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SERMON

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# He Made a Believer Out of Me

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Out of Me**

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We often say that to be a true Christian means to walk by faith and not by sight, to trust God in spite of our circumstances, to believe in God's plan *before* we can see it. And while I agree that that ought to be true for a mature Christian, I would contend that we who claim to be believers can identify at least one moment early in our faith walk where our belief in God was made secure. Sure, we made it as long as we could on what our parents told us and what we learned in Sunday School, but if all of us were honest with ourselves, that was not what made us true believers. It was not enough just to hear about this God our mothers and fathers prayed to, we had to see this God move in our lives. No matter how many Bible verses we can quote now, how many positions we've had in the church, or how righteous we think we are now, all of us have had a moment in our faith walk where the Lord had to make a believer out of us.

That is exactly the situation we find in our text for today. In our text, we find our Lord Jesus Christ just making it to the east bank of the Sea of Galilee. And when He gets there, He is approached by a man who is possessed by an unclean spirit. We don't know how long this man had been afflicted by this spirit, but we do know that it caused him to live "among the tombs" and spend all his time "howling and bruising himself with stone." But this does not phase Jesus in the slightest. He casts the spirit out of the man and sends it into some nearby swine, who proceed to drown in the sea. The people of the nearby towns got news of this and came to where Jesus was to see it. They saw this man who had been possessed was now "clothed and in his right mind." Seeing what had happened, they became scared and begged Jesus to leave their neighborhood. As He is getting back into His boat, this man whom He saved begged to go with Him. And that is where we find the words of our text. Jesus refuses and says to the man,

“Go home to your own people, and tell them how much the Lord has done for you and what mercy he has shown you” (Mk 5:19). And the Bible says that he did just that.

We don’t know anything else about this man. This is where his story ends, as far as the Gospel is concerned. Mark does not tell us how exactly this man tells of his encounter with Jesus when he returns home. But in my spiritual imagination, when this man is witnessing, I can hear him saying to any and everybody who would listen, “He made a believer out of me.”

**Beloved, I submit to you today that we ought to take a page out of that man’s book and declare, “He made a believer out of me.” And I believe that if we were to talk to this man today, he would give us three reasons the Lord made a believer out of him.**

**1. ...because He saw me.**

- a. Notice, beloved, how Jesus makes no commentary about the man. He offers no criticisms of the man. He says nothing to condemn or condescend to the man. The text says that the first thing Jesus says is, “Come out of the man, you unclean spirit” (Mk 5:8)!
- b. Given his circumstances, it’s not hard to see that this man was probably a social outcast. After all, he “lived among the tombs” and spent majority of his time “howling and bruising himself with stones” (Mk 5:3, 5). And I imagine that just as it was the case in the healing narratives in the Gospels, Jesus was this man’s last hope. Nobody had a solution for his problem. Nobody has a cure for his ailment. Nobody had a remedy for

his condition. Presumably, everyone had given up on this man. But that all changes when Jesus steps in.

- c. When Jesus saw this man, he didn't see a lost cause or a waste of time. No, He saw a sheep that needed to be connected with their Shepherd. He saw a someone who had been fearfully and wonderfully made in the image of God. He saw someone who was just as much deserving of God's redemptive, sustaining grace as anybody else. So rather than further ostracizing and dehumanizing this man, Jesus decided to look beyond the man's condition so He could speak to his crisis. And I don't know about you, but I'm glad that when the Lord looks at me, He doesn't see my flaws, He doesn't see my faults, He doesn't see my failures. All He sees is His child. And no matter how much a child has messed up or how far a child has fallen, they can always rest knowing that their parent will never let their shortcomings change the way they see them.
- d. That's the problem we have as the people of God. When people wander into the church, so battered and broken by the world, we see everything *but* them. We see how much money they have (or don't have). We see what clothes they're wearing. We see their education or lack thereof. We see what drugs they're on. We see their marital status and sexual orientation. And in the midst of all of that, we never see *them*. We never see them as one of God's children. We never see them as one deserving of God's

blessings. We never see them as the neighbor that we ought to love as much as we love ourselves.

- e. But I believe that if we could speak to that man today, he'd say, "I'm so glad that when Jesus looked, He didn't see my problems, He saw *me*. He didn't see my situation; He saw *me*. He didn't see my imperfections; He saw *me*. And because He saw *me*, He didn't discriminate against me, He made a difference in my life." And child of God, I've got good news for you: He sees you, too! There is no mistake you've ever made that prevents the Lord from seeing you. There is no fault you've ever had that prevents the Lord from seeing you. There is no error on your track record that prevents the Lord from seeing you.

Is there anybody in the house today that's glad that the Lord sees you?

## 2. ...because He made my enemies nervous.

- a. Listen to what the spirit says to Jesus, "What have you to do with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I adjure you by God, do not torment me" (Mk 5:7). The spirit even goes on to beg Jesus saying, "Send us into the swine; let us enter them" (Mk 5:12).
- b. I remember when I was a religious studies minor at the University of Pittsburgh; I was taking a class called Origins of Christianity. In that class, we surveyed just about the entirety of the Protestant canon during the semester. When we got to the Gospels, our professor had us read



Mark first, as most scholars believe Mark was the first Gospel to have been written, and the next class she noted that Mark has three defining characteristics. First, Mark loves the word “immediately.” He uses it 41 times. Second, Mark’s Jesus is the Secret Messiah because He almost always tells people not to tell anyone else about the miracles He performs. But the third characteristic seemed to be the most intriguing for her. She said something to the effect of, “Don’t you find it interesting that the religious people in the text often don’t recognize who Jesus is, but the demons do?”

- c. Here in chapter 5, the unclean spirit implies that they know who Jesus is. But go back to chapter 1, when Jesus is confronted by an unclean spirit in the synagogue. After begging Jesus to be spared from destruction, that spirit outright said, “I know who You are, the Holy One of God” (Mk 1:24b). And I don’t know who I’m talking to today, but can I suggest that the reason that you are still standing today, the reason that the enemy has not succeeded in taking you out, the reason that the enemy is scared to even make a move against you is because even the enemy is smart enough to know that you plus God is a majority. Let me see if I can make it plain.

I’m told of a story of a man who worked as a stock broker in New York City. One night he was making his way home from work, long after the sun had set. While he was making his way home, he was approached by a strange-looking man. This man asked the broker, “Do you have

a lighter for my cigarette?" It just so happened the broker was also a smoker, so he took out his lighter and lit the man's cigarette. The man thanked him and went on his way. The next morning when the broker woke up and turned on the news, he saw that that same man whose cigarette he lit had been arrested for homicide. The broker was confused; he didn't understand why that man spared his life. So later that week, he went down to the county jail to visit the man, and said to him, "I don't know if you remember me, but I'm the man who lit your cigarette the night you were arrested. And I just have to know, why didn't you kill me that night?" The man said, "Yeah, I do remember you. And the truth is, I was going to kill you that night. But when you lit your lighter, the light from the flame made me see that there was another man standing right behind you, so I knew I could not mess with you."

- d. I believe there is a witness in the room that can testify that you're glad that the Lord covered you! If the Lord hadn't covered you, you would have lost your mind a long time ago. If the Lord hadn't covered you, you would have thrown in the towel a long time ago. But because the Lord covered you, your enemies thought twice about making a move against you. Because the Lord covered you, your enemies were scared to even approach you. Because the Lord covered you,

you found out that “all things work together for the good of them that love the Lord and are called according to His purpose” (Rm 8:28).

Because the Lord covered you, you found out that “no weapon formed against you shall prosper” (Is 54:17). Because the Lord covered you, you found out that

“if God be for you, who can be against you?” (Rm 8:31)

- e. I thank God that I’m covered! And because I’m covered, my enemies are put on notice: you can try it if you want to, you can think it’ll be easy for you if you want to, but my God is greater, my God is bigger, my God is stronger than anything you can throw my way!

### **3. ...because He gave me marching orders.**

- a. The text says that as Jesus was making His way back into the boat, the man begged to go with Him. But Jesus refuses, telling the man, “Go home to your own people, and tell them how much the Lord has done for you and what mercy he has shown you.” (Mk 5:19)
- b. So parenthetically Jesus says to this man, “Brother, I appreciate your enthusiasm, but where I am going, you cannot follow Me. In fact, I have a better plan for you anyway. I want you to go back to the people that threw you away. Go back to the people that forgot about you. Go back to the people that cast you out, and tell them how the Lord did what they thought was impossible. Tell them how the Lord made a way for you. Tell them how the Lord worked a

miracle for you.” And that’s the lesson that Jesus is trying to teach us today. My brothers and my sisters, the Lord did not save us for us to become saditty saints. The Lord did not save us for us to become bougie believers. The Lord did not save us for us to become holier-than-thou Christians. But the Lord saved so that we could fulfill the plan that He has for our lives.

- c. And what gives me strength as a believer is the simple fact that no matter what happens in my life, I can rest knowing that God always has a plan. No matter how hard the storms of life may rage, God still has a plan. No matter what obstacles arise in my path, God still has a

plan. No matter what the enemy tries to throw my way, God still has a plan. It does not matter what happens in my life, because as long as God still has work for me to do, He will continue to lead me and guide me every step of the way. So I’m not worried, and I’m not stressful, because I know that “he who has begun a good work in [me] will complete until the day of Jesus Christ” (Phil 1:6).

I’m going to my seat, but I just stopped by to let somebody know that just like that man who was possessed by an unclean spirit, you ought to declare, “He made a believer out of me!” Child of God, I know you think you have it all together. I know you think you’ve crossed every t and dotted every i. I know you think you’ve finally made it. But every now and then, you ought to look back over your life and think about what the Lord has done for you. And when you think about the unmerited favor that God has poured over your life,

when you think about how the Lord showed you mercy when you deserved judgement, when you think about how the Lord's love outweighed the enemy's contempt for you, your testimony ought to be, "He made a believer out of me!"

As a matter of fact, I'm reminded of a story of an auction that took place one day. And the first item that the people were to bid on was an old violin. It was covered in dust and scratches. It hadn't been tuned in a while. But the auctioneer held it up for the crowd, and said, "Who wants to start the bidding?" But nobody would bid on it. After two minutes of awkward silence, the auctioneer was just about ready to give up. But just before he could, there was an old man in the back of the room that came up to the front where the auctioneer was. He picked up the violin, wiped the dust off of it, tightened the strings, and began to play some of the most beautiful music that anybody had ever heard on that violin. The old man set the violin back down and went back to his seat. The auctioneer asked again, "Who wants to start the bidding?" And everybody in the room was putting in bids, and that violin sold for thousands of dollars. There was a little boy in the crowd who saw all of this happen. So he asked his father, "What changed the violin's worth? What made it so much more valuable in a matter of minutes?" The father replied, "Son what made that violin so valuable was that it had been touched by the Master's Hand."

I don't know about you, but I'm so glad that I've been touched by the Master's Hand! What a wonderful change in my life has been wrought since Jesus came into my heart! I have light in my soul for which long I had sought since Jesus came into my heart! Since Jesus came into my heart, since Jesus came into my heart! Floods of joy o'er my soul like the

sea billows roll, since Jesus came into my heart! He made a believer out of me!

I was sick, but He healed my body! I was down, but He lifted me up! I was blind, but He gave me sight! I was lost, but He found me! He made a believer out of me!

He made my enemies my footstool! He opened doors that were shut in my face! He mended my broken spirit! He made a believer out of me!

He picked me up! He turned me around! He placed my feet on solid ground! He made a believer out of me!

He made a believer out of me!

Say yeah!!!





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