

"GO AND TELL"

"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."
Mark 5:19.

Our subject is taken from the command which our Saviour gave to the man from whom He cast the unclean spirits.

I. The Case.

As soon as the boat had grounded on the beach and Jesus and the disciples had disembarked, they heard wild cries on the cliff above them. Looking up, they saw this dreadful wreck of humanity rushing down toward them. This ghastly figure had left his home and dwelt in the tombs and was the terror of all those who passed by. His hair was long, matted and disheveled. He was practically without clothing. His body was gashed and bleeding from the wounds made by the stones with which he had cut himself.

It is impossible to accurately describe him. He dwelt in the tombs and was the terror of all those who passed by. The authorities had attempted to curb him. They had bound him with chains and fetters, but in the paroxysms of his madness he had torn the chains in sunder, and broken the fetters in pieces. On his ankles and on his wrists were fragments of the chains with which men had tried to bind him and which he had broken. In his face was a wild maniacal look; and yet with it all--and that was the infinite pathos and sorrow if it--the face of a man, made in the image of God.

This man had formerly lived in one of the near-by villages. One day he began to act strangely; he said strange things, did strange things, and had strange obsessions. The neighbors began to talk about him and wondered what his trouble was. Local remedies and traditional cures were tried. But, instead of getting better, the man grew worse. At length when he became violent and dangerous they laid hands on him and bound him with heavy iron fetters, but in the strength and fury of his dementia he broke the chains as easily as Samson broke the ropes with which Delilah had bound him. Then, unable to cure him or to secure him, the men of the village banded together and drove him out of the village into the country. There he took up his residence among the tombs, the caves dug out of the limestone cliffs which are still a feature of that part of the country. There, in terrible anarchy and solitude, the outcast dwelt. Much of the time he was ranging over the hills, crying and howling fearfully, cutting himself with the sharp flints, torturing his body in the most fruitful manner, frightening seamen who came to the shore, and turning back travelers and merchants who wanted to pass that way. There the poor wreck and ruin lived--avoided, feared, abandoned--a picture of the devastation and loneliness of sin.

Sin unfits any man for service. It isolates him from his family and from society. This wild and untamable man was under the power of an unclean spirit. He was led to do unclean things. He dwelt remote from his fellows, "in the tombs." He exhibits human life in its uttermost derangement.

II. The Contrast.

Many of the citizens of Gadara were rich. It is often noticeable how much wretchedness exists at the same time and in the same place with material wealth and mercantile prosperity, and amid all the beauties of natural scenery. This world is a strange mixture of mercy and wrath; of the beautiful and the terrible; of plenty and of poverty; of sorrow and of joy; of sunshine and of shower. Here, in the country of the Gadarenes, with its well-to-do and wealthy inhabitants, and their profitable herds of swine, was this wretched creature. While others bought and sold and got gain, he was a terror to himself and to all around. While others occupied comfortable dwellings, he dwelt in caverns which abounded in the district. While others were decently clad, or even

gorgeously attired, this miserable man refused the decency of raiment. He had lost all that could make life desirable. Unclothed, uncared for, he had fallen back into the condition of savage life. Homeless, houseless, helpless and hopeless, he led a vagrant life. His agony of mind was dreadful and fearful. His cries made the gloom of the sepulchre more dreadful. He cut himself with stones, and, by making gashes in his body, sought to transfer his suffering from the mind to the body, or at least divide it between them. When deprived of his liberty, by a sort of superhuman power, he plucked them asunder or broke them in pieces.

Being at war with himself, he was naturally wretched. Warring against himself, he was a stranger to real happiness. That is ever the case. Regardless of one's circumstances, if he is at war with himself, he will continue to be miserable until his conflict is hushed in peace.

He was antisocial. He had separated himself from his fellows. He lived alone. Nobody could live with him. Warring with himself, he also warred with his fellows. Those torn by strife that is inward are hard to live with. Being unable to live with his fellows, he did not render any service for them. He was a liability rather than an asset, a hindrance rather than a help. Instead of making the burdens of others a bit lighter, he made them the more difficult.

A demon-possessed person is under the influence and power of an evil spirit. His thinking is under its mastery; his emotions respond to its impulses; and his will is dominated by the demon. The effect of their mastery is the ruin of the one possessed.

III. The Cry.

"And cried with a loud voice, and said, What have I to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of the most high God? I adjure thee by God, that thou torment me not." Verse 7.

At considerable distance the demoniac perceived the party landing, and he came bounding toward them. As soon as the disciples saw this monstrous-looking man, and heard his cries as he came rushing down toward them, they laid hold on the boat and would have pushed out to sea again. But Jesus had no fear. In fact, this wreck was his opportunity. Standing His ground, Christ said to the maniac, "What is thy name?" In that question there was infinite tenderness and compassion. In him the Master saw one who was still a man, who was still a personality, and who had all the possibilities of manhood yet within him.

IV. The Command.

With the voice of unmistakable authority, Christ uttered a command that brooked no argument, "Come out of the man, thou unclean spirit." At His word there burst forth from the victim a most fearful shriek. At once the taut, tense muscles of the wild man's arms relaxed. The sharp, bloody stones dropped from his hands. The wild look faded from his face, and the look of reason took its place.

On the steep hillside nearby there was a herd of some two thousand hogs feeding, with the herders watching them. The evil spirits requested Christ to permit them to enter the swine. In response to their appeal, He gave His consent and said, "Go." But even the hogs were unhappy and miserable with the demons in them. This shows that mankind, alas, can sink to lower depths than that of the lower animals. Beasts don't behave like men. Men often descend to far greater depths than the beasts. So, over the cliff and in a mad rush the swine went, and the whole herd was drowned in the sea.

V. The Change.

As soon as they had seen the drowning of the hogs, the swineherds ran into the village

and told everybody what had taken place. Just as people today rush to see a wreck or a fire or any other disaster, so they rushed out of their homes and over the fields and hills and down to the edge of the cliff, where they saw some of the drowned swine already floating on the surface of the sea.

Then, they went over to where the man whom Christ had healed was sitting at the feet of the Saviour, clothed and in his right mind. That is where everyone goes to sit, who is in his right mind. Nobody is in his right mind until he sits at the feet of Jesus, I care not if he knows ten times as much as the average doctor of philosophy. What a transformation or change! He had gone from the companionship of demons to the fellowship of the Saviour. No man who is really in his right mind would choose the companionship of Satan instead of the companionship of the Son of God. That is self-evident.

"And the unclean spirits went out." The madman came to his right mind; the maniac was tamed; his reason was restored; his fierceness was subdued; the anguish of his spirit had subsided; his wild cries had ceased; his self-inflicted bodily wounds had been healed; his tempest-tossed soul had received peace. When people have peace with God, they have peace within and peace with others.

What matters if two thousand hogs are drowned, since a soul has been set free from the cruel dominion of Satan? How much is a man better than a hog? What a wonderful thing the Lord had done for him! He is right with God, right with men, and right with life. What a change! In healing the demon-possessed man Christ had conferred a great blessing not only upon him but upon the whole community by delivering them from the fear of the wild maniac who had always threatened their lives. But they cared nothing for that. All they could think of was the loss of their hogs. "They besought Him that He would depart out of their coasts." He had brought great blessings to them, but they asked Him to leave, and He did so.

VI. The Commission.

"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." Mark 5:19.

Our Lord stepped into the boat in order to go oversea. Just as He was about to go from the place, the saved man naturally and humbly clung to his Deliverer, and begged Him to let him go and be with Him. He loved his Saviour and thought that he could show his love for Him by going with Him. Out of gratitude to his Deliverer and Saviour, he said, "Lord, I will follow Thee whithersoever Thou goest; I will be Thy constant companion and Thy servant; permit me so to be."

1. A desire denied.

"Howbeit Jesus suffered him not." What a strange denial! When the demons asked Jesus to let them go into the swine, He gave His permission. When the citizens asked Jesus to get out of their country, He granted their request. But when a poor fellow who had been saved asked Christ to let him go with Him, He refused to grant his request.

2. A duty demanded.

In substance Christ said, "No! I esteem your motive; it is one of gratitude to Me; but if you would show your gratitude, go home to thy friends, and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee, and hath had compassion on thee." The saved man loved Christ and thought he could show his love for Him by going with Him. He believed that he could show his gratitude to Him by being His attendant. He was exceedingly anxious to do something for Him Who had cast out the demons, so he thought he would be the happiest man on earth if he could only wait on Christ. He wanted to be with Him and taught by Him. In addition to being His

disciple, he wanted to be with Him as a comrade. What is better than being with Christ? It is better to be working for Him.

Christ put the man's duty above his desire, beautiful and commendable though that desire was. He commissioned him to go home and to tell his loved ones and his friends what the Lord had done for him and for others like him. He assigned him a quiet and unostentatious work. He could be far more useful telling of Christ in his own home and among his own people than he could by travelling about with Christ. So, the Lord told him where to go and what to do. His work was to begin at home. All true work for God commences there. His work was to be found among old acquaintances. Some of them had scorned him. Others had hated him, and perhaps ill-treated him. But all resentment in him was to be conquered by God's grace, and to those who had known him at his worst he was now to speak for Christ. Such witness-bearing is the most difficult, but the most effective. John the Baptist told the penitents around him to go back to their old spheres, and to prove their repentance by their changed lives and spirit amid their old temptations. So, when this man was saved, he was sent first to his own house and friends. So, let all grace from Christ begin to tell at home. If it cannot win its way there, it certainly lacks vital force.

Note that it was a story of personal experience that was demanded. You are to go home and tell, not what you have believed, but what great things the Lord hath done for you. It is not, "Tell thy friends how great things thou hast done thyself, but how great things the Lord hath done for thee." It must be a story told by a poor sinner who feels himself not to have deserved what he has received-- "how He hath had compassion on thee." Do not tell John Bunyan's experience, but tell your own. If Christ has done great things for thee, be ever ready to speak of it. Tell it humbly and earnestly. Let others see that you mean it. There must be the witness of the life, of course; but there must also be the witness of the lips as well. "Return to thine own house, and shew how great things God hath done unto thee. And he went his way, and published throughout the whole city how great things Jesus hath done unto him." Luke 8:39. "Go home to thy friends, and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee." It is good to read, to pray, to go to church, but that is not all--"Go and Tell." They must hear if they are to be saved. The Lord commands us to go. Something in us as deep as life says we must go. Many expect us to come.

A man who had been saved in one of Spurgeon's services came to him after the meeting and expressed the desire to go out and do Christian work. Spurgeon looked at him and said, "What are you?" The man answered, "I am an engine driver." "Is the stoker a Christian?" said Spurgeon. "No," the man answered. "Then there, in your engine, with the stoker working at your side, is your field of duty and opportunity."

It was better for the saved man that Christ denied his request. It was better for the man's friends. It was better for the land in which he lived. If Christ had permitted him to follow Him, the whole region of Decapolis would have remained in darkness.

In his characteristic way Christmas Evans described this man going home. He pictured one of the children looking out of the window, and crying, "Oh, mother, father is coming!" "No! then she cries, "come and help me." They gather everything they can move, and roll it against the door. They barricade the windows, and wife and family stand within trembling for what the man may do--just as some poor wives and children today have to tremble when drunken husbands, or sons, come home.

The man comes nearer, and one of the children says, "Why, mother, it is father, but he is different. Look at his clothes. Look at his eyes. He is not like we have known him for some time. Look at him."

At last he knocks at the door, and says, "Wife, let me in. It is your husband. I don't blame you for being afraid. I am not surprised that you and the children are terrified. But I have a story to tell you. I am not the man you knew. Since you saw me last I have met with Jesus Christ, and the demons have left me, and I am in my right mind. Won't you let me in?" Even then, greatly fearing, they open the door, and he walks in, and takes his wife in his arms, and they weep together in their new-found joy. Then the children come to him, and he takes them one after another into his arms, and covers them with his kisses, as he says, "You won't need to be afraid of father any more. You have a new father. We will have a new home, you and mother and I. Jesus will come and meet you, and we will have Him here in our home. We will not have demons any more, but we will have the Son of God."

That miracle has been repeated times without number. What a blessing it is to know that this same Christ is with us still! He still has the same power. He is able to break our chains, and to set prisoners free.