Mark 5:18-20

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[0:00] As I was giving thought to what passage to consider this evening, I was conscious of the fact that this was the weekend away and that folks who'd been on the weekend away would be here for the evening service. Good to see you. And I was also conscious that it might be necessary to try and arrest your attention. Of course, I should try and do that every week, but particularly on this occasion. And I was also thinking about how when we are on something like a weekend away, and I know not everybody has been, but if you haven't on this occasion, I'm sure you could imagine, a time of fun and fellowship. It could be a camp, a youth conference, a weekend away, and it's been a time of enjoyment, fun, but it comes to an end.

And Monday looms large. I don't know what you make of Mondays, but at the best of times, they can be difficult. But when you've been away and enjoying fellowship with God, with one another, the contrast can be particularly stark. And this thought was going through my mind, and probably not particularly helpfully, but I had the words of some pop song going through my head.
Not very meaningful, not very deep, but these are the lyrics. Some of you may recognize them. They go back a long time. Just another manic Monday. I wish it was Sunday. That's my fun day. Well, I don't know if Sunday is your fun day. Certainly when I was a wee boy, I didn't think of Sunday as being a very fun day. But anyway, that's another story. But I think as believers, we can use even that language.
It's a day of enjoyment, a day of fellowship, a day of being together and enjoying one another. And then Monday comes along. I wonder what we make of Monday. Is Monday just unnecessary evil? We need to get through it, and Tuesday and Wednesday, and well, the weekend will come again, and we can enjoy ourselves in a way that during the week we find difficult to do.
[2:38] I want to spend a little time thinking about how Jesus dealt with a man he delivered from a quite horrendous demonic oppression. We've read how it influenced him and the behavior that characterized him, and it's a sorry picture that is presented to us. And as we think about how Jesus dealt with this man, particularly the commission that he gives him, to maybe draw some insights and some encouragement in the matter of relishing Mondays to the glory of God. Not unnecessary evil, not something we simply need to endure and get through, but rather something we can relish and enjoy and take as a challenge to be grasped. Now we read the whole of the passage, but we're going to limit ourselves to the very end of the encounter and what's recorded in the final three verses. Let's think a little bit about what we find in these final three verses. The man has been healed from this terrible demonic oppression described. He was self-harming, he was deranged, he was violent. It is a horrendous picture that we find in the passage, and he's been healed. And we have this beautiful description of him in verse 15. Those who came to see

Jesus, they find this man, and he's described there as one sitting there dressed and in his right mind, in his right mind. The contrast was tremendous. Those who saw it were astonished by what they saw, and how much more the man himself. And so he's been healed, he's been delivered, the demons have been cast out, and he is in his right mind. And in those circumstances, what do we find about this man? Well, the first thing that I want to notice or to highlight is this very worthy desire that he has. In verse 18, we read, as Jesus was getting into the boat, the boat had gone across the Sea of Galilee to the Gentile side, and now presumably a return journey. And Jesus is getting into the boat. The man who had been demon possessed begged to go with him. This is what the man wants. He wants to go with Jesus. He wants to be with Jesus. And he begs of Jesus, let me go with you. Let me be with you. There's a contrast with other begging that we read of in the chapter. The demons had begged that they not be cast out from the area, that they be allowed to possess the pigs. The people had begged of Jesus to go, to leave them alone, because he was no good for them. And now this man begs, but he begs to be with Jesus. That is what he wants. Isn't that a

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good thing? Is that not commendable? Is that not something that we can commend him for? And we get it. We understand. When you think of this man, what he had suffered, and how he had lived, and as he even contemplates what his life had been. And now as he just examines himself, the transformation is such, and it's Jesus who has done it. Of course he wants to be with Jesus.
He wants to be with Jesus. I imagine that even for Jesus, the fact that this man has this desire was was encouraging in the face of the opposition of the crowds who want to be rid of him, there's this one man, and this man wants to be with Jesus. And as I say, you can understand the man's desire. It's understandable. It's healthy. It's commendable. It is a good thing. You say, surely he wants something that is so good. Surely he will be granted what he desires.
There are times when we can feel something of that desire to be with God and to be with God's people, in fellowship with God's people. It's a safe place. It's a place of rest. It's a place of acceptance.
[7:08] It's a place of love. It's a place that sometimes can seem so different to what awaits us outside, in an indifferent and sometimes hostile world out there. Sunday's so much better than Monday.

If only Sunday could carry on and we could just dispense with Mondays. While it's unlikely that the man had much of a notion of what it meant to be a disciple of Jesus, he wants to go with Jesus, he wants to be with Jesus, but I can't imagine he had a very developed concept of what it meant to be a disciple of Jesus, it's still interesting that Mark employs language that seems to be a deliberate echo of language used to describe discipleship. In the previous chapter, in two chapters before, in chapter 3 and from verse 13, just one page before, we read of the appointing of the twelve apostles stroke disciples, and notice what it says, Jesus went up on a mountainside and called to him those he wanted, and they came to him. He appointed twelve, designating them apostles, that they might be with him and that he might send them.
Interesting there's these two aspects, that they would be with him and that he might send them. And the first part is what the man is asking for. The man wants to be with Jesus, and that was part and parcel of being a disciple, to be with Jesus. And this is what he wants. He maybe doesn't appreciate all the implications of it, but that's what he is asking for. But being a disciple isn't just about being with Jesus. As we notice there in verse 14 of chapter 3, it also involves being sent by Jesus. That's the part that the man hadn't quite understood, but he very soon will understand.
You can't have one without the other. You can't say, well, I want to be with Jesus, but I don't want to be sent by Jesus. The two go together. So there's this worthy desire, but also what we then meet in the passage is what I'm describing as a tough prohibition. What does Jesus say in response to this man begging to go with him? Well, we read in verse 19, Jesus did not let him. Jesus did not let him. How the man must have felt when his request was denied. He couldn't get into the boat. He couldn't go with Jesus. He couldn't be with Jesus. He was being left behind. The boat would go and he would remain there on the shore, seeing it going into the distance. How must he have felt as he contemplated that prospect? Well, he must have been gutted. How he longed to get into that boat. How he longed to go with Jesus, to be near Jesus, to speak to Jesus, to listen to Jesus, to get to know him better, to serve him. He would do anything for Jesus. But Jesus says, no, you can't come with me.
[10:24] You can't join me in this boat. You can't go where I'm going now. It was tough to be faced with that denial on the part of Jesus of what he was asking for.

Why was that? Why did Jesus not allow the man to go with him? Well, we're not given explicitly the answer, but we can give some thought to it. At one level, there may be something to do with the fact that the man was a Gentile. It's not that Jesus was opposed to Gentiles. He'd healed the man. He delivered the man. He loved Gentiles. But at this stage in his ministry, it perhaps would not have been appropriate for a Gentile to be part of that inner circle of disciples. There's maybe something in that. But I think beyond that, and more fundamentally than that, the reason why Jesus denies the man his request is that Jesus had other plans for the man. He had better plans for the man. It seems difficult to imagine anything that could have been better than being with Jesus, but Jesus had better plans. And these plans, the plans of Jesus, however seemingly unattractive to the man at first sight, were best for him. And there's a spiritual principle there that applies so often for us. What we want, and desires that could be very worthy and commendable and reflect our love for the Lord and our desire to serve him and to be with God's people, what we want.

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It may have something to do with location of where we study or work or matters of that kind. The church that we wish to be a part of and serve in, and yet a door is closed. What we thought would have been perfect for us, the door is closed, and we have to go elsewhere, somewhere seemingly a lot less attractive for us. And yet God is in all of this, ordering events because he knows best for us. A worthy desire, a tough prohibition. But then we have what we're calling an exciting commission that is given to the man by Jesus. In verse 19, it begins with the prohibition, Jesus did not let him, but said, go home to your family and tell them how much the Lord has done for you and how he has had mercy on you. Go and tell. We had to just summarize it in three words. Go and tell. Now this was exciting at a number of levels, certainly a couple of levels. It was exciting that a man like this man, who had suffered as he had suffered, that this man would be commissioned by Jesus. The very fact that Jesus would give him a task to do, that was exciting. But then the task itself was an exciting task that he was given. Jesus wasn't rejecting this man. On the contrary, he was sending him as his representative, as his ambassador to this man's family and community. This was a high calling.
Or maybe you should call it a high sending. Jesus needed him. Jesus needed this man. Remember, as we've read or as we know, Jesus had been banished from this region. The people had told him to go.
[14:03] They said, you're not welcome here. Jesus couldn't minister there. He was being cast out from that place. But this man could go where Jesus could not go. And so he's sent by Jesus to his family, to those who had surrounded him perhaps many years before he had suffered as he had been suffering.

He could go where Jesus couldn't go. That's true for you as well. Even on a Monday, especially on a Monday.
Whatever Monday holds for you, wherever you need to go, Jesus sends you there. He sends you to go in his name, to go and tell all that God has done for you and how he has had mercy on you. This was an exciting commission that he was given. The healed man, the liberated, demon-possessed man, no longer possessed, becomes the first missionary preacher sent out by Jesus to the Gentiles. Far from being denied the opportunity to be a disciple of Jesus, this man is placed on what we might call a fast-track discipleship program. He's been asked to do things that the other disciples still aren't ready for.
Already he's been told, go and tell. So often those who had enjoyed or experienced healing or liberation from Jesus were told to remain quiet, not this man. Now again, the reasons for that are interesting to consider, it may well be because he was going to Gentile territory where announcing who this Jesus was and what Jesus had done didn't carry any implications for Jesus's ministry in a way that it would have done among Jews in Galilee. Maybe that's something of why this man is given this permission and this commission to go and tell. But it is a high calling that he has given. Go and tell. Go home to your family. These words, even this journey home, it speaks of restoration. Can you imagine his family when he arrived? How they had suffered seeing this man. I don't know in what circumstances he had become possessed in the manner that he had become possessed. How long he had suffered in this way? But to see this man, their son, their brother, their uncle, whoever the family circle were, to see him in his right mind, what a powerful impact that must have had as he walked in the door of the family home. And they would have been all ears. They would have been all ears to hear what he had to say. How has this happened? Who has done this for you? He had to go and tell his family.
[17:08] He has a story to tell of what Jesus has done for him. He knows very little. He knows very little about who Jesus is. He knows very little of theology. He knows very little of messianic prophecies being fulfilled. Little or nothing, perhaps, of many of these things. But he knows enough because he has a story to tell. He can tell of God's restoring power, and he can tell of God's mercy. He can tell of God's grace. He knows very little of God's grace. He knows very little of God's It reminds me a little of the man born blind, healed by Jesus. It's recorded for us in John's Gospel in chapter 9. Again, some of you who didn't really know much about Jesus, and the religious leaders were criticizing him and telling him, well, this man, Jesus, that you say has healed you. Don't you know he's a sinner?

And how did the man reply? Whether he is a sinner or not, I don't know. One thing I do know, I was blind, and now I see. No doubt this man would have been quizzed. Who is this Jesus who's healed you? I don't know, but one thing I do know, I was oppressed. I was in the most appalling

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circumstances, and look at me now. I'm free. That I do know. He had a story to tell. Monday is a day for going and telling.
Where are you going? What are you going to tell? And the story that you tell should be a developing story. It's a story of what God has and is doing for you. It ought not to remain a static story.
It can't be one story that doesn't change because God is working in you. The story is growing. There's new chapters. There's new stories to tell, new parts of the story.
Go and tell the story of what God has done for you and of his great mercy. Let's draw things to a close with just seeing one or two other things more briefly.
[19:18] There is this great commission, this exciting commission, but then there is what we're calling his exemplary obedience. In chapter 5, we read, So the man went away and began to tell in the Decapolis how much Jesus had done for him.

The man went to his family, I'm sure. We're not told that he did, but I'm sure he did. But he does more than just go to his family. Having told his family, we're told that he went to tell in the Decapolis. Now, the Decapolis was a collection of city-states to the southeast of the Sea of Galilee. And these were cities that had been established in the time of Alexander the Great when he had conquered that part of the world and Greeks had moved and settled there. So these were several communities known corporately as the Decapolis.
And this man went. He went from town to town telling of what Jesus had done for him. He went way beyond what he'd been asked to do. So we call this obedience exemplary and challenging as he goes and tells whoever is willing to hear of what Jesus has done for him and of his great mercy.
And we see something of the wonderful providence of God in this incident. You know, when this man was suffering as he did in the way described at the beginning of the chapter, you know, anybody could have said, what good could possibly come of this? What good could come of this man suffering so terribly?
There's nothing redeemable about his situation, nothing at all. And yet, and yet, his story and his witness is all the more compelling because of who he had been and what he had suffered. His gratitude is all the more profound because of where he had been rescued from.
[21:18] His devotion all the more intense because of where Jesus had rescued him from. We notice also in his obedience a revealing insight into the identity of Jesus in the manner in which we're told the commission that he's given and how he fulfills it. You see, the commission is, then in verse 19, go and tell how much the Lord has done for you.

Then Mark tells us what he does. And what he does, what the man does is, he went and he told how much Jesus had done for him. He had to go and tell what the Lord had done for him.
What God had done for him. What Yahweh had done for him. The Lord. And he went and he told. And he told what Jesus had done for him.
See, the man identifies Jesus with the Lord. What the Lord had done, Jesus had done. What Jesus had done, the Lord had done. And then finally, we have the outcome of his obedience.
He's commissioned, he's sent, he goes, he tells. And we're told very briefly what the outcome was. All the people were amazed. Well, of course, they were amazed.
[22:42] If they had known anything of his previous life, they could have been nothing but amazed. Now, what does that mean? What can we read into the fact that they were amazed? We've already discovered how people can be amazed and yet not changed.

No doubt that was true for many of the people. They were amazed. They were astonished. But there was no change. But among those who were amazed, I'm sure there were those who listened more carefully.
Perhaps their interest was sparked to the point of them seeking to discover more about this Jesus. And among them, might there have been those who came to know and trust in Jesus as their Savior, as their Lord.
Maybe a link in the chain was started there and then subsequently they'd have heard more, they'd have learned more, and would have come to saving faith. Well, only eternity will tell how many came to faith in Jesus through the bold and passionate witness of this man.
But there was an outcome also for the man. The man discovered that though separated from Jesus, he was still able to serve as a servant and ambassador of Jesus.
[23:56] And how he would have delighted and rejoiced in telling others his story. Telling others of Jesus. As we fast forward to ourselves, as we are sent by Jesus to go and tell, the promise that we have from Jesus is much more full and rich and explicit.

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When Jesus commands us to go and tell, when Jesus commissions you to go and serve him on Mondays, he promises to be with you. You don't need to choose between being with Jesus and being sent by Jesus.
Both will go together. As you are sent, so he will accompany you by his Spirit. And he will be with you on Monday. At college, at work, in the office, whatever it is that Monday will find you.
Jesus is with you on Monday, just as surely as he is with you on Sunday. Well, are you dreading Monday? Well, Jesus gives you a task to perform.
Let's pray.
[25:31] To go and tell what you have done for us and of your great mercy. Help us to go and to tell. And we pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

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