*DAILY DEVOTIONS*

January 25 - 30

Mark’s Gospel

**Monday, January 25 Mark 5:1-5**

*“A demon-possessed man meets Jesus”*

 As Jesus gets out of the boat, he is met by a demon-possessed man. Wherever Jesus goes, his holy presence triggers a reaction from the unholy. These demons do not cower in fear but cause the man to rush at Jesus. Mark gives us a vivid account of this man’s condition and how he had been treated. The man’s home is the unclean place of the dead, and he himself is home to unclean (evil) spirits. His behavior apparently had spooked the community in which he lived. They tried to bind him, but he was powerful enough to snap the chains.

 This man roams free because all attempts to constrain him have failed. He is one tough customer, and only a power more potent than that which inhabits him will be able to free him from his current condition. He is banished from society and must dwell with those whose sleep will not be disturbed by his shrieks. He is condemned to live out his days alone amid the decaying bones of the dead, with no one who loves him and no one to love. Evil spirits always deface humanity and destroy life.

*Evil is real, Lord, and its forces are all around us. Amen.*

**Tuesday, January 26 Mark 5:6-13**

*“Come out of the man”*

 The demons do not go easily. In their desperate attempt to resist any exorcism, they have the man prostrate himself before Jesus. Whether this action is counterfeit worship or conniving submission, the evil spirits try to talk Jesus into leaving them alone. When Jesus asks for the demon’s name, the evil spirits respond: “My name is Legion,” the name of a Roman regiment (consisting of 6,000 foot soldiers and 120 horsemen). This man is captive to a legion of demons, at least enough to drive 2,000 pigs crazy.

 It was popular belief in the first century that evil spirits were not content to wander aimlessly about. They want to inhabit something. A human host is best; wanting that, a bunch of pigs will do. Jesus seems all too gracious in granting their request, but it leads to the surprise ending. The pigs begin to stampede, lemminglike, down the bank and into the waters, where both they and the evil spirits are destroyed. From a Jewish perspective, unclean spirits and unclean animals are both wiped out in one fell swoop, and a human being is cleansed.

*While evil is strong, Lord, you are stronger. Amen.*

**Wednesday, January 27 Mark 5:14-17**

*“They pled with Jesus to leave”*

 The townspeople’s response to the man’s restoration is startling. When the community arrives, they are not frightened by what has happened to the pigs but by seeing this man now clothed and in his right mind. They do not rejoice at his recovery but are afraid. What is so scary about seeing a person sitting at the feet of Jesus? The community had desperately tried to tame him with chains and shackles, all to no avail. Now Jesus frees him from the chains of demons with a word.

 They do not want someone with such power among them. They are more comfortable with evil forces than with the one who can overcome those forces. As Jesus had granted the request of the demons, he now grants the request of the community to leave them. This community becomes another example of the outsiders who see but do not see, who hear but do not hear. They do not recognize the help that Jesus offers and do not invite him to stay or bring their sick to him. They chase off the source of their deliverance and salvation.

*I do not fear your power, Lord, for its purpose is always for good. Amen.*

*DAILY DEVOTIONS*

January 25 - 30

Mark’s Gospel

**Thursday, January 28 Mark 5:18-20**

*“Tell them everything the Lord has done for you”*

 The spotlight shifts back to the man who requests to be with Jesus. The community has begged Jesus to leave them; this man begs to be with Jesus. In a surprising response, Jesus declines the petition – the only request that he does not grant in this story. While Jesus’ dismissal of this man may seem like bad news, it can only be good news for one who yearns for the warmth of family, for a sense of place and identity, and for a sense of purpose. Jesus sends him to his own home so he can be restored to his family.

 Jesus also reverses his usual demand of silence by telling the man to spread the news of what God has done for him. Why? Is it because he does not fear a messianic upsurge in the midst of Gentiles or because this place needs a witness to begin sowing the word? Jesus may grant the community’s wishes for him to leave, but he leaves this disturbing evidence of his presence. The infamous man with the legion of demons remains to proclaim the work of Jesus and how he has been delivered by God’s mercy.

*My purpose, Lord, is to tell others what you have done for me. Amen.*

**Friday, January 29 Mark 5:21-24, 35-43**

*“Jesus raises Jairus’ daughter from the dead”*

 After Jesus returns from across the lake, an official of a synagogue falls before Jesus’ feet and begs him to come to his home to lay hands on his daughter that she might be healed and live. Jesus agrees, but the rush to the girl’s side is interrupted by an anonymous woman who also needs healing. As Jesus stops for her, the distraught father is left to cool his heels. One can only guess what he must be thinking about this delay. While he waits for Jesus to finish his encounter with the woman, news arrives that his daughter has died.

 “Why bother the teacher any more?” The subliminal message here is that Jesus is only a teacher, and death marks the limit of whatever power he may have. Jesus turns to Jairus and says, “Don’t be afraid. Just have faith [i.e., keep on having faith].” He had shown faith in coming to Jesus in the first place, now he must continue. But how can faith endure in the face of death, particularly when it hovers over one’s cherished child? Jairus reveals that faith is something that trusts in the midst of hopelessness.

*In your time, Lord, you make all things right. Amen.*

**Saturday, January 30 Mark 5:25-34**

 *“Jesus heals a woman who has suffered for twelve years”*

 That the woman has been suffering for twelve years stresses her great need and why she is so compelled to seek Jesus’ help. Her perpetual bleeding causes her to be ritually impure, and anyone who has contact with her becomes unclean.

 The woman refuses to accept this disease as her lot in life and boldly takes matters into her own hands by touching Jesus’ garment. She is not the first to do so. Earlier Mark tells us that many who suffered diseases touched him in order to be healed. The difference is that this woman slinks up from behind so that she will not be observed and hopes that she can slink back into the anonymity of the large crowd without anyone knowing of her unlawful contact. When she touches Jesus, immediately her bleeding stops. But just as immediately Jesus knows that power has gone forth from him, and he will not allow her to slip away and remain anonymous. He forces the issue so that when she leaves healed, she will leave knowing that the one who healed her knows her and cares for her. She is a person who is worth taking time with and addressing.

*By faith, Lord, you have healed me and made me well. Amen.*