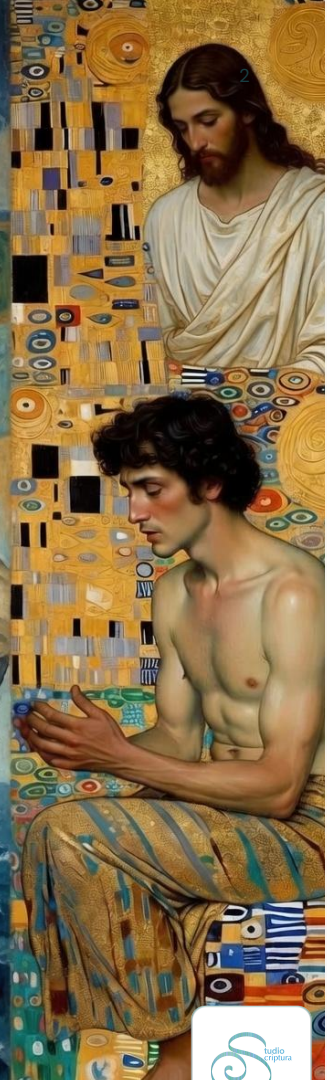
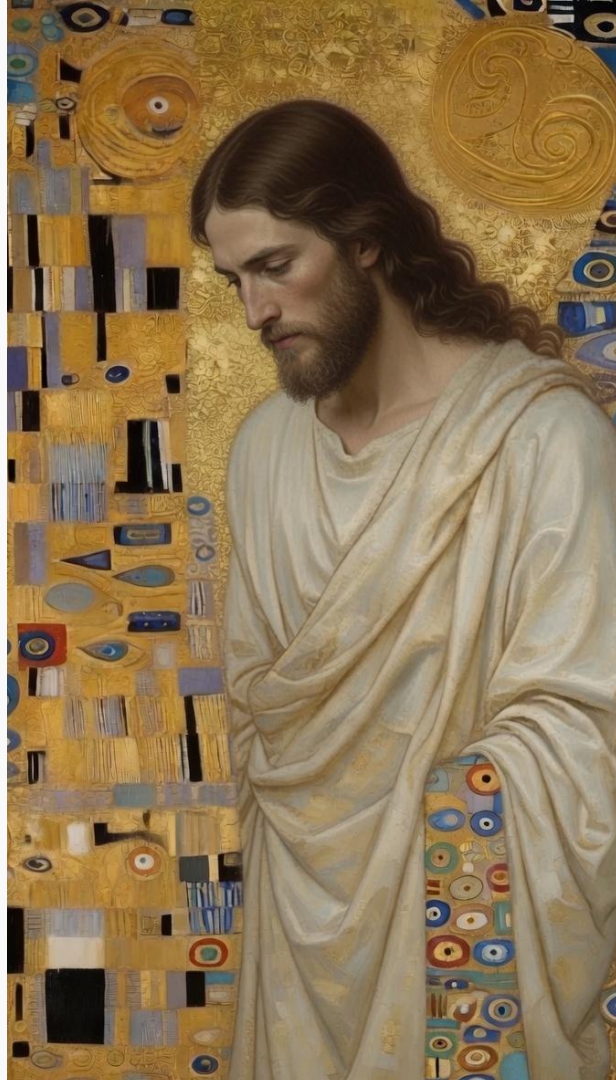




THE LIFE AND TIMES

of

JESUS OF NAZARETH



Legion, the Swine, and a Cliff

Demons Flee, Pigs Plunge, Power
Proclaimed

Matthew 8:28–34; Mark 5:1–20; Luke
8:26–39





We come to one of the most dramatic and unsettling events in the earthly ministry of our Lord. It is strange. It is uncomfortable. It takes us away from the tidy places of respectable religion and brings us into the realm of tombs, chains, nakedness, uncleanness, swine, fear, economic loss, demons, and a whole new aspect of Jesus' Kingdom.

And yet, as we read it in context of the *Life and Times of Jesus of Nazareth*, this is not merely a strange episode on the eastern shore of Galilee. It is a revelation of the authority of Christ and a revelation of the ruin of Satan.

And it is a revelation of what happens when the kingdom of God invades enemy territory. This is not a passage to make us suspicious of every sorrow or struggle, but neither is it a passage we can safely file away as ancient and remote; Scripture is showing us that evil is real, human ruin is serious, and Christ's authority is still the only final hope for a broken world.

We have considered how His Kingdom arrives and grows - it comes with mystery, patience, hiddenness, and final harvest. But here, in the Gadarene country, we see another dimension of that kingdom.

The King enters territory occupied by the enemy, and the occupying powers tremble.

Jesus is not just *teaching* about the kingdom. He is *bringing* the kingdom; and the powers of darkness immediately recognize Him.





Mark says, “Then they came to the other side of the sea, to the country of the Gadarenes.” Luke adds that this country was “opposite Galilee.” Matthew calls it “the country of the Gergesenes.”

In the Synoptic parallels and manuscript traditions, we find the names Gerasenes, Gadarenes, and Gergesenes. That does not trouble us; these are understood as overlapping geographic designations - a broader district, a more familiar city, and most likely a reference to the shoreline name.

The point is that Jesus has crossed into the Gentile-leaning Decapolis region.

The *Decapolis* was a region associated with *ten* Hellenistic cities, shaped first by the wider Greek influence that followed the conquests of Alexander the Great and later brought under Roman power.

After Pompey's conquest of the region in 63 BC, these cities became part of the Roman political world, and under the Caesars they retained a strongly Greco-Roman character: pagan temples, Greek language and culture, civic pride, and Gentile customs.

So when Jesus steps into this region, He is not merely crossing a lake; He is crossing into a world shaped by pagan culture and Roman power - near Israel geographically but very different religiously. That helps explain the herd of swine, and it also heightens the point: Christ's authority is not confined to Jewish territory. He is Lord even here.





This is no longer the clean center of Jewish religious life.

This is enemy territory. It is near Israel, yet culturally and religiously very different. Pigs were unclean animals under the Mosaic law, but in this Hellenized Gentile region, they were ordinary for food and trade. So the scene is layered with uncleanness: unclean spirits, unclean animals, tombs, Gentile territory, social disorder, and a man living outside the ordinary bounds of human life.

Jesus is not afraid of unclean territory. He does not wait for the ruined to make themselves presentable before He approaches them. He does not say, "When this region becomes safer and more respectable, then I will come."

He goes to the other side. He crosses the boundary. He steps into the mess.

Matthew tells us that two demon-possessed men met Him, coming out of the tombs, “exceedingly fierce, so that no one could pass that way.” Mark and Luke focus on one man, the principal spokesman, the man through whom the dialogue and the restoration are narrated.

This is not a contradiction - Matthew gives the headcount, Mark and Luke spotlight the dominant figure. Matthew reminds us that the misery was not isolated. Mark and Luke show us what restoration looks like in a single human life.

Matthew says these men were “exceedingly fierce.” The Greek expression means: dangerous and violent. This was not merely private distress; it was public danger. “No one could pass that way.” The region had adjusted itself around this man’s bondage. People had learned the geography of fear. Do not go that way. Do not pass those tombs. Do not go near that man.





Mark gives us additional detail: this man had been in this condition for a long time. He had his dwelling among the tombs and did not live in a house. He wore no clothes. No one could bind him, not even with chains.

He was kept under guard and had often been bound with shackles and chains, but the chains had been pulled apart and the shackles broken in pieces. “Neither could anyone tame him.”

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

Here is a man created in the *Imago Dei*, an image-bearer of God, but everything about his life has been grotesquely deformed. He is isolated from the community. He is naked. He is among the dead. He is violent. He is self-harming. He is beyond the reach of human and medical restraint. The best society can do is chain him, guard him, avoid him, and warn travelers not to pass that way.

Satan's work is degradation. The thief comes to steal, kill, and destroy (John 10:10). When evil has its way, the result is not authenticity or freedom, but bondage, shame, isolation; inner and physical torment. One's life is destroyed.



Chains can restrain, but cannot redeem. Shackles can limit movement, but cannot restore the mind. Human management may reduce risk for a time, but no human system can make the man whole.

This man does not need stronger chains. He needs a Saviour!





This passage deals explicitly with the demonic. But Scripture does not teach that every mental or emotional struggle is a demon possession. It is a distortion to reduce psychiatric disorders or mental distress to demon possession, just as it is a distortion to deny any spiritual dimension or influence.

Scripture distinguishes explicit demonic control from ordinary diseases, weaknesses, and afflictions. So we must avoid two errors.

The first error is over-spiritualizing: “There is always a demon.” That is not biblical and harmful.

The second error can be equally damaging: “There is no spiritual evil.” That is unbelief dressed in modern clothing.

Some cultures dismiss spiritual powers as primitive superstition. Other cultures may over-attribute every hardship and sickness to demons. Scripture corrects both errors. It gives us a larger worldview than secular naturalism allows, but it also teaches sober discernment.





This is where Paul Hiebert's (1932–2007) phrase “the excluded middle” can be helpful. He observed that many modern people have a category for God above and the natural world below, but they leave out the middle realm of angels, demons, and spiritual powers that Scripture presents seriously.

But we must say this biblically. The Gadarene case is extraordinary. The visible, public, dramatic confrontations with demons in the Gospels occur during the unique redemptive-historical moment of Christ's earthly ministry. This event belongs to the great unfolding story of redemption, where God is publicly revealing His kingdom in the person and work of Christ.

Jesus is not merely helping an individual sufferer, He is invading the enemy's territory, exposing the enemy's tactics, and overthrowing the powers of darkness.





Colossians 2:15 says that at the cross, Christ disarmed principalities and powers and made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them. Their kingdom has been exposed, bruised, judged, and decisively defeated. Spiritual evil remains active, but the Church does not live as though the outcome is uncertain. We resist the enemy *from* a position of Christ's victory, not *for* our victory.

And because the believer is united to the risen Christ, a Christian cannot be possessed, cannot be owned nor occupied by the devil.

Union with Christ means that by grace through faith we are joined to Christ in His death, resurrection, life, and victory. The Christian belongs to Christ.

The Christian is indwelt by the Holy Spirit. The Christian can be tempted, oppressed, deceived, battered, and accused; but he is no longer the devil's property. We do not tremble as though Christ and Satan were equal powers. We stand in the victory of the One who has already crushed the serpent's head.





The normal Christian life therefore involves resisting evil through repentance, faith, submission to God, His Word, prayer, fasting, fellowship, and the ordinary means of grace - including baptism and the Lord's Supper.

James says, "Submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you" (James 4:7).

Peter says, "Be sober, be vigilant," and resist him "steadfast in the faith" (1 Peter 5:8-9).

Paul says, "Take up the whole armor of God" (Ephesians 6:10-18).

For many believers, the most common battlefield is not dramatic but subtle - believed lies, idols, cherished sins, bitterness, lust, pride, cowardice, and worldliness.

That is why Luther could write:

*“Did we in our own strength confide, our striving
would be losing;
were not the right Man on our side, the Man of
God’s own choosing.*

*The prince of darkness grim, we tremble not for
him; his rage we can endure, for lo, his doom is
sure;
one little word shall fell him.”*

That is exactly what happens in this passage. One little word from Christ.



“Then I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, “Now salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of His Christ have come, for the accuser of our brethren, who accused them before our God day and night, has been cast down. And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, and they did not love their lives to the death. Rev. 12:10-11





Mark says that when the man saw Jesus from afar, he ran and worshiped Him. The word here does not mean saving faith. It means he fell before Him, acknowledging His superior authority.

The demons know who Jesus is. They cry out, “What have I to do with You, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I implore You by God that You do not torment me.”

Matthew gives the wording, “What have we to do with You, Jesus, You Son of God? Have You come here to torment us before the time?”

That is remarkable. The demons know Jesus’ identity. They know His authority and that judgment is coming. And they know He has the power to torment them before that time.

Demons are not atheists. Their problem is not lack of information. Their problem has always been pride and rebellion.

James says even the demons believe, and tremble. So we should not confuse correct information with saving faith. A person can know true things about Jesus and still resist Him. A person can use the language of theology and still remain proud, unrepentant and in rebellion.

Hell may be full of those who held accurate knowledge about Jesus - but without repentance.

The title “Most High God” is especially striking as it was used in Gentile territory. It declares Jesus supremacy, he is not merely a Jewish teacher operating within Israel’s borders. His authority extends across the sea, into Gentile lands, over unclean spirits, over the invisible realm, over time, over judgment, and over the abyss.





Then Jesus asks, “What is your name?” And the answer comes: “My name is Legion, for we are many.” In the Roman world, a legion was a large military unit, commonly thought of in the range of several thousand soldiers. The name communicates number, military organization, and intimidation.

But here is the glory of the passage: whether one demon or a legion of demons, they are all subject to Jesus. The number may terrify men - but it does not trouble Jesus. He is never outnumbered by the enemy.

That is one of the great reversals in the passage: The man had been feared by the town, the town had arranged itself around him, no one could tame him. But when Jesus appears, the man who caused terror is no longer the central power in the story. The demons are reduced to fear and begging. They beg Jesus not to torment them before their time. Luke says they beg Him not to command them to go out into the abyss.

The abyss is the place of confinement, restraint, and judgment. Revelation uses bottomless pit in connection with final judgment. The idea here is clear: the demons dread confinement under divine authority, they fear being shut up in restraint. They fear judgment before the appointed consummation of all things.





Milton's language provides us a literary echo of such dread:

“A dungeon horrible, on all sides round, as one great furnace flam’d, yet from those flames no light, but rather darkness visible serv’d only to discover sights of woe, regions of sorrow, doleful shades, where peace and rest can never dwell, hope never comes ... but torture without end.”



Last week we discussed when our Lord crossed the water into the Gentile region of the Gadarenes, He was not merely taking a detour; He was deliberately stepping into enemy-occupied territory to display His absolute authority.

There, in a landscape layered with uncleanness, He was met by a man grotesquely deformed by darkness, living naked among the tombs, violent, and utterly beyond the reach of societal management.

This **dramatic confrontation** demands that we hold a thoroughly biblical worldview: we must reject the modern arrogance of denying spiritual evil, just as we avoid the superstition of over-spiritualizing every struggle. We instead rest securely in Christ's definitive victory.

And what a stunning revelation of power we witness when the forces of hell, identifying themselves as a *Legion*, instantly recognize the ***Son of the Most High God***. They simply tremble, begging Jesus, the Sovereign King, not to cast them into the abyss before their appointed time of final judgment.

So the demons beg to enter the swine. Why? We are cautious to not read too much into Scripture as it does not tell us everything. But it tells us enough.

First, they want continuity of agency. They plead to remain active rather than confined. Second, there is malice on exit. Even when expelled, they seek destruction. If they cannot destroy the man, they will destroy the pigs; the enemy “does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy.” (John 10:10). Third, the visible transfer into the swine publicly corroborates the deliverance. Everyone can see that something decisive has happened. The herd’s plunge into the sea becomes an outward sign that the demons truly left the man at that moment.

Jesus permits it. He says, “Go.” That is all. No ceremony. No struggle. No negotiation. No theatrical contest. **Just, Jesus’ sovereign Word.**





“And suddenly the whole herd of swine ran violently down the steep place into the sea, and perished in the water.” Mark says there were about two thousand. This is shocking. Two thousand pigs would represent significant economic capital. This is not a small nuisance, it is a financial disaster for the owners and keepers of the herd. The **passage wants us to feel the disruption.**

Now we might ask: what happened to the demons after the pigs drowned? The honest answer is that Scripture does not say. Demons are spirit beings; they do not die when animals die. They were not destroyed in the water. Perhaps they became disembodied again. Perhaps they remained subject to whatever restraint Christ imposed. We should not conjecture where the text of Scripture is silent.

The point of the passage is not to satisfy curiosity on every point - the point is the **complete liberation of the man and the visible confirmation of Christ’s authority.**

Those who kept the swine fled and reported it in the city and in the country. Matthew says the whole city came out to meet Jesus. Mark and Luke describe the people coming out to see what had happened.

Matthew's statement is more condensed and dramatic, emphasizing the scale of the response. All three Synoptic writers agree that **the news spreads, and spreads fast**, and the region comes face to face with Jesus. And what do they see?

Luke says they came to Jesus and **“found the man from whom the demons had departed, sitting at the feet of Jesus, clothed and in his right mind.”**

That must be one of the most beautiful sentences in the Gospels. *Sitting. Clothed. In his right mind. At the feet of Jesus.* **Sitting:** he is no longer roaming among tombs, crying night and day. There is composure now. Stability. Peace.





Clothed: shame is covered, dignity is restored. He is again visibly fit for human society. Luke had told us he wore no clothes, that detail is not incidental. Nakedness in Scripture often carries moral and symbolic weight i.e., exposure, shame, and alienation from God. In Genesis 3, after sin enters, Adam and Eve know they are naked, and they hide. Nakedness is associated with shame and fear. The enemy strips dignity and shames people. Christ restores dignity. And in the larger gospel picture, we are clothed with His righteousness. Isaiah says, “**He has clothed me with the garments of salvation, He has covered me with the robe of righteousness.**” (Isaiah 61:10) The final answer to human shame is to be clothed by God Himself in the righteousness of Christ.

In his right mind: the Greek idea is soundness (being of sound mind), ordered reason, self-control. This is not merely that the man has stopped screaming. His inner life has been re-established, his mind has been restored.

And at the feet of Jesus: that is discipleship language. To sit at someone's feet is to take the posture of the learner. Paul says he was brought up "at the feet of Gamaliel." It is humility and submission to instruction. The man is not merely relieved, he is reoriented. He is now where every restored soul belongs, at the feet of Christ.

And this is essential for our age. We live in a restless age of fractured souls. We see and experience anxiety, confusion about the age we live in, despair and paranoia, constant digital distraction, and moral chaos.

Few are not living among literal tombs, but many are living among **tombs of another kind:** dead philosophies, dead political ideologies that promise hope, pleasures that once pursued end in death, dead religion, and dead-end promises. All dressed up as a shiny and exciting new thing, but each unable to provide rest for the soul because they do not have Christ.





And Christ restores the mind. Notice that this restoration is more than a calm nervous system, reduced symptoms, or improved social functioning. Those things matter, to be sure, but the passage points us to something deeper.

True soundness of mind is a life reordered under the lordship of Jesus Christ; a **mind** brought out of chaos, restored to clarity, and seated at His feet. Paul writes, “Let this **mind** be in you which was also in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 2:5), and he calls us to bring “every **thought** into captivity to the obedience of Christ” (2 Corinthians 10:5). The restored **mind** is therefore not merely calmer; it is increasingly shaped by the **mind** of Christ and brought under the authority of His truth.

This is why Isaiah 26:3 says, “You will keep him in perfect peace, whose **mind** is stayed (*firmly fixed upon, resting upon, and sustained by*) on You, because he trusts in You.”



The Christian answer to the troubled mind is not simplistic. We are not denying physiological factors. We are not denying mental illness, depression, the potential need for medication, or other medical realities. Wise professional medical insight should be sought where evident bodily, medical, or safety factors are present. Medicine is a gift of common grace.

That means we move with both courage and compassion. And if there is ever an urgent risk of self-harm or harm to others, then emergency medical and law enforcement professionals should be contacted immediately.

At the same time, all medical help remains under the lordship of Christ and never replaces the authority of Scripture, repentance, faith, prayer, and life in the Church!

Christ can deliver suddenly and decisively as this passage reveals. Restoration, however, sometimes unfolds progressively as knowledge of His word deepens and habits, relationships, worship, sleep, thought patterns, repentance, community, and stability are all rebuilt upon the authority of Scripture and Jesus.

Jesus concludes the Sermon on the Mount by saying: "Therefore whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock". Matthew 7:24

When others are suffering, we must not burden them with unrealistic promises or predetermined timelines for recovery. Nor should we allow modern cynicism to diminish our confidence in the power of God.





Now we observe the reaction of the townspeople: “They were afraid.” Luke says they were seized with **great fear**. They ask Jesus to depart from their region.

They had actually learned to tolerate the demoniac, a tormented man in the tombs. They had avoided that road for years, warned their kids, chained him and kept a distance.

But when Jesus arrives and restores him, they ask Jesus to leave.

It seems they grew more comfortable with demonic bondage; they felt it was sort of manageable more than Jesus’ disruptive authority and holiness.

This is one of the most searching points in the passage. The question one must ask is *Why?*

First - Holiness is not tame. Christ's power is unsettling. A Jesus who can do this cannot be domesticated into one's comfortable religious expectations.

Second - Economic loss. The herd was capital, the arrival of the Kingdom disrupted commerce.

Third - Status quo. Jesus didn't fit expectations. He reordered reality. He exposed the region's priorities, its fear, its economy, its tolerance of evil.

There is a parallel in Acts 16. Paul casts a spirit of divination out of a slave girl. She is delivered, but her masters are furious because their hope of profit is gone. Deliverance collided with economics. So they dragged Paul and Silas before the authorities.



That still happens today, righteousness is costly. Holiness disrupts profit centers. When Christ liberates people, certain industries lose customers. Certain churches lose their comfortable arrangements. Certain communities lose their illusions. And those who benefit from the status quo begin to feel threatened, because they prefer predictable bondage to disruptive holiness.

A church, a family, a community, or an individual heart can say, in effect: *Jesus, please leave*. We do it when we want His comfort but not His commands. His benefits but not discipleship. A religion just enough to be respectable. We arrange our worship, preaching, so-called discipleship classes so that attendance matters more than repentance - and reputation outranks holiness.





Many people do not reject Jesus because they have disapproved of Him. They reject Him because they sense, that if He stays in my life He will claim authority. He will reorder priorities. He will touch my money, sexuality, ambition, and the hidden chambers of my heart.

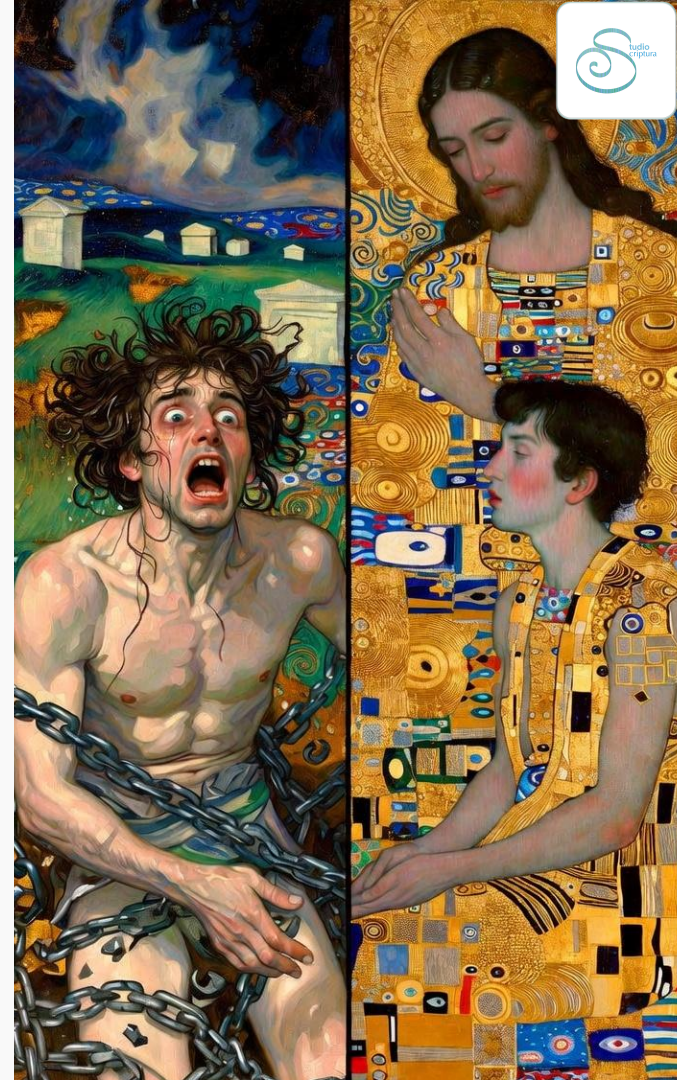
So they beg Him to depart.

Jesus does not leave without a witness. The restored man begs to be with Him. That is understandable. If Jesus had delivered anyone from that kind of bondage, they would want to climb into the boat with Him - to be near the One who set them free.

Jesus gives different directions - not rejection - but commission.

Mark records Jesus' words: "Go home to your friends, and tell them what great things the Lord has done for you, and how He has had compassion on you." Luke records: "Return to your own house, and tell what great things God has done for you."

And the man goes and proclaims throughout the whole city. That does not mean every witness is limited to family and friends. But it does mean that evangelism naturally begins with the people who know us best. Your family knows whether grace has made you gentler. Your friends know whether Christ has changed your speech. Your coworkers know if your life has changed. Your neighbors see something is different.





Mark continues and says he went throughout all of Decapolis **testifying** what great things Jesus had done for him. This is all about testimony, not ministry technique.

And notice where the witness spreads, Decapolis which is gentile territory. The man becomes a herald of Christ in a region that has just asked Christ to leave. The people rejected Jesus' presence, but Jesus left them a witness. They did not want Him as their Teacher, but they could not avoid the testimony of one delivered by his authority and grace.

This first missionary to that region was not a polished religious professional. He was not a graduate of seminary. He was not a man with impressive credentials.

He was simply a guy with a true story of how Jesus changed his life.

The church today should recover confidence in this kind of ordinary testimony. We often make witnessing more complicated than Jesus made it. Christ sends a restored man back into his own circle with a true report: *what the Lord has done, and how the Lord has shown compassion*. The man does not need training. He simply tells what great things Jesus has done for him.





So what are some takeaways for us?

First Christ's authority is absolute. He commands wind and waves, and they obey. He commands demons, and they obey. He crosses seas, boundaries, cultures, fears, and uncleanness. No realm is outside His rule. There is no region where nor legion over which He is not Lord.

Second Satan's work is destructive. The enemy dehumanizes, isolates, shames, drives people toward death. He lies, deceives, and destroys. We should not be naïve about spiritual evil. But neither should we be fearful nor fascinated by it.

Third Restoration is holistic. The man is sitting, clothed, in his right mind, and at Jesus' feet. Christ restores the body, the mind, the dignity, the relationships, worship, and the mission of the person. He does not merely remove torment; He reorders life.

Fourth Many fear another way when it threatens the status quo. The town tolerated the demoniac but feared Jesus. What bondage have we learned to accept? What disorder do we tolerate because true holiness would be too disruptive?

Fifth The witness begins close to home. “Go home to your friends.” Tell what the Lord has done, how He has had compassion. The man becomes a living sermon. So often the most powerful evangelistic message is a redeemed life.





We are called to not merely admire Christ from a distance and enjoying His benefits. But we are called to be clothed in His righteousness, sitting at His feet, under His authority, receiving His Word, in our right mind, and yielding to His lordship.

We are called to go to family and friends, and then to our entire region and tell them:

*Here is what the Lord has done for me,
and here is how He has had compassion
on me.*





If You Missed a Week Where We've Been



Secrets of the Kingdom: Parables That Both Confound and Reveal Matthew 13

1. Christ's kingdom does not arrive through immediate political triumph, but grows quietly until the final harvest
2. Jesus used parables to reveal spiritual mysteries to His disciples while concealing them from hardened hearts
3. The Word's impact depends on the heart; only good soil produces genuine fruit despite worldly pressures
4. The visible church contains true believers and false professors, growing together until God's final judgment
5. God's kingdom starts from small, unimpressive beginnings but quietly produces a transformative outcome over time
6. True disciples recognize Christ's incomparable value, joyfully surrendering old desires and reordering their lives for Him
7. Believers must faithfully sow the Word without despairing over mixed results, trusting God with the final harvest

If You Missed a Week Where We've Been

Signs & Wonders - The Miracles of Jesus that Mend Body and Soul

1. The miracles of Jesus are signs: they reveal His glory, identity, authority, compassion, and kingdom.
2. Jesus mends both body and soul - but forgiveness of sins and peace with God are the deeper need.
3. His miracles show authority over sickness, sin, demons, creation, defilement, death, and the grave.
4. Miracles show that the kingdom has arrived in Christ: healing, provision, restoration, and resurrection preview the world to come.
5. Miracles call for faith, worship, obedience, and witness, not mere amazement or curiosity.
6. Miracles confirmed Christ and His apostolic messengers. Although they are not normative today in the same apostolic-sign sense, God still hears prayer and acts miraculously according to His sovereign will.
7. Jesus' miracles ultimately point beyond themselves to the cross, the empty tomb, and the greatest miracle: sinners made alive in Christ.





If You Missed a Week Where We've Been



Mountainside Manifesto: The Sermon That Still Shakes the Soul Matthew 5-7

1. We are saved by grace through faith; the *Sermon on the Mount* shows how saved disciples are called to live.
2. Jesus gives disciples (kingdom people) a whole new way to see and live in the world: "*But I say to you.*"
3. The Beatitudes show the character (the *attitude*) of the disciple: humility, mourning, meekness, mercy, purity, peace, and courage.
4. Salt and light remind us to preserve truth and shine visibly for the Father's glory.
5. Jesus fulfills the Law and Prophets and drives righteousness into behavior, attitude, and the heart.
6. How we respond to anger, lust, marriage, oaths, retaliation, enemies, money, worry, and judgment reveal whether we live under Christ's authority.
7. The sermon ends with a searching question: Are we building on sand, or on the rock of Christ's Word?

If You Missed a Week Where We've Been *(continued)*

Come, Follow Me Twelve Ordinary Men, One Extraordinary Call

1. Jesus called ordinary men into extraordinary service. Christ used them to turn the world upside down.
2. John the Baptist pointed his disciples to Christ: "Behold the Lamb of God." True discipleship begins with seeing Jesus as the fulfillment of redemption and salvation.
3. Andrew brought Peter, Philip brought Nathanael, and Matthew brought sinners. A disciple wants others to "come and see."
4. "Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men" - transformation under Christ's hand.
5. Discipleship begins with being with Jesus - "that they might be with Him," then sent to preach.
6. The Twelve were real men with real weaknesses and varied backgrounds. Christ formed fishermen, a tax collector, a zealot, doubters, bold men, quiet men, and one tragic betrayer.
7. Bonhoeffer reminds us that discipleship is costly, not casual: *When Christ calls a man, he bids him come and die.*





If You Missed a Week Where We've Been *(continued)*



A Late Night Visitor: Nicodemus and the Mystery of the New Birth

1. John 3 centers on Jesus' declaration: "You must be born again." Religion, morality, heritage, and status cannot replace new life received by faith.
2. Nicodemus was respected and religious, yet Jesus exposed his deepest need: sin and the need for spiritual rebirth through faith
3. The new birth is not self-improvement or religious activity. It is the Spirit's sovereign work, producing true faith and fruit.
4. Like the bronze serpent in Numbers 21, Christ was lifted up so sinners may look to God's provision by faith and live.
5. The gospel's heart: God loved, God gave, and whoever believes in the Son has everlasting life.
6. This confronts cultural Christianity. Admiring Jesus is not enough. True Christianity begins with new life - faith, repentance, humility, and Christ-centered living.
7. *For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. John 3:16*

If You Missed a Week Where We've Been *(continued)*

Zeal for His Father's House - Two Cleansings of the Temple - "Can You Hear Me Now?!"

1. Jesus performed His first miracle at Cana, turning shame into joy and revealing His divine glory
2. Mary said, "Whatever He says to you, do it," calling for immediate obedience
3. Jesus then went to Jerusalem, where the Temple, meant for prayer, had become filled with commerce and a *den of thieves*.
4. In zeal for His Father's house, He drove out the merchants and called for restoring the purpose of true worship
5. He declared the Temple to be "a house of prayer for all nations," not a place of profit
6. A second cleansing later in His ministry confirmed His sustained call to repentance and reverence
7. And His message still confronts the Church today. In the midst of programs, polished liturgies, carefully crafted music, and the quiet pull of commercial ambition, Jesus still stands before His people and asks: *Can you hear Me now?*





If You Missed a Week Where We've Been *(continued)*



Waters and Wilderness: Baptism's Blessing and Triumph over Temptation

1. At His baptism, Jesus publicly identified Himself with sinners and began His public ministry in obedience to the Father
2. The heavens opened, the Spirit descended like a dove, and the Father declared, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased," providing one of the clearest displays of the Trinity in Scripture
3. Immediately after His baptism, Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to face direct confrontation with Satan
4. Satan offered shortcuts to power, glory, and authority without obedience to the will of God
5. Jesus resisted every temptation by relying on the written Word of God, demonstrating faithful obedience where Adam and Israel had failed
6. The wilderness became the setting where the obedient Son showed His readiness to carry out the Father's mission
7. Before the ministry advanced publicly, the Messiah was revealed by God and proven faithful under testing.

If You Missed a Week Where We've Been *(continued)*

A Carpenter's Son in a Cradle: Genealogy, Mary, and Witnesses

1. The birth of Jesus is surrounded by a remarkable series of witnesses placed by God to confirm the identity of the promised Messiah
2. Angels announced the birth of the Savior, declaring peace on earth and glory to God in the highest
3. Shepherds became the first public witnesses of the good news after seeing the child in Bethlehem and spreading the report widely
4. Simeon recognized the infant Jesus as the fulfillment of God's promise and praised God for allowing him to see the Lord's salvation
5. Anna, a faithful prophetess who had waited many years for redemption, witnessed openly about the child to all who were looking for deliverance
6. All these witnesses demonstrate that God revealed His Son publicly and through credible testimony, not quietly
7. The early years, including Jesus' growth in wisdom and presence in the temple, show His life unfolding under the hand of providence - *He must be about His Father's business*





If You Missed a Week Where We've Been *(continued)*



Before Bethlehem: The Word Before Worlds

1. John begins his Gospel not with the birth of Jesus, but with the eternal existence of the Word before creation itself
2. The Word is the agent of creation, through whom all things were made and by whom all things continue to exist
3. The term *Logos* was familiar in the ancient world and especially influenced by Stoic philosophy which spoke of the Logos as a rational principle governing the universe. John reveals that the Logos is not a force, but a living Person, Jesus Christ
4. John uses the language of the culture as a platform and expands it with divine truth, showing that the true source of life, order, and meaning is the Son of God
5. A central theme in John chapter 1 is witness: God sends witnesses to testify publicly to the truth about Christ
6. John the Baptist is a man sent from God to bear witness to the Light so that all might believe
7. The Word became flesh and dwelt among us, meaning that the eternal God entered human history as a person.

If You Missed a Week Where We've Been *(continued)*

Prophecy and fulfillment

1. The Old Testament contains a unified pattern of promises and prophetic expectations pointing forward to a coming Messiah who would redeem His people
2. These prophecies described His lineage, birthplace, mission, suffering, and ultimate victory long before He entered human history
3. Jesus Himself taught that the entire Old Testament points to Him, not merely in isolated predictions but in a coherent redemptive storyline
4. After His resurrection, Jesus declared in Luke 24 that everything written in the Law of Moses, the Prophets, and the Psalms must be fulfilled concerning Him
5. Christianity is not built on religious sentiment or moral aspiration, but on fulfilled promises anchored in real history
6. The coming of Jesus was not accidental or improvised, it was the unfolding of God's eternal plan in time
7. The Old Testament does not merely anticipate Christ, it testifies of Him.



This class was prepared through personal study of Scripture and careful engagement with trusted scholarship on the Gospels. Generative AI tools were used to assist with research, organization, and the drafting of phrasing. All final interpretations, judgments, and content reflect the author's convictions.