

THE MAN WHO LOST HIS CLOTHES ++



PASTOR GREG GRIFFITH

Good morning, Church! Happy 4th of July to all of you across all of our campuses as well. Before I dive into this message, I do want to just alert everyone. Later this week you will be getting something about how we can help those who have been devastated through the floods in Texas. And so we'll have a way that we're able to help. We've already been in touch with the Texas district of our church body down there. And we're going to be having that information for you.

Hey, today as we continue our series, hey, don't skip this. We're going to dive into seeing what Jesus does. That Jesus exposes lies and restores dignity when the world just wants to expose our lies. Today my prayer is across all campuses and anyone who hears this message, that you would know Jesus is intentionally coming after you to give you transformation. That when we come and are received by the King of Kings, that we will find peace and know that victory is ours. And that we will be clothed with righteousness and with His glory. And that everyone will see Him by meeting and seeing you.

Hans Christian Andersen, the famous nursery fable writer, wrote about an emperor with no clothes. And what it was was a story of this emperor who loved to be seen and to be known. And he loved to wear fancy wardrobes and clothes. And then there were two tailors who they said that they could trick him in all his folly. And so they convinced him that they were the only two that could fashion and form the finest of clothing. The finest of wear. The people would see it and would be amazed by what they see. And he said, I have to have these. And they said, well the only thing is it will be invisible to you, but everyone will see the clothes that you wear. And so this emperor wore these clothes and really was walking around naked. And was mocked and laughed at for his folly.

Today we're going to meet a man who too was naked. Who too needed new clothes. Who also was walking around in desperation. But he doesn't need flattery like the emperor. He needs freedom like you and like me. And Jesus meets this man not to mock him, but to relieve him from his pain, his hurt, and his heartache. And to give him new life.

I don't know about you, but sometimes I can find myself in the same boat as this man that Jesus meets. Meaning this, that I can find myself what that old TV show used to be called naked and afraid. Not physically, but definitely emotionally. Definitely spiritually. I think when we find ourselves out of control, or when we find ourselves at a loss of being able to solve something, or a worry that's happening that we know, oh this has been messed up and I don't know how to fix this. What it brings up in all of us is it brings up this feeling that we're naked and afraid. How do we fix this?

And there was a man that had that same situation. And Jesus came to him. And I want us to discover more about this story. And more about this event that happened in the lives of Jesus. And where Jesus also meets you in your life today.

So as I said last week, as we're diving into this, bring your Bibles. Be ready to open up. We're going to open up into Mark chapter 5. Mark chapter 5. And here's what the Word of God says to us today. 5 verses 1 through 5.

They went across the lake to the region of Gerasenes. And to the country, and to that region. And you can see that on the screens. This is what it looked like. And when Jesus got out of the boat, a man with an impure spirit came from the tombs. And they met him. This man lived in the tombs and no one could bind him anymore. Not even with a chain, for he had often been chained hand and foot. But he tore the chains apart and broke the irons on his feet. No one was strong enough to subdue him. Night and day among the tombs and in the hills. He would cry out and cut himself with the stones.

So let's dive into the Word of God that is happening here. First of all, the region that Jesus is going to, the Gerasenes. This is primarily what is known in that time as a Hellenistic or a Roman territory. So it is not a place that the Jews would go. As a matter of fact, it is known as a Gentile land. Which is why you see throughout the rest of the event and rest of the Scripture there, that there's going to be a plethora of pigs that are around. It's why he meets this man in a graveyard. It is a place for unclean people, unclean things. Nowhere that a Jew would go. And then he meets this man.

Now, first of all, let's back up. Notice this. They came to the other side of the sea of the country. Jesus intentionally got in a boat. It wasn't like the wind just took them there. He intentionally got in a boat and he intentionally went to this Gentile region. God is intentional about meeting you and me in our mess. God is intentional about it. You can't avoid it. It's not haphazard. It's not like he's not there. One of the thoughts that we might remind ourselves with is when the father runs to his son who had been with the pigs. And who had squandered all things. Our God is intentional to come to us in the mess. And that's who you have in Jesus.

Second, this man's living amongst the tombs. He's living where the dead live. He is a dead man walking. Is what those who would have heard and seen this event would have thought. He is a dead man walking. And beyond salvation is what the Jews would have said. And he's cutting himself. He's naked and he's out of control. Unlike the emperor in the fable that was for laughs. His is because of his pain and his shame. So as Jesus is radical and uncommon coming towards him. It reminds me of the feeling that we have sometimes when we too feel out of control. It feels like no one can help us.

There's times in our lives where we may not be going through the total desperation of this man in the tombs. But we do feel like we have total desperation in our life. And we feel exposed and vulnerable. And we feel like we are going mad. I think every human being has this experience at times in our lives. Where we look and we say that anxiety or worry or something is overtaking us. And we lose control and we don't know how to stop it. We don't know how to fix it. And I think that's one reason why in our world we have so many moments where we just want to unplug. This is why the epidemic of scrolling through whatever social media platform you find as your fix is. Where you say I'm just not even in the world anymore. I'm in this fairy tale land. And like the emperor we think that it's no big deal. But yet we've completely lost it.

Now the Romans and those of this Gentile region with this man. They tried to help him but nothing could do it. Now they've given him up to himself. That he's just living in this tomb. Living in these places with chains that cannot bind him. And he's mad. He's lost his mind. You can see it that this would have been like if people are walking down the street. They would have taken their children and

crossed to the other side. And said oh don't pay attention to him. And for the Jews they would have said he's not even a man. And collectively Jew and Gentile would have said he's a monster. But the reality is that our God sees no monsters. He only sees men. He only sees people as dearly loved creations of his. Who he has formed and fashioned in the womb.

I like how C.S. Lewis wrote about it in his book *The Weight of Glory*. He says there's no ordinary people you've never talked to a mere mortal. You see when we live as Jesus' people and recognize all that Jesus has done. We realize how valuable humanity is. Every single man, woman and child from every single background, age and demographic. All people are extraordinary in the eyes of God. Every one of us. There's no mere mortal. And in our lives as we get transformed to recognize that Jesus is intentional in meeting every single one of us. And every single person in their mess. To come and to relieve them from their pain and their shame. Your pain, your shame, my pain, my shame.

Then we can recognize what it is to live in the true economy of God. In the kingdom of God. And this has always been the intention of our God. Our God has always said don't make people higher or lower. Don't give them greater significance or lower significance. It's why he pleaded with his people and said you don't need a king. You have me as your father. It's why we see that he said my kingdom isn't of this world. And he would not allow himself to be named the king of this world. Because he knows that his people don't need a king. And you and I as Americans that just celebrated the 4th of July and the 249th birthday of our great nation. Have said we don't need a king. But we have and love the king of kings. And that's the king that God knew we needed. And that he gave us. The king who gave up everything. His royal robes and all things to become a child and to be swaddled. To intentionally come and to meet us in our mess.

Let's go on into what the word says to us in Mark 5, 6-13. When he, this man who was mad, saw Jesus from a distance. He ran and fell on his knees in front of him. He shouted at the top of his voice. What do you want with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? In God's name don't torture me. For Jesus had said to him, come out of this man, you impure spirit. And Jesus asked him, what is your name? My name is Legion, he replied. For we are many. And he begged Jesus again and again not to send them out to the area. A large herd of pigs was feeding on a nearby hillside. The demons begged Jesus, send us among the pigs. Allow us to go into them. He gave them permission. And the impure spirits came out and went into the pigs. And then the herd, about 2,000 in number, rushed down the steep bank into the lake. And were drowned.

Let's discover more about this scripture here today. So first, as he arrived, the man who is now being overtaken by these demons, fell down before him and said, please, in a loud voice, what do you want with us, Jesus of the Most High God? By God's name and in God's name, do not torture us. This reminds us that everything will bow and every knee will confess that Jesus is Lord. All will, even the demons, have to submit to the authority and to the kingship of Jesus.

And so we see here that as they come, that this man is no longer in his own possession. He is no longer himself. When Jesus says, what is your name? He says, I am Legion. And what he is announcing is he is announcing that he has multiple thousands of demons that are possessing this man. And probably Legion was a Roman name that would have been and would have described the number of soldiers in the armies. Anywhere from four to six thousand demons are possessing this man at this time. He can't even do anything for himself now. That is the full pain that he is in.

And we know again, as they are now saying, here it is, we're in a region where there are pigs. Send us into the pigs. And the Jews and those around, as they would have heard about this event happening, would have been like, yes, those are the unclean animals. Those are where things go. And we are reminded, as we hear this event, we are reminded of a few things.

First, we are reminded, as Martin Luther said this, even the devil is God's devil. And what does that mean? That the devil is not out and about and cannot say, I want no authority. I will not submit to your will and your ways, oh God. The devil is a created being. So let us not give him the attributes of God. He is not omniscient. He's not omnipotent. He doesn't know everything. He doesn't have all the power. He can't be everywhere.

But let us also recognize that he is at work in this world where we see its might. And he's at work in our world today. And I think it's really important to not think about demonic possession as these things where it's always like this man. Where we lose our minds and we're foaming at the mouth and all those stereotypes we put in our heads.

I think we need to normalize the reality that we live in a spiritual warfare and a spiritual world right now where Satan is at work through his demons. Millions of them. Where he's tormenting us. And where he finds little spaces and little footholds that we've revealed to him. And that it's not always, well, this is no problem. Sometimes they become greater problems. Like I found myself recently in the past year or two struggling more and more with anxiety. With some worry. And I've also found myself struggling more and more with isolationism.

And these are little demons. And let's not poo-poo them away and just think, well, it's no big deal. They are big deals. And they're all around us. And the reminder for me in this text is a reminder that Satan is always working through his demons. C.S. Lewis even wrote about this in his screw tape letters.

It's a little demon that's in the back of your head while you're in church going, can you believe that person would wear those clothes today? Or the little demon that just gets you to have the evil thought as you're driving like, you know, that person is terrible. Or the little demon that devalues a person without even knowing them. Those little thoughts or those feelings that just take us over that we want to get rid of. And sometimes they're emotional. Sometimes they're physical. And sometimes they're spiritual. And they come after us.

And here's what I want to encourage you to do today. Don't let the Satan whispers of the lies of the things that are overtaking you today have power over you. Instead, expose those lies. I need not worry, oh God, I am not alone. And I am valuable for who I am are the things and the truths that I have to expose those lies. Restore the dignity of who I am and a child of God. And then we know what we do? We send them back. Those lies back to the pits in the pigs where they live with the pig of all pigs. Satan. Amen? Amen.

What Jesus does in this life right here and right now, evil isn't displaced. It has been destroyed. We're already living in the new time of the glory of the victory. Now we're waiting for him to return where it will no longer be present in us. But evil's been destroyed. It doesn't have power over you anymore. Jesus proves that and shows that to us. Not only through this event, but also through the empty tomb. Evil's not displaced. It's been destroyed.

And so what we see in here is we see that Jesus heals the Gentile man. He's amongst the pigs and he's in the tombs. Now for the Jews of that day and their culture, this would have been three strikes, Jesus, you're out. You're amongst all the unclean things. But in the kingdom of God, this is the grand slam that shows us he is the king of all kings. And that nothing on this earth can displace him from his power and his authority.

And as he comes in and rescues the man and rescues you and me, he gives to us rest, restoration, rest, and he sends us. Mark 14 through 20, it says this.

Those tending the pigs ran off and reported this to the town, the countryside, and the people went out to see what happened. When they came to Jesus, they saw the man who had been possessed by the legion of demons sitting there, clothed and dressed in his right mind. They were afraid because those who had seen it told the people what had happened to the demon-possessed man. And they told them about the pigs as well. And then the people began to plead with Jesus to leave their region.

And as Jesus was getting into the boat, the man who had been demon-possessed begged to go with him. And Jesus didn't let him. Instead, he said, go home to your own people and tell them how much the Lord has done for you, how he has mercy on you. So the man went away and began to tell in the Decapolis how much Jesus and what he had done for them. And all the people were amazed.

So, you and I have restoration with Jesus in our homes, in our lives, in our hearts, and in our minds. It's what the transformation comes when we know that Jesus intentionally comes to us in our mess and that he is the king of all kings and we give him all things. It means that we get to live rested like this man, sitting at the feet of Jesus, rested and restored in his mind. And that we can find peace even though it feels like there's no peace around us. And it means that we get to be sent. Sent.

And you know what I love about this? You and I actually get to meet the very first Gentile missionary. It's the man who was walking amongst the dead in the tombs. When Jesus said, go and tell your people what you have seen and what has been done.

That's the very first Gentile missionary. And Jesus sends you and I to go out clothed in new robes, clothed with righteousness. You know what I want to invite? I want to invite my buddy to come up here. Come on up here, bud. Come on up here. Come on up here.

And I want to do this as he's coming up. Come here. Stand with me right here. Here's the thing. You and I, I know. You and I are no longer naked and afraid. Instead, we get to be clothed with the glory and the redemption and the life of Jesus. And we walk. We walk clothed in his righteousness. Not afraid. Not unseen. But now, everyone who sees us sees the King of Kings.

Will you stand up? Will you pray with me?

Father God, we thank you and praise you that you've intentionally come into our mess by sending your Son into our lives. We thank you and praise you, O God, that you are the God who is the King of all kings, our King. We thank you and praise you, O God, that you've restored us, you've given us rest and you've sent us to go and to show that we have the clothes of righteousness and of glory upon us.

Today, tomorrow, and forever and all God's people across all campuses said, Amen. Amen.

Thanks, my man.