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GUARDIAN'S WEEK END SERMON

Sermon by Rev. J. W. Aikens.

The Man of Gadara, Mark V, 1-13.

Jesus sums up the whole story in the words—"The Lord hath done great things for thee and hath had compassion on thee." So we have here a story of the Lord's compassion.

Jesus had landed with his disciples on the shores of Gadara and scarcely had the boat been secured before a man with a very fierce and forbidding appearance came forth from his lonely dwelling among the tombs and confronted them. We notice to begin with how sin separates a man from his home and friends.

Perhaps this man's father could not stand him any longer and put him out of the house, more than likely he left of his own accord preferring a dwelling-place among the tombs to a comfortable home. Sin always affects the home life and surely a man without a home is to be pitied. The world's battles may be fought bravely if there is one spot where sympathy counsel and welcome await us but when the foundations of home life are undermined by sin then a man is badly handicapped. This man was also separated from society. We build jails and penitentiaries in order to separate sinners from society. As a matter of protection this may be a success but as a means of reformation it is a failure. In fact the method of placing offenders in jail is comparing with other criminals and allowing them to live in idleness has a tendency to produce crime rather than good living. Sin also separates us from God, as it is written—"Your sins have separated between you and your God and your iniquities have hidden his face." Unless sin is put away it will separate us eternally. People who say there is no hell are shutting their eyes to the facts of life all around them for wherever sin is, there is hell. Whether in this world or that which is to come.

Luke tells us that this man of Gadara "wore no clothes." He had lost all sense of decency. Ever since Adam fell mortality and decency have been largely questions of clothing. How long would mortality last without clothes? A thin crust of earth separates us from liquid fire and a mere matter of clothes separates us from the hell of immortality. There are few people who are like the man of Gadara in wearing no clothes, but there are many who do not wear much. Some of the people in the theatres, are only half-dressed. How would you like your daughter to appear half-dressed before a crowd of ungodly men? Yet so-called Christians attend theatres and thereby encourage some other persons daughter to travel the downward road.

"No man could tame him." After all our efforts the authorities had only a heap of broken fetters and chains to show for their trouble. Sin is lawless and to license sin is to license lawlessness for sinners never can observe law. "They are not subject to the law of God neither indeed can be."

"And always night and day he was in the mountains and in the tombs." The devil gave him no rest. The wicked are like the troubled sea that cannot rest. In the Niagara gorge there are the famous whirlpool rapids. On the surface of the pool many pieces of boards, logs and sticks are ceaselessly whirled around. They cannot rest for they are in the grasp of a restless power. So it is with sinners. The devil has them in his power and for six thousand years he has been driving men and women around the same monotonous circle, for there is nothing new in sin. It is the most stale and monotonous life that can be lived. How self-destructive sin is. He was "cutting himself with stones." He that sinneth wrongeth himself. A sinner hurts no one so much as himself. Saul thought that he was destroying the disciples but Jesus said "It is hard for thee to kick against the pricks."

This Gadarene sinner is but a type of ourselves. His sin ran like a fearful cataract until he met Jesus and there it ceased. "We also ourselves were sometimes foolish disobedient serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful and hating one another but after the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done but by his mercy he saved us."

Men sin because they have not yielded to Jesus. A burglar once broke into a house to steal. As he was about to lay his hands on some valuables his eye caught sight of a picture hanging on the wall. It was the portrait of a face pure strong and tender and by a strange power it held him so that he could not commit his crime. He tried a couple of times but the face arrested him until finally he turned the face to the wall and was then able to continue in his sin. The devil has turned away the true picture of God lest the light of the gospel in the face of Jesus should shine upon us.

People have strange ideas of what God's compassion means. A little girl was once told that if she did a certain thing, God would be angry with her but she replied "No, he won't be will forgive me that's what he is there for." A great many persons act as if that was their conception of the compassion of Christ. The scriptures show us that the love of Christ for this man meant just of all,—deliverance from evil. He said—"Come out of the man thou unclean spirit." How simple, direct and complete is the salvation of Jesus. I once recommended this cure for sin to a man addicted to drink but he made light of it and took the gold-cure. That lasted for a while but the devil in him soon broke loose again and he sent to Halifax for a case of liquor and after receiving it drank himself to death. He might have been living now if he had only met Jesus. It is a terrible thing for a man to have met the devil and missed Jesus.

Jesus gave him rest. "They found him sitting." He had never known repose for mind or body while serving the devil. Into the midst of the restlessness of sin Jesus comes saying—"Come unto me all ye that are weary and heavy laden and I will give you rest."

People travel over the world seeking rest but as long as they take the same restless spirit with them they cannot have peace. Rest is the result of contact with Jesus. "We which have believed do enter into rest."

Jesus civilized him. They found him "clothed." Formerly "he wore no clothes." The religion of Jesus is good for the tailoring business. There is much said of the influence of environment and we are urged to surround people with good homes and put decent clothing on them in order to make them respectable citizens. Of what use is a good home and clothing to a man like the one in the text? He would only destroy them and turn again and rend you, but after he has been saved by Jesus immediately he procured his own clothes. The Rev. Mr. Collier tells of hearing a man give the following testimony—"Since I have found Christ I have flitted three times and each time to a better house". The Socialism that leaves out the salvation by Jesus will never meet the world's needs.

Jesus gave him a "right mind." For years he had been acting like a fool but after he has been delivered from his sin, the troubles of his mind are rectified. There are people whose doubts and fears are not the result of bad living but in many cases known sin is the cause of unbelief.

Dr. Torrey tells of a certain man who professed to be an unbeliever and a skeptic. He claimed to be very much exercised over the question of who was Cain's wife but he found out later that his real Skepticism was not Cain's but another man's wife. There are hypocrites in churches but they are not to be compared with the hypocrites in the world.

Some do not want the Lord's compassion. They besought him to depart out of their coasts. Why? Because it was interfering with business. These Gadarenes were Jews in the hog business which to them was unlawful and when Jesus showed the devils to enter into the swine he was only breaking up a bad business. If Jesus reigns at all he must reign in business social and national life. It is the lack of this that hurts the church more than all outside attacks. When men name the name of Christ and their employes know that their business is not conducted on the square then Jesus has been wounded in the house of his friends.

The Gadarenes were afraid of a revival. It looked as if the whole country would be stirred for "God but the people did not want it." The whole multitude of the country of the Gadarenes besought him "that he would depart out of their coasts!" There are those who would sooner have a desperado than a revival if the latter meant the loss of a few hogs. I have heard people grumbling at the cost of genuine work of grace but they had no complaints to make against the cost of the liquor traffic. It is no wonder the man wanted to leave such a community but Jesus said—"Go home to thy friends and they'll hear how great things the Lord hath done for thee" and he departed and began to publish in Decapolis how great things Jesus had done for him and all men did marvel. What a change! One day he was roaming the mountains, possessed by a legion of devils, and living in fearful sin, the next day he was preaching in Decapolis the salvation that comes through faith in Christ. Surely this is the kind of Saviour the world needs.

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