

Date: 4th July
Reading: Mark 5:1-20
Speaker: Gordon Gillespie
Subject: Independence Day

This is the story of the man of Gadara. He was in bondage to demons, forced to do their will. In this he is a picture of each one of us as we are in bondage to sin, under the power of the devil rather than the kingdom of God.

At the cross, the Lord Jesus defeated the power of sin, death and the devil but the devil is still trying to stop people from believing the Gospel and being freed from their sin.

The man had no control over his actions. John 8:34 teaches us that “Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin.” (John 8:34). He needed the Lord Jesus to deliver him from the bondage. As we read the Gospels, there are many people with different illnesses: blind, lame, leprosy, but the root of all was sin. The Lord showed this with the paralysed man (Mark 2:1-12). When he was brought, the Lord said to Him first, “Thy sins are forgiven” (v5) only later did He say “take up thy bed and walk” (v11).

In verses 3-5, the man was uncontrollable, miserable and a danger to himself. This pictures the sinner who can do nothing for himself (Rom 5:6). In verse 3, he was dwelling in tombs, the place of death. This reminds us of the wages of sin (Rom 6:23). He had no contentment, no joy and no freedom. This is true of all, not just alcoholics, drug addicts or the like. Only the believer can say:

“And we have known redemption, Lord,
From bondage worse than theirs by far;
Sin held us by a stronger cord,
Yet by Thy mercy free we are.”

In verse seven, the demon recognised Jesus as the Son of the most high God. We can only be delivered if we recognise that he is the Son of God: not another man however great, not an angel. He asked, “What have I to do with Thee?” This was the reaction of people in the past, it is the reaction of many today. They want nothing to do with Jesus. What about you?

After the Lord has commanded the demon to depart, He asks the name (v9). He is showing an interest and a desire for a relationship with each. The demons had to leave (v11-13). The work was complete, when the Lord delivers it is a full deliverance He said “If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed.” (John 8:36).

In verse 14, the people came and were afraid when they saw the man. Sadly, although they saw the change and knew Who had made the change, they said “Not for me”.

How is this possible for us? This is illustrated in the deliverance of Israel from Egypt at the Passover. The promise of God was “When I see the blood, I will pass over you” (Ex 12:13). It illustrates the fact that we can only be delivered by the death of Christ. When judgment fell, there was no death where the blood was found rather in Exodus 15, there is a song of triumph. For all who come to Christ as a sinner believing that He died for their sin, the assurance is that He will save. This was the experience of John Newton, who wrote the hymn, “Amazing grace”. The Lord sent the man back to tell how great things God had done.

There is a great gulf between God and men. Only the cross can bridge that gulf because Christ took the judgment that our sins deserved. Well does the song ask, “What kind of love is this?”