

Comments on Mark 5

This chapter is comprised of two sections, first the healing of a demoniac (v. 1-20), then the healing of two women (v. 21-34, v. 35-43). All three stories carry an undercurrent of what it means to be unclean, and how Jesus reacts to people's uncleanness.

1 AND they came over unto the other side of the sea, into the country of the Gadarenes. 2 And when he was come out of the ship, immediately there met him out of the tombs a man with an unclean spirit, 3 Who had [his] dwelling among the tombs; and no man could bind him, no, not with chains: 4 Because that he had been often bound with fetters and chains, and the chains had been plucked asunder by him, and the fetters broken in pieces: neither could any [man] tame him. 5 And always, night and day, he was in the mountains, and in the tombs, crying, and cutting himself with stones.

6 But when he saw Jesus afar off, he ran and worshipped him, 7 And cried with a loud voice, and said, What have I to do with thee, Jesus, [thou] Son of the most high God? I adjure thee by God, that thou torment me not. 8 For he said unto him, Come out of the man, [thou] unclean spirit. 9 And he asked him, What [is] thy name? And he answered, saying, My name [is] Legion: for we are many. 10 And he besought him much that he would not send them away out of the country. 11 Now there was there nigh unto the mountains a great herd of swine feeding. 12 And all the devils besought him, saying, Send us into the swine, that we may enter into them. 13 And forthwith Jesus gave them leave. And the unclean spirits went out, and entered into the swine: and the herd ran violently down a steep place into the sea, (they were about two thousand;) and were choked in the sea.

14 And they that fed the swine fled, and told [it] in the city, and in the country. And they went out to see what it was that was done. 15 And they come to Jesus, and see him that was possessed with the devil, and had the legion, sitting, and clothed, and in his right mind: and they were afraid. 16 And they that saw [it] told them how it befell to him that was possessed with the devil, and [also] concerning the swine. 17 And they began to pray him to depart out of their coasts.

18 And when he was come into the ship, he that had been possessed with the devil prayed him that he might be with him. 19 Howbeit Jesus suffered him not, but saith unto him, Go home to thy friends, and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee, and hath had compassion on thee. 20 And he departed, and began to publish in Decapolis how great things Jesus had done for him: and all [men] did marvel.

v1-20 Jesus travels into an area inhabited by Jews who have abandoned the Law (v. 1). He meets a wild man who dwells in tombs, who is possessed by demons such that he cannot be

restrained because of supernatural strength, and who is largely self-destructive (v. 2-5).

However, this overpowering wild man becomes utterly submissive in the presence of Jesus, as the demons in him fear him and beg him to let them be (v. 6-7), because Jesus had told the demons to come out of the man (v. 8). Jesus asks the demons their name and they respond "Legion" because so many are present (v. 9). They then beg him not to cast them out into the abyss (v. 10, cp. Luke 8:31), but rather into a swine herd which was nearby (v. 11-12). Jesus permits them to go into the swine, but when they do so the swine are driven mad, to the point of running headlong into the sea where they drowned themselves (v. 13).

The men who were herding the swine saw all of what happened with the demoniac and the swine and go to tell everyone in town (v. 14, 16). The townspeople come out and see the demoniac dressed and sitting calmly at the feet of Jesus, and are frightened over the events (v. 15), so they ask Jesus to leave them (v. 17).

At their request Jesus goes to leave, and the formerly possessed man wishes to go with him (v. 18). Jesus tells him to stay there among his people and spread the news about what the Lord has done for him (v. 19), and he does so (v. 20).

In this passage, two types of uncleanness are contrasted: the townspeople who willingly eat the flesh of swine, and the extreme uncleanness of one possessed and living in tombs. The possessed man who is living in the tombs becomes a disciple of Jesus when his demons are exorcized, while the townspeople persist in their uncleanness. Contrast the details:

| <u>Demoniac</u> | <u>Townspeople</u> |
|--|--|
| Unclean spirit inside by possession (externally imposed) | Unclean food inside by paganizing (internally imposed) |
| Living in tombs | Living in town |
| Cannot be physically restrained | Cannot be spiritually restrained |
| Legion of unclean spirits | Herd of 2000 unclean swine |
| Demons exorcized, uncleanness removed | Swine stampeded, uncleanness removed |
| Seeks to follow Jesus | Asks Jesus to leave |

The townspeople are willfully paganizing, so their uncleanness is one of deliberacy. The demoniac is possessed by Legion demons,

he is out of control, out of his mind, outcast, running around naked, smashing himself on the rocks. He appears to be utterly hideous and unredeemable, he can't even be restrained with iron chains.

Superficially, the townspeople appear less unclean than the demoniac, they look civilized. But, when Jesus comes to them, the reactions are completely opposite. When the demoniac is released from the external control of the Legion demons, he is completely transformed and sits at Jesus' feet. When the townspeople are deprived of their unclean food, they fear Jesus and ask him to leave. Which then is the more insidious uncleanness? In both cases Jesus delivers them from their uncleanness, but contrast their reactions.

v1 "the country of the Gadarenes", determining the the city or region is problematic. In the KJV Luke agrees with Mark and labels them "Gadarenes", Matthew calls them "Gergesenes". Below are the relevant Easton Bible Dictionary entries which attempt to harmonize the accounts:

Gadara - the capital of the Roman province of Peraea. It stood on the summit of a mountain about 6 miles south-east of the Sea of Galilee. Mark (5:1) and Luke (8:26-39) describe the miracle of the healing of the demoniac (Matthew [8:28-34] says two demoniacs) as having been wrought "in the country of the Gadarenes," thus describing the scene generally. The miracle could not have been wrought at Gadara itself, for between the lake and this town there is the deep, almost impassable ravine of the Hieromax (Jarmuk). It is identified with the modern village of Um-Keis, which is surrounded by very extensive ruins, all bearing testimony to the splendor of ancient Gadara.

The most interesting remains of Gadara are its tombs, which dot the cliffs for a considerable distance round the city, chiefly on the north-east declivity; but many beautifully sculptured sarcophagi are scattered over the surrounding heights. They are excavated in the limestone rock, and consist of chambers of various dimensions, some more than 20 feet square, with recesses in the sides for bodies.

Gadarenes - the inhabitants of Gadara, in Revised Version "Gerasenes" (Mark 5:1; Luke 8:26, 37). In Matt. 8:28 they are called Gergesenes, Revised Version "Gadarenes."

Gergesa - =Gerasa, identified with the modern Khersa,

"over against Galilee," close to the lake. This was probably the scene of the miracle, Mark 5:1-20, etc. "From the base of the great plateau of Bashan, 2,000 feet or more overhead, the ground slopes down steeply, in places precipitously, to the shore. And at the foot of the declivity a bold spur runs out to the water's edge. By it the frantic swine would rush on headlong into the lake and perish." Porter's Through Samaria.

The Anchor Bible (AB) discusses in detail some of the difficulties of such an attempt to harmonize, and points out variants in the available ancient Greek texts. Most modern translations harmonize Matthew's account with Mark's and Luke's and render it "Gerasenes".

Why does it matter? If the town is Gadara then it is on the very border of Judah's lands and therefore may be inhabited by Gentiles as opposed to Jews, and then the herding of swine wouldn't be prohibited by the Law. But, Gerasa was well within the borders of Judah, so if the events took place there then they were definitely Jews. The point of interest in location is whether or not the people involved were Jews.

Aside from questionable geography, the content of the story strongly suggests it is Jews. Why else would it matter if the herd were swine?

v2 Matthew's much briefer account (cf. Matt. 8:28) presents two demoniacs and omits the conversion of one of them. Taking the KJV alone, it would appear Mark and Luke have omitted the second demoniac and focused on the one who converted and ended up a proselyting convert. However, the IV on Matt. 8:28 emends the passage to say "there met him a man possessed with devils" instead of the KJV "there met him two possessed with devils".

v3 "dwelling among the tombs", tombs and the dead were generally considered unclean, cf. Num. 19:11-16, cp. Ezek. 39:11-15.

v9 "my name is Legion", to put into context the name-title of "legion", at the time of Caesar Augustus (ca. 63 B.C. - 14 A.D.) a legion was 6100 foot soldiers and 726 horsemen.

v10 "send them away out of the country", Luke's account states "command them to go out into the deep". Luke's version is more poetical and better parallels the ultimate fate of the swine which are drowned in the sea. In Luke's account the "deep" is the Greek "abussos", the watery submerged chaos, the same place where John's Beast rises out of (cf. Rev. 11:7) and the Dragon is cast down to (cf. Rev. 20:3).

v11-14 The area referred to is apparently within the lands of Judah, yet they are herding swine, which are proscribed for food under the Law (cf. Lev. 11:7, Deut. 14:8). These Jews are either secularizing or paganizing with unclean food. Verse 14 makes it clear the swine aren't just wild boars as they are actively being herded.

v13 Jesus casts out both the demons and the swine, both sets of uncleanness are disposed at once. In v. 10 the demons ask to not be sent out into the deep, but they ironically end up being submerged in the sea anyway. The demons are destructive and drive their hosts mad, to the point of self-destruction. The demoniac was driven mad by them and hurt himself, but the brute swine simply run wild and become suicidally berserk.

v15-17 The townspeople are frightened by what they see. What exactly they are frightened of isn't made clear. The lack of detail on why they fear Jesus is probably intentional on the author's part. They are having a negative emotional reaction to Jesus and ask him to leave, there is no real reason behind their response. Perhaps they fear he will punish them for herding the swine.

v15 "clothed", being previously unclothed (cf. Luke 8:27), either Jesus or his disciples must have given him clothing to wear.

v19-20 Notice the parallelism:

...how great things the Lord hath done for thee...
...how great things Jesus had done for him.

Jesus is poetically equated with the Lord.

21 And when Jesus was passed over again by ship unto the other side, much people gathered unto him; and he was nigh unto the sea. 22 And, behold, there cometh one of the rulers of the synagogue, Jairus by name; and when he saw him, he fell at his feet, 23 And besought him greatly, saying, My little daughter lieth at the point of death: [I pray thee], come and lay thy hands on her, that she may be healed; and she shall live.

v21-24 After leaving the Gadarenes per their request, Jesus sails back to Capernaum and is caught up in a crowd again (v. 21). Out of the throng comes one of the leaders of the local synagogue, Jairus, who humiliates himself before Jesus begging him to heal his 12 year old daughter (v. 22-23). Jesus assents and many people follow (v. 24).

24 And [Jesus] went with him; and much people followed him, and

thronged him. 25 And a certain woman, which had an issue of blood twelve years, 26 And had suffered many things of many physicians, and had spent all that she had, and was nothing bettered, but rather grew worse, 27 When she had heard of Jesus, came in the press behind, and touched his garment. 28 For she said, If I may touch but his clothes, I shall be whole. 29 And straightway the fountain of her blood was dried up; and she felt in [her] body that she was healed of that plague.

30 And Jesus, immediately knowing in himself that virtue had gone out of him, turned him about in the press, and said, Who touched my clothes? 31 And his disciples said unto him, Thou seest the multitude thronging thee, and sayest thou, Who touched me? 32 And he looked round about to see her that had done this thing. 33 But the woman fearing and trembling, knowing what was done in her, came and fell down before him, and told him all the truth. 34 And he said unto her, Daughter, thy faith hath made thee whole; go in peace, and be whole of thy plague.

V25-34 While traveling to Jairus' house with a crowd, a woman who has suffered greatly for twelve years because of menstrual problems (v. 25-26) touches the hem of Jesus' cloak in the hopes of being healed (v. 27-29). She is healed, and Jesus feels power go out of him to heal her. When he feels this, he stops and asks who it is who has touched him (v. 30). Peter, surprised at what seems to be a nonsensical question, asks him what he is talking about (v. 31). Jesus ignores him, and looks around (v. 32) to see the woman prostrate herself on the ground before him confessing (v. 33). At her confession, Jesus tells her that he faith is what healed her, making her whole (v. 34).

Verses 21-43 present two interspersed accounts of the healing of women. To understand the context of what is occurring a review of Mal. 4:2 is necessary. The KJV on Mal. 4:2 states:

But unto you that fear my name shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings;

This passage makes reference to wings of healing. The "wings" are kanaph in Hebrew, for which Strong's has:

03671 kanaph {kaw-nawf'}

from 03670; TWOT - 1003a; n f

AV - wing 74, skirt 14, borders 2, corners 2, ends 2, feathered 2, sort 2, winged 2, misc 8; 108

1) wing, extremity, edge, winged, border, corner, shirt
1a) wing

- 1b) extremity
- 1b1) skirt, corner (of garment)

This is the same term employed in Num. 15:37-41 where the people are told to wear fringes on their garments. Thus, rather than the KJV "wings" a better translation would be "with healing in the folds of its garments" (JPS). We then contrast this garment of healing with the garment of violence from Mal. 2:16 where the priests are harming the women of Israel by permissive divorce practices and permitting Israelite men to marry Gentile women. Where the priests are harming Israel, this "sun of righteousness" rises and casts light on Israel to heal her.

Mark simply identifies the garment where Matthew (cf. Matt. 9:20) identifies "the hem of his garment" and Luke (cf. Luke 8:44) identifies "the border of his garment". These more specific statements are clearly referring to the kanaph, or fringes, of Jesus' garment. Also cp. Matt. 14:36 where people are healed by touching the hem of Jesus' garments.

The Midrash Rabbah on Exodus 31:10 interprets Mal. 4:2 as Messianic and states the Messiah will come with healing in his kanaph.

Thus, when the woman touches Jesus' cloak and is healed, we see, in part, a fulfilment of the Messiah arising with healing in his garments for the women of Israel. When Jesus raises Jairus' daughter, who is 12 years old, he is reviving a girl who has just approached marriageable age. The Messiah has arisen to heal the women of Israel, in sharp contrast to the treatment the women receive at the hands of the priests, Pharisees, and physicians.

A broader symbolic approach to this passage is that Jesus' healing of these two women represents the OT relationship between the Lord and His wife Israel. He has come to redeem and restore his wife Israel, cp. Isa. 49:18, 61:10, 62:5.

Also note in both healings faith is the essential ingredient. In the first healing it is the faith of the woman, in the second healing it is the faith of Jairus.

v25 "issue of blood", a woman in such a condition was unclean, cf. Lev. 15:19-31. Her approaching Jesus in this manner shows her desperation. It also shows Jesus' considerable compassion on her. He didn't censure her for violating the Law by approaching others when unclean, instead he blesses her.

The "issue of blood" is not explicitly equated with menstrual problems, but by implication, that is probably what it is. The Greek in Mark and Luke is "rhusis haimatos" which literally translates to "gushing of blood" and the Greek in Matthew is "haimorroeo" which literally translates to "blood gush". The reference to a "fountain" is the Greek "pege" which is also used in reference to literal springs of water or

figurative springs of the Spirit elsewhere in the Scriptures. These terms suggest a flowing of blood that becomes external, such as menstruation, as opposed to some blood condition which is internal such as anemia. She couldn't be hemophiliac as that would be fatal with menarche. The context of menstruation is also forwarded with Jairus' daughter, as she is 12, the typical age of menarche.

Note the older woman has suffered greatly at the hands of many men who have sapped her of all her wealth. In contrast to this is Jesus, who heals her via her faith. Jesus is the Lord over all of life and can heal all people according to their faith. Here he is specifically presented as being particularly compassionate with women, a group that has suffered considerably at the hands of men at this time.

v30 "virtue had gone out of him", for "virtue" a better translation would be "power".

v33 The woman is fearing because she is unclean and has approached and touched a man when she should have been keeping her distance. She fears punishment for violating purity rituals of the Law.

v34 Jesus makes it clear there is nothing magical about his cloak, it is her faith that made her whole. The spiritual implications of Jesus' statements are also plain. Her primary concern in the action was to be physically healed, but to have such great faith one must be spiritually strong and healthy as well, thus she is both made both physically and spiritually whole.

35 While he yet spake, there came from the ruler of the synagogue's [house certain] which said, Thy daughter is dead: why troublest thou the Master any further? 36 As soon as Jesus heard the word that was spoken, he saith unto the ruler of the synagogue, Be not afraid, only believe. 37 And he suffered no man to follow him, save Peter, and James, and John the brother of James. 38 And he cometh to the house of the ruler of the synagogue, and seeth the tumult, and them that wept and wailed greatly. 39 And when he was come in, he saith unto them, Why make ye this ado, and weep? the damsel is not dead, but sleepeth. 40 And they laughed him to scorn.

But when he had put them all out, he taketh the father and the mother of the damsel, and them that were with him, and entereth in where the damsel was lying. 41 And he took the damsel by the hand, and said unto her, Talitha cumi; which is, being interpreted, Damsel, I say unto thee, arise. 42 And straightway the damsel arose, and walked; for she was [of the age] of twelve years. And they were astonished with a great astonishment. 43 And

he charged them straitly that no man should know it; and commanded that something should be given her to eat.

v35-43 After the encounter with the woman (v. 24-34), they continue on to Jairus' house when they are intercepted by a runner who informs them his daughter is dead so they shouldn't bother Jesus about it anymore (v. 35). Jesus hears this and tells Jairus to have faith and fear not (v. 36). When they get to Jairus' house Jesus permits only Peter, James, and John to enter in (v. 37), excluding all others, presumably to keep the throng of sign seekers out. Around and inside the house people are greatly mourning (v. 38), but Jesus tells them not to mourn because she is not dead (v. 39). The people mock him for this, so he gets them out of the house (v. 40). Jesus then goes in with the three and her parents to the young woman and says "Little girl, arise!" (v. 41) and she does to the astonishment of all present (v. 42). Jesus charges them to keep the matter private (v. 43), but it ends up being spread abroad anyway (cf. Matt. 9:26).

v41 Luke's account has Jesus taking her by the hand, a classical OT act of condescension, cf. Isa. 41:13, Isa. 42:6. As she just died, she would also be unclean. Jesus is once again reaching out to help and heal the unclean.

v42 Luke's account explicitly states her spirit returned to her, cf. Luke 8:55.

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