.

The demons knew torment awaited them.

They knew there was an appointed time.

They knew Jesus was the One with authority over that judgment.

They were not wondering whether judgment would come.

They were afraid that it had arrived early.

They had no illusion that they could defeat Jesus.

They did not threaten Him.

They begged Him.

Jesus asked, "What is thy name?"

The answer came back, "My name is Legion: for we are many."

A Roman legion was a large military unit numbering in the thousands.

The word communicates an overwhelming multitude, though Scripture does not tell us the precise number of spirits in this man.

The herd contained about two thousand pigs, but the Bible never says that there was one demon for every pig.

That is sometimes assumed, but it is not stated.

We do not need to manufacture a number.

What matters is that many demons had entered this man.

What matters even more is that their number did not concern Jesus.

Jesus did not step back when He heard the name Legion.

He did not call for reinforcements.

He did not ask whether the disciples had brought enough chains.

He did not begin a long contest to determine who possessed greater power.

The demons already knew the answer.

A legion of demons was still no match for one command from Jesus Christ.

That brings us to today's question.

Why did the demons ask to enter the pigs?

The most honest answer begins with a sentence some preachers do not like to say.

The Bible does not tell us precisely why.

Scripture records what they asked, but it does not provide a complete explanation of every thought behind their request.

That does not mean we have no clues.

It means we must keep our conclusions within the boundaries of the text.

When we place Matthew, Mark and Luke beside one another, we discover three things the demons were trying to avoid.

Matthew tells us they did not want to be tormented before the time.

Mark tells us they begged Jesus not to send them away out of the country.

Luke tells us they begged Him not to command them to go out into the deep.

Those statements form the strongest Biblical foundation for understanding their request.

They feared torment.

They feared confinement in the deep.

They did not want to be removed from the country where they had been operating.

Then they saw a herd of pigs feeding nearby and requested an alternative.

“Send us into the swine, that we may enter into them.”

They may have wanted another living host after being expelled from the man.

That is a reasonable possibility.

Matthew chapter 12 describes an unclean spirit walking through dry places, seeking rest and finding none, then attempting to return to the person it had left.

That passage shows a desire for habitation, but it does not prove why these particular demons selected pigs.

They may have believed that entering the pigs would allow them to remain in that territory.

Mark specifically says they did not want to be sent away out of the country.

The nearby herd may have appeared to offer a way to remain active there.

They may also have intended further destruction.

Everything about their treatment of the man had been destructive.

They drove him away from his home.

They robbed him of dignity.

They tormented his mind.

They caused him to cry and cut himself.

When they entered the pigs, the result was immediate destruction.

The herd ran violently down a steep place and perished in the water.

But let us keep saying what the Bible says and no more than the Bible says.

The Bible says the pigs died.

It does not say that the demons drowned.

Spirits do not become mortal simply because the animals they entered died.

The text does not tell us where those demons went afterward.

It does not tell us that they escaped judgment.

It does not tell us that their plan succeeded.

In fact, if they wanted the pigs as a permanent home, they certainly did not receive one.

The animals immediately ran into the sea.

The request may have been granted, but the demons did not gain control of the outcome.

There is another popular explanation we need to handle carefully.

People sometimes preach that Jesus destroyed the herd because Jewish farmers were illegally raising unclean animals.

Pigs were unclean under the law of Moses.

That part is true.

But the event occurred in or near the Decapolis, a region with a substantial Gentile population.

The Bible does not identify the owners of the herd as Jewish.

It never says Jesus was punishing Jewish farmers for violating dietary law.

That theory is possible only if we first assume facts the passage does not provide.

We should not preach assumptions as revelation.

There is nothing wrong with considering a possibility.

There is something wrong with saying, “The Bible teaches,” when the Bible does not teach it.

So what can we say with certainty?

We can say that the demons feared Jesus.

We can say they knew judgment awaited them.

We can say they did not want to be sent into the deep.

We can say they did not want to leave the country.

We can say they requested the pigs as an alternative.

We can say they could not enter the pigs without permission.

That last fact may be the most important one of all.

The demons had possessed extraordinary influence over the man.

They had given him strength sufficient to break chains.

They had terrorized an entire region.

Yet when Jesus stood before them, they could not even enter a pig without asking Him.

They said, “Suffer us.”

They said, “Send us.”

They begged for permission.

That means Jesus was never negotiating from weakness.

He was not making a bargain because He lacked the power to remove them.

They were not equal parties arriving at a compromise.

He commanded.

They obeyed.

Jesus said, "Go."

That was enough.

Someone listening today may have developed a picture of spiritual warfare in which Jesus and Satan are nearly equal forces struggling for control.

That is not the picture presented here.

Jesus did not struggle to expel the legion.

The demons did not test their strength against His.

They begged.

They trembled.

They obeyed.

Our enemy is dangerous, but he is not equal to God.

Darkness is real, but it is not sovereign.

Evil spirits possess power, but they do not possess ultimate authority.

Jesus Christ does.

Why, then, did Jesus permit the demons to enter the pigs?

Again, the Bible does not give us a sentence beginning, "Jesus allowed this because."

But the result of His permission teaches us several things.

First, it visibly demonstrated His complete authority.

The demons moved only when He permitted them to move.

Second, the herd provided visible evidence that the spirits had actually left the man.

The people could not see invisible spirits departing.

They could see approximately two thousand animals suddenly reacting, rushing down the slope and dying in the sea.

No one could dismiss the man's transformation as a temporary change of mood.

Something decisive had happened.

The legion that had occupied him was gone.

Third, what happened to the pigs revealed the destructive nature of the spirits.

The same evil that had been destroying the man slowly was revealed in the herd suddenly.

The pigs did not sit quietly after the demons entered them.

The herd ran violently toward death.

The man's previous life among the tombs had not resulted from his life being worthless.

It revealed how thoroughly evil had been trying to destroy someone whose life mattered to God.

We must be careful here not to turn this passage into an explanation for every form of mental illness or every act of self-harm.

The Bible identifies this particular man's condition as demonic possession.

It does not authorize us to label every person suffering emotionally or psychologically as demon possessed.

People who are suffering need compassion, prayer, wise pastoral care and sometimes professional medical treatment.

They do not need careless accusations.

This passage concerns a specific man whose condition Scripture specifically explains.

And Jesus restored him.

That restoration is the center of the story.

Before meeting Jesus, the man was naked.

After meeting Jesus, he was clothed.

Before meeting Jesus, he wandered among the tombs.

After meeting Jesus, he sat at the feet of life.

Before meeting Jesus, he cried night and day.

After meeting Jesus, he was at peace.

Before meeting Jesus, no man could tame him.

After meeting Jesus, he was in his right mind.

Before meeting Jesus, he frightened everyone who passed through the area.

After meeting Jesus, he was ready to tell everyone what the Lord had done.

The community had tried chains.

Jesus brought freedom.

The community had pushed him toward the tombs.

Jesus sent him home.

The community knew his reputation.

Jesus gave him a testimony.

What happened next may be the most disturbing part of the account.

The people who tended the pigs ran into the city and the countryside and reported what had happened.

The people came out to see for themselves.

They saw the man who had been possessed by the legion.

He was sitting.

He was clothed.

He was in his right mind.

This should have been a moment of celebration.

A son was coming home.

A neighbor had been restored.

A man who had lived among the dead had been returned to the living.

But the witnesses also told them about the pigs.

And the people began to ask Jesus to leave their country.

Think carefully about that.

They had tolerated a legion of demons in a man.

They asked the Son of God to leave.

They had learned to live with cries coming from the tombs.

They could not live with the presence of Someone powerful enough to change everything.

The text does not explicitly tell us that money was their only concern.

They were certainly frightened by the display of supernatural power.

But Mark deliberately places the restored man and the lost pigs together in their report.

The community was forced to confront the cost of what had happened.

A whole herd had been lost.

One man had been restored.

Which mattered more?

The story presses that question upon us.

What is a person worth?

Is a human being worth more than property?

Is someone's restoration worth disruption?

Do we welcome Jesus only when His work costs us nothing?

Do we rejoice when a person is delivered, even if that deliverance interrupts the comfortable arrangements we have learned to accept?

It is easy to condemn the people of that region.

But churches can make the same mistake.

We can become more concerned about a carpet than a child.

We can become more concerned about a schedule than a hurting person.

We can become more concerned about reputation than restoration.

We can become more disturbed by inconvenience than by bondage.

We can say that we want Jesus to work, but quietly, inexpensively and without rearranging anything.

Jesus did not cross the sea to protect the community's comfortable arrangement with darkness.

He crossed the sea to rescue a man.

There is a beautiful structure hidden in the final verses of Mark's account.

Three different parties make requests of Jesus.

The demons begged Jesus to let them enter the pigs.

The people begged Jesus to leave their country.

The restored man begged Jesus to let him accompany Him.

Three requests.

Three very different hearts.

The first request came from spirits who feared Jesus but did not love Him.

The second came from people who feared what Jesus might change.

The third came from a man who had experienced His compassion and wanted to remain near Him.

Jesus permitted the demons to enter the pigs.

Jesus honored the people's request and prepared to leave.

Jesus declined the restored man's request to board the ship.

At first that seems almost backward.

The demons received what they asked.

The unbelieving crowd received what they asked.

The faithful man did not receive what he asked.

But the man was not being rejected.

He was being commissioned.

Jesus said:

"Go home to thy friends, and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee, and hath had compassion on thee."

The man wanted to travel with Jesus.

Jesus sent him home for Jesus.

He wanted to become part of the group crossing the sea.

Jesus made him a witness on the shore.

The Lord's "no" to his preferred plan was a "yes" to a greater purpose.

Sometimes we believe that serving Jesus must mean going somewhere far away.

Sometimes Jesus says, “Go home.”

Go back to the people who remember what you were.

Go back to the people who heard your cries.

Go back to the people who knew about the chains.

Let them see what compassion has done.

Tell them the truth.

The man did not possess years of theological education.

He did not have a library of commentaries.

He could not answer every difficult question.

He had only recently put on his clothes.

But he knew what Jesus had done for him.

That was enough to begin.

Mark says he departed and began to publish in Decapolis how great things Jesus had done for him.

The man who had frightened the region became a messenger to the region.

The place that knew him as a terror would now know him as a testimony.

The mouth that had cried among the tombs now proclaimed the compassion of Jesus.

The life that had seemed wasted became useful in the hands of Christ.

Notice also the connection between Jesus’s instructions and the man’s obedience.

Jesus told him to declare what great things the Lord had done.

The man went and declared what great things Jesus had done.

The Gospel writer places those statements together intentionally.

The work of Jesus is the work of the Lord.

The authority of Jesus is divine authority.

The compassion of Jesus is the compassion of God reaching a man among the tombs.

So why did the demons ask for the pigs?

Here is the most responsible answer we can give from Scripture.

They apparently sought the pigs as an alternative to being tormented before the appointed time, sent away from the country or commanded into the deep.

They may have desired another living host.

They may have wanted to remain active in the region.

Their established nature gives us reason to believe that continued destruction was consistent with their purpose.

But the Bible does not tell us precisely why pigs were their preferred destination.

We should be content to leave the unanswered portion unanswered.

The purpose of Scripture is not to satisfy every curiosity we might have about demons.

The purpose of this account is to show us Jesus.

The demons knew who He was.

They knew what awaited them.

They knew they could not resist Him.

They knew they needed His permission.

The pigs reveal the demons' destructive character.

The restored man reveals the Savior's compassionate character.

The townspeople reveal how the human heart can reject Jesus even while standing before undeniable evidence of His power.

And the commissioned man reveals what a changed life can accomplish when it simply tells the truth about Jesus.

There may be someone listening today who identifies with that man more than you would ever admit publicly.

You may not live physically among tombs.

But you may feel as if part of your life has become a graveyard.

You may feel isolated from the people who once knew you.

You may be carrying shame that has stripped away your sense of dignity.

You may be fighting something you cannot break with your own strength.

Other people may have tried to control the visible symptoms while never reaching the pain underneath.

Hear the good news of this passage.

Jesus is not afraid to come where you are.

He is not confused by your condition.

He is not intimidated by the number of things standing against you.

He is not waiting for you to make yourself presentable before He approaches.

The man was naked, wounded, violent and living among the dead when Jesus came to him.

Christ did not wait for him to become clothed and calm before deciding he was valuable.

Jesus restored him because he was valuable.

The same Jesus went to the cross for sinners.

He bore our sins in His own body.

He died, was buried and rose again.

Salvation is not earned by becoming respectable enough for church.

It is received by grace through faith in Jesus Christ.

You may know facts about Jesus today.

The demons knew facts about Jesus.

The question is whether you will trust Him.

Will you repent of your sin and receive the Savior who died and rose again for you?

Will you stop trying to break spiritual chains through your own strength and surrender to the One before whom every power must bow?

You can speak to Him where you are.

You do not need a rehearsed speech.

Tell Him the truth.

Confess that you are a sinner.

Tell Him that you believe Jesus died for your sins and rose from the grave.

Ask Him to save you.

Place your trust in Christ rather than in your goodness, religion or ability to repair yourself.

Christian, this passage also speaks to us.

Whom have we left among the tombs?

Whom have we decided is too difficult, too damaged or too dangerous for restoration?

Have we been offering chains when people need compassion?

Have we grown accustomed to cries coming from the edges of our community?

Would we recognize the worth of one restored person, or would we remain preoccupied with the pigs?

Jesus told the man to go home and tell his friends.

Perhaps that is our assignment this week.

You do not have to begin with a theological debate.

You do not have to answer every objection.

You do not have to know the answer to every question about demons, pigs or the deep.

Begin with what you know.

“Let me tell you what the Lord has done for me.”

Tell someone how He forgave you.

Tell someone how He carried you.

Tell someone how He gave you hope.

Tell someone how He met you in a place you thought no one else would enter.

Your testimony does not have to be dramatic to be genuine.

Some people are rescued from visible tombs.

Others are rescued from quiet pride, hidden bitterness or respectable unbelief.

Every saved person has received mercy.

Every saved person can say that the Lord has done great things.

Let us pray.

Heavenly Father, thank You for the authority and compassion of Jesus Christ.

Thank You that darkness is real but it is not sovereign.

Thank You that no multitude of enemies can withstand the command of Your Son.

Thank You for seeing value in people whom others have abandoned.

Forgive us for the times we have cared more about possessions, convenience or reputation than about hurting people.

Forgive us when we have tried to bind what only You can heal.

Forgive us when we have grown comfortable with suffering as long as it remained safely out of sight.

For anyone living among emotional or spiritual tombs today, bring hope.

For anyone struggling with self-harm, despair, isolation or torment, surround that person with compassionate people and wise help.

For anyone who does not know Christ as Savior, draw that heart to repentance and faith.

For those of us who have been changed by Your grace, give us courage to go home and tell our friends what great things the Lord has done for us.

May our church always value people more than property.

May we welcome the work of Jesus even when it interrupts our routines.

May we never ask Him to leave because His presence threatens something we have placed above Him.

Use our testimonies to carry the good news throughout our community and throughout the islands.

We ask these things in the name of Jesus Christ.

Amen.

Before we close today, do not allow this message to remain only an interesting discussion about demons and pigs.

Carry one question with you into the coming week.

Who around me is being treated like a problem when that person needs to be seen as someone Jesus loves?

It may be someone in your family.

It may be a neighbor, a coworker or someone you regularly pass without really seeing.

You may not be able to solve every problem that person faces.

You can refuse to treat a human being as disposable.

You can listen.

You can pray.

You can show compassion.

You can help connect someone with appropriate spiritual, medical or practical assistance.

And choose one person this week with whom you can share a simple testimony.

You do not need to preach a forty-minute sermon.

Simply say, "Let me tell you something the Lord has done for me."

The delivered man did not know everything.

He knew what his life had been before Jesus and what Jesus had done afterward.

That honest testimony caused people throughout Decapolis to marvel.

If today's study raised another question, write it down and send it to us.

Questions are never an interruption here.

They are part of why Reason Together Church exists.

You are also invited to continue the conversation at the Reason Together Café.

Sometimes the best part of a study begins after the final prayer, when someone opens a Bible across a table and says, "I noticed something else."

That is exactly the kind of conversation we welcome.

Thank you for being with us today.

To our first-time guests, Aloha Nui Loa.

To our church family and everyone joining us online, thank you for reasoning together through the Word of God.

Bring your questions.

Open your Bible.

Let's Reason Together the Word of God.

Aloha.

PASTOR'S COMMENTARY

Why the Pigs?

RTS-029 | Mark 5:1–20; Matthew 8:28–34; Luke 8:26–39 KJV

A reader's companion to the sermon

Reason Together Church

Dr. Thomas W. Hawksley

www.ReasonTogether.Church

*Bring your questions. Open your Bible.
Let's Reason Together the Word of God.*

About This Commentary

The Pastor's Commentary is a readable public companion to the sermon. It explains the principal Biblical reasoning, interpretive cautions and pastoral applications behind RTS-029. It is not a second sermon, and it is not the internal Study Vault. Readers may use it for personal study, group discussion or careful follow-up after hearing the message.

The account of Jesus, Legion and the herd of swine appears in Matthew 8, Mark 5 and Luke 8. The incident is memorable enough that the death of the pigs can overshadow the deliverance of the man. This Commentary keeps the restored person at the human center while examining the question that naturally arises: why did the demons ask to enter the pigs?

Scripture does not provide a direct explanation of why pigs specifically were selected. It does provide three important clues. Matthew records fear of torment before the appointed time. Mark records the plea not to be sent away out of the country. Luke records the plea not to be commanded into the deep. These statements tell us why the demons wanted an alternative, but they do not reveal every detail of their preference.

A responsible study must therefore make distinctions. Some conclusions are clearly stated. Others are reasonable inferences. Still others are popular theories that exceed the text. Saying that the Bible leaves one detail unanswered does not weaken faith. It demonstrates submission to what God has chosen to reveal.

Commentary in Brief

The man lived among the tombs, could not be restrained, cried night and day and injured himself with stones. The community had attempted chains but could not restore him. Jesus crossed the sea, confronted the unclean spirits and accomplished what no human power could do.

The demons recognized Jesus as the Son of the most high God. They knew judgment awaited them and understood that Jesus possessed authority over their destiny. They did not threaten Him or negotiate as equals. They begged. They could not remain in the man, leave the region, enter the deep or enter the swine apart from His command or permission.

The demons' request for the pigs may indicate a desire for another living host. It may also reflect their stated desire to remain active in the region. Their established behavior makes destructive intent plausible. None of those conclusions should be stated with the same certainty as their expressed fear of torment, expulsion and the deep.

Jesus's permission demonstrates His authority and provides visible evidence that the spirits had departed from the man. The herd's destruction reveals outwardly the destructive character of the evil that had been tormenting him. The Bible says the animals died. It does not say the demons drowned, ceased to exist or entered the abyss afterward.

The conclusion of Mark's account contains three requests. The demons ask to enter the pigs. The townspeople ask Jesus to leave. The restored man asks to remain with Jesus. His faithful request appears to be denied, but Jesus is not rejecting him. He is commissioning him to go home and tell what great things the Lord has done.

1. Begin With the Question Scripture Can Answer

The title *Why the Pigs?* invites curiosity, but curiosity can become a temptation. When the Bible records an unusual event without explaining every motive, readers often fill the silence with a theory. Repeated often enough, the theory begins to sound like a verse.

The question should therefore be divided into two parts. First, why did the demons want an alternative destination? Scripture gives substantial answers. Second, why did they prefer pigs specifically? Scripture records the request without disclosing the complete reason.

This distinction allows us to answer faithfully without pretending certainty. The demons feared torment before the time. They did not want removal from the country. They did not want commandment into the deep. The nearby herd offered an immediate alternative. Beyond those facts, we reason carefully and label every inference.

Biblical restraint is not evasiveness. A pastor may confidently preach what the text says and humbly acknowledge what it does not say. That combination teaches a congregation how to handle every difficult passage, not only this one.

2. The Man Must Not Disappear Behind the Pigs

Mark introduces the man before he introduces the herd. He dwelt among tombs. No chain could hold him. Night and day he cried and cut himself with stones. Luke adds that he wore no clothes and did not live in a house.

The account describes more than frightening behavior. It describes the loss of community, dignity, safety and peace. The man is alive but lives among the dead. Other people know his location but keep their distance. They have tried to control him, yet no one can heal him.

The community's chains were not necessarily acts of cruelty. A dangerously violent person presented a real threat to himself and others. Restraint may have seemed like the only available protection. The tragedy is that human restraint could address only the outward danger. It could not reach the bondage within.

Jesus sees more than a dangerous problem. He sees a person. He approaches the place others avoid and restores the one others have abandoned. Any treatment of this passage that becomes fascinated with the number of demons but indifferent to the suffering man has missed the heart of the narrative.

3. From the Storm to the Shore

The encounter follows Jesus's calming of the storm in Mark 4. The disciples have watched Him rebuke the wind and speak to the sea. They ask, "What manner of man is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?" (Mark 4:41 KJV). On the opposite shore, another realm of creation recognizes His command.

The narrative movement is important. The storm cannot prevent Jesus from reaching the man. The legion cannot prevent Jesus from restoring him. Nature obeys and unclean spirits obey. The disciples' question concerning Jesus's identity receives an increasingly powerful answer.

It is reasonable to say that Jesus crossed the sea knowing whom He would meet. Mark does not state that the man was the only purpose of the journey, so we should not claim more. The narrative nevertheless

gives this isolated person extraordinary prominence. Jesus enters a frightening place for someone everyone else has left among the tombs.

4. The Demons Knew Who Jesus Was

“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.” (Mark 5:7 KJV)

The demons possess correct information. They identify Jesus by name and title. Matthew says they ask whether He has come to torment them before the time. Their knowledge includes His identity, His authority and their future judgment.

James 2:19 says, “the devils also believe, and tremble.” Recognition is not saving faith. The spirits do not love Christ, trust His grace or surrender willingly to His lordship. They know enough truth to fear Him.

This is a needed warning for religious readers. Knowing vocabulary about Jesus is not the same as receiving Jesus. A person may affirm His existence, know His titles and understand Christian teaching while remaining unrepentant. Saving faith does more than recognize facts. It rests in Christ and His completed work.

The demons’ fear also establishes the balance of power. They do not arrive as equal opponents. They do not threaten to defeat Jesus. They plead against torment. The spiritual enemy is dangerous to human beings, but he is never God’s equal.

5. What Does the Name Legion Mean?

“My name is Legion: for we are many.” (Mark 5:9 KJV)

A Roman legion was a very large military formation numbering in the thousands. The word therefore communicates multiplicity, organization and overwhelming force. The answer explains that many unclean spirits had entered the man.

The term should not be turned into an exact census. Mark later reports that the herd contained about two thousand animals. He never says the number of pigs equaled the number of demons. The common assumption of one demon per pig is not supported by the wording.

The point is not that we can calculate the legion. The point is that even a multitude cannot resist Jesus. Human beings could not bind one tormented man, but thousands of hostile spirits remain subject to one word from Christ.

The account also gives no warrant for making conversation with demons a ministry method. Jesus asks the name within an encounter governed entirely by His authority. Christians are never instructed to pursue names, ranks or information from lying spirits. Our confidence rests in Christ and His Word, not in intelligence supplied by the enemy.

6. What Each Gospel Adds

The account appears in three Gospels because each writer contributes details that help us understand the whole event. Mark gives the longest description of the man’s condition, the name Legion, the approximate size of the herd and the man’s commission in Decapolis.

Matthew records two possessed men and gives the demons' question, "art thou come hither to torment us before the time?" (Matthew 8:29 KJV). This establishes awareness of an appointed judgment. Jesus's answer is only one word: "Go." The brevity emphasizes authority.

Luke describes the delivered man sitting at Jesus's feet, clothed and in his right mind. Luke also records that the demons begged Jesus not to command them "to go out into the deep" (Luke 8:31 KJV). The deep or abyss is associated elsewhere in Scripture with confinement and judgment.

Mark says they did not want to be sent "away out of the country" (Mark 5:10 KJV). When the three accounts are placed together, we learn that the spirits feared torment, confinement and removal from the region where they had operated.

None of the accounts says, "They selected pigs because..." The combined evidence explains why they wanted an alternative. It does not eliminate the remaining mystery concerning their precise preference.

7. Why Did They Ask for the Pigs?

The most natural possibility is that the demons desired another living host. They were being expelled from the man and asked to "enter into" the swine. Matthew 12:43–45 describes an unclean spirit walking through dry places seeking rest, then attempting to return to the person from whom it departed.

That connection supports preference for habitation but does not prove necessity. Scripture never says demons cannot exist without physical bodies. It never establishes that animals were required for their survival or activity.

A second possibility is that entering a local herd appeared to preserve their connection with the region. Mark specifically says they begged not to be sent away out of the country. This gives the regional reading direct support, though it does not create a complete doctrine of territorial spirits.

A third possibility is continued destruction. The spirits had driven the man toward isolation, self-injury and the tombs. The herd's immediate rush toward death is consistent with their malicious character. The text does not tell us whether the demons intentionally caused the stampede or whether the animals reacted violently to their presence.

These possibilities may overlap. The spirits may have desired another host, hoped to remain in the region and intended harm. We may discuss them. We should not place "the Bible says" in front of what the Bible has not said.

8. Did the Demons Get What They Wanted?

Jesus gave them leave to enter the herd. Permission, however, should not be mistaken for surrender or approval. The spirits could move only within the boundary Christ established.

If they wanted a lasting home, the outcome did not provide one. The herd immediately ran violently down the steep place and died in the water. If they intended destruction, the event made their character visible before the entire region. In neither case does the narrative picture Jesus as deceived or outmaneuvered.

The Bible states that the pigs were choked in the sea. It does not state that the spirits drowned. Evil spirits do not become mortal because animals die. The text also does not say where the spirits went afterward.

Some interpreters connect the animals' descent into the water with Luke's reference to the deep and conclude that the demons entered the abyss after all. That conclusion may seem fitting, but the Evangelists do not state it. The destination of the pigs should not be converted into a revealed destination for the spirits.

9. Why Did Jesus Permit It?

The Gospels do not provide a direct explanation of Jesus's reason. The results of His permission nevertheless perform several clear narrative functions.

First, the event demonstrates authority. The spirits cannot enter animals without leave. The request itself proves that Christ remains sovereign throughout the encounter.

Second, the herd supplies visible confirmation that the spirits have departed from the man. Invisible beings cannot be observed leaving. Approximately two thousand animals reacting at once creates public evidence that something decisive has occurred.

Third, the destruction exposes the nature of the evil that had been tormenting him. What had been happening gradually and personally in the man becomes sudden and visible in the herd. The spirits' presence is associated with ruin while Christ's presence is associated with restoration.

Fourth, the event forces the surrounding community to respond. They cannot ignore the restored man or the cost represented by the herd. Jesus's authority has entered their world and rearranged it. They must decide whether they want Him to remain.

These are strong observations from the narrative. We should still say that the transfer may have served these purposes rather than claiming access to every intention in the mind of Christ that the text does not disclose.

10. Were the Pigs an Illegal Jewish Business?

Leviticus 11:7 identifies the swine as unclean for Israel. Because Jesus encounters unclean spirits and then permits them to enter unclean animals, the symbolic connection is difficult to miss.

A popular sermon claim goes further. It says the animals belonged to Jewish farmers who were violating Mosaic law and that Jesus destroyed the herd as punishment. The passage never identifies the owners as Jewish. It never describes the business as illegal and never names punishment for dietary disobedience as Jesus's purpose.

The event occurs on the eastern side of the Sea of Galilee in the broader Decapolis setting, a region with strong Gentile and Greco-Roman influence. A large herd of pigs is not surprising in such a setting. Gentile ownership is at least as plausible as Jewish ownership.

The safest conclusion is simple. Swine were unclean under Mosaic law and may provide fitting symbolism. The identity of the owners and the legality of their business remain unknown. A memorable theory should not be preached as a revealed fact.

11. Two Men or One? Gadarenes or Gergesenes?

Matthew records two possessed men. Mark and Luke concentrate upon one. This does not require a contradiction. Describing the prominent man who spoke, was restored and later commissioned does not deny that another afflicted man was present. If two men met Jesus, it remains true that one man met Jesus.

The KJV also preserves different geographic forms. Matthew refers to the country of the Gergesenes, while Mark and Luke use the country of the Gadarenes. Other manuscripts and translations may display Gerasenes. Gadara and Gerasa were associated with the Decapolis, and Gergesa has been proposed as a shoreline identification.

The discussion involves textual history, city territories and ancient geographic usage. It deserves technical study, but it does not alter the controlling facts. Jesus crossed to the eastern side of the lake, encountered the afflicted men, expelled the spirits and commissioned the restored witness in Decapolis.

A commentary may acknowledge the variants without allowing them to distract from the event. The existence of different regional designations is not evidence that three unrelated incidents were confused.

12. The Man Before and After Jesus

Mark and Luke provide a deliberate before-and-after portrait. Before Jesus, the man is naked, violent, isolated, crying, cutting himself and living among tombs. After Jesus, he is sitting, clothed and in his right mind. Luke places him at Jesus's feet.

The transformation includes more than the absence of demons. Dignity is restored. Peace is restored. The capacity for relationship is restored. The man can listen, choose and receive a calling.

This is an important pattern of salvation and discipleship. Christ does not merely rescue people from something. He restores them for something. Grace brings a person out of bondage and then places that person back into a community with a testimony and purpose.

The community had known him as a threat. Jesus would send him back as a witness. The history that once produced fear would become the background against which mercy could be seen.

13. Why Did the Town Ask Jesus to Leave?

The swineherds reported what had happened to the man and to the pigs. The people came and saw the man sitting, clothed and in his right mind. They were afraid and asked Jesus to depart from their coasts.

It is common to say they valued pigs more than a person. That may capture part of the moral contrast, but the text does not say financial greed was their only motive. They had encountered supernatural authority beyond anything they could control. Luke emphasizes that they were taken with great fear.

The loss of the herd was also economically serious. The Bible does not ask us to pretend that property, livelihood or animals have no value. The sharper question is whether a restored person was worth disruption and whether they would welcome Jesus when His presence rearranged their familiar world.

Their request remains sobering. They had learned to live with a tormented man among the tombs. They were not prepared to live with Jesus in their midst. Human beings may prefer a familiar bondage at a safe distance to divine authority close enough to change everything.

Churches can repeat the error whenever carpets matter more than children, schedules matter more than hurting people or reputation matters more than restoration. We may ask Christ to work while quietly insisting that He protect everything we have placed above His compassion.

14. Three Requests Reveal Three Hearts

Mark builds the conclusion around repeated requests. The demons beseech Jesus to enter the pigs. The townspeople beseech Jesus to depart. The restored man beseeches Jesus that he might be with Him.

The demons recognize His authority but do not love Him. The people fear His power and want distance from Him. The man has experienced His compassion and wants nearness to Him.

Jesus permits the first request. He honors the town's request by entering the ship. He declines the faithful man's request to travel with Him. At first, the pattern seems troubling. The hostile spirits and resistant town receive what they ask, while the grateful disciple does not.

The man's request is not refused because he is unwanted. It is redirected because he is needed. Jesus says, "Go home to thy friends, and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee, and hath had compassion on thee" (Mark 5:19 KJV). The Lord's no to one plan becomes a yes to a mission.

This guards believers from measuring God's love by whether every prayer receives the requested circumstance. The demons' granted request did not become lasting blessing. The man's declined request became divine purpose.

15. The First Witness to Decapolis

The man obeyed immediately. Mark says he began to publish in Decapolis how great things Jesus had done for him. The region that had asked Jesus to leave still received a witness to His mercy.

Jesus told him to report what the Lord had done. He reported what Jesus had done. The wording places the works of Jesus within the works of the Lord. The authority and compassion displayed in the deliverance belong to God revealed in Christ.

The man did not possess years of theological education. He could not answer every question about the deep, demons or the destination of the spirits. He knew what his life had been and what Jesus had done. That truthful testimony was enough to begin.

The commission also dignifies him. He is not permanently labeled by his former bondage. Scripture does not continue calling him Legion. Legion was the name given by the spirits, not the identity Jesus gave the man. Christ returns him to his home and entrusts him with a message.

16. A Necessary Pastoral Caution About Mental Health

The man's condition includes behavior that may resemble symptoms seen in psychological or medical crises. The Gospel writers explicitly identify his case as demonic possession. That diagnosis belongs to this narrative. Similar symptoms in another person do not prove the same cause.

Christians should pray and take spiritual realities seriously. They should also seek competent medical or psychological assistance when someone faces severe distress, self-harm, disorientation, seizures or danger. Appropriate treatment is not a denial of faith.

A church must never turn a vulnerable person into a spectacle. Public shouting, humiliating accusations and coercive practices can deepen trauma. Immediate danger requires safety measures and emergency assistance, not delay while leaders attempt to create a dramatic ministry moment.

Responsible pastoral care protects dignity, privacy and continuity. It includes prayer, Scriptural counsel, mature accountability, professional evaluation when appropriate and practical aftercare. The restored man in Mark 5 is not abandoned after the crisis. Jesus returns him to community and purpose.

The safest principle is to speak only as clearly as the evidence allows. We may affirm the supernatural diagnosis Scripture gives this man. We may not use his symptoms as a checklist for diagnosing strangers.

The Final Answer

Why did the demons ask Jesus to let them enter the pigs? Scripture gives a clear account of what they were trying to avoid. Matthew says they feared torment before the appointed time. Mark says they did not want to be sent out of the country. Luke says they did not want to be commanded into the deep. The nearby herd was requested as an immediate alternative.

The demons may have desired another living host. They may have hoped to remain connected with the region. Their destructive treatment of the man makes further destruction consistent with their purpose. These are responsible possibilities, but the Bible does not state precisely why pigs were preferred.

What the passage reveals with certainty is more important. A legion of unclean spirits could not resist Jesus and could not enter animals without His permission. The herd's destruction made their departure visible and revealed the ruin associated with their presence. The man was delivered, clothed, restored to his right mind and commissioned to testify.

The story therefore asks three questions. Why did the demons want the pigs? Why did the town want Jesus to leave? What will a person do after receiving His mercy? The final answer is not speculation about spirits. It is confidence in Jesus Christ, compassion toward suffering people and obedience to tell what the Lord has done.

Questions for Personal or Group Reflection

- Which details in Mark 5 show the depth of the man's suffering and the limits of human restraint?
- What do the demons' words reveal about their knowledge of Jesus and future judgment?
- What distinct clues do Matthew, Mark and Luke contribute to the reason the demons wanted an alternative?
- Why should another host, regional presence and destructive intent be labeled as possibilities rather than equal certainties?
- What does the request for permission reveal about the authority of Jesus?
- Why is it unsafe to claim that the demons drowned when the pigs died?
- What facts are missing from the theory that Jesus punished Jewish pig farmers?
- How can Matthew mention two men while Mark and Luke emphasize one without creating a contradiction?
- What may have motivated the townspeople to ask Jesus to leave?
- What do the three requests in Mark 5 teach about granted prayers, declined prayers and divine purpose?
- How does Jesus restore the man's dignity as well as remove his bondage?

Who around us may be treated as a problem when that person needs to be seen as someone Jesus loves?

Interpretive Cautions

- Do not say Scripture provides no answer. It clearly identifies torment, removal from the country and the deep as outcomes the spirits feared.
- Do not say Scripture provides the complete answer. It never explains precisely why pigs were preferred.
- Do not assume one demon entered each pig. The passage supplies no numerical correspondence.
- Do not say the demons drowned. The text says the animals perished and leaves the spirits' later destination unstated.
- Do not preach Jewish ownership or an illegal pig farm as fact. The owners are not identified.
- Do not create a complete doctrine of territorial spirits from the plea not to leave the country.
- Do not treat the word worshipped as proof that the demons offered saving worship. Their prostration is governed by fear.
- Do not accuse Matthew, Mark and Luke of contradiction merely because one account includes two men and the others emphasize one.
- Do not reduce the townspeople's response to greed alone. Economic loss, fear and resistance to disruption may all be relevant.
- Do not diagnose contemporary mental illness or self-harm as demon possession from outward symptoms.
- Do not let fascination with darkness displace the authority and compassion of Jesus.
- Do not leave the delivered person without community, dignity, discipleship or purpose.

A Personal Invitation to Christ

The demons knew who Jesus was and trembled before Him. Their knowledge did not save them. It is possible to know Christian language, recognize Biblical facts and remain separated from God by sin.

The good news is that Jesus Christ came to save sinners. He lived without sin, died upon the cross for our sins, was buried and rose again the third day. His authority over the legion points toward the greater victory accomplished through His death and resurrection.

"For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God." (Romans 3:23 KJV)

"That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved." (Romans 10:9 KJV)

"For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." (Romans 10:13 KJV)

Come to Christ as you are. Admit your sin, believe that He died and rose again and trust Him as your personal Savior. You do not need to repair yourself before He will receive you. The man among the tombs was not restored enough to approach Jesus. Jesus approached him and brought restoration.

If you have trusted Christ, tell a mature believer and begin following Him in the fellowship of a faithful church. Then begin where the restored man began. Tell someone what great things the Lord has done for you.

Pastoral Note

Stories involving demons can produce unhealthy fascination or genuine fear. A church should neither deny spiritual evil nor build its identity around dramatic encounters with it. The New Testament directs attention to Christ, truth, prayer, holiness and the proclamation of the Gospel.

Believers should not seek contact with spirits, ask them for hidden knowledge or attempt to reproduce the conversation in Mark 5 as a technique. Jesus acted with divine authority. Our security rests in belonging to Him and obeying His Word.

This study should also make churches safer for suffering people. Someone in crisis is not an opportunity for a dramatic story. That person bears dignity and may need immediate protection, compassionate presence, pastoral prayer and professional care. The goal is restoration, not attention.

Finally, pastors should model honest uncertainty. Congregations become stronger when leaders can say, “The Bible tells us this, the passage may suggest this and the text does not reveal this.” Confidence and humility belong together under the authority of Scripture.

Selected Scripture and Interpretive Resources

All Scripture quotations are from the King James Version.

Mark 4:35–41; 5:1–20. Authority over the storm, Legion, the herd and the restored witness.

Matthew 8:28–34. Two afflicted men and the demons’ fear of torment before the time.

Luke 8:26–39. The deep, the man at Jesus’s feet and the citywide testimony.

Matthew 12:43–45. An unclean spirit seeking rest and attempting to return.

Leviticus 11:7. The swine as unclean under Mosaic dietary law.

James 2:19. Demons believe and tremble.

Revelation 9:1–11; 20:1–3; 2 Peter 2:4; Jude 6. Evil spiritual beings, confinement and judgment.

Frederick William Danker, editor, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*. Lexical background for abyssos, chora, daimonizomai, epitrepo and legion.

R. T. France, *The Gospel of Mark*, *New International Greek Testament Commentary*.

James R. Edwards, *The Gospel According to Mark*, *Pillar New Testament Commentary*.

Craig S. Keener, *A Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew*.

Joel B. Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, *New International Commentary on the New Testament*.

Darrell L. Bock, *Luke 1:1–9:50*, *Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament*.

A Closing Prayer

Father, thank You for the authority and compassion of Jesus Christ. Thank You that no darkness can equal You and no multitude of enemies can resist Your command. Forgive us when we become fascinated with evil and overlook the person who is suffering. Give us wisdom to distinguish what Your Word states from what we merely suppose. Protect us from careless accusations, spiritual pride and fear. Help us treat vulnerable people with dignity, seek wise help and pray with faith. Thank You that Jesus receives sinners, restores lives and gives purpose to those who have received mercy. Give us courage to go home and tell what great things the Lord has done. In Jesus’s name, amen.

Carry This Study Into the Week

Reopen Matthew 8:28–34, Mark 5:1–20 and Luke 8:26–39 during the coming week. Read the three accounts beside one another. Mark what each writer states about the man, the demons, the pigs, the people and Jesus. Place a question mark beside every conclusion the text does not explicitly state.

Then carry the human question into your community: who is being treated like a problem when that person needs to be seen as someone Jesus loves? You may not be able to solve every need. You can listen, protect dignity, pray and help connect someone with appropriate spiritual, medical or practical assistance.

Finally, share one honest testimony. You do not need to answer every difficult question. Say, “Let me tell you something the Lord has done for me.” The man of Decapolis began with mercy received, and an entire region heard about Jesus.

Until We Reason Together Again

The lasting lesson is not that we have solved every mystery about the pigs. It is that Jesus Christ stands in absolute authority over darkness, crosses barriers to reach abandoned people and turns delivered lives into witnesses of His compassion.

“Go home to thy friends, and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee, and hath had compassion on thee.” (Mark 5:19 KJV)

*Bring your questions. Open your Bible.
Let's Reason Together the Word of God.*

Reason Together Church
www.ReasonTogether.Church