In studying Mark 5 I ran across yet another scriptural story that I have short-changed all these years. I always thought the story of the man possessed by a legion of spirits ended with the pigs drowning in the Sea of Galilee. For the first time I have seen that this story truly does have, not only an ending, but a real point. It is always nice to know the stories in the scriptures have a reason for being there.

**Story setup**

Jesus was teaching on the west side of the lake, but wanted to go over to the other side. When they arrived on the shore of the town of Gadara, which is on the road to Damascus, they were immediately met by a wild man who lived in the tombs outside the city. This man was completely out of his mind, and was so strong that no one could bind him or tame him. If bound, he would break any fetters or chains that tried to hold him.

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.

When the man approached them Jesus commanded the evil spirit within him to come out. This was the man’s reply.

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.
For he said unto him, Come out of the man, thou unclean spirit.

Upon having the unclean spirit acknowledge who He was and begging Jesus not to be tormented, Jesus asked his name.

And he asked him, What is thy name? And he answered, saying, My name is Legion: for we are many.

The legion of spirits begged Jesus not to be sent away from the body they had possessed, and were willing to take what they could get, so they pleaded to be allowed to enter into the herd of swine nearby.

And he besought him much that he would not send them away out of the country.

Now there was there nigh unto the mountains a great herd of swine feeding.

And all the devils besought him, saying, Send us into the swine, that we may enter into them.

Evidently there is a difference in controlling a swine's body from controlling a human's body, because upon entering the herd of swine they all ran violently down a steep bank and were drowned in the water below.

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.

The swine herders saw what happened to their animals and promptly ran into the town and told the leaders of the town what had happened. When they arrived at the scene they saw Jesus and the man formerly possessed, now sitting, clothed, and in his right mind. Evidently, a crazy man possessed of the devil, an "evil" they knew was preferable to the sane man now before them. They didn't know what to do with him, so they asked Jesus and his followers to please leave their town and go elsewhere.

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.

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.

And they that saw it told them how it befall to him that was possessed with the devil, and also concerning the swine.
And they began to pray him to depart out of their coasts.

The story continues

I always thought that was the end of the story, but it goes on. Jesus obliged them and went back to the boats that had carried them across the Sea of Galilee. The man who had been possessed went with, hoping to follow Jesus, but interestingly enough Jesus wouldn't allow him to follow. He told the man to stay and to go tell all those at home and all his friends "how great things the Lord hath done for thee and hath compassion on thee." And this is exactly what the man did.

And when he was come into the ship, he that had been possessed with the devil prayed him that he might be with him.

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.

And he departed, and began to publish in Decapolis how great things Jesus had done for him: and all men did marvel.

By the way, Decapolis is two Greek words put together meaning ten and city. Decapolis is a collection of ten cities in and around Palestine and Jerusalem.

So what?

You've probably already figured out the lesson here, but I'm a bit slower than many, and just saw the connection. Why did Jesus not want the man to follow him? Why did he want him to go, instead, and bear his testimony of God's love and compassion to all his family and friends? This is especially interesting to me since so many times when he had performed a miracle he charged the person not to tell anyone. If I may, I would like to sidestep for just a moment to make a point.

Often in the scriptures the Lord performs something wondrous in a physical way and then later on does the same thing in a spiritual way. The protection he gave the children of Israel in the wilderness for 40 years is a good example. He protected them by day with a pillar of cloud to shade them from the heat, and a pillar of fire so they had light to see by in the night. He fed them with a miraculous food that sustained them, but only if they gathered and ate it according to his strict instructions.
The parallel is in the law of Christ. Jesus gave commandments and priesthood authority to the members of the Church, along with the gift of the Holy Ghost. This law provided them with the bread of life and the living waters he promised to them over and over again. The gospel is the sustaining influence in our lives. Through our continued obedience his protective hand is upon us all the time, just as he guided the children of Israel and fought their battles for them. And just as he had Moses raise up the physical staff with a serpent on it to save those in Israel who had been bitten by the poisonous serpents, so too was He raised upon the cross to bring life and salvation to all who will look to him and live.

This story reminded me that the same basic principle behind the possessed man and the Savior casting out the legion of spirits from him can be likened to all of us, or at least to me. The man had been captive by his demons for years. No mention is made as to how long he had been in this situation, but others had tried to tame him and bring him into submission many times before, but his devils were too strong. (See where I am going with this?)

The spirits inside the man delighted in the suffering of this poor soul, and would hurt him by making him cut himself with rocks. No one knew the extent of his problem. Those around him only knew he was crazy and was a danger to himself and to others. It was only when Christ called out his evil spirit that it was learned that there was not just one, but legion; for they were many. Only after Christ had cleansed this man of his "inner demons" was the man able to come back to his right mind.

**We are sent forth**

In 3 Nephi 19:28 the Savior prays for the people and says this:

> 28 Father, I thank thee that thou hast purified those whom I have chosen, because of their faith, and I pray for them, and also for them who shall believe on their words, that they may be purified in me, through faith on their words, even as they are purified in me.

This is how the Savior operates. He goes to those who have the greatest faith and helps convert them then sends them out to testify to the world. Here is 3 Nephi 12:2.

> 2 And again, more blessed are they who shall believe in your words because that ye shall testify that ye have seen me, and that ye know that I am. Yea, blessed are they who shall believe in your words, and come down into the depths of humility and be baptized,
for they shall be visited with fire and with the Holy Ghost, and shall receive a remission of their sins.

This is the mission Jesus gave to the man once possessed. He sent him out in a testator capacity to spread the word that the Son of God was among the people, and to share with them the grace he had personally received at God's hands.

**Me**

I won't be so bold as to claim you are a sinner and that this story is about you, so I will say that I take this story very personally. I recognize within myself a host of inner demons that only Christ can cleanse. While I am giving into my demons that would lead me astray at every turn and torture me, I am not in my right mind. But when I have come to Christ and have received of his grace, and the evil that controlled my life has been sent away, I am free. I can now think and see clearly, and am desirous to sing his praises.

He has told me, as he told the man once possessed, "Go home to thy friends, and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee, and hath had compassion on thee." In the Doctrine and Covenants 4:3-5 Jesus calls us to the work this way.

3 Therefore, if ye have desires to serve God ye are called to the work;

4 For behold the field is white already to harvest; and lo, he that thrusteth in his sickle with his might, the same layeth up in store that he perisheth not, but bringeth salvation to his soul;

5 And faith, hope, charity and love, with an eye single to the glory of God, qualify him for the work.

**Final Thoughts**

The physical miracle played out in the New Testament of the man once possessed is likened to us (me at least) and the cleansing we need to experience by our coming to and acknowledging Christ and his role in our life. Only when I submit myself to His power as Redeemer can I have my legion of sins banished and I once again come into my right mind.
The blessing of being alive in the last dispensation of time is that we no longer have to receive a directive to go and preach the gospel. That directive is built into everything about the gospel of Christ for this dispensation. Our baptismal covenant charges us to represent or stand for Christ at all times in all places. Our Temple covenants further that charge. And the scriptures of the last days, such as section 4 of the Doctrine and Covenants tells us that we need to be up and doing the Lord's work. Even the living prophet has told us that we need to be ministering and inviting all to come unto Christ.

I hope we can be like this man who was faithful to the Savior's charge to him. "And he departed, and began to publish in [the 10 cities] how great things Jesus had done for him: and all men did marvel. This spirit of gratitude for God's mercies is the essence of missionary work.

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My name is Legion; for We Are Many