



## Meditation— Mark 5.<sup>14-20</sup>

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<sup>14</sup>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. <sup>15</sup>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. <sup>16</sup>And they that saw it told them how it befell to him that was possessed with the devil, and also concerning the swine. <sup>17</sup>And they began to pray him to depart out of their coasts.

<sup>18</sup>And when he was come into the ship, he that had been possessed with the devil prayed him that he might be with him. <sup>19</sup>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."

<sup>20</sup>And he departed, and began to publish in Decapolis how great things Jesus had done for him: and all men did marvel.

It does not matter how many times or how often I read the story of the man named Legion, I am always completely transfixed by the image of the man "sitting at Jesus' feet" "clothed, and in his right mind." I am utterly transfixed by the absolute and full contrast between the man's condition after his encounter with Jesus and that before his encounter with Jesus—naked, wounded, hated, uncontrollable, suicidal. The contrast between the two men—one before or after his encounter with Jesus—is so complete and so stark that I can't help but lift my eyes, as this man must have done, to look upon the face of Jesus with respect and love and hope. I can't help feeling my own mind calmed and changed and enlivened.

I am no less transfixed when I hear the man's plea that "he might remain with Jesus." Here, too, I am transfixed by the contrast between the before and the after. This is the same man who just moments earlier had expressed concern and unworthiness, "What have I to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of the most high God?" This is the same man who just moments earlier had expressed his doubt about Jesus and his intentions toward him, "I adjure thee by God, that thou torment me not."

But look at him now! All worries about his worthiness have been cast aside. All concerns about Jesus' intentions have disappeared as if less than a mist. Once again, this man named Legion calls out to me. Draws me to Jesus. Convinces me that he can be trusted no matter how legion the overwhelming forces are that threaten and destroy my worthiness before him. Convinces me not only of the joy I can find in Jesus' presence, but of the joy that Jesus finds in being present in my life.

In the past 20 to 30 years, we LDS have become a Book of Mormon people. This has, too often, come at the expense of the other standard works and our appreciation and understanding of them. I don't think, at least I hope, that this was not intended. It is tragic. It is most tragic when one considers the four Gospels. There is nothing like them. In them, we get closer to a first person revelation of God than anywhere else, including the Book of Mormon.

Because of this near singular emphasis on the Book of Mormon, we are familiar with the story of Alma the Younger and the transformation that took place in his life upon his encounter with Jesus, Son of God.

Previous to this encounter, Alma was tormented and “harrowed up to the greatest degree and raked with all [his] sins.” So vivid was his sense of guilt and unworthiness that “the very thought of coming into the presence of [his] God did rack [his] soul with inexpressible horror.” It all felt, to him, like “the pains of hell.”

It was while in this state that he finally cried out to Jesus, as Legion had done, and encountered Jesus. Like Legion, he was transformed by the encounter.

“And oh, what joy, and what marvelous light I did behold; yea, my soul was filled with joy as exceeding as was my pain! ... Yea, methought I saw, even as our father Lehi saw, God sitting upon his throne, surrounded with numberless concourses of angels, in the attitude of singing and praising their God; yea, and my soul did long to be there.”<sup>1</sup>

One can almost hear Mark’s, “sitting, and clothed, and in his right mind” in Alma’s testimony. Indeed, there is little doubt in my mind that both men experienced the same thing. Both men were transformed to and from the same demons. Both men discovered Jesus to be the most attractive of all beings. Both men wished to remain with him and have him remain with them. And both men were send into the world to tell the good news of Jesus’ transforming power and of his generous and accepting character.

Both men deserve to be heard. Both men draw us to Jesus, Son of God. Both men fill us with confidence in him. Both men fill us with the confidence to enter his presence and let him work his transforming work in our lives. This is a message and a moment that truly calls forth the plea which we so often invoke:

Even so, come, Lord Jesus!

*(edition: may 19, 2024)*

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<sup>1</sup> See Alma 36.<sup>12-22</sup>