Unbound: Finding Freedom in Christ

Week 4 – Deliver Us from Evil (October 25, 2026)

Main Point: Jesus has authority over darkness—and He shares it with those who belong to Him. **Sticky Statement:** Darkness has a legion. Jesus has the authority. **Application Point:** Name your fears and spiritual battles, and ask Jesus to speak freedom and peace into them.

Key Text: Mark 5:1–20 **Supporting Texts:** Ephesians 6:10–18; James 4:7; 1 John 4:4; Matthew 6:13 **Brief cross-references:** Mark 1:27; Mark 3:27; Mark 6:7

Me

We've reached the final week of Unbound: Finding Freedom in Christ. We've healed a wounded heart, released a debt, and asked for the Holy Spirit. If you've been following along, you've noticed that freedom is wonderful and also a little uncomfortable. Healing makes you face your pain. Forgiveness makes you face your past. And the Holy Spirit has a way of making you face the parts of yourself you'd rather ignore.

Today we talk about evil.

I'll be honest. For most of my life this topic was easy for me. I thought "spiritual warfare" mostly meant avoiding scary movies. No zombies, no demons, no problem. Turns out evil is not intimidated by your Netflix history.

Seminary didn't change that. At Wesley Theological Seminary, spiritual warfare, if anyone mentioned it, meant the powers and principalities: empires, systems, structures. Real things, and I still believe in them. But they were never a person in a room. Nobody told me about the room.

My first room was a parsonage. My wife, our dog, and our two small children had been noticing strange things. Shadows moving. The dog barking and growling at an empty corner. The sound of someone running down the hallway and bumping the walls. I never experienced any of it. I thought my family had gone crazy.

Then my sister-in-law came to visit, and she doesn't believe in any of this. At three in the morning, she heard running and bumping, assumed the kids were up, opened her door, and found a quiet house and everyone asleep.

The next day, after her story, I blessed the house. We never had another problem. I still don't know what that was.

Years later, I was at a homeless shelter when a man I knew well turned on another man with a look in his eyes I did not think a human face could make. I thought he was going to kill him. I stepped in front of him. I did not overpower him. I had an authority Someone else had given me, and when I stepped in and he saw me, his eyes cleared. I saw my friend again. He muttered an apology and went to bed.

I have never felt prepared for any of it. I do not believe there's a demon around every corner. I believe it's rare, and that most of what weighs on us is grief, anxiety, habit, and a long week. But rare is not never. And I've learned that before I walk into the room, I need to know who's in charge.

So I'm not standing above you this morning. I'm standing next to you, a pastor who was not prepared, still learning who holds the authority. And here is what I'm sure of:

Darkness has a legion. Jesus has the authority.

We

Most of us have never seen anything strange. But every one of us has felt the weight of something we couldn't quite name.

Some of us feel it in our minds: anxiety that won't quiet down, thoughts that arrive uninvited, worry that spirals at 2 a.m. faster than a browser with forty-seven tabs open.

Some of us feel it in our relationships. You're in an argument far too intense for something about where the laundry basket goes. (Sometimes it really is just laundry. I want to be fair to laundry.)

Some of us see it in our families: patterns we swore we'd never repeat, and then there we are, repeating them.

Some of us fight it in our habits. The temptation we repent of on Monday and wrestle again on Thursday, strongest right when we thought we'd won.

And some of us carry a heaviness we can't explain, a discouragement that clings like July humidity.

Now let me be careful, because this is where preachers get into trouble. Not everything is a demon. Most things aren't. Anxiety is often a body doing what bodies do, and a doctor or a counselor may be exactly the tool God hands you. God heals through many hands.

But Scripture won't let us pretend that's the whole story. Jesus spoke of a real enemy. Paul says we wrestle with more than flesh and blood. And at least once, most of us have whispered, "Is this just me, or is something else going on?"

So here's the tension. We don't know what to do with that. Some of us ignore it. Some of us fear it. Some of us are too rational for it. And some of us fight a spiritual battle with only emotional tools and wonder why we keep losing.

So maybe the better question is this: when the battle is bigger than I am, who is bigger than the battle?

Mark tells us about a town that tried everything.

God

Mark 5. Let's walk through it slowly, because every detail matters.

Verse 1: "They went across the lake to the region of the Gerasenes." Remember what just happened. At the end of chapter 4, Jesus calmed a storm that terrified seasoned fishermen. Now He steps onto a Gentile shore, in pig country, a place unclean in every direction a Jew could count. He crossed a storm for one man. Sometimes the places we avoid are exactly the places Jesus steps into.

Verses 2–5 introduce the man: living among the tombs, crying out night and day, cutting himself with stones. The town had tried to restrain him with chains and shackles. Verse 4 says, "No one was strong enough to subdue him." Every human tool failed. And Mark has already told us where this is headed. In 3:27 Jesus says no one can plunder a strong man's house unless he first ties up the strong man. In Mark 5, Jesus walks into the strong man's house.

Verse 6: the man runs and falls on his knees. He doesn't attack Jesus. He bows, and the verb Mark chooses is the one used for worship. Whatever is inside him knows exactly who just walked ashore. "What do you want with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God?" The disciples are still asking, "Who is this?" The darkness has no doubt.

Verse 9: Jesus asks his name. "My name is Legion, for we are many." The word is legiōn (leg-ee-OHN), a Latin word borrowed into Greek, a Roman military unit of five or six thousand soldiers. This region lived under Roman occupation. They knew what a legion meant. Whether the number is literal or symbolic, the picture is clear: this man isn't fighting one thing. He's overwhelmed by many.

Now notice what the naming does, and what it doesn't. The name doesn't give Jesus power He lacks. It puts the battle on the table, out of the fog, where only one question is left. Who's in charge?

That's the question of this whole chapter, and Mark has been answering it since chapter 1. When Jesus first commands an unclean spirit, the crowd gasps: "A new teaching—and with authority! He even gives orders to impure spirits and they obey him." (Mark 1:27) The word is exousia (ex-oo-SEE-ah). It means authority, the right to command. Not muscle. Not volume. Not technique. Authority. This is the root word for exorcism.

Remember the shelter? I didn't win that room with strength. I stepped in with a role Someone else had given me. I don't know everything that happened, but I know it wasn't mine. Authority is borrowed, or it's nothing.

Going back to Mark Chapter 5, lets look at the incident with the pigs. Let me read verse 13 wrong for a second: "The demons negotiated, and Jesus gave in." No. Read it right: "He gave them permission." They cannot move without His say-so. I won't pretend I understand every detail of the pigs. But I understand the chain of command. Darkness asks. Jesus decides.

Then verse 15. The people come out and find the man "sitting there, dressed and in his right mind." Sitting: the man who couldn't be still is still. Dressed: the man who lost his dignity has it back. And in his right mind. I

know what that looks like. It looks like eyes clearing, and a friend coming back. Jesus doesn't only remove what torments. He gives back the person.

Then the strangest verse. In verse 17 the townspeople begin to plead with Jesus to leave. They were afraid. A chained man they could manage. A free man cost them two thousand pigs and a changed world. Sometimes we are more afraid of freedom than of the chains.

In verse 18 the man begs to go with Jesus. But Jesus says no: "Go home to your own people and tell them how much the Lord has done for you, and how he has had mercy on you." Not "how powerful I am." Mercy. And in verse 20 he tells it in the Decapolis (deh-KAP-oh-lis), the "Ten Cities," how much Jesus had done for him. Jesus said "the Lord." The man said "Jesus." He'd already put the two together. A man no one could chain became the first missionary to the Gentile world, before the Twelve were ever sent. And in the very next chapter, Jesus gives the Twelve the same exousia over impure spirits (6:7). That is how Jesus shares His authority: not by handing us a script to shout at the dark, but by sending free people home to tell the truth.

Paul says, "Be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power…" (Ephesians 6:10) and then tells us four times to stand. Not to charge. To stand on a victory already won. James says, "Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you." (James 4:7) Submit first, then resist. And John says, "The one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world." (1 John 4:4)

That's why Jesus taught us to pray, "Deliver us from the evil one." We don't ask because evil is strong. We ask because Jesus is stronger.

Darkness has a legion. Jesus has the authority.

You

So what do you do with that? One thing this week: Name your fears and spiritual battles, and ask Jesus to speak freedom and peace into them.

Not "figure it all out." Not "win it yourself." Not "pretend you're fine." Notice what Jesus did first: He asked for the name. Naming drags a battle out of the fog and into the light of His authority. Here are three small steps.

First, name it. Fear, anxiety, temptation, despair, anger, heaviness, confusion. Say it plainly. "The fear for my kids." "The thing I keep going back to." "The dread at 2 a.m." Not the whole story. Just the name.

Second, ask Jesus to speak. Pray something as simple as, "Jesus, You have authority here. Speak freedom and peace into this." Then do what James says: submit, then resist. Hand it over to God. Then say a quiet, firm no. Turn away from the thing, and say out loud, "I belong to Jesus." Don't wait for the feeling. The man in the tombs didn't earn his peace. He arrived at the feet of the One who had it.

If your battle is a relationship, pray, "Jesus, speak peace into this situation," and pray it over the person as well as the problem. If it's fear about your future, your kids, or your health, bring it to the One who said, "Do not be afraid. I am with you."

Third, go home to your own people. Tell one person. Not to impress them, but to say what Jesus said: here is what the Lord has done, and here is the mercy I've received. A battle fought alone feels spiritual and enormous. A battle spoken aloud to a friend usually shrinks.

Two words of care. First, please don't go looking for a fight. This isn't a technique to try on a stranger, a family member, or a house you're curious about. Authority is borrowed, and it belongs to Jesus. If something truly

frightening is happening, in your home or in you, don't carry it alone. Come find me or one of our deacons.

Second, if your battle is anxiety or depression, praying and seeing a counselor or doctor are not rivals. Do both. And if you are hurting yourself, or you're thinking about ending your life, tell someone today, and you can call or text 988 right now. The man in the tombs did not have to stay there alone, and neither do you.

If you're not sure what you believe about Jesus, this step is still for you. You don't need a theology of spiritual warfare. Just pray, "God, if You're real, bring peace where I feel chaos." Even a skeptical prayer can open a door.

Darkness has a legion. Jesus has the authority.

We

Now imagine a church that lives like it believes that.

Imagine a church where nobody fights alone. Where the person who walks in carrying a heavy battle walks out lighter, because someone said, "Me too, and let me pray with you." Where anxiety, addiction, fear, and discouragement can't isolate anyone, because we've made a home big enough to hold them.

Imagine what our neighbors in Staunton might say if they saw a people who refused to be intimidated by darkness. Not because we're strong, but because our Savior is. A people who do not bow to fear. A people who walk in the light. A people unbound.

Methodist Christians have always taken this seriously. At baptism we are asked whether we renounce the spiritual forces of wickedness, and whether we accept the freedom and power God gives us to resist evil. Notice the word "give." The freedom is a gift, and the power is borrowed.

Four weeks ago we started with a wounded heart. We learned that Jesus came for our guilt and our grief. We released debts because He released ours. We asked the Spirit to fill us, because freedom is Someone we receive. And today we hear that the One who heals, forgives, and fills also stands between us and the dark.

Together we can stand firm in the victory Jesus has already won. So go home. Name it. Stand. Tell somebody.

And remember: Darkness has a legion. Jesus has the authority.

Closing Prayer

Almighty God, We thank You that in a world where darkness is real, Your light is stronger, Your truth is deeper, and Your love is unshakeable. Jesus, You crossed a storm for one man in the tombs, and You have crossed every storm for us. You calm what we cannot calm. You restore what we cannot restore. We place our battles in Your hands: every fear, every temptation, every place where we feel pushed or pressured or overwhelmed. Speak freedom and peace into those places now. Holy Spirit, give us courage and a sound mind. Teach us to stand, to submit, and to resist. Guard our minds, steady our hearts, and surround our homes with Your peace. And Lord, make our church a home where the wounded find healing, the weary find rest, and the free go out to tell. We trust You. We cling to You. Deliver us from evil. Make us unbound. In Your strong and mighty name, Amen.