**Date –** 4/10/16  **Theme –** Identity

**Title –** Releasing Greatness in You **Passage –** Mark 5:1-14

**Big Idea –** When God reveals our identity He releases great authority.

**Introduction – We have been talking about our identity in Christ &** The reality is... **(1) there’s a fight to grasp our identity & Jesus lived & died and lives to help us do that**. **(2) He wants us to help others through** & **(3) there’s a purpose in the process or the fight.** Today I want you to see that **(4) when God reveals our identity He releases great authority.**

God changed the identity of that leper and empowered that man’s identity to change anyone who saw Him. This is why we follow God. **He always sees what can be. He sees the gold in us and is working us to see that released in us. That’s a great place to praise Him. You need to look at the person next to you and let them know that God has something greater for them.**

Look at how He does this: In **Mark chapter 5 it says, They came to the other side of the sea, to the country of the Gerasenes. 2 And when Jesus had stepped out of the boat, immediately there met him out of the tombs a man with an unclean spirit. 3 He lived among the tombs. And no one could bind him anymore, not even with a chain, (**he’s free, but not really free. Living in a cemetery we can see that) **4 for he had often been bound with shackles and chains, but he wrenched the chains apart, and he broke the shackles in pieces. No one had the strength to subdue him.**

**Story – Forrest’s story of the little girl in Sri Lanka.** We look for rational answers that are purely spiritual (i.e. movies: Noah, Exodus).

**5 Night and day among the tombs and on the mountains he was always crying out and cutting himself with stones.** (He’s within screaming distance of town) **6 And when he saw Jesus from afar, he ran and fell down before him. 7 And crying out with a loud voice, he said, “What have you to do with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I adjure you by God, do not torment me.” 8 For he was saying to him, “Come out of the man, you unclean spirit!”** (Jesus is at a distance, some say a great distance, & this demon-possessed guy knew who He was. “They” knew who He was **before** those who **weren’t** possessed did. So, this guy filled with demons runs & screams at Jesus maybe to intimidate, but ultimately to kneel in submission...**they knew Jesus has power over them**). **Jesus is at PEACE in all this because He isn’t threatened.**

**9 And Jesus asked him, “What is your name?” He replied, “My name is Legion, for we are many.”** (Legion is a word that comes from a company of Roman soldiers) **10 And he begged him earnestly not to send them out of the country. 11 Now a great herd of pigs was feeding there on the hillside, 12 and they begged him, saying, “Send us to the pigs; let us enter them.” 13 So he gave them permission. And the unclean spirits came out and entered the pigs; and the herd, numbering about two thousand, rushed down the steep bank into the sea and drowned in the sea.** (I don’t get the negotiation or why all those pigs were killed. These people didn’t have dietary restrictions. **What I do know is that Jesus gave them permission.** **He was in charge & they knew it**) **14 The herdsmen fled and told it in the city and in the country. And people came to see what it was that had happened. 15 And they came to Jesus and saw the demon-possessed man, the one who had had the legion, sitting there, clothed and in his right mind, and they were afraid. 16 And those who had seen it described to them what had happened to the demon-possessed man and to the pigs. 17 And they began to beg Jesus to depart from their region.** (ok...this is the strange part. This guy scared you for a long time & now you’re scared because he isn’t scaring you. You want the guy who took away the scary stuff to leave? **Most of the time we want someone to rescue us from the boogieman.** Like Daymon Wayans in Sergeant Payne...

**Jesus honors their request and leaves,** BUT what I want you to hear is that **this story is MUCH MORE about what Jesus does than the devil because... That’s a great place to praise Him. God sees greatness in you.**

**2) Jesus sees what’s IN THE WAY of our identity –** Jesus knows where we struggle & how we got there. **He knows** **the devil is a liar and a whittler. This guy didn’t start with a legion of demons. It started with one.** **He made steps toward what he had become.**

**A) Integrity –** It starts with 1 lie until we are known by our lies.

**B) Purity –** It starts with a glance until we NEED more.

**C) Anger –** The Bible says we can be angry & not sin, but many times our motivation isn’t justice, it’s ego. I.E. Someone cut us off, a friend/spouse said something. It happens & now we can’t stop.

**E) Addiction –** The process of addiction always begins with the first step. I know people have addictive personalities & propensities, but it always begins with the first, yes, **when we know we must say, no.**

**F) Personality –** We knew what it meant to be happy, to laugh...we were different and then that slowly eroded. Beyond chemical imbalance & seasons of struggle our identity shifted.

The issue comes down to allowing any demonic influence in my life and I don’t want him to have that influence. When I lie, get angry, sacrifice my purity, give in to addiction, become someone who’s identity and motives are twisted I look more like the devil than God.

**Here’s the crazy thing...**God sees these choices & He pursues us even when we are screaming at him & have failed & He’s stilling looking for the gold. **He asks, “Who are you?”**  The demons say, Legion, but **Legion was the stuff in the way of getting to who this guy really was.** Jesus knew that wasn’t this guy’s real identity and He had to get rid of the things that wrongly defined, demeaned, & defeated Him **to release who He knew he could be.**

On the backside of the fight **God’s ultimate goal is for us to know life as He knows it. It’s becoming like Christ. Remember that Lewis quote from last week?** “**The more we let God take us over, the more truly ourselves we become because He made us. He invented us. He invented all the different people that you and I were intended to be. . .It is when I turn to Christ, when I give up myself to His personality, that I first begin to have a real personality of my own.”** Jesus is leading us into **our identity & all the authority that comes with it when we acknowledge He is the Son of the Living God & that we need Him to rule over our lives.**

**When we invite Jesus to add or remove whatever He wants or needs to in our lives He can reveal & release the full potential of who He knows we can be.** **His absolute authority enables us to have absolute authority over the things that stand in the way** **of our identity in Christ & in that discovery we find even more...**

**18 As he was getting into the boat, the man who had been possessed with demons begged him that he might be with him. 19 And he did not permit him but said to him, “Go home to your friends and tell them how much the Lord has done for you, and how he has had mercy on you.” 20 And he went away and began to proclaim in the Decapolis how much Jesus had done for him, and everyone marveled.** I don’t understand all the reasons Jesus doesn’t let this guy come with Him, but I do know...

**3) Jesus RELEASES who we can be –** God always sees the gold. **Reference: Real discernment with Francis Frangipane.**

* **It didn’t matter if he had a legion of demons inside of him.**
* **It didn’t matter that a whole town was afraid of him or that he was cutting himself or lived on the wrong side of town.**
* **It didn’t matter what He had done in his past.**

**What mattered was that...**

* **He & the demons knew Jesus was the Son of God.**
* **Jesus loved him enough to look past all the stuff.**
* **Jesus had the power to push through his confusion.**
* **He wanted to follow Jesus as the Son of the Living God.**

**Conclusion – Jesus knew this guy’s full potential & He knows yours.**  **He knew this guy’s name was more than Bob, or Frank. It was evangelist, world changer, chain breaker.** A 5th C. church in this area can be traced back to the testimony of this man.

**So, what’s your name? Who is God wanting you to see? Who you are will release what He will do through you.**

**Know this: When God reveals our identity He releases great authority.**

**Think about this:**

* **Imagine life free of what is stealing life from you –** i.e. waking up in the morning anticipating what God would do.
* **God has an incredible way of leveraging our past & our regrets in our favor to motivate us to move toward Him.**

**Do this:**

* **Acknowledge that Jesus is Lord of you –** 1st step for some. Ongoing step for others **(See memory verses).** When He is Lord we make the conscious choice to run to Him, immerse yourself in His words and His purposes for you life.
* **Ask God to deliver you –** This is what Jesus taught us to pray, lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil or the evil one. Ask God to help you be free from the things that you already know are controlling you.
* **Ask for help when and where you struggle –** When you are overwhelmed ask others to pray. This is not a place filled with perfect people. This is a place where people in community want to help each other know and love Jesus.
* **Look for the gold –** We look for our failures, but God is looking at what we are becoming. Look for where He’s leading you.

**Memorize this:**

**Matthew 16:24 (ESV ) Then Jesus told his disciples, “If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.**

**2 Corinthians 10:5 (ESV) 5 We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ,...**