

3. Jesus wants us to know about evil, but the message he wants us to share is about his grace and compassion.

v.18

It is natural for us to want to spend time with those who have helped and blessed us

v.19

Jesus wants us to know his help but then to pass on to others the good news of his kindness and mercy

v.20

Our experience of God's grace to us in Jesus will be a powerful testimony to those who know only the enslaving power of sin and evil

*Jesus, the name high over all,
in hell, or earth, or sky:
angels and men before it fall,
and devils fear and fly.*

*Jesus, the prisoner's fetters breaks,
and bruises Satan's head;
power into strengthless souls he speaks,
and life into the dead.*

Charles Wesley (1707-88)

'Jesus, Son of the Most High God!'

Mark 5:1-20

Sunday 12th June 2022

Introduction

What do you think of the Devil?

Is he a real personal being, or just a force or idea?

If he's real, what's he like?

Or do you prefer not to think about him?

C.S. Lewis gives this warning about the powers of evil:

"There are two equal and opposite errors into which our race can fall about the devils. One is to disbelieve in their existence. The other is to believe, and to feel an obsessive and unhealthy interest in them. They themselves are equally pleased by both errors and hail a materialist or a magician with the same delight."

Preface to 'The Screwtape Letters' (1941)

Mark 5:1-20 shows Jesus meeting a man possessed by evil spirits.

In this passage:

- We see the reality of evil and its damaging consequences
- We see Jesus' wisdom and compassion, and power over evil
- We see what Jesus wants our priority and emphasis to be today

1. God wants us to know that the Devil exists: there are real, personal, spirit-beings whose aim is to destroy God's work.

God has spiritual enemies: fallen angels ('demons', 'devils', 'unclean / impure spirits', v.2). They harm (3-5) and possess people (15-16). Satan, their leader, tempts Jesus (Mk.1:13) & his followers (Mk.8:33).

They are active throughout the Bible story, especially during Jesus earthly ministry. In Mark 5 there are thousands of them ('Legion').

In this passage, they have this effect on the man:

He cannot live with others (2-3)

He has no self-control, and cannot be controlled (3-4)

He harms himself, and would harm others (v.5)

In our lives today there are real spiritual dangers, but we are not alone and we are not helpless. See what the Bible writers tell us:

Peter describes the devil as a devouring lion; whom we can resist
(1 Pet .5:8-9)

Paul warns of a spiritual battle against unseen forces; but shows us God's armour, weapons - and prayer (Eph. 6:10-20)

John reminds us that as believers in Christ we have His Holy Spirit in us, who is greater than any spirit in the world (1 John 4:4)

2. In his compassion, Jesus speaks to the evil spirits in the man. His power is greater; he commands them to leave.

(a) The evil spirits recognise him and his power (2, 6-13)

They know he is 'Jesus, Son of the Most High God' (7)

They know he has absolute power over them (7-13)

(b) Jesus always promotes good and opposes evil (14-17)

Free from the evil spirits, the man prospered (16)

The power of Jesus can be frightening (15,17)

There is a cost to us in saying 'Jesus is Lord' (13,17)