From the book of Matthew, quoting the prophet Isaiah.

**“The people who sat in darkness**

**have seen a great light.**

**And for those who lived in the land where death casts its shadow,**

**a light has shined.” Matthew 4:16**

Today we are kicking off a new series that we are calling ‘Known.’ It’s a 4 week series that will focus on *4 specific moments in the book of Mark,* where Jesus encounters an individual who presents with some sort of immediate and obvious need - a need for physical healing or restoration - or deliverance of some kind.

**But** in addition to their overt needs, each person we’ll meet in this series also has a hidden, less obvious need. And Jesus, in His great love for that individual, sees far beyond the surface of their need. He sees the bigger picture. In His love, Jesus sees the whole person.  And He knows them.

So we are calling this series, “KNOWN.”

**Over the next 4 weeks we will see that when Jesus restores, He restores completely!**

**He works in ways to show us that He *knows us thoroughly*. In His compassion and love for us, He sees far beyond the surface of our need. He sees the whole person.**

**We are known and loved by the One who has authority over all things: Jesus! Our Great Defender!**

So if you will, would you turn with me to Mark chapter 5, if you’re using a house Bible that’s page **833**. While you’re flipping to Mark chapter 5 I want to say hello to those of you joining us online! I’m glad you’re with us! And as always, it’s good to see you all who were able to make it in person today! Thank you for being here. We’re just diving straight into the book of Mark this morning because there’s so much to cover in 30ish minutes!

Mark, the writer of this gospel, was not one of the original 12 disciples. He was actually Peter’s interpreter and scribe. Peter, as most of you will know, WAS one of the original 12 disciples who followed Jesus, and witnessed his miracles first-hand.

The Gospel of Mark is actually a collection of the memories and observations of Peter!

Mark was documenting Peter's recollections of his time with Jesus. And as Pastor Tim mentioned in the video we just saw, the Gospel of Mark is largely centered around one burning question, and that is: WHO IS THIS MAN. This was the question that the stunned disciples asked after Jesus spoke to the wind and the waves, and calmed the storm. “Who is this man?” they asked each other. “Even the wind and waves obey him!”

The stories we will read in the coming weeks are there to answer that question! Who is this Man?

And the first one we’ll look at today begins at the start of Mark chapter 5, in verse 1. Now, some of your Bibles may have a heading at the top of chapter 5. Mine says, ‘Jesus Heals a Demon possessed man.’

This is an intense story. There’s no way of getting around it! But remember - Mark is writing for Peter and Peter was a pretty intense guy. He was bold, and brash. **And** he was a first-hand witness to this supernatural event. And Peter wants us to know - this guy that we’re about to read about - **this** guy was consumed by a kind of evil that was utterly destroying his life! We don’t know the specifics of how he ended up this way, or for how long he had been afflicted by this kind of evil. All we are told is that this man was completely consumed by and tormented by the presence of something truly evil and demonic.

It **IS** a heavy story. Not a light way to kick off a new series. And I **AM** aware that there are a few middle school students in our midst today - **shout out to you if you’re a middle school student!** Fuse, our middle school ministry has been taking a break for the summer, hanging out in big church -  so as a bit of a nod to them, I will be getting a little visual help today from The Brick Bible - do ya’ll know about this Brick Bible? I guess it’s a few years old by now, but it’s basically Lego scenes that depict Bible stories. My mom got a copy for my kids when they were little, FAR TOO LITTLE for this book. It can get pretty graphic in lego terms - especially the old testament.  Be forewarned. But for our purposes this morning, we’ll use it to help us tell the story. So please if you would, grab your Bibles or a house Bible, and read along with me starting at Mark 5:1

**“So they arrived at the other side of the lake, in the region of the Gerasenes.[[a](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Mark+5&version=NLT" \l "fen-NLT-24339a)] 2 When Jesus climbed out of the boat, a man possessed by an evil[**[**b**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Mark+5&version=NLT#fen-NLT-24340b)**] spirit came out from the tombs to meet him.**

Pause. We’re only 2 verses in, and we already need to pause! Remember, Jesus had just calmed the storm, at the end of chapter 4. Jesus and his disciples are still in that boat! And I’m immediately struck by a detail we read in verse 2: “a man possessed by an evil spirit ***came out*** from the tombs to meet him!”

And for me, that immediately begged the question, Why?!

\*\*\*side note\*\*\*

I asked myself that question, WHY??? multiple times while studying this story. And chances are, you will too. As we get deeper into this story, that question comes up again and again! WHY, GOD? WHY?

And can I tell you - it’s ok to ask why! It’s more than ok! I believe God welcomes our wrestling. So if something is puzzling to you, if there’s something you just don’t get, go ahead and ask why! Don’t ever be afraid to be honest with Him! Remember, HE KNOWS you. He KNOWS us. HE KNOWS when something doesn’t make sense to us. He knows when we’re struggling with something we just don’t understand. He knows. So go ahead and ask - WHY?

I asked why this demon possessed man would voluntarily come out of the tombs to meet Jesus! Why didn’t he hide, and just wait for Jesus to pass on through? Couldn’t he have just laid low, and stayed in the cave? Why didn’t he just hide?

And my answer came in the form of a question: Could it be that the very presence of Jesus, drives darkness out from it’s hiding place? When Jesus came ashore, the evil knew it was busted! It was game over.

**Darkness has no place to hide, in the light of God’s radiant glory!**

It **was** as the Prophet Isaiah had said:

“The people who sat in darkness

    have seen a great light.

And for those who lived in the land where death casts its shadow,

    a light has shined.”

This man with many demons ***literally lived in the land where death casts its shadows***. He lived in the tombs, among dead bodies. But for him, on this day, a great light had come!

**Jesus is the Light that drives out darkness!**

We continue reading in verse 3

**3 This man lived in the burial caves and could no longer be restrained, even with a chain.**

**4 Whenever he was put into chains and shackles—as he often was—he snapped the chains from his wrists and smashed the shackles. No one was strong enough to subdue him.**

**5 Day and night he wandered among the burial caves and in the hills, howling and cutting himself with sharp stones.**

We’ll pause here again, because this begged another question! Why had this man been restrained with chains and shackles? There’s nothing in this text that says he was a criminal, or violent toward others. The text says ‘no one was strong enough to subdue him’. Why were people trying to subdue him? I think the answer to that question is found in verse 5 - “Day and night he wandered among the burial caves and in the hills, howling and cutting himself with sharp stones.”

He was self-harming. I think this man had become a terrible danger to himself. He had been so consumed by evil forces, that he was self-destructing. I think the people of the town tried to chain him up for his own good - it was all they knew to do to keep him from harming himself. Maybe they tried to subdue him when they saw him mercilessly mutilating himself with sharp stones.

So he went away. The evil had driven him to the cold, dark, isolation of the tombs on the far outskirts of town, where he could be alone to continue to torture himself without anyone intervening. Where he could live among the dead - in the darkest kind of darkness.

Until the day the Light came ashore, and darkness had no place to hide!

“...For those who lived in the land where death casts its shadow,

    a light has shined.”

**Jesus is the light that drives out darkness!**

And can I tell you that the darkness knows that!! Look what happens in verse 6:

**6 When Jesus was still some distance away, the man saw him, ran to meet him, and bowed low before him. 7 With a shriek, he screamed, “Why are you interfering with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? In the name of God, I beg you, don’t torture me!” 8 For Jesus had already said to the spirit, “Come out of the man, you evil spirit.”**

**9 Then Jesus demanded, “What is your name?”**

**And he replied, “My name is Legion, because there are many of us inside this man.” 10 Then the evil spirits begged him again and again not to send them to some distant place.**

There’s quite a bit going on in this interaction. First we see the man bowing low before Jesus. This was not a reverent bow of worship. This was an act of desperation, by a cowardly evil spirit who knew it was in the presence of somebody far superior to it! It screamed at the top of it’s lungs -  τί ἐμοὶ καὶ σοί “TEE em eee K’EY SEE! “  The Greek here translates to a well known expression for that time: WHAT TO ME AND TO YOU?’

It basically means “what business do you have with me?” The demon shrieks at the top of it’s lungs  ‘why are you messing with me?!’ and then it mocks -  “Jesus, Son of the Most High God.” Calling Jesus by his first name was demeaning and disrespectful. This demon was using familiar language as though they were on casual terms. It’s as though the demon was saying “I already know who you are.” And the part about calling him the “Son of the Most-High God” - that was no show of respect either! Referring to God in this way, as ‘the Most-High God,’ was only used by gentiles who believed that Israel’s God was just one of many gods. It was a slam on God - a way to mock God

And after mocking Jesus to his face, the evil spirit has the gal to beg Him for mercy! It said “I beg you, don’t torture me.” Now I don’t need to tell you how slimy that is! This spirit had been mercilessly torturing this man for years - but now it is the one begging not to be tortured!

Jesus demands to know its name. This was an assertion of authority over this evil spirit. This was letting the demon know who was in control - who had the power.

And the demon said it’s name was Legion. The word ‘legion’ was a Roman military term that described an infantry of about 6,000 soldiers. This demon was suggesting that there were thousands of evil spirits infesting this man. It was as though the demon was saying  - ‘It’s an army up in here! You don’t want to mess with this guy, because there are way more of us than there are of you - thousands of us! Was it just trying to intimidate Jesus? Was it lying?

Was it exaggerating? We don’t know.

But what we do know is that the language changes from singular to plural from this point on in the story. Watch what happens in verse 11:

**11 There happened to be a large herd of pigs feeding on the hillside nearby.**

**12 “Send us into those pigs,” the spirits begged. “Let us enter them.”**

**13 So Jesus gave them permission. The evil spirits came out of the man and entered the pigs,**

**and the entire herd of about 2,000 pigs plunged down the steep hillside into the lake and drowned in the water.**

Oh we don’t like that part! And I get it! I don’t like that part either! This is definitely one of those moments in this story where I had to stop and ask WHY?????? Why the pigs?? In our modern times, we have a much different view of swine than they did in ancient times. We tend to sympathize with the pigs in this story! They were innocent in all of this!

But, put yourself in the story for a moment. We’ve got to take off our 21st century, western cultural lenses sometimes, and try to see things the way they would’ve been perceived in ancient times. Obviously, some things were very different back then. For instance - Jews considered pigs to be absolutely vile creatures. Filthy, and unclean.

I tried to think of a modern equivalent in the animal world that would generally be considered nasty or filthy today. I asked a co-worker earlier this week “when you think of an animal that is just gross. Generally considered nasty and undesirable, what animal comes to mind?”  Without hesitation, he said ‘a hairless cat!’ He didn’t even have to think about that! I was shocked! Because that is not the first animal that comes to my mind. I tend to think hairless cats are cute!  And that’s part of the issue here! One person’s ‘gross and detestable’ is another person’s ‘cute and cuddly’! But the animal that comes to my mind, when I think of a creature that is widely detested in our culture - its RATS!

Pigs, in jewish culture, were like rats are to many of us today. Filthy and undesirable. They would not have sympathized with these pigs. They didn’t want pigs anywhere near them, in the same way that the majority of us wouldn't want 2,000 rats anywhere near us! To the jewish observers with Jesus on the boat - this was a victory!  But to the gentile pig herders, it would’ve been a different story.

They just lost their livestock, and they were afraid they’d be punished! However, there **IS** a belief that both Jews and Gentiles had in common. They both believed that demons could be killed ***by drowning***!

This is very important! This means that this human being who had been infested with and tortured by these evil spirits, had now been swept clean on the inside. And those demons who caused all the destruction in this man’s life, were driven out, and drowned. They were exterminated. They were no more. And the chaos that these demons had caused, that had totally ravaged this man, that chaos now broke loose in this herd of 2,000 pigs! The scene was absolute chaos and disorder. And my fellow Bible nerds out there might be able see where this is going. Where does all this chaos end up? The pigs are driven into the sea. The sea is so often used in the Bible as a symbol for chaos and disorder.

And so through this ancient lens, the story reads like this: Evil was driven out and sent back to where it belongs, drowned in the chaos of the sea! Jesus had so completely delivered this man, that his demons weren’t just cast out, they were annihilated!

Jesus was this man’s Great Defender. This man whom no one could save. This man who couldn’t even save himself. This man who was destitute, and naked, and mutilated, and completely ostracized. For this man - Jesus took on the forces of evil. For this man, Jesus had compassion.

**Jesus is the light that drives out darkness!**

Jesus’ power and authority and love and compassion brought freedom to this man! Once and for all.

End of story, right? It could’ve ended there. But there’s still that thing about the pigs… and the livelihood of those gentile pig herders…

Verse 14

**14 The herdsmen fled to the nearby town and the surrounding countryside, spreading the news as they ran. People rushed out to see what had happened.**

**15 A crowd soon gathered around Jesus, and they saw the man who had been possessed by the legion of demons. He was sitting there fully clothed and perfectly sane, and they were all afraid.**

**16 Then those who had seen what happened told the others about the demon-possessed man and the pigs. 17 And the crowd began pleading with Jesus to go away and leave them alone.**

Remember, these pigs had been grazing on a hillside, and in that hillside were a bunch of dead bodies! This was no man's land. No one wanted to live near rotting corpses,  so the herdsmen had to RUN to the nearest town, to get any kind of help! And as they RAN they were yelling that something horrible had just happened. They were freaking out, running and yelling through the town. And of course, all this commotion drew a crowd and the curious townspeople had to go see for themselves what had happened! They saw Jesus - *and the man who they thought was beyond hope* - the man no one could chain or subdue. The man who mutilated himself and howled day and night - that man was now sitting there, calm, fully clothed, and perfectly sane.

And the townspeople rejoiced!!!!

That’s how I want this story to end. They cheered and prepared a massive feast to celebrate what Jesus had done!

But that’s not what happened. The people were just freaked out. So freaked out that they asked Jesus to leave. Leave them alone. They were fine with having one tortured soul living a COMFORTABLE distance away from them. But they were not fine with having their lives disrupted. This man’s life had been miraculously restored, but that’s not what concerned these villagers. They didn’t want this man, Jesus, to further disrupt their lives. So they begged him to leave.

And Jesus complied..

Verse 18

**18 As Jesus was getting into the boat, the man who had been demon possessed begged to go with him. 19 But Jesus said, “No, go home to your family, and tell them everything the Lord has done for you and how merciful he has been.” 20 So the man started off to visit the Ten Towns[**[**c**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Mark+5&version=NLT#fen-NLT-24358c)**] of that region and began to proclaim the great things Jesus had done for him; and everyone was amazed at what he told them.**

You know, there’s been a lot of ‘begging’ happening in this story. The demons begged Jesus to not to send them far away, and Jesus complied. The townspeople pleaded with Jesus to leave. And he complied. But this man begged Jesus to let him come with him in the boat. And Jesus said no.

WHY? There’s just one more question of WHY in this story?

And I think I know why this man so badly wanted to sail away with Jesus.

Have you ever wanted to start over? Have you ever dreamed of a fresh start, where no one knew you? Have you ever longed for a clean break from your past? A new beginning with a clean slate, where you can be whoever you want to be, without all the baggage you left behind in your old life? Have you ever wanted to re-invent yourself? If you’ve ever felt that way, then you know how this man must have felt! Desperate to sail across the sea with Jesus, to a far away place, away from anyone who would associate him with demons, or the tombs.

But this is where Jesus draws the line. In his deep love he denies this man’s request. Instead, he tells him to go and do the very thing this man is attempting to avoid. Go home.

Go home to your family. Go home, to the people who knew you best, and TELL THEM everything that the Lord has done for you, and how merciful He has been. Go. Home.

Jesus knew that full restoration for this man, meant coming full circle. Not escaping his past, or even getting a fresh start someplace new. That would NOT have meant true freedom for this man. No. Full restoration for this man meant being restored to dignity in his own hometown, and among his own people. This man had a family! And they could now be re-united, because of what Jesus had done for him.

Jesus said

**I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full. - John 10:10**

Jesus knew that for this man, fullness of life meant being reconciled with his family. Jesus saw beyond the surface of his need! He saw the bigger picture - the whole person. This man needed to be welcomed back into his community, vindicated, with his dignity restored. Free.

This kind of freedom was more than anything this man could’ve ever dreamed possible! But it was ALL possible now, because of Jesus. And all that was left for this man to do was obey.

And here’s our happy ending. That man did obey. He did just as Jesus told him. He went home and told his family about his life saving encounter with Jesus. But he didn’t stop there. It seems he would tell anyone who would listen. He went through the 10 towns of the region, telling his story about this man named Jesus, this valiant defender, who rescued him from total darkness, and restored his life! I’m sure this man carried the scars of his past with him every day for the rest of his life. Literally! He had cut himself with stones. The enemy, the evil, the demons tried to destroy his body. But now his scars helped illustrate the story of his dramatic rescue! He could go from town to town saying “look at me - this was me. This is how bad it was. But I was delivered from my torturers by a man I didn’t even know.

BUT HE KNEW ME! SOMEHOW, HE KNEW ME! And He found me in that desolate place. And He rescued me.

Mark chapter 4 ends with a question: WHO IS THIS MAN, THAT EVEN THE WINDS AND THE WAVES OBEY HIM? And Mark chapter 5 answers that question, with this story of a man consumed by evil, who was banished to live among the dead - the darkest kind of darkness. Who is this man? He is the Almighty, all powerful, all KNOWING son of God! He speaks and the wind obeys him. At his word, the waves stop churning. He has authority over the natural world, and brings order to the chaos of the sea!

And now we see that he also has authority over the spiritual realm. He speaks, and evil must bow down. At his word, darkness must flee. He has authority over all things, and brings peace, and order to the chaos of our world.

Who is this man - who drives out darkness, and brings freedom to those held captive by evil forces? Who is this man who gives new life, so freely? Who is this man with the power to restore even the most hopeless of outcasts? Who is this man, who moves into dark places, and hopeless situations, and has no fear! Who is this man, who sees the whole picture, and loves the whole person, and restores them to the fullest degree?

He is Jesus. Our great defender.

“The people who sat in darkness

    have seen a great light.

And for those who lived in the land where death casts its shadow,

    a light has shined.” Matthew 4:16

So what does this story mean for us today?

First - **God knows you.** He knows where you are and He knows where you’ve been! There is no place too dark, or too far. If you feel like you’re in a ‘dark place’ right now, I have good news for you! For you, a light has shined!

John says

The light shines in the darkness,

    and the darkness can **never** extinguish it.

**Jesus is the Light that drives out darkness!**

Darkness can never extinguish it! You are not too far gone! You are not a lost cause! You are not hopeless! You are not tainted or ruined, or trashed or too damaged.

**You are known and loved by the One who has power and authority over all things!**. Even your past. Even your woundedness. Whatever sin, or pain, or brokenness there may be in your life, Jesus KNOWS.

**You are known and loved by Jesus, our Great Defender!**

Secondly - And if you are a follower of Christ - guess what that means? YOU carry His light! That means **YOU have the power to drive out darkness**! You don’t need to be afraid of the dark. You carry the kind of Light that darkness can NEVER extinguish! Don’t be afraid. The Light goes with you! It’s always with you. Jesus is always with you, and His power, HIS LIGHT, live within you!

Lastly, **as carriers of His light - we have a great responsibility.**

Matthew 5:14 says

**“You are the light of the world—like a city on a hilltop that cannot be hidden. No one lights a lamp and then puts it under a basket. Instead, a lamp is placed on a stand, where it gives light to everyone in the house.  In the same way, let your good deeds shine out for all to see, so that everyone will praise your heavenly Father.**

To whom can you bring this light you carry? Who do you know who is still in darkness? Is there anyone that you would consider to be a ‘lost cause?’ Remember,

**They, too, are known and loved by the One who has authority over all things: He is Jesus! Our Great Defender!**

**DON’T BE AFRAID OF THE DARK. THE DARKNESS IS AFRAID OF YOU! BECAUSE YOU SHINE BRIGHTLY WITH THE POWERFUL, INEXTINGUISHABLE LIGHT OF CHRIST!**

“The people who sat in darkness

    have seen a great light.

And for those who lived in the land where death casts its shadow,

    a light has shined.” Matthew 4:16

The Light shines for you. The Light knows you. The Light is with you. The Light is Christ our Great Defender.