

PART II - Loving Your Family With the Gospel – Mark 5:1-20

Series: Look and Live #20

Illustration: When I was saved my sophomore year in college, I quickly quit on all my old relationships (because they were built on doing things I now no longer would do), and I began replacing them with new Christian friendships. Although those old relationships can and should change when you are converted, I want to suggest though that *my experience* was wrong. That's what we're going to think about from Mark 5:1-20.

Read Mark 5:1-20.

Last week we walked through this story and paid particular attention to Jesus dealing with the demons controlling this man. There was a legion of them controlling, influencing, and destroying this man. But Jesus freed him from them all. At that point, they asked Jesus if instead of being banished to the desolate places, they could go to the nearby herd of pigs instead. With that, some 2000 demon-possessed pigs rushed into the sea and drowned.

This did not set well with the local people who promptly ask Jesus to leave the area. At this point now, this man whom Jesus just saved begs Jesus, "Let me go with you!" But Jesus tells him, No, "go home to your friends and tell them how much the Lord has done for you, and how he has had mercy on you." "Friends" could also be translated "family", or even just "your people". Go home to your people, to your folks and tell them all. And that's what the man did.

I'm going to make four points from this text as we think about Jesus and his response to this formerly demon-possessed man.

- 1) There *is* a call of Christ.
 - a) In our Christian culture, we assume that pastors and professional missionaries are called, and everybody can just go about life as usual and try to attend a local church.
 - b) But consider this story.
 - i) This man initially asks Jesus if he can be one of his followers. He wanted to hang out with Jesus and go from place to place with him all the time.
 - ii) That is *similar* to the call to be a foreign missionary.
 - iii) The reason I'm making that connection is because the call to the mission field is a call to give up what you know, to leave your current life, relationships, and job and to go to another place to advance the Kingdom. If Jesus had said *yes* to this man, that's what it would have been like for him.
 - iv) But of course, Jesus said no. "No, you can't roam around with me and be a traveling missionary."
 - v) But that *didn't mean that Jesus wasn't calling him!*
 - vi) Jesus still had a particular Kingdom-advancing call for this man; it just wasn't the foreign-traveling-missionary-type call.
 - c) Becoming a Christian means Jesus calls us into a new, disciple relationship with himself. (See sermon on Mark 1:16-20.) Becoming a Christian sets a man or woman on the course of discipleship. It's just like Jesus walked up to Peter and Andrew in the boat saying, "Men, follow me. Become my disciples." And they did. And *you did* if you're a Christian. And this man did too.

- d) So you *have that calling*. The question is not whether you are called, the question is just where?
- 2) That call of Christ is *always* missional.
- a) It's pretty obvious that *most of us* are not called to be foreign or even domestic professional missionaries, called to leave our lives and go start new ones somewhere else for the cause of Christ.
 - b) So, the call of Christ is not always to be a *missionary*, but, the call is always to be *missional*.
 - i) Here's the gist of what it means to be "missional".
 - ii) Take a look at a foreign missionary. What does he or she *do* once they arrive on whatever field they've traveled to? Learn the language. Familiarize themselves with the culture. Find ways of establishing many relationships. Begin to love and serve those new relationships in a particularly *Christ-like, Christ-exalting way*. Begin to communicate the Gospel in those relationships in a way that is appropriate to that friend and to that culture. Continue this process as some of those friends are converted and then disciplined, training them to do and be the same.
 - iii) Some in the church have started asking, "Hey, why do we leave all that up to professional missionaries? Isn't that really the task of the entire Church? Isn't that essentially just the Great Commission put into practice, and wasn't that given to the whole church?"
 - iv) **So *missional* means adopting those practices right here in the midst of our lives. Missional means having a kind of missionary mindset in my current life-set-up and circumstances.**
 - c) The call of Jesus Christ might not be for you to be a missionary, but if you're a Christian, the call is *missional*.
 - d) When Jesus told the formerly demon-possessed man "no", he was only telling him that the place of his ministry as a disciple was not tagging along with Jesus but rather was back home. He wasn't saying, "No, don't serve me as a missional disciple." He was just saying, "No, you won't do that along with me, you'll do that at home. That's the place of your call. You need to go *home* and be missional!"
- 3) That missional call of Christ is always sacrificial. The call of Jesus on our lives *always means sacrifice and hardship*.
- a) Consider which option would have been easier for this man: going with Jesus as missionary disciple or going home as a missional disciple?
 - i) Going *with* Jesus certainly would have been hard. It would have meant
 - (1) living mostly outdoors
 - (2) unimaginably long hours of ministry
 - (3) constant danger from the Romans and from the Jewish religious authorities
 - ii) But think of the difficulties this man must have experienced when he went home.
 - (1) He obviously *left* home for a reason. He was demon-possessed and self-destructive.
 - (2) He was mean and evil (they had tried to bind him).
 - (3) I'm guessing he wasn't his parents favorite son anymore.
 - (4) So going home, he would have to interact with people who already had their minds made up about him and who *were familiar* with all his former sins. Going to new places would have brought a fresh start.
 - iii) Sometimes *staying or being a missional disciple at home* is the harder thing to do.

- b) Summary: If you leave and take the Gospel on the road, there will be immense sufferings. If you *stay* and bring the Gospel to your home (to your people whom you've disappointed and aggravated and sinned against and who have hard feelings about you and fractured relationships) there will be immense sufferings there too.
 - i) They probably won't stone you or eat you, but they might hate you.
 - ii) They might start talking about at family gatherings.
 - c) For a disciple of Christ there will always be *suffering*.
 - d) The call of Christ to be *missional* is a call to forsake worldly comforts, to let loose our grip on living perfectly comfortably, easy lives in this world, and to embrace the possibility that to be a true follower of Christ, I might be disliked, made fun of, and even scorned right here in Hickory Hill.
 - e) It's a sacrificial call.
- 4) The call of Christ to be missional is *within* your current relationships.
- a) Don't become a Christian and so easily give *up* on all your old relationships like I did.
 - b) Two clarifications:
 - i) I'm *not* saying that those old relationships should be just like they've always been!
 - ii) Furthermore, I'm not saying, Don't make new relationships.
 - c) Do those things, but don't *abandon* all your relationships that are already established. Don't *abandon them, transform* them! That's what it means to be sacrificially missional.
 - d) Remember what Jesus said? "No you can't come with *me*, you've got people! Go back to your people!" Go back to them. Don't abandon them. So you've got the Gospel now, so now you're a disciple of Christ, don't just abandon them to their unbelief, go back home to them. Go back to those relationships and *show them* and *tell them* how things have changed for you by the grace of God.
 - e) He was telling him to *transform those relationships* so they are all about advancing the Gospel into that person's life.
 - f) What a terrible waste it is when people are genuinely converted and passionate for God, and suddenly they disassociate from every lost person they knew.
 - i) About one year into that person's new Christian life, they'll be an integrated part of a local body with a host of Christian friends, working in a new work-place, and disassociated from old friends and co-workers (and even family members).
 - ii) Then one day at church, the Sunday School teacher will be teaching on evangelism and they'll raise their hand saying, "I don't know, evangelism is just so *hard*. I don't really *know* unbelievers."
 - iii) Well of course you don't.
 - g) Can we *learn* from this story?
 - h) Maybe you've become a Christian, and maybe you're the only Christ-loving Christian in your circle of friends. Or maybe you work at a place where lots of words are used, but Christ is never one of them. Or maybe your family never had a place for a passionate love for Jesus Christ in their lives.
 - i) Whichever of the situations you fit into, let this story teach us something huge: instead of immediately separating ourselves from these relationships and jobs, let's consider that the call of Jesus Christ on our lives is to be *missional* within this relationship.
 - j) Don't abandon them but *take them* and begin to **incarnate Christ** to those people.
 - i) *Incarnate* and the *incarnation* means to put into the flesh.

- ii) God revealed himself in Jesus because in Jesus, God *was put into flesh*.
- iii) Our call today is similar to that. Who is Jesus for most people? He's a good teacher who called people to love and forgive.
- iv) The people in your life have no knowledge of a Christ who is Lord, who is the eternal Son of God, who took on the flesh to live a perfectly pleasing life before the Father, who willfully accepted the wrath of God for our sins and suffered and *died under that wrath* on the Cross, only to completely overcome that sin in his resurrection. Your coworkers don't know *that Jesus*.
- v) His call upon us now is to make him *known* in those established relationships we have, and within new relationships that we're building.
- vi) We make him known by incarnating him for people. That is, we represent Christ by our actions, by our deeds, by our serving these people like Christ would serve them, by forgiving them like Christ would forgive them, by crying with them, laughing with them, and just helping them. That's incarnating Christ to them (making him visible in that relationship).
- k) In the midst of that, we begin to *speak the words of the Gospel to them as well*, telling them that God calls all men everywhere to repent and believe in Jesus.
- l) That's what Christ has called us to do and be (missional).
- m) Look around. You've got 40 relationships already with people who right now, are following the course of Satan and headed to Hell. Don't give up on them. Begin to incarnate Christ in those relationships. Serve and love them as Christ, and begin to speak the Gospel to them within that.
- n) So *love* your family, love your best friend, love your cubicle mate with the Gospel of Christ!

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