

# Discipleship Moment

## Sermon Text: Mark 5:1-20

In the sermon this week, we heard about a man who was possessed by an *unclean* spirit. This unclean spirit wasn't just evil, but was intending to make this separated from God, his community, and other people—his friends and family. This status of *unclean* was a Jewish way of talking about worshipping God, if you were *unclean* you could not enter the Temple, therefore not worship. He was unclean in many ways: he was a Gentile (a non-Jew, who was not allowed in the Temple), he was living in the tombs (which were open tombs, where dead here in bunk-bed like shelves) and was in contact with the dead, he was cutting himself and in contact with blood, he was filled by a "Roman" spirit which called themselves "Legion" (a Roman military term, who were the oppressors of the Jews), not only all this, but he was by swine, next to some pigherds in the area. This guy was as unclean as you can get; which is what Mark is trying to draw our attention to with all these details. He was the unclean of the unclean of the unclean.

This is the kind of person that Jesus transformed: this is the kind of person that Jesus spend his time with. We have spent the last two weeks exploring this remarkable and scandalous habit of Jesus: he went to the worst of the worst, the scum of the earth, and he chose those kinds of people to heal, follow him, and usher in the Kingdom of God.

As the body of Christ we are called to use Jesus' authority and life as our own and we are called to be the *physical body* of Christ—as Jesus loves and commands, we are the ones to do his command and love in his place.

But there's something else that happens to Jesus in this story, too. After he had cast out the demon and healed the man the community members nearby *begged* Jesus to leave and the man who was healed *begged* Jesus to let him go with Jesus. There was a polarization that happened when Jesus worked in this man's life. Some liked him, some didn't. When we go to our neighbors who are hurting from addictions and separation and offer them the grace of God through our love, support, and ministry there will be some in our community who turn their noses up at us. There will be rumors, there will be slander, there will be abuse when those who do not fit the mold of what is "acceptable" become part of a church community. That is the natural reaction to Jesus' work in the world—some despair and some rejoice.

But let's go even further with this; not only was Jesus polarizing in this Gentile countryside, but Jesus himself sacrificed something: his own cleanliness. If this man was unclean, chances are that Jesus became unclean, too. I'm sure there was hugging after the exorcism, I'm sure Jesus got too close to the dead bodies in the tombs, if the man was bloody someone had to clean him up and give him clothes. Although this is speculation, we can be comfortable in saying that Jesus probably became unclean in the process of healing this man. Which means that Jesus couldn't go to the Temple and worship for at least a day, and for as long as a month. Jesus was willing to sacrifice his own cleanliness in order to minister to this man. He was willing to sacrifice his status, and even his *worship* in order to see this man transformed.

Are you willing to sacrifice your worship to see the unclean transformed? Are you willing to sacrifice your status to see the "scum of the earth" welcomed into the Kingdom?

## Going Deeper

1. Who are the people in your community that might be considered "unclean"?
2. Why do you think they would be treated this way? How much money they make? How they dress? How they speak?
3. When was the last time you spoke to or spent time with this kind of person? How often you interact and spend time with this kind of person?
4. What have you done that has made you "unclean" in God's eyes? Read through the Ten Commandments or even the first part of the Small Catechism. What are the things you've done wrong according to these commands and explanations? Repent of these things and confess them to God.
5. Are you willing to give up your respectability in order to reach those who don't know God? Are you willing to give up your worship style or preference in order to reach those who don't know God? Why or why not?
6. Ask God to give you opportunities to minister to and treat well those who are considered "unclean" in your community.