

The Power of Your Story
Your Home is a Great Place to Start
Mark 5:1-20

Dr. Steve Horn

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Text Introduction: We are in a series of messages on the Power of Story—not just any story, but the story of God’s activity in our lives. We are examining New Testament stories of individuals sharing their story. We want to specifically see what God would teach us from these stories about sharing our own story. So far, we have considered the story of Nicodemus coming to Jesus at night, the example of John the Baptist, the example of the very first disciples of Jesus, the woman at the well, and last week the healing of a blind man. I’ve been telling you that you need to tell your story and others need to hear your story. Today, I want to talk to you about telling your story to perhaps the most difficult group—those closest to you—your family, your neighbors, those who know you best.

Text: Then they came to the other side of the sea, to the region of the Gerasenes. ² As soon as He got out of the boat, a man with an unclean spirit came out of the tombs and met Him. ³ He lived in the tombs. No one was able to restrain him anymore—even with chains— ⁴ because he often had been bound with shackles and chains, but had snapped off the chains and smashed the shackles. No one was strong enough to subdue him. ⁵ And always, night and day, he was crying out among the tombs and in the mountains and cutting himself with stones.

⁶ When he saw Jesus from a distance, he ran and knelt down before Him. ⁷ And he cried out with a loud voice, “What do You have to do with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I beg You before God, don’t torment me!” ⁸ For He had told him, “Come out of the man, you unclean spirit!”

⁹ “What is your name?” He asked him.

“My name is Legion,” he answered Him, “because we are many.” ¹⁰ And he kept begging Him not to send them out of the region.

¹¹ Now a large herd of pigs was there, feeding on the hillside. ¹² The demons begged Him, “Send us to the pigs, so we may enter them.” ¹³ And He gave them permission. Then the unclean spirits came out and entered the pigs, and the herd of about 2,000 rushed down the steep bank into the sea and drowned there. ¹⁴ The men who tended them ran off and reported it in the town and the countryside, and people went to see what had happened. ¹⁵ They came to Jesus and saw the man who had been demon-possessed by the legion, sitting there, dressed and in his right mind; and they were afraid. ¹⁶ The eyewitnesses described to them what had happened to the demon-possessed man and told about the pigs. ¹⁷ Then they began to beg Him to leave their region.

¹⁸ As He was getting into the boat, the man who had been demon-possessed kept begging Him to be with Him. ¹⁹ But He would not let him; instead, He told him, “Go back home to your own people, and report to them how much the Lord has done for you and how He has had mercy on you.” ²⁰ So he went out and began to proclaim in the Decapolis how much Jesus had done for him, and they were all amazed.

Introduction: What's going on in this story? Mark is continuing to show Jesus as Messiah. Mark is the Gospel that gets right to the point. In Mark 2, there is the story of the man being lowered through the roof. Not only is he healed by Jesus physically, but he is spiritually healed as Jesus forgives his sin. Mark's Gospel continues to show Jesus healing, even on the Sabbath. Not only is Jesus Lord over disease, He is also Lord over the Sabbath and the Law. Right before this story in Mark 5, the story is told of Jesus calming the sea. He is Lord over nature. Then comes this story of a man healed of demonic possession. Jesus is Lord over all. And, your story is helping to share that story.

This is a powerful story of Jesus' Lordship. He speaks, and the man is delivered. As powerful as that story is, my favorite part of this story is what happens at the end. The man wants to go with Jesus, but Jesus tells him to go home.

Why did Jesus tell this man to go home?

Understanding why Jesus told this man to go home helps us understand both the necessity and the difficulty of our going home to tell our story.

1. Home was where he needed to go.

Until now, this man had not been much good at home. He had caused great hurt. Now, he could help. He could be restored to family. Can you imagine all of the difficulty this man must have caused at home? To his parents? Did he have a wife? Did he have children? There is emotional shame. There is economic strain. Now, he had an opportunity to be something other than trouble. Jesus wanted him to go home to be that something and He wants us to go home and be that something.

When I was in college in Memphis, I met a man named John "Bull" Bramlett. John Bramlett played professional baseball out of college in the 1960s. Just two years into his career, he was let go for his behavior both on and off the field. He then tried his hand at professional football. He quickly got the nickname, "The Meanest Man in the NFL." By the time I met John, he had been wonderfully saved. That is, he had come to a place of belief in Jesus as the way, the truth, and the life. His testimony is dramatic. Some men came to his house one Monday evening. He was doing what he did every Monday night in the Fall—getting drunk and watching Monday Night Football. The men left a Bible and asked him to commit to reading the Bible. He began to read the Bible and soon could not put it down. One day, on his own, he came to that place in life to believe that what the Bible said about Jesus was true and believed in Christ for eternal life. He repented of his sins and committed his life to Christ.

Two years after John Bramlett gave his life to Christ, his young son, Don, was given an assignment at school to write a letter to the newspaper starting with the phrase, "All I want for Christmas is...." Don's teacher contacted John to tell him to come up to the school to read what his son wrote before she submitted it to the paper. Don's young son wrote: All I want for Christmas is for my family and me to have a very Merry Christmas like the other two Christmases we've had. My dad was out drinking and fighting three years ago and we were all worrying about him and wondering when he would come back. While opening our presents, we were so miserable through those years. Now we have a happy and merry Christmas after my daddy accepted Jesus in his heart and we have a lot to be thankful for. This is all I want for Christmas and I've got it.

2. Home was where Jesus was not welcomed.

They kicked Jesus out of town. Interesting, isn't it that they kicked Jesus out of town when he subdued the man? I'm not sure there is a better explanation for why they kicked Jesus out of town other than He caused the demons to enter the pigs. They rejected Jesus, but maybe they would receive the man.

Consider how many places God has been kicked out of today? Schools come to mind first. Whatever you think of, the truth is that we become the witness to those places where God has been removed.

Even when people don't at first respond to Jesus, there is a tendency to respond to changed lives. Samuel Chadwick was a preacher in England in the late 1800's and early 1900's. He talked about the turning point in his ministry being the conversion of a man named Bob. Bob was a notorious sinner in Chadwick's town. He was known for fighting and stealing. Bob came to know Christ. Chadwick said when Bob got saved, revival began. What the congregation did not know was that Chadwick had been studying the story of the resurrection of Lazarus. He began praying that God would give his community a Lazarus story. After that, in every congregation he pastored, he prayed for the salvation of someone like Bob. He said, "If God is at work week by week raising men from the dead, there will always be people coming to see how it is done." (Warren Wiersbe, *50 People Every Christian Should Know*, Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2009, p. 248)

3. Home was the hardest place to go.

Jesus knew that for this man, going home would be a tough thing. They knew him at home. Going home becomes a test of discipleship. It may not be for you, but it will be for many. Wherever He calls us to go is the place that we will need to go. It may be the toughest place to go. My friend Waylon Bailey tweeted the other day, "The most important missionary journey may be across the street."

What is your test of discipleship?

4. Home is the place where revival begins.

The last verse of the Old Testament, Malachi 4:6 says, "And He will turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their father."

Paul Jones was once the director for the Christian Life Commission for the Mississippi Baptist Convention. One day he was paged to go downstairs. Two young ladies were introduced to him. One said, "Jane, here is pregnant. Help her." Paul said, "Well, I'm not going to help her get an abortion if that's what you had in mind, but we can definitely help her." "Forget it," the leader of the two said, "I knew all we would get here is judgment." And off they went. The next day, Jane showed back up at Paul's office. "Can you really help me?" She asked. Paul listened to her story. She had come from Missouri. Her dad, a wealthy businessman, had forced her to have sex with a client to close a business deal. When she turned up pregnant, her Dad kicked her out of the house and that's how she came to Paul. Paul Jones helped her meet a Christian family. She kept the baby, found work and an apartment, and was managing quite well.

Two years later, Paul was traveling in Mississippi, having breakfast alone in a Shoney's Restaurant. A gentleman, who happened to be a Baptist pastor, approached Paul and asked, "Aren't you Paul Jones?" "Yes," Paul said. The pastor began. "There's a man here who has a problem and I was thinking you might be able to help when I looked up and saw you. For the next few minutes, Paul began to hear the father's side of Jane's story. "I'm trying to find my daughter," the heartbroken father said. "I've become a Christian recently and I want to see if there's any way she will forgive me and come back home." In a matter of moments, Paul had Jane on the phone and a grand reunion began to take place.

When a Dad rebels, the first place to suffer is the home. But when God changes the heart of a father, the first place to be rewarded is the home. (From Matter of Fax, Joe McKeever, Jan. 06, 2004.)

That's the story of Mark 5 and Jesus healing a crazy man. Until Jesus arrived, no chain could hold this crazy man. Everyone was afraid of him. When Jesus arrived, He immediately cast the demons out of the man. The man became so thankful that he wanted to go with Jesus. Jesus, though, instructed the man to go home. Dad, the best you could do today is come home to Jesus and then go home and tell your family what Jesus has done for you. May you have the courage to do just that.