

# Jesus Visits a Cemetery

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*Mk 5:1-20*

## I. INTRODUCTION.

A. This is the week-end when so many go to visit cemeteries.

1. When I was growing up, Memorial Day meant two things: 1) My dad, who grew up just south of Indianapolis, would be watching the Indianapolis 500; and 2) My grandmother's family would come in to lay flowers on their families' graves.
2. We mentioned this morning how important it is to remember and to reflect about those who have gone before.

B. But, did you ever stop to think that Jesus visited cemeteries.

1. He visited a cemetery when Lazarus had died. Jesus went to that cemetery, ordered the stone rolled away, called for Lazarus, and then ordered that Lazarus be ordered out of his grave clothes.
2. He visited for a brief time a cemetery that Joseph of Arimathea had purchased. Some devout people wrapped and anointed Jesus' body, placed it in that tomb, but three days later, he got up and walked out of there!
3. Every time Jesus goes to visit a cemetery, we find that he gives life back to people.
  - a. In tonight's passage, Jesus visits a cemetery and gives life back to an individual.
    - Interestingly, the man wasn't dead. Rather, he lived in the cemetery.
    - But, Jesus gave life back to him, and this man would never be the same!
  - b. READ TEXT. (SIX SLIDES)

C. We tell others when something positive happens in our lives.

1. Examples:

- a. If a doctor cures us, aren't we quite likely to sing his praises?
    - If we were at death's door, and a good doctor was able to discover what our problem was and correct it, we're going to tell everyone we meet, aren't we?
    - A few months ago, a gentleman from Charleston called me who was considering having Dr. Tierney perform the surgery I had. He asked me what I thought, and I said, "Do it! It's changed my life, and it was worth everything."
  - b. What fisherman doesn't come home from a trip and tell about all the great fish he caught?
2. People in Scripture who encountered good often went and told others what had happened.
- a. That whole principle is biblical: "Like cold water to a thirsty soul, so is good news from a far country" (Prov 25:25).
  - b. When Ben-hadad, king of Syria, caused a great famine in Samaria by besieging the city, four lepers found the Syrian camp deserted and great supplies of good there. We then read, "They said to one another, 'We are not doing right. This day is a day of good news. If we are silent and wait until the morning light, punishment will overtake us. Now therefore come; let us go and tell the king's household.' So they came and called to the gatekeepers of the city and told them, 'We came to the camp of the Syrians, and behold, there was no one to be seen or heard there, nothing but the horses tied and the donkeys tied and the tents as they were'" (2 Ki 7:9-10).
3. Why is it that we sing the praises of a doctor, tell of our exploits in fishing, and realize the desire for good news, but when we have an opportunity to share our faith, we tend to be as silent as the dead themselves?

D. The man who had lived in the cemetery wanted to be with Jesus: "As [Jesus] was getting into the boat, the man who had been possessed with demons begged him that he might be with him" (v 18).

1. Jesus, however, did not permit the man; Jesus says 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" (v 19).
2. This was quite similar to the dilemma Paul faced.
  - a. "I am hard pressed between the two. My desire is to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better. But to remain in the flesh is more necessary on your account" (Phil 1:23-24).

b. Paul wants to leave this world of heartache and sin and go be with Christ. But, he knows there is much work to be done in the flesh.

E. We learn three important lessons from the man in the cemetery: WE RECOGNIZE, WE REMEMBER, & WE RESPOND.

## II. WE MUST RECOGNIZE WHAT THE LORD HAS DONE FOR US.

A. Think about how much the Lord Jesus changed this man's life.

1. Notice his condition prior to that meeting with Jesus: vv 2-5.

a. This man was homeless—he lived in a cemetery.

- It is likely that this man had some family somewhere who loved him deeply—maybe a wife and kids, parents, siblings. We don't know, but surely he had someone who cared deeply for him.
- Yet, he wasn't safe.

b. It becomes clear that he was a danger, for he often broke chains and shackles.

- The text doesn't say why he was bound:
  - It could very well have been that the townspeople bound this man for his own good—the text says that he was cutting himself with stones.
  - It's also likely, even if the man's own benefit was part of the motivating, that the townspeople were terribly frightened of him.
    - The fact that he broke chains and shackles and cut himself clearly indicates that this was a dangerous demon which had hold of him.
    - The demon gave him supernatural strength. He was like superman, and it's hard to tell what would happen if he got hold of someone.
- He was also dangerous, for he often cut himself with stones. Self-injury is a serious phenomenon and usually indicates, as it does here, a more serious underlying problem.

c. The man was always crying out.

- There are few things as sad as someone who cries out and no longer has the cognitive ability to control him or herself.
- When I had my first surgery, I had to spend the night in the hospital,
  - My roommate for the evening had Alzheimer's, and he cried all night long.
  - In fact, after having just had surgery, I was able to sleep no more than 45 minutes all night, for he constantly yelled.

2. This man in the cemetery was in a quite deplorable condition.

a. Prior to coming to Jesus, we, too, had a quite deplorable condition.

- "You were DEAD in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked" (Eph 2:1-2).
- We belonged in a cemetery—we just didn't know it!

b. Do we have enthusiasm anywhere comparable to what this man had for what the Lord has done for us?

- Maybe we just don't realize how much the Lord has done for us!
- Maybe our conversion was nothing more than superficial—maybe we haven't really given the Lord our broken life so that he can make it whole.

B. What has the Lord done for us?

1. He has taken away our sins: "Surely he has borne our griefs and carried out sorrows; yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned—every one—to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all" (Is 53:4-6).
2. The Lord has redeemed us from sin: "You were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot" (1 Pt 1:18-19).
3. The Lord has given us life: "The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly" (Jn 10:10).
4. The Lord has given us hope: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the

dead, to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time" (1 Pt 1:3-5).

- C. A man from the back mountains of Tennessee found himself one day in a large city, for the first time standing outside an elevator.
1. He watched as an old, haggard woman hobbled on, and the doors closed.
    - a. A few minutes later the doors opened and a young, attractive woman marched off.
    - b. The father hollered to his youngest son, "Billy, go get your mother!"
  2. The change that man wanted to bring about in his wife is quite like the change Jesus brings to us.
    - a. A life that was once marred by sin becomes whole, complete and beautiful.
    - b. Has the Lord brought such a change to your life?

### III. WE MUST REMEMBER WHAT THE LORD HAS DONE FOR US.

- A. How could this gentleman ever forget what the Lord had done for him?
1. He was living in a cemetery, unable to be bound, yelling night and day.
  2. Jesus comes along, and he's a totally different person—no longer living in a cemetery, no longer needing to be bound, and no longer yelling constantly.
- B. Do we remember what the Lord has done for us?
1. Maybe we get so involved in the things of this world that we forget what all the Lord has done for us.
    - a. Jesus says that's certainly possible: "Others are the ones sown among thorns. They are those who hear the word, but the cares of the world and the deceitfulness of riches and the desires for other things enter in and choke the word, and it proves unfruitful" (Mk 4:18-19).
    - b. Do we get too caught up in the "cares of the world"?
      - Are we so busy making sure the kids have their homework that we don't have time to remember what all the Lord has done for us?
      - Are we so busy making sure that we don't miss our favorite TV show that we don't have time to remember all the Lord has done for us?
      - Are we so busy with making a living that we don't have time to remember what all the Lord has done for us?
    - c. Notice that Jesus says that the "cares of the world" choke the word "and it proves unfruitful."
  2. The Lord has provided us with reminders:
    - a. The Lord's Supper serves to remind us what Jesus has done for us:
      - "The Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, 'This is my body which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me.' In the same way also he took the cup, after supper, saying, 'This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.' For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes" (1 Cor 11:23-26).
      - As we come to the Table, we remember what the Lord has done for us.
        - We remember the body which is for us, and the new covenant in Jesus' blood.
        - Notice that Paul also says that as we take these emblems, we proclaim the Lord's death.
          - The Lord's Supper is in a very real sense a re-enactment of the death of Jesus.
            - It is not, of course, a re-enactment to God, for he needs no reminder: "By that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all" (Heb 10:10).
            - However, it is we who need that re-enactment to recall the high price paid because of our sins.
          - The Lord's Supper also proclaims the truth of Jesus' death to our friends, neighbors, and brethren.
    - b. Scripture also serves as a reminder:
      - "I intend always to remind you of these qualities, though you know them and are established in the truth that you have. I think it right, as long as I am in this body, to stir you up y way of reminder, since I know that the putting off of my body will be soon, as our Lord Jesus Christ made clear to me. And I will make every effort so that after my departure you may be able at any time to recall these things" (2 Pt 1:12-15).

- Notice that Peter uses the idea of “remember” three times in that text. Do we spend time in Scripture that we might remember all that God has done for us?
3. Do we remember what the Lord has done?

#### IV. WE MUST RESPOND BY DECLARING WHAT THE LORD HAS DONE.

##### A. This man went and declared what the Lord had done.

1. “Jesus 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.’ And he went away and began to proclaim in the Decapolis how much Jesus had done for him, and everyone marveled” (vv 19-20).
2. Is it any wonder the people in the Decapolis marveled when they saw this man?
  - a. They knew who he was—there likely wasn’t a soul around who didn’t know about this man.
  - b. Here he comes walking, away from the cemetery, not screaming his head off, and not cutting himself with stones. People are going to want to know what brought such a change to this man. And, he told them what Jesus had done for him.
3. There is great power in example:
  - a. Jesus says: “You are the salt of the earth, but if salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything except to be thrown out and trampled under people’s feet. You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden” (Mt 5:13-14).
  - b. We are a different people, aren’t we?
    - We are just like that man in the cemetery—we once were dead and blind and living to fulfill our own desires. Now, we’ve been redeemed by the blood of Jesus and we seek to live under his lordship. People are going to want to know what has brought such a change in our lives, and we can say, “Let me tell you about Jesus.”
    - We live differently than the world around us:
      - In a context of sexuality, Paul writes, “Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body” (1 Cor 6:19-20).
      - “The time that is past suffices for doing what the Gentiles want to do, living in sensuality, passions, drunkenness, orgies, drinking parties, and lawless idolatry. With respect to this they are surprised when you do not join them in the same flood of debauchery, and they malign you; but they will give account to him who is ready to judge the living and the dead” (1 Pt 4:3-5).
    - Because we are different than we were and because we are different from those around us, we have great opportunities to speak of the change Jesus has wrought within us.

##### B. It is not enough, however, simply to live differently—we need to tell what God has done.

1. The nature of the Great Commission is to tell it: “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. God therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age” (Mt 28:18-20).
2. The early church told it: “Those who were scattered went about preaching the word” (Acts 8:4).
3. The church evangelized in the first century by personal involvement—it wasn’t that they said, “We have the apostles; we have elders—we’ll let them take care of it.” They were each involved.
4. Are we telling what great things the Lord has done for us?