

Date:

More miracles of Jesus

PRAY Father, please give me a deeper sense of your power over sin and love for me as I spend time reading your Word today.

READ Mark 5:1–20

REFLECT

The reality of demon possession is difficult for modern minds to accept. It has become a popular plot line for horror films. It's also a comic device: the cartoon image of a red-tailed 'alter ego' sitting on someone's shoulder whispering devious thoughts of revenge always gets a laugh. But actual demon possession? That doesn't happen today, right?

Yet, from beginning to end, the Bible teaches that the devil is real, and that he's hell-bent on opposing God and destroying people.

We see a vivid example of that in our passage today. The devil had been at work in this poor man's life for a long time, torturing his mind and body, and in the process alienating the man from himself and from society. But Jesus stepped in:

Jesus took control of the situation and of the demons themselves (5:6–8). Clearly, Jesus was the higher power.

Jesus dealt with the demons once and for all (5:11–13), something the townspeople had never been able to do (5:4).

Jesus restored the man and gave him a renewed purpose in life (5:18–20). Often those with the darkest pasts become the most effective witnesses for God.

But this passage also contains two great ironies:

The demons knew who Jesus really was. They almost sound like theologians: 'What do you want with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God?' (5:7).

The townspeople were afraid instead of rejoicing. They pleaded with Jesus to leave. Maybe they thought Jesus was out to ruin their economy; 2,000 pigs represented a lot of money. Or maybe they were nervous he'd come after the skeletons in *their* closets next. Whatever the reason, they pushed Jesus out of their lives.

APPLY Is there a skeleton lurking in the closet of your heart? What will it take for you to bring this issue 'into the light', to Jesus?

PRAY Pray about any unresolved issues in your past that need healing.

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PRAY Lord, my life is so complicated and stressful; sometimes I feel like I've run out of answers. Right now I humbly bow before you and wait for your peace and help.

READ Mark 5:21–43

REFLECT

Politicians work hard to get 'Big Mo' on their side; in the US it's the insider's term for 'momentum' and it's what wins elections. Jesus was no politician but, at this point in his ministry, Big Mo was definitely working for him. His authoritative teaching and dramatic miracles were causing big crowds to follow him everywhere he went (5:21,24). Our passage today weaves together the accounts of two miracles that occurred during this exciting and chaotic time in Jesus' ministry.

A very private healing An unnamed woman in the crowd had suffered from uncontrollable bleeding for 12 years (5:25). Long-term physical problems often lead to emotional and spiritual depression as well. Difficult though it may be, God sometimes allows us to experience a 'dark night of the soul' in order to help us see our need for him, as he did for this woman. Her friends may have criticised her desperate scheme (5:28). But Jesus said, 'Your faith has healed you' (5:34). Sometimes faith requires us to take desperate measures.

A very public healing The daughter of a well-known synagogue ruler named Jairus – a man who would have been aligned with groups opposing Jesus – had fallen sick. Once again we see God using a health emergency to produce true faith. As Dr C Everett Koop, a paediatric surgeon and former Surgeon General of the US, once said, 'There are no atheists at the bedside of a dying child.' His colleagues may have criticised Jairus for being a turncoat. But Jesus said, 'Don't be afraid; just believe' (5:36). Sometimes faith requires us to ignore what others think.

A common element in both of these healings is the way the unnamed woman and Jairus approached Jesus. They 'fell at his feet' (5:22,33). The surest way to experience Jesus' healing power is to reach out humbly to him and then wait for him to respond in his way.

APPLY Have you ever needed to take desperate measures or ignore what others think to exercise faith? What happened?

PRAY Bring to God in prayer the area of your life where you feel the greatest sense of desperation...