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[0 : 00] Please turn with me in your Bibles back to Mark chapter 5. Mark chapter 5, we'll be looking at this story that we read, this great account of an incredible rescue, verses 1 to 20.

Now about a month ago, I'm not sure if you'd have seen it on the news, there was some news of some hostages in Somalia being rescued. Two aid workers, a US woman and a Danish man, had been held hostage for ransom by some pirates.

It was a terrifying situation and their lives were in danger. And to make it worse, the US woman's health was deteriorating. So President Obama gave the order to go ahead for a rescue operation. Out came the US Navy SEALs. The elite team were dropped in by parachute into Somalia for an overnight operation. Parachuted from a plane, they landed near the compound where the hostages were being held.

And there was then a gun battle that ensued. But eventually the pirates were overtaken and defeated. And the hostages were flown by helicopter to a nearby military base.

[1 : 23] An incredible, powerful rescue. And can you imagine how those hostages would have felt, being able to be freed and taken out of there, taken back to a place of safety.

One thing's for sure, although we don't know the details of what actually happened in that moment when they were being rescued, I'm sure we can imagine that they were really grateful to be rescued. Sure we'd be sure that as soon as those rescuers were there on the scene saying, come on, time to go, they were out at like a shot with them.

You'd never imagine that they would say, actually, no, I'm quite happy here. What on earth did you just do to those Somali pirates?

That just wouldn't happen, would it? In Mark 5, we have an even greater rescue done by Christ in this hostage situation going on.

We've got a man, a man whose actual name is Legion because of the demons that are taking over his life, and he's being rescued from his captivity.

[2 : 29] And it's an incredible rescue mission that's going on there. But there are other hostages in this story too. They're in a different kind of captivity.

And although Jesus, the great, powerful rescuers, they're on the scene ready to free them, actually they say, no thanks, go away. It's an incredible reaction.

And we're just left wondering, why don't you want to be set free too? Don't you want to be set free? That's the question in this story, as we'll come through to see later on.

And it's a question that's turned back on us too as we read this account. Don't you want to be rescued too? Don't you want to be set free? We'll look at both situations in turn.

I just want to talk you through this amazing account of what happens to this man first, and then we'll get on to see what happens in the other situation. We'll look at, first of all, the kind of captivity that he's in, the problem that that captivity gives, and finally how Jesus rescues from that captivity.

[3 : 38] So first, let me introduce you to this man, Legion, and see how that worked out in his account. We meet Legion straight on in this chapter. Verse 2, he's a man with an evil spirit who's living there among the tombs.

He's got a great problem. He's demon-possessed. These demons seem to have taken over his life. We don't know how long he's been held captive in this kind of condition.

Maybe for a while, because it seems from the text that these things are getting worse. They were able to chain him before, but now they're not able to, because he just breaks them. It seems like he's getting worse, and he's not just got one demon, but he's got Legion.

Legion is a term at a time which would have referred to a team of Roman soldiers, about 5,600 in number. So if that's the connection made there, there could be almost 6,000 demons taking over this man's life.

He's in an absolute mess. I'm not much good at rugby, and one reason is because one tackle just floors me. One rugby player coming on top of me is enough to wipe me out, but 5,600 demons coming on this man is like a whole team of rugby players coming on me all at once.

[4 : 58] I've got no chance at all. Completely held down. And here's this man. 5,600 demons is a serious takeover in his life. He's got no hope whatsoever, has he, of freeing himself.

Almost sounds like fantasy, doesn't it? Talking about demons. Can that really be true? Are we really expected to believe this stuff? Well, actually, there are no other reasons for these natural effects going on.

The effects it's had on his life, how else can we explain the superhuman strength that he seems to have? That they try to chain him, but he just snaps them. That's just not possible unless something else is going on in his life, snapping them like they're just spaghetti.

He's clearly then a danger to society, so they have to banish him out there on those hills, among the tombs. A danger to their children. I wonder if the parents among the villagers are saying, stay away from this man.

He's trouble. Just don't go anywhere near him. Don't play in that area out there. All they can do is just make this man an outcast, left alone in the hills.

[6 : 07] And there's this final description here in verse 5. Night and day among the tombs and in the hills, he would cry out and cut himself with stones. Frustrated.

This captivity is tearing him apart. He's harming himself and is crying out with no hope whatsoever. Reading through Mark's gospel, there's no one else recorded in such a desperate state as this man. This is as bad as it gets. And who's there to help him? We'll actually enter Jesus. Jesus comes in on the scene.

As soon as he and his disciples step ashore, we're told that the man who'd been living among the tombs, verse 6, he saw Jesus from a distance and ran towards Jesus.

I wonder if it's anyone's guess as to what's going to happen next. I wonder if the disciples stood there were suddenly a bit afraid. Here's this strange creature of a man running towards them.

[7 : 10] Are they in danger? Should they be jumping back into the boat and setting off for the opposite shore again? Well, actually, Jesus stays there.

And as the man ran towards him, what do we read? Verse 6, he fell on his knees before him. Just a moment.

He's there on his knees, completely made tranquil. And in no time at all, after a short exchange that Jesus has with the demons in him, Jesus sends the demons fleeing into a nearby herd of pigs, which then take a fatal swim in the sea and are gone.

In just a moment, Jesus, this incredible, powerful, and authoritative figure, has sent the demons fleeing. And the man is set free. More powerful than a U.S. Navy SEAL's operation, Jesus disarms those demons effortlessly with just a few words.

How? How can he do that? Who is this man, Jesus? Well, the demons know, don't they? Look at verse 7. Jesus, what do you want with me, Jesus?

[8 : 31] Son of the Most High God. You see, there's something about this Jesus. He's got authority. He can do anything. He can heal people.

He can even send these demons fleeing. Why? Because he's the son of the Most High God. Even the demons can see that.

And the result is incredible. Look at verse 15. Later on, he's found sitting at Jesus' feet, dressed, and in his right mind, restored.

It's an amazing thing that Jesus has done with his power and authority, able to restore this man who had no hope otherwise. And yet, the best bit is yet to come.

In a sense, it's implied in the passage, but it's easy to miss. See, part of the problem of his condition is the state it left him in. It's not so obvious reading it today, but Mark gives us some signs, some signals, to show that his condition would have made him offensive to God.

[9 : 38] We can at least begin to appreciate that by the fact that he is demon-possessed. See, this man, in terms of how he stands before God, if he's demon-possessed, how on earth could he ever expect to approach God in that state?

But now the demons are gone. And so part of the amazing miracle that Jesus has done in his life is to free him from that which separates him from God.

It actually opens up to his relationship with God being able to be restored. His most important relationship in his life being restored.

Hostage situations are so tragic in many ways, not least because it separates the hostages from their loved ones. And they're desperate to get back to their loved ones.

And their loved ones at home are longing to be with them again. And on TV, the scenes of a hostage being freed and restored and returning home is joyous and so emotional because they're restored to the ones that they love.

[10 : 43] And here's this man in the closing scenes of this event. Here he is, sat at Jesus' feet, recognizing that he's the son of the Most High God, wanting to follow Jesus, able to be restored to God.

Do you see? There's this beautiful image of wanting to follow the one who restores us to God. Jesus being the one to bring us into true relationship with God.

It's like he's truly home. It's like everything's right in his life now. Because not only is his life restored, not only is he dressed now in his right mind, but he's met the son of the Most High God and he wants to follow him because he knows he can restore his relationship with God.

Hostage won, rescued. How? Well, he had a captivity that was powerful, taking him over by demons, that was destroying him physically and left him in a state of being cut off from God.

But Jesus had the power and authority to set him free and to restore him. And as we read that, that verse 19, that these incredible things that he had done in his life, Jesus said, go and tell how much the Lord has done in your life.

[11 : 57] A great thing that Jesus has done. Jesus can set even this man free. Okay, so let's just pause for a moment. Jesus can set even this man free.

You might still be wondering what on earth has all this got to do with me? We're not demon possessed. We're not there in this scene. This happened almost 2,000 years ago.

What on earth has this got to do with me? So what? And I wonder if the locals would have been asking that same question, thinking, well, that's fine.

There's a man out there. Okay, he was outcast for a while. Great, he's restored. Fine. Okay, let's carry on with our lives. What's that got to do with us? Well, the locals would have been able to have opportunity to ask that question, except they're not given that opportunity because something happens in the story to take an unexpected turn.

Something happens in the story that draws them in that can't make them remain distanced from their story. They've got to respond because when Jesus got rid of the demons, they took their pigs for a fatal swim and that's going to prompt a reaction and it's going to be interesting in a moment to see how the locals respond to that.

[13 : 25] They're being drawn into the story and they've got to make a decision about who this Jesus is and about how they're going to respond to him. Otherwise, they could have remained separate from this story and maybe not be involved.

They're going to be put on the spot too and actually, at the same time, we're put on the spot as well. What do you make of Jesus? What do you make of what he can do in someone's life? So we read how this herd of 2,000 pigs that were feeding on the nearby hillside in verse 11 and that the demons had begged Jesus to send us into the pigs and Jesus gave them the permission.

Verse 13, the herd, about 2,000 in number, rushed down the steep bank into the lake and were drowned. Then what happens?

Verse 14, those tending the pigs had seen what had happened and ran off and started to report it in the town and the countryside. So the people went out to see what happened.

It starts to cause a commotion. The villagers want to know what's going on. It's not usual that 2,000 pigs just run off into the sea and actually this is worth a lot of money to them.

[14 : 40] What on earth is going on? So they arrive. Verse 15, they start to survey the scene. They start to gather the evidence. What's happened? Well, they hear about what's happened to the demon-possessed man.

They see that he sat there before Jesus, dressed and in his right mind, healed and restored and made well. This man who they'd probably known since he was a little boy growing up in a village, a friend of theirs.

Maybe they used to play with him as kids. But over time, something started to go wrong in his life, obviously, as we've read, and in the end, they'd had to make him an outcast.

And I wonder if there was a sense of reminiscence as they're saying, yeah, actually, this guy who we saw grow up who became an absolute mess, wow, look at him now.

He's restored. That's incredible. But there's no celebration party because at the same time, they hear what happened to their pigs. Any happiness that they may have felt for this man is not there because, actually, it's completely overshadowed.

[15:47] The whole event for them is overshadowed by the fact that they've lost their pigs. What does that mean to them? Well, actually, that many pigs was worth a lot of money to them.

It was actually symbolic of quite a lavish lifestyle, quite a big amount of money for them. And what's going on? Their lavish lifestyle and everything that they were losing because of that meant more to them than this man being restored.

Everything that they had, their lifestyle, meant more to them than this man's soul. So instead of celebrating what Jesus has done for this man and welcoming Jesus, they're afraid of what might happen next.

And the reaction shows that they're in a kind of captivity themselves. You see, it's not just demons that can take over someone's life in the way that this man had seen.

Everyday lifestyles that people live for, that people end up pursuing and chasing after, actually control their lives, end up controlling those who chase them.

[17:01] Let's look at this situation again just under those three main points which I raised earlier. What is the captivity? What's the problem that this causes? And what's the rescue that Jesus can do from it?

First of all, what's the captivity? It's being controlled by a lifestyle. We've just seen that, actually, their lifestyle had such a grip on them that it controlled them and that it ruled their thinking so that they weren't even able to be happy for this man being restored.

They were more concerned about the threat that Jesus was posing on their own lifestyle. See, until this point, it had been about that man, about that outcast of a man out there.

He's the one with a problem, not them. Now we're going to see it is them too, isn't it? I'm sure they'd never seen it like that before and I'm sure maybe we would never see it like that in our lives before if we've not thought about it.

None of us do because we think we control our own lives, don't we? We're the ones in control, surely. I just choose what I want to choose and I just live my life the way I want to.

[18:08] That's the way it goes, isn't it? Actually, no. The things that we chase after end up controlling us. Now look, we've all got our dreams, we've all got our aspirations for life, haven't we?

We've all got that ideal of a life which we want to aim to live for. So whether it's just wanting to be up to date with the latest things, the latest iPhone, the latest music, those are great things that we often chase after.

Maybe it's about being successful, maybe the prestige of having a good career, maybe even wanting to aspire to be that classily dressed executive who's got all the mod cons and that flash car to go with it.

Or maybe it's just as simple as having a retirement that's got lots of wonderful holidays lined up, cruises through the Norwegian fjords with the sea glistening in the sunlight.

And that's what life is about, aiming for that. Or maybe it's just something as simple as having a simple and content home that is just the way you want it. And that's what life is about.

[19:19] Now look, don't get me wrong, these are good things. They're not bad things to have. Things like nice holidays and a happy home are genuinely good things to have, aren't they? But as we chase after them, as we pursue these lifestyles, actually, that ends up taking control of us.

And it affects our thinking, it affects our emotions, it ends up controlling us in a captivity. Just think, for example, of the last time, the way that you reacted the last time you didn't get what you were hoping for.

Maybe that thing you bought, you were really pleased to have got it and it broke. And how disappointed you felt because all your hopes were in that. Those clothes that got spoiled, that iPod that broke, or that football game that your team lost.

Because life is about that, actually, it ends up controlling you and it controls your emotions and everything is about that. And it takes a hit on you. Everything sours when it goes wrong.

So we're not demon-possessed, maybe, but the pursuit of a lifestyle controls us. We're in a kind of captivity that Jesus needs to deal with. It's not as obvious, maybe, but it's a very serious problem

controlled by a lifestyle.

[20 : 42] Secondly, though, what's the problem that that captivity leaves us in? Well, actually, it leaves us messed up by that lifestyle. Messed up. Just like those demons did damage to that man, so in this captivity, these people here, in this scene that we've been reading about, are being harmed and left in a mess.

You can see the way that it's turned their emotions the wrong way around, their moral ethics, the way that they can value their possessions and their pigs more than a man's soul, a man's life. Remember how they reacted after seeing that man being restored, far more concerned about their pigs and everything else that they have than Jesus. See, they're missing out on what really matters and it leaves them messed up.

Reading a story in a book, a testimony about a lad called Tom and how he was finding that when he went to university he was living for the things that were around him and how that was messing up his life.

When he first went to university he was quite a lazy student, so he tried to shape up his life in the second year, but he was still living quite a reckless life in some ways as a student.

[22 : 04] But life looked great, he says to the onlooker. My grades were improving. I was in the sports team and I was certainly having a great time at evenings and weekends. To those around me, my life was going smoothly.

Inside, however, I was a mess. I had had two relationships with good friends of mine. Both were lovely girls, though through my own fault the relationships ended horribly.

I was utterly selfish in my attitude, towards them. I even shocked myself at the way I acted. Clearly, I was not the good moral guy I thought I was.

It was worse than just one mistake. This was the way I was. And for all my efforts in changing, I couldn't alter what I was really like deep down inside. My actions were dreadful and the feelings that came with it were getting me down.

You see, chasing after a lifestyle eventually messes us up inside. It messes up our decision making. It messes up our moral integrity. And it leads us into being so down because of that.

[23 : 16] We can't free ourselves from it. See, it's about knowing that these things are wrong and yet being unable to change, not wanting to change maybe even.

Actually, in this account, at that time in this land, it was actually against the Jewish law to have pigs at that time. But I'm sure these Gentile people were quite happy carrying on living their lives without having to worry about that law.

The Jews weren't living in that part of the land anymore. They were quite happy to ignore what God was wanting to say in their lives. And it can be the same in our lives too. That even though we know that there is a God who made us, who created this world, we're not interested in what he says about our lives.

We're not interested in going his way. In this scene, Jesus turns up and you can imagine how they must have felt. Jesus, this clearly authoritative Jewish man, what's he going to say?

Is he going to comment on the way that they're living their lives? And I wonder if you would say the same too. you don't really fancy having Jesus speak into your life saying, well, what's this you've got in your life?

[24 : 29] How are you living in terms of how God says is right? God says and sadly this me centred life that we live is what cuts us off from God.

Those decisions that we make, those things which are against God's ways, means that actually, it means that we're made offensive before God. The things that we do wrong, the way that we treat God, actually cuts us off.

So this captivity that we're in means that we're unable to have the most important relationship in our lives that we need. It's funny, we want heaven, but we don't want God to have to tell us about what standard we have to be at to get there.

We want to be able to go to paradise when we die, yet actually we're not really interested in the God who's there. if you're asking God to accept you like that, it's a bit like a rebellious royalist wanting to be able to turn up to all the celebration parties of the Diamond Jubilee, but without having to change anything of what they're like.

We don't have a hope of being able to come before a holy God in the state that we are in because of the way that we are messed up in our lives. And if we're honest, that unsettles us.

[25 : 50] Don't you sense that? Don't you sense that by being cut off from God, actually there's a gaping hole in your life and that no matter how many good things can happen in your life, no matter how your other relationships might be good, actually unless you're sorted with God, things aren't right and that you know you need that sorted, messed up by a lifestyle.

So that's the captivity that actually we're all in, that's the mess that we're all in. But what have we learned from the account earlier with the man, with legion, there's a saviour who can rescue you. See, this is the great message of this account, is that if Jesus can save that man, then he can save and rescue you from the captivity that you're in. If he can save that man, he can save anyone. But again, the question is put to us, the question is put to you and me, don't you want to be set free? Don't you want to be set free? Because here is the saviour who can do just that.

We've talked about how this captivity holds us and that we can't break free from it. No matter how many times we try to clean up our lives and break free from the things that control us, we can't.

[27 : 09] But Jesus is the one with the power and authority to change our hearts inside, to make us new, so that we can be freed. And Jesus is the one who can take those offences that we've committed against God and can forgive us and clothe us to be right and acceptable before God.

Jesus is the one who can do that and he's the rescuer here on the scene. So imagine that rebellious royalist wanting to come to those celebrations with the queen for the party while the queen saying okay, I will forgive those offences you've done against me.

And in fact I will even give you the smart outfit that you'll need to wear to come to this celebration party. And in fact come and join us with the royal family. It'd be the equivalent of that except even greater because God himself, Jesus here in person, is able to forgive you, able to clothe you so that you can come back to that relationship.

So how are you going to respond? Don't you want to be set free too? Don't you want to be set free so you can be brought to God yourself? There's a warning in this account isn't there?

That when the people saw the man sitting there dressed in his right mind verse 15 what's their reaction? They're afraid. In verse 17 the people began to plead with Jesus to leave their region.

[28 : 44] the warning is that you can love your lifestyle so much that you don't want to count the cost and actually you say I'm sorry Jesus it's too much just leave.

Have you ever said that to Jesus? Have you ever been confronted before? Because here it is again here's the problem that you're in and you need to be saved. How are you going to respond to Jesus?

Do you love your lifestyle too much? Do you love the stuff that you try and get for yourself? Do you love the things around you that you live for more than what Jesus is offering?

Again don't misunderstand me this isn't a message saying that all pleasures are evil that's not what we're saying here and it's not saying also that we have to give everything away instantly but what Jesus is saying is that we need a willingness for him to free us and rescue us from chasing after that lifestyle that holds you that grips you and he can do that.

Are you willing to let go? Are you willing to be freed from it? Because here is the saviour. Here is Jesus who can rescue you. So what would you say to him?

[30 : 01] How would you treat him? If this is your first time of encountering the gospel would you say to Jesus okay yeah I've lived my life for my career I've lived my life for getting the latest stuff but do you know what that's nothing compared to what a relationship with God is.

So Lord Jesus I am prepared to let go of that stuff and I'm prepared for you to set me free and to make me right with God so I can have what means most to me to be right with my heavenly father.

Would you say that to him? And as a Christian are you having said that to Jesus already are you going on in that? Because the danger is that as Christians we can still look back to that old way of life still look at those things that have such great appeal and actually begin to live for that again.

So the challenge is here for you as a Christian as well. Will you still say to Jesus Lord Jesus yeah I still want to be freed from that old way of life I don't want to live for it anymore. Because there are many times that it's happened in Christians lives that they've begun to say actually Jesus I don't want you speaking to my life anymore.

And there's a beginning of a backsliding a beginning of a turning away from Christ. Don't do that. Don't turn Jesus away turn back to him and say Lord what you are giving is far greater than anything I can do in this world.

[31 : 32] Free me from the captivity that I'm in and bring me to my heavenly father. Don't turn him away. Don't make it as if there's this hostage scene and the hostages saying no I don't want to be rescued while really they've got those family and friends back at home who they dearly love and who they should be restored to.

Wouldn't it be tragic if they weren't brought together again? Wouldn't it be tragic if you were to say no to Jesus and not be restored to God? Don't turn Jesus away.

May it be in your life that you can say this of what can be this man's testimony when Jesus said to him verse 19 go home to your family and tell them how much the Lord has done for you and how he has had mercy on you.

That can be your testimony and if it is your testimony be in amazement about it of what Jesus has done in your life and go home tell your family about it tell your friends about it because you are a living testimony of the power and authority of Christ and his amazing love and grace.