

Jesus Confronts the Powers of Legion

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 30 January 2022

Preacher: Anthony Parrott

[0 : 00] Let's turn our Bibles to Mark chapter 5. And I'll be honest with you, I knew back in the fall when we started our Mark gospel series that we were going to have to be talking about demons and angels and possessions and the powers and the spirits and the invisible world.

And I knew that I would have to be, well, I am sort of nervous about all of that. Because we are a bunch of rational, educated people here in the Western world, and we don't possibly believe in angels and demons, all of that.

We're far more sophisticated, right? And the Table Church in particular has a reputation for quite a few of you to be in a phase of deconstruction. So maybe you grew up in the faith, you grew up in a Pentecostal or charismatic background or just a background that really held all of these things like angels and demons and possessions and exorcisms and gifts and all of that really, really high esteem.

And since then, you've began to rethink your faith. And now the idea of like hearing preaching on that sort of thing, again, might send shivers down your spine.

I get it. And I'll talk about a little bit of my own testimony when it comes to this as well. But it's important stuff, and so we're going to spend some time in it tonight.

[1 : 25] As Mark Twain has said, I said this earlier this morning to our Bible class, if I would not have preached so long if I had had more time to prepare.

So if this sermon goes long, you know, close your tab and download the podcast and catch up later. But I also have my laptop up here so I can see the numbers of how many people are watching. So if you close your tab, I'll know, all right?

Mark chapter 5, this is what it says. It says, they, being Jesus and the disciples, went across the lake. And across the lake is key language, meaning they're leaving Palestine, they're leaving Jewish territory, going into Gentile, non-Jewish territory, to the region of the Gerasenes.

Now, when Jesus got out of the boat, there was a man there with an impure spirit. And he came from the tombs, a.k.a. the region of the dead, to meet him.

This man lived in the tombs, the local cemetery graveyard, and no one could bind him anymore, not even with a chain, for he had often been chained hand and foot.

[2 : 29] But he tore the chains apart and broke the irons on his feet, and no one is strong enough to subdue this man. At night and day, among the tombs and in the hills, he would cry out and cut himself with stones.

And you know that there were teenagers back then who were, like, doing dares and seeing how close they could get to him, and, you know, listening to the spooky sounds of this demented man. Now, when he saw Jesus from a distance, he ran and fell on his knees in front of Jesus.

And he shouted at the top of his voice, What do you want with me, Jesus, son of the Most High? In God's name, don't torture me. For Jesus had said to this man, Come out, you impure spirits.

So then Jesus asked him, What is your name? My name is Legion, he replied, For we are many. And he begged Jesus again and again and not to send them out of the area.

And a large herd of pigs was feeding on the nearby hillside. And the demons begged Jesus, Send us among the pigs, allow us to go into them. So Jesus gave them permission, and the impure spirits came out, went into the pigs, and the herd, about 2,000 in number, rushed down the steep lake into the lake where they drowned.

[3 : 49] Now those tending the pigs ran off, like you do, when you see all your pigs run off a cliff. And reported this in town and countryside, and the people went out to see what had happened.

And they came to Jesus, and they saw the man who had been possessed by the legion of demons sitting there, dressed and in his right mind. And they were happy? Excited?

No. Afraid. Those who had seen it told the people what had happened to the demon-possessed man, and told them about the pigs as well. And then the people began to plead, beg, and demand of Jesus to leave their region.

As Jesus was getting into the boat, the man who had been demon-possessed begged to go with him. And Jesus did not let him, but said, Go home to your own people, and tell them how much the Lord has done for you.

Now he has had mercy on you. So, the man went away, began to tell in the Decapolis, the Decapolis is a region of ten cities, how much Jesus had done for him.

[4 : 51] And notice, we're not going to talk about this, but notice Mark's little bit of subversive writing. Jesus says, Go and tell how much the Lord has done for you. And Mark says, that the man went and reported how much Jesus has done for him.

A little bit of, Jesus is divine here. And all the people were amazed. This is the word of the Lord. Now in my life, I've told some of my testimony and life story here at the Table Church.

I had a biological mom who was unable to take care of me. I was in the foster system, lived with some relatives for a spell. And then when I was ten, I moved in with the Parrot family who eventually adopted me when I was fourteen.

And the Parrot family, we were part of a small little denomination called the Missionary Church, which was a pretty typical evangelical church at the time. We had a youth group. I had all of those sorts of experiences.

But when I was a little bit older, into my teenage years, but before college, my brother had gotten involved in sort of a Pentecostal charismatic gathering a little bit outside of town.

[5 : 55] And I looked up to my older brother who was sort of a spiritual giant in my mind. And so I started going to this charismatic Pentecostal gathering as well. And this place was wild.

It was there where I experienced things like speaking in tongues and casting out of demons. And we would gather around certain possessions of people and dance in circles around it in order to cast out evil spirits.

I would have these ecstatic prophecies that I would give. And I would rebuke my old church. And I would rebuke the spirits of my school, the high school that I was a part of.

And I would have all of these deep experiences. There was a time where we were at a place, an acreage, and there was a barn there where we were seeing spirits and demons floating over this barn.

And so we made a circle around it and cast it out. And this experience started out as something that was deeply life-giving. At the time, when I first started, I was experiencing these nightmares that I had had since I was a kid.

[6 : 57] And my biological mother, she suffered from paranoia, schizophrenia. So she had a hard time getting a grip on what reality was.

And when her mother, my maternal grandmother, died, she refused to believe it. And so before the funeral, she had snuck into the funeral parlor and tried to sneak in food and water and supplies into my grandmother's casket.

And it opened up the eyelids of my dad, grandmother, and I as a six-year-old am seeing all of this. And so those images of the whites of my grandmother's eyes haunted me for years.

I had these recurring nightmares about it. But when I first encountered these charismatic Pentecostal folks, they laid hands on me, prayed for me, and the nightmares were gone. And I've never had a single nightmare since.

But as I got deeper and deeper into this world, I became a nastier and nastier person. Because I believed that I had knowledge and power that those little peon Christians didn't have.

[8 : 05] I believed that I could see into a world and a realm that was really in charge of things while the rest of you all were blind. And I wasn't afraid to tell anybody about it.

I was a really nasty kid to my parents telling them about all of their spiritual blindness and darkness. I got to college. And as I've said before, I had the gift of many patient mentors and professors who shook the hubris and pride out of me and brought me into a more humble expression of my faith.

And as I left that expression behind of certainty and spirituality and demons and angels, I eventually looked back on it with shame and embarrassment and a sense of how could anybody possibly think that this is a good idea?

As the years went on, I began to see more examples, healthier examples of what it is to believe in not only this physical world, the spiritual world as well.

And that's what I want to talk about tonight. My basic main idea is that there are, in fact, powers, invisible realities that must be named.

[9 : 25] Scripture calls these the powers, and Jesus heals us and our society, our culture, our nations, our organizations from them.

He sets us free. He undoes the corruption and sets us on a mission to do the same. So let's talk about these powers.

Do they exist? So if you're anything like me, you probably have some kind of cartoony images in your mind of angels and demons, these little flying creatures that, you know, somehow grab a hold of us and influence us.

And so we, you know, talk about possession, demon possession, angels, you know, taking the wheel of a car, things like that. So do me a favor. We were talking a little bit about this in the live chat before service.

I know that you are not 100% focused on your live church stream screen right now. So take out your phone, get out your second screen that you're probably already playing Wordle on, and do a Google image search for biblically accurate angels.

[10 : 35] Yep, I'm looking at you. There's people in this room here too. So do a Google image search for biblically accurate angels. Now, if you're one who, you know, suffers nightmares, maybe do this in the morning and not close to bedtime.

All right, I'm giving the people here a chance. What's that? Yeah, yeah, go to Google images, images.google.com, and do biblically accurate images.

Yeah. All right, so the people here are starting to react. Yeah, they're a little wild. So I'll show you a couple of my favorites. These are up on the slides. So, you know, there's the angel figure that my grandma gave me, the little precious moments.

And then there's the angel figure that I really wanted, right? Because it looks amazing. If you look at the images that are described in Scripture of angels, there are these multi-winged, some of them have one eye, some of them have eyes all over, crazy things.

Here's another image where the angel says, be not afraid. And the man says, sir, this is the scariest moment of my life. Because if an angel, as described in Scripture, shows up, you would bleep your pants, right?

[11 : 51] These things are wild looking. Now, we've been influenced by culture, cartoons, movies, going back to medieval times, and drawings and pictures, particularly from Dante's writings, of what angels and demons look like, a little bit more human figures and forms.

Now, so I want these images to leave your mind for a moment and talk about how the Hebrew Bible, the Old Testament, talks about these invisible powers. So there's a whole bunch of vocabulary that the Hebrew Bible uses.

It uses the idea of little g gods, that there are all of these gods of the nations, that Yahweh, the one true God of Israel, is going to conquer, is going to show that he is almighty, that he is the Lord of hosts, Lord of the angel armies, that there is one true God and all of these other gods of the nations.

We hear language about angels that are messengers of the divine God, and lots of images in Isaiah and Ezekiel of what they do and what they look like and what their purpose is.

There's language about a creature or a being called Ha-Satan, the Satan. And the Satan figure in the Hebrew Bible is not necessarily the same as the devil that we think of today, but rather like a prosecuting attorney who shows up to make a case against God's people.

[13 : 18] There are the chaos monsters that you'll read about in the book of Job and in the Psalms, about Rahab, who God slaughters and chops into pieces, and this Rahab is a chaos monster that once God does that, then God can bring order to the chaos in Genesis chapter 1 begins.

There's Leviathan and Behemoth and these creatures that were signs of rebellion against order, and then God comes and defeats them and puts order into place.

These are all the different ways that the Hebrew Bible talks about this invisible reality. And if you're an ancient person, you did not have a clear split in your mind between the physical, the real, and the invisible, the not so real.

In your imagination as an ancient person, these two realities were deeply linked. The one influenced the other constantly. The other thing that we find that's surprising about the Israelites, the folks that we find in the Hebrew Bible, the Old Testament, is that they were rarely strict monotheists.

They did not have a strict notion of there being one God. And we see this even in the first commandment of the Ten Commandments. God says, you shall have no other gods before me.

[14 : 43] The first commandment is not, there are no other gods. Rather, God, when he speaks to his people Israel, assumes that they think that there are lots of gods, and their first priority is to not think that there are no other gods, but rather to not have any other gods besides Yahweh.

And this language comes about all the time in the Old Testament. There's this fascinating passage in the book of Daniel, chapter 10, where Daniel is praying to God, but his prayer gets delayed by weeks because the prince of Persia, one of the gods of Persia, has blocked Michael's prayers.

So then, the archangel Michael has to come duke it out with the god of Persia before Daniel's prayer can get to God. Look at Psalm 82.

It says this. It should be on your screen. It says, God has taken his place in the divine council in the midst of the gods, he holds judgment. So again, Hebrew imagination says there is not just one God, there is a variety of gods and one God above all.

So God takes his place in the divine council in the midst of the gods he holds judgment and Yahweh says, how long will you basically be unjust? Show partiality.

[16 : 04] God says, you are God's children of the Most High, all of you. Nevertheless, God's judgment on the little g gods is you're going to die like mortals and fall like any prince.

This whole idea, if you want to Google this later, is the idea of henotheism. So it's not monotheism, a belief in one God only, but the Israelites were henotheists. They believed that there were a variety of gods, but there was one God above all.

Now eventually, after Israel was exiled to Babylon and returned to Israel, this viewpoint changed and they became more strict, monotheists, beliefs in one God.

And so between our two testaments, between the book of Malachi and Matthew, there's about 400 years of theological development happening where the language that Jews and Israelites are using about this invisible world changes not so much from gods and chaos monsters, but rather to angels and demons.

And this takes us to the New Testament. The New Testament uses different language about this invisible world, but it's getting at the same Jewish notion that there is this world of powers, invisible powers, that's influencing the world.

[17 : 23] So here's some examples. Romans chapter 8. This is Paul writing, saying, I'm convinced that nothing can separate us from God's love, not angels or rulers or powers.

Now, Paul is expressing that there is nothing that can separate us from God's love, but the things that might try are angels and rulers. And in Paul's imagination, it's not angels as invisible beings and rulers, the people you vote for for president or Caesar.

These are both these influential invisible powers that can affect the world. Ephesians chapter 3 says, God's purpose is now through the church to show the rulers and powers in the heavens, the heavens, the heavens being this realm where the invisible world is, the rich variety of God's wisdom.

Ephesians 6, Paul says, we aren't fighting against human enemies, but against rulers and authorities and forces of cosmic darkness and the spiritual powers of evil in the heavens.

Colossians 1 is this gorgeous poem or hymn about the Son of God, Jesus. It says, the Son is the image of the invisible God, the one who is first over all creation because all things are created by him both in the heavens and on the earth, the things that are visible and the things that are invisible, whether they are thrones or powers or rulers or authorities, all things are created through him and for him.

[18 : 54] Last example, 1 Peter chapter 3, Peter writes, your salvation comes through the resurrection of Jesus who is at God's right side. And now that he has gone into heaven, he rules over all angels and authorities and powers.

So, by the time of Jesus in the first century church, this Jewish notion of there being a whole world within the world which shapes and affects the physical reality continues and that's whenever we see language of power, authority, ruler, that's what's being talked about.

So, what are they? Now again, get out of your mind images of flying creatures that are, you know, latching on to, you know, onto you and riding you around like a horse.

And throughout this sermon so far, I've been using this idea of as a separate invisible reality that may or may not interact with this physical one. So, let me give you a definition.

This comes from a great, incredible book called Engaging the Powers by Walter Wayne. So, longer quote, bear with me. This is what it says. He says, the powers, unfortunately, have long since been identified as an order of angelic beings in heaven or as demons flapping about in the sky.

- [20 : 19] Most people have simply consigned them to the dustbin of superstition and others sensing the tremendous potential in the concept of the powers for interpreting social reality have identified them merely as institutions or structures or systems.

The powers certainly are the latter, these systems, structures, and systems, but they are more and it's that more that holds the clue to their profundity. In the biblical view, the powers are both visible and invisible, earthly and heavenly, spiritual and institutional.

The powers possess an outer physical manifestation like buildings and portfolios and personnel and trucks and fax machines. This was written in the 90s.

And an inner spirituality or corporate culture or collective personality. The powers are simultaneously an outer visible structure and an inner spiritual reality.

the powers, properly speaking, are not just the spirituality of institutions, but their outer manifestations as well.

- [21 : 34] So, that was some really heady stuff. Let me try to give you some examples. You may have a job somewhere and you enter into that job and within maybe a week, a month at most, you begin to get a grasp of the corporate culture.

There are certain expectations, unwritten rules about how you are going to behave, what happens when you don't behave that way, when you buck up against the system or the culture of the corporation.

And no one wrote this stuff down necessarily, but when people enter into this corporation, all of a sudden that group of people begin to, out of them, emerge an identity that they didn't necessarily intend to have.

We talk about it in terms of corporate culture. Well, it's really hard to change corporate culture. Now, there's no instrument or measuring tape or scale that you could set down or stretch out to measure corporate culture.

It just is. It just exists. We talk about the spirit of a nation or a New York state of mind. Well, you know, New York just has a certain way of being. Americans, man, when they go into a different country or culture, everyone knows you're the American because you stick out like a sore thumb.

- [22 : 49] There's just something about you that emanates American-ness or New York-ness or Boston-ness or whatever. Midwestern is what applies to me. Think about a riot happening after a sporting event.

Very rarely does a group of people get together and say, hey, if our team wins, let's go flip some cars and light them on fire. But rather, a spirit affects the crowd and sends them out and the spirit makes them do things that individually they would never do.

And then as soon as that crowd dissipates, that spirit does as well. This is what we're getting at, that there are these spirits, these powers that influence groups of people, and groups of people out of them emerge concrete actions in the world.

I'm going to keep going with some axioms about how we might get our mind around this. So what's an axiom? An axiom is a simple statement that gives limits to and handles around a complex idea.

Some of my favorite axioms comes from a guy named Science Mike, Mike McHarg, who when he was an atheist and trying to understand what faith and spirituality and religion was all about, had some axioms that helped him get a better handle on why it was worth practicing the faith.

- [24 : 14] So here's a couple of examples. He has an axiom on sin. Mike McHarg writes, sin is at least action or inaction that violates human consent and produces human suffering.
- Sin comes from the divergent impulses between our lower and higher brain functions, our lizard brain and our monkey brain, and our evolution-driven tendency to do things that serve ourselves and our tribe.
- even if this is all sin is, it is destructive and threatens human flourishing. So as a bare minimum definition of sin, no Bible verses quoted, but Mike McHarg is arguing even if this is all sin is, it's still worth talking about.
- He has an axiom for the Bible. The Bible is at least a collection of books and writings assembled by the church that chronicles a people's experiences with and understanding of God over more than a thousand years.
- Even if that's a comprehensive definition of the Bible, study of scripture is warranted to understand our culture and the way in which many, many people come to know God.
- [25 : 21] So I gave a crack at writing an axiom for the powers, gods, angels, demons, et cetera, and this is my attempt. The powers are at least the systemic social and cultural forces that both emerge from and animate, organizations, corporations, nations, and other groups of people.
- Even if that's a comprehensive definition of the powers, it's essential to identify these powers so that they may be critiqued, reformed, or exercised.
- All right, are you with me? I've got like seven people in here. Okay, good. Not a whole lot of you have left the live chat, so we're in good company. So why does it matter?
- Why does any of this matter? Because this is heady, sort of philosophical, theological stuff. Why does it matter that we get this right? It matters because language creates perception.
- Language, the words that we use to talk about the world, can actually create perception. When I was a kid, I grew up poor for the first, you know, ten years of my life, seven years of my life, and so all I had was a black and white TV.
- [26 : 33] TV, and black and white TV was enough to get me interested in Superman, the adventures of Lois and Lane, and things like that, but when I got a little bit older and got into a different house and realized that there was color TV, I realized that black and white TV was this relic of the past.
- And in my childlike mind, I thought that anybody born before 1980 or so only saw the world in black and white. Black and white was all there was. It wasn't just how they recorded things, it's actually how the world was.
- Now, this was a silly idea, and I was wrong, but that's what I thought. But there's something kind of true about it. The color blue, to blow your minds tonight, was not perceived by people until relatively recently.
- Now, there's a whole story about how we figure this out, but if you go back to like ancient Greek poetry, Homer, he describes the sea not as blue, but as wine dark. He describes the sky not as blue, but as a dark monstrosity.
- So some sociologists and folks who study language got together and they analyzed the ancient languages of Greek and Hebrew and Chinese and Japanese and Indian languages and Icelandic languages all in ancient times and realized that none of these languages had a word for the color blue.
- [28 : 02] And it seems like ancient folks couldn't even see it because they didn't have a word for it. Now, they tested this. So there's a tribe in Namibia, the Himba tribe, and they also do not have a word for the color blue, but they've got dozens of words for the color green and all of its different shades.

So they put these folks in front of a computer and they showed them like seven or eight, you can put them on the screen, eight or nine blocks of color green and one the color blue, and they couldn't pick out which one was blue.

Then they put a different image in front of them, and all of them to our eye looked like the same color green, but the Himba tribe folks were able to identify which one was slightly different every time.

Their language granted them an ability to perceive the world differently than from the rest of us who don't have dozens of words for the color green.

Now, if you want to wiki-hole yourself later about this, this is called the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis or something called linguistic relativity.

[29 : 14] The idea is that the structure of a language affects its speaker's way of thinking, and therefore people's way of seeing the world is relative to their spoken language.

All right, what on earth does this have to do with demons? Back to Walter Wink. Wink says, the relevance of the powers for an understanding of structural evil should now begin to be clear.

Any attempt to transform a social system without addressing both its spirituality and its outer forms is doomed to failure. Only by confronting an institution and its solid way of being concrete in the world can the total entity be transformed.

It's not a coincidence that our society, the Western American society, is incapable of having language or being conscious of angels, demons, invisible powers, and also seems to be equally incapable of confronting racism and cis-hetero-patriarchal normativity and economic greed and toxic capitalism and consumerism and individualistic freedom at all costs and militarism and the myth of redemptive violence.

I want to argue that our inability to talk about the powers influences our inability to talk about systemic evil.

[30 : 48] Our culture has the fewest words, the least amount of language for the spiritual realm, and our culture is the one most affected by depression and addiction and anxiety and suicide and mental illness.

When we throw away all of that language of how to speak about the powers, we are shaming our ancestors and the majority world who still is confronting this every day and has language for it.

All right, let's go back to Jesus. So, Jesus confronts someone possessed by a demon. And again, we do not need to read this as a little invisible monster who is now getting a free horse ride off of this person.

Jesus has to kick it off somehow. Rather, Jesus is confronting the corrupted powers of this man's world and the hold that they have not only on individuals, but also communities and villages and nations.

Now, I for one do not hold that demon-possessed people are basically ancient ways of speaking of mental illness. Because the ancient world had ways of speaking about mental illness, it was not only demon-possession.

[32 : 08] It's an insult to mentally ill people to say, well, basically it's a version of being demon-possessed. And it's more accurate to see it as first-century people's way of understanding when someone had become either corrupted or deeply influenced by a culture's illness imposed by others.

demon-possession was often the language of scapegoating. So, this man has been taken by his community, sent out to the graveyard, and been told, do not come back.

Now, there's an irony here, because Jesus is not confronting just one possessed person, but rather Rome itself. There's a man, and he's possessed by a demon named Legion, for we are many.

If you are a first-century person, this has all of the literary subtlety of us saying, hey, someone came into our church, and they were obviously possessed. They were possessed by a demon named Red Hat, and they said, we are MAGA.

That's all of the same subtlety that Mark is using here. Seriously. Black scholar, Obery Hendricks, says, this demonic presence called Legion, the occupying presence which wrought the bitter pathology of oppression, how could it be anything but the Roman military?

[33 : 31] This man has been scapegoated by his community to be an outsider, because the entire village has been possessed by Rome, by legions of armies which occupy them.

So, this way of seeing the world opens up the possibility that we are all implicated in the corruptive ways that the powers affect us.

Because remember, the powers aren't just invisible, but they also show up in real, physical ways. And so we have to start asking ourselves tough questions. How have we been implicated, or possessed by, or corrupted by, or oppressed by, the demonic lie of white supremacy?

Or of hustle culture and toxic capitalism, or of ableism and insipid forms of eugenics, sexism and patriarchy, white Christian nationalism?

When I say that these things are demonic or satanic, what I don't mean is that there are little monsters poking at our brains to make us into bad people. What I do mean is that our organizations, and our corporations, and even churches, and religions, and countries, and states, and cities, out of them emerge, the powers, the spirits, the demons, and the false gods.

[34 : 47] And then these demons, in turn, perpetuate and give energy to the concrete corporations, and groups, and political parties, and churches, and people that go on corrupting creation.

And it's a cycle that without God in the flesh intervening becomes vicious and destructive. The other thing I want you to see in this story is that when Jesus frees someone, it angers the community.

They send Jesus, the liberator, away. This man's freedom comes at economic cost. Goodbye, piggies. And that cost is considered too high by the community.

And that is precisely what we can expect to happen when those who are animated by the divine spirit of liberation and freedom confront those who are possessed by the corruptive powers.

We see the cycle over and over again when America deals with race. Otis Moss Sr. said in a sermon in 1976, he says, I see a black and white parallel here.

[35 : 56] As long as we were struggling in the cotton fields of Tennessee and Georgia and Alabama and Mississippi with our cotton sacks across our shoulders and to our sides picking cotton and having our fingers burning from stinging cotton worms that were high under the cotton leaves, as long as we were barefoot, actually, and symbolically laughing when we were not tickled, America was satisfied.

But one day, America saw us marching to the voting booth, sitting down at lunch counters, and all of America became afraid.

When Jesus dares to set cultures free, cultures bite back. In fact, our freedom will anger those who benefit from our oppression.

Your freedom will anger those who benefit from your oppression. And so you may be the man who had been possessed by legion, and Jesus has set you free, and the crowd wants your liberator to go.

So, let's tie this all together. Every aspect of our society, I want to say, has both concrete and invisible realities that need to be named.

[37 : 18] And scripture calls this the powers. Jesus heals us from the powers that corrupt us and our world, and sets us on a mission to do the same.

The powers, this is the good news, the powers do not have the last word. And they will not succeed in the end. They will be, and this is crucial, redeemed and restored.

Remember what we read in Colossians 1, that he sits above all of the powers and rulers and authorities, for they were created by him. And the Colossians hymn goes on to say that in him all will be reconciled.

God will not only liberate us from the powers, but will liberate the powers as well. Those things that are currently corruptive, God will make a healing of force into the world.

So the invitation and the challenge for us is to be recipients of that healing power of Jesus. To be able to name and to recognize that there are oppressive powers and systems and angels and demons and gods who are all pulling and tugging at us.

[38 : 32] And Jesus wants us to be healed, to be set free, to be in our right minds again. And the challenge is that our healing may make us deeply unpopular.

But Jesus, what does he do with this man? He sends him back into his community to preach all the good things that the Lord has done for you.

Now this man's eyes are opened. He sees the truth of what God is really like, of what the world is really like. And now he, as the previously possessed man, is going to go perform exorcisms of his own hometown.

And our mission is much the same. To have our eyes opened to the corrosive powers of this world. To become detached to them, attached to the divine spirit, and empowered to go perform exorcisms of our own.

This is what I mean when Jesus confronts the powers, and Jesus is asking us to do so as well. . Thank you.