

Ugly Jesus #2
“Ugly into Beauty”
Mark 5:1-20
7/17/16

- There was a man who often took a shortcut through a cemetery on his way home. One night, though, it was pitch dark out and he was unaware that a new grave had been dug in his path, he tumbled in. For some time he struggled to get out of the 7 foot deep grave, but finally gave up and settled down for the night.
 - o An hour later, a farmer, out coon hunting, came walking through the cemetery and he, too, fell into the grave. He began a desperate attempt to get out, unaware that there was anyone else in the grave.
 - o The first man listened to the farmer for a few minutes, then reached over in the pitch darkness and laid a hand on his shoulder. "You can't get out of here," he said...
 - o But that farmer sure did. How many of you think you could get out? Fear can catapult us!

- It reminds me of a time when I was a teenager and our youth group from church went canoeing. There were three of us in our canoe. Not long into the trip, another canoe of our friends started splashing us.
 - o In the process of the slashing and fooling around, our canoe tipped over. We were in deep water where none of us could touch the bottom. One of my friends got in the canoe pretty easily. He was keeping it steady while our other friend got in. Then, it was my turn. I was having a hard time getting enough momentum to get myself over the side of that canoe without being able to touch anything to push off from.
 - o Until...I suddenly felt something brush across my legs. I don't know whether it was an animal or some plant and I didn't care! I was up and in that canoe so fast!
 - o The right motivation is a powerful thing!

- Last week, we started a new sermon series called "Ugly Jesus." We looked at how Jesus became ugly for us. Jesus, the most beautiful, heavenly Lord of Lords and Kings of Kings left the beauty of heaven motivated by beautiful love for us to take on our ugly sickness, pain, shame, guilt and sin upon himself. His perfect body was pierced and crushed in an ugly death to pay the price for our sins so that we might have beautiful life through salvation in him.
 - o Last week, we wrote down ugly things in our lives – sickness, pain, shame, guilt, sin, problems and gave them to Jesus.
 - o Ugly Jesus is all about how Jesus takes on ugly and makes it beautiful.

- Today we continue talking about how Jesus takes on the ugly of the world. He was motivated by his love for us to do just that.
 - o We, then, are motivated, as we examine the ugliness in our lives, to accept Jesus's invitation to take on the ugliness in our lives and turn it into beauty.
 - o But, sometimes, it takes people some pretty big motivation to get us to do that. Sometimes, the right motivation doesn't come until things get bad enough, until they get scary enough, until they get out of control enough. Then, it motivates us to get out of the grave we got ourselves into.
 - o This is what happened in the life of a demon-possessed man whose story we find in Mark 5 and how Jesus turned his life around. Jesus turned this man's ugly into beauty.

- Today, demon possession is the stuff of Hollywood horror movies. Movies like The Conjuring, The Exorcist, the list could go on and on. It boggles my mind that people will pay money to sit and watch a movie about demon possession and demonic activity. It's entertaining to be scared. I just don't get it.
 - o Maybe I don't get it because I know that this stuff isn't entertaining or just in a movie. It's real. Hollywood didn't come up with this as a cool way to make money. The Bible tells us of demonic activity and demon possession.
 - o Throughout the New Testament, we're told of times when Jesus or Apostles cast demons out of people. But nowhere in the Bible is the description of demon possession more graphic and horrifying than in Mark 5.

- We're going to look at this passage in just a minute. If you want to start turning toward Mark 5 in your Bibles, feel free. But, let me tell you a little about what we are going to find.
 - o We are going to find a man who was possessed by demons. Demons are spiritual beings that serve Satan. Now, I'm not here to scare anyone. I'm just here to share the reality of what it says in God's Word.
 - o God's Word tells us that God is love. God is good. He has angels who are spiritual beings that serve him and do good at his bidding. We like to think about these things. We like to talk about angels.
 - o Yet, God's Word also tells us that there is an enemy. His name is Satan. He chose to be evil. There is no good in him. He, too, has spiritual being, demons, that serve him and do evil at his bidding. We don't like to talk so much about these as if they are real. We would rather think they just exist in movies. But, they are real. Look around our world and you see them and work all around us!
 - o We cannot believe the truth of the Bible when it comes to God, Jesus and angels and then reject what the Bible teaches about Satan and demons.

- And, the fact is that the Bible is going to show us that this guy is scary. He lives in a graveyard. He's unshaven, ragged. And he's scarred from chains and shackles that have been unable to bind him. See, the townspeople didn't know how to control

him and so they put chains on him, but he was able to break them.

- He walks around day and night with little or no clothes on. His face has a dark haunted look to it. He's a cutter, and his body bears the marks of cuts he's made on it with sharp stones. He's likely bleeding as he runs down the path to Jesus.
 - Every night and every day, he prowls the hills around the graveyard howling and screeching in a crazed torment of a man whose personal demons will not let him rest.
- Again, I'm not sharing this story from Scripture to scare people. I want us to learn something. There is most definitely something we can learn from this man. Or better yet, something we can learn from the demons living inside of him.
- So, let's look at the Lessons from a Demon. Let's start reading in **Mark 5:1-5**
- As we read this, we see the first lesson from a demon. The lesson is that sin is nothing to play with.
- I heard a story from a youth pastor who took a group of kids to a summer church camp. One night after lights out, thinking that the kids were all asleep, some of the camp counselors met outside one of the cabins to just hang out for a little while.
 - Suddenly, a little kid about 8 years old came running out and said, "Mr. Counselor, come quick. Johnny is demon possessed!" The youth pastor said, "What?" "Johnny is demon possessed and everyone is scared!"
 - So, the youth pastor went into the cabin to find little Johnny over in the corner curled up in a ball, growling and hissing, while all the other boys are grouped up in another corner praying for God to take the demon away. The youth pastor stepped up to the boy and said, "Quit that hissing and growling. Boy what's wrong with you?"
 - In scariest growling voice, Johnny said, "I'm full of the devil." The youth pastor said, "How do you know that?" "My mamma told me I was." The youth pastor said, "Get up and get in that bed, boy. You're no more full of the devil than the rest of these boys! Quit trying to scare people!"
- This, little story of a an 8 year old trying to be funny and scare people actually teaches us two important things.
- First, we need to be very mindful and careful of what we speak into the lives of our children. This child's mother told him he was full of the devil. It was probably said in frustration because this child was obviously a very precocious, probably very active, probably prone to get into trouble kind of kid.
 - But, what those words, said in frustration, spoke into that little boy was that he was evil. That is not what we want to speak into our children. Our words matter. We either speak life into our children or we speak death. Careless words like that, said in frustration or anger, leave marks and can speak

death to them – death of their self-worth, death of their self-image, death to the fact that they are actually created in the very image of God and loved greatly.

- The second lesson, though, and the lesson that the demon possessed man shows us is that real sin, real demonic activity is not that cute. Johnny could be redirected. He was just messing around.
 - o But, sin is nothing to play with. It's nothing to mess around with.

- Yet, we don't really get the fully impact of those words because people play with sin all the time. We mess around with it all the time. We dabble in it all the time. We look for ways to flirt with it and get up close next to it. We try to see how much we can get away with.
 - o We watch a little porn, we play with adultery by being flirty, we experiment with drugs/alcohol, we play with all kinds of stuff that seem harmless to us. Like it's going nowhere and doing nothing to us. But, just like careless words can bring death, careless actions that play with sin can bring death as well.
 - o I shared this example before – when I was a youth pastor, every year we would have a series on God's plan for sex. Now, most of our teens agreed with the fact that God wants them to remain pure until marriage. They agreed that they should not have sex until they could enjoy it fully within a lifetime marriage.
 - o But, what they wanted to know was "How far is too far?" That question was really a code to ask, "How much can we do and still be OK with God? Where is the line? I don't want to go over the line and go to hell, but I want to get as close to the line as possible. I want to play with the line, flirt with the line, experiment as much as I can next to the line. Where is the line?"

- It's not just teenagers doing that with sex. It is our human nature to do that with the sins that we are most susceptible to, those that are most tempting to us. We want to know how much we can play with sin before God sends us to hell.
 - o But, we're asking the wrong question! The question should never be "How much can I get away with or how far can I go?" The question should be, "How far away can I get from sin so that I don't get anywhere near it. I don't want to get near the line! I want to be as close to Jesus as possible!"

- Because the reality is every person who is struggling with any sin that has taken control of their very lives and souls, it all started with them playing with, flirting with, messing with what seems to be small sins which grew until those sins took control of their lives.
 - o The end is seen here in the life of this man. He started out playing with sin and eventually, look what happened to him.
 - o He's running around naked living in a graveyard! That's not exactly the kind of life people grow up to dream of having! He's cut off from his family. He's

uncontrollable by anyone because He's completely controlled by demonic influences.

- Now, who wants to believe that they can be controlled by demonic influence? No one!
 - o Yet, think about this - we would probably all agree that the Spirit of God controls people to varying degrees. God will lead and control as much of my life as I will surrender to Him.
 - o We look at the spiritual lives of people and we know that those who are more mature in their faith that they are more mature because they have allowed God to have control in their lives.
 - o Similarly, evil controls people to varying degrees as you continue to play with it and then live for it.

- Now, I'm not about to say that anyone here is possessed by demons. However, I do believe that the sin we dabble in is far more dangerous than we believe and when we dabble in sin, we allowing demons to influence and motivate us, rather than being motivated by God.
 - o *Ephesians 2:1-2 says, "Once you were dead because of your disobedience and your many sins. You used to live in sin, just like the rest of the world, obeying the devil – the commander of the powers in the unseen world. He is the spirit at work in the hearts of those who refuse to obey God."*
 - o Now, this is sobering text. God considers you dead when you're in living in disobedience and in sin. When you are living in sin, then God isn't in control of your life. Instead, the devil is the one at work in the hearts of those who refuse to obey God.
 - o When you are playing with, dabbling with, meddling with, messing with, flirting with sin, God is not in control of your life. Guess who is?

- So, guys, you think all you're doing is making a funny sexual innuendo at a hot girl, but you're inviting that spirit (demon) to work in you and influence you.
 - o Ladies, you think all you're doing is getting the attention of another woman's husband, but you're inviting a demon to work in your life.
 - o You think all you're doing is getting high or drinking with your friends, but you are partnering with a demon.
 - o You think cheating a little on your taxes, not claiming all your income is no big deal because you aren't actually stealing, but you are messing with sin for God's Word says do not lie. The devil is the father of lies, not God.

- If there's one thing we can learn from this demon-possessed man, it's that sin is nothing to play with. Sin will always take us farther than where we wanted to go and leave us there longer than we wanted to stay.

- But, here's another lesson that the demons know well...**Jesus wins every time.**

- This man went from playing with sin to being controlled completely by sin and demons. But, that is not going to be the end of his story.
 - Let's continue to read **Mark 5:6-13**.
- Now I just described to you how scary this guy was. No one wanted to be around him. Everyone kept their distance. He was the real life horror story of his community. He is completely controlled by these powerful demons – demons of death that immediately killed the pigs Jesus sent them into.
 - Then, it gets even a little scarier. Jesus asks the name of the demon and the reply is “Legion for we are many.” This guy doesn't have one demon – but many.
 - In those days, a legion was a military term. In the Roman army, a legion had between 4,000 to 6,000 men in it. Now, I don't know if this guy was really possessed with 4,000 to 6,000 demons, but he was certainly possessed with many. One is scary enough. Many is – yikes!
 - In our human thinking, we think this guy is goner. That is some scary stuff. Who can stand up to that many demons? Do you think you can? Certainly not in our own power! But, there is One who can! There is One that can take on the ugliness of a legion of demons.
 - But, check this out - Jesus isn't even in front of the guy yet. He's still at a distance, the demons see him coming and they get scared! They get scared to the point that they ran to meet Jesus and **they just bow at Jesus' feet!**
 - They didn't engage in battle. They didn't try to intimidate Jesus. They bowed at his feet! Why? Because they knew full well that they had no chance against the Son of the Most High God!
 - I'm absolutely sure of one thing about the devil - He knows the power of Jesus far more than we do! He knows that he is defeated by Jesus. He knows that he is powerless compared to Jesus. He knows that every knee will bow before Jesus – including his own knee – because Jesus is the King of all!
 - He knows that Jesus' name is above divorce, disease, and addiction. He knows that Jesus' name brings freedom for those enslaved to sin. He knows that Jesus' name can break every chain.
 - Why do you think we pray in the name of Jesus? It is power!
 - Satan knows that one word from Jesus is more powerful than all of his tricks and gimmicks. And, when we stand firm in the power and name of Jesus – Satan's got to go – he's got to go from our lives! In Jesus, we have the power to refute and defeat Satan!
 - What is impossible in our own power or strength or might, God makes possible as his Spirit lives in us. That is what Matthew 19:26 talks about. It says, *“Jesus looked at them intently and said, “Humanly speaking, it is impossible. But with God all things are possible.”*

- Sometimes in our most difficult battles, we may struggle to believe this because all we can see is the impossibility of the situation we are facing. But, Satan knows it's true. Satan knows that the one thing in the world that will defeat him every single time is Jesus. It is impossible for Satan to defeat us when Jesus is for us and when we are standing in the authority given to us as children of God and followers of Christ.
 - Jesus' blood that was shed on the cross is the most powerful substance in all of reality. By his blood, we are healed, forgiven, reconciled and saved. His blood was poured out for us.
 - And, Jesus defeated Satan completely when he rose from the dead. His resurrection sealed the defeat of the devil. See, the devil's biggest weapon is death – death by separation from God. Jesus broke that separation when he rose from the dead and when he guaranteed that we would live eternally with him as those who have made him their Lord.
 - While the devil is still at work in the world around us, his fate is sealed. He will never be victorious. He will face ultimate defeat when Jesus returns.
- And Jesus has been defeating the works of the Enemy ever since his resurrection. In fact, he even gave that same power of victory to his followers. Scripture says that the same Spirit that raised Jesus from the dead lives in those who believe in and accept Jesus as Lord.
 - The same Holy Spirit who raised Jesus from the dead lives in believers of Jesus and will raise you up from under any scheme, temptation, trial, problem, situation – anything that the devil might bring.
 - You may feel like you're under the power of the devil right now. I have good news for you! Jesus loves you today and His power is more than enough to bring you out!!! You've got to be motivated to tap into the power the Jesus offers you over sin and Satan.
 - That leads us to the third lesson we can learn from a demon. That lesson is that Meeting the power of God demands a decision.
 - Let's continue reading **Mark 5:14-17.**
 - Here, we see that when people saw the power of Jesus displayed in what they thought was an impossible situation and yet Jesus was able to do the impossible, they responded in two ways. Those two ways are the same today: we either accept or reject his power in our lives.
 - The townspeople were scared to death that Jesus was that powerful. They knew that Jesus was going to stir things up and they didn't want that! So, they asked him to leave. They rejected Jesus.
 - This is exactly what people still do today! They see that Jesus is going to move powerfully in their lives, but they don't want it! They would rather live under the

control of the devil than give control over to Jesus. They would rather live under hate than live under love. They would rather live in bondage than live in freedom.

- Why do people respond in this way? Well, when Jesus sets you free, you lose something you've depended on. It might be a mindset. It might be something that you always believed as true. It might be an addiction. It might be a way of living. It might be a relationship or a way that you have related to others. You've depended on those things for so long to make sense of what is going on and Jesus might just pull those right from under you.
 - The townspeople were used to living and believing a certain way about life and people. Here, Jesus shows them something completely different! He shows them the power of God and instead of embracing it, they rejected it because it was going to challenge how they always lived.
- Jesus is going to stir things up. The demons sure knew that which is why they ran to him and started begging. Jesus is going to stir things up because our ways are not his ways and our thoughts are not his thoughts! He is not going to use his power for nothing! He is going to use it to stir things up which will ultimately bring freedom!
- Make no mistake about it, following Jesus will always cost you something. But what you gain is so much more valuable and so much more life-giving. Jesus said, "Whatever you lose by following, I'll repay you in this life and in the life to come."
 - And, the one who has the power over demonic forces surely has the power to do good on his promises to us! Jesus is worth whatever it costs for you to have him! His power is worth whatever you are so afraid you have to give up in order to follow him.
 - What are you afraid you will have to give up for Jesus? That fear will keep you in bondage rather than setting you free to live life to its full. You think it is helping you to live a full life when the reality is it is holding you back!
- No one knew that truth more than the formerly demon-possessed man. He had gone so far from reality, so far from sanity that he became almost non-human. He wouldn't listen to anyone or submit to anyone and he was convinced that he was free – free from society, free from others, free from control, and apparently, free from personal hygiene and clothing!
- But, then Jesus showed up and changed everything. Jesus showed up and gave him life.
- This is the next lesson we learn from a demon. Jesus takes ugly and gives beauty. Let's finish reading **Mark 5:18-20**.

- The response of this man was to pursue Jesus with everything in him. He wanted to go with Jesus, but Jesus told him to stay and tell everyone about what happened to him.
 - This version, refers to the Ten Towns. Another version refers to this region where all this took place as The “Decapolis.” According to biblical history, this was a region of 10 cities that were very close to one another and all combined to make one huge metropolis.
 - This man was known in this region and Jesus knew it would make more of an impact for him to share his story with his family and everyone.

- And, an impact it certainly did make! The Bible says that *“everyone was amazed.”* Jesus took the ugliest man in the metropolis and made him the most beautiful, the most sane, the most changed. And EVERYONE was amazed! The transformation Jesus brings is nothing short of amazing!
 - We’ve all probably heard testimonies from people who were a mess. Their lives, families, relationships, everything where marked by crisis and mess and darkness.
 - Then, they met Jesus. Everything changed – their emotions, their reactions, their relationships. Even their appearance changed. That’s because Jesus makes beautiful things out of the ugliness inside of us.
 - Whether you are a complete mess or just a little bit of a mess, you and I are in need of the beautiful transformation of Jesus Christ! He wants to take our ugly. Last week, we were challenged to list the ugly stuff in us – the shame, guilt, sin, pain, past experiences – all the ugly and give them to Jesus. He wants to take them – little or big – and make them into something beautiful! Are you ready for that? Do you want his beauty?

- Many years ago, doctors determined the sanity of a mental patients with the following test: The patient was placed in a room with a sink. The faucet was turned on and a stopper was put in the drain until the sink overflowed. The patient was then handed a mop and the door was closed.
 - If the patient had enough sense to shut off the water, pull the plug, and then mop up the water, he was considered capable of going home. But on the other hand, if the patient mopped like crazy and never bothered to shut off the water and/or pull the plug, he was considered still insane and was detained.
 - There are people in this world that are mopping like crazy... and they’re not in mental institutions. They’re people who we’d consider quite sane (pause). BUT they are ***plagued by their own personal demons, and they haven’t figured out how to stop the flooding in their lives.***
 - Are you one of those people?

- Remember lesson #3 - Meeting the Power of Jesus Demands a Decision. What's your decision? We said at the beginning the right motivation is a powerful thing. It is powerful enough to invite a powerful Christ to take control.
 - o Are you motivated enough to fully accept Him and follow Him or send Him away? Are you ready and motivated to pull the plug on the old life, or do you just want to keep mopping and hoping you can stay ahead? Are you motivated enough to allow Jesus to bring beauty into your life?

Prayer

Altar Call

- This morning, there is a two part invitation. The first part is to ask the question, "Is there something I need to lay aside today? Is there some ugliness that I have been clinging to because I have thought it is me, I have depended on it, I have believed it to be good, but it's not."
 - o We asked those questions last week as well. Maybe you weren't here last week. This morning is your time to ask those questions.
 - o The second part is do you need to accept Christ today. Are you motivated enough to make a decision to either accept the transformation power of Jesus? Or, are you going to ask him to leave? Either way, know this – Jesus loves you and desires for you to be with him. He will always pursue with his that love and with is offer for power and life. Are you ready to accept his invitation today and know the beauty that comes as he works in and through your life?
 - o If so...
 - o The altar is a place where ugliness ends and beauty begins...