



**Sermon Transcription • Abbotsford**

**Local Missions Weekend - (Mark 5:1-20)**

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**[Please Note: This transcript has been lightly edited for ease of reading. Also, some headings have been added in square brackets to aid the reader in locating portions of the sermon.]**

The purpose of local mission is threefold. Number one, it is to remind us what God has done in our lives. Number two, it is to remind us what God is doing in each one of our lives, and third, it is to challenge us to use every opportunity to make him known. That's why we have this. But those our not my three points. My two points that I have, if you're a note taker, are tell how much the Lord has done for you, and use every opportunity to tell. Tell how much the Lord has done for you, and use every opportunity to tell.

**[Tell How Much the Lord Has Done For You]**

So here we go, the first one. Tell how much the Lord has done for you. Those of you young adults in the room, or those of you who have dated, know that dating is fun. Right? Some of you are like, yeah. But, also, can be hard as well, right? When I first started to date my wife, we went on our first date, and we were talking, and I was very blunt. I did not want to just beat around the bush. I was straightforward, I asked the questions that were important to me, because I told her right at the first meeting, "Listen, I'm hanging out with you because I'm not here to just fool around. I'm looking to get married, so if you're on the same page let's talk. If not, let's not waste our time." [Laughter] Most of you don't say that, right? And she probably thought, okay, this is good. [Laughter] Because we stood and we talked for five hours. Right? Most of you are like, an hour, okay I'm done man, I've got to be out of here. I'm not sure if this is going to work out. Five hours. That first line, being blunt, I guess it worked. [Laughter] So anyway, we talked, we asked the questions that were important to us, I asked the questions, she asked the questions. We talked about faith, we talked about every single thing. Because we were intentional.

Again, next date, a week or two later, it was about three hours long. And after dinner as we're walking, she's like, "I need to tell you something." And if you're a guy, the moment you see that line coming, you're like, uh oh. She didn't like that I was wearing runners at my first date. And that was me, I was. Although I stepped up my game, the second one though. But it can also be something else. So as we're walking she's like, "Imran, I need to tell you something." I'm like, "Okay, go ahead."

"I need you to know that I cannot have children. I understand that it's important for you, perhaps, from a cultural perspective and all that, but I need to you to know that I cannot." Now when you hear those words, there are mixed emotions that go through your head. You don't know how to respond, you don't know what to do. And that was me, I had no idea what to say in that situation. So I was like,



“Hey, I’m sorry to hear that. I appreciate your honesty. Thank you for telling me right away, because that way if we wanted to keep going, we could keep going. If not, then, yeah, hey, let’s just stop right here.” But then, as we left I came home and I talked to my friend’s wife, who was in her fifties at the time. And I’m like, “Hey, here’s the situation. I need your advice. I met a woman who told me this, I have no idea how to respond.” Godly, Christian woman. And her advice to me was, “Imran, you go out with someone else, you know they’re healthy, they can have children, you get married, and they cannot have children. What would you do? Would you walk away from the marriage? No.” That’s all she had to say. And to me, I got the message. You have those moments, and that’s where you’re like, okay, this is good. Because I’m going to trust God in this. I’m going to ride along, and I’m going to see where he takes me in this journey. As much as it was painful for me even just to tell my own family and friends perhaps, it was painful from a cultural perspective. Just so you guys know, the day we get married, nine months later, people want to see a baby in your arms, singing *Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star*. [Laughter] Or maybe more of a Bollywood star, “Dingle, dingle, dingle,” what we just saw, right? [Laughter] But that’s the cultural expectation. You don’t have a child nine months later, then what’s wrong with you? Why can’t you have children? Did you see a doctor? Did you see so-and-so? You need to go see this person, that person, do this...it’s painful. You cannot tell every single person what’s going on, what’s the reason, and with people you can tell easily. There’s stigma attached to that. There’s emotional pain that takes place. I’ve seen my wife cry at times at night, I’ve had my emotional rollercoaster at times. You see your friend having a baby and you’re like, man, I wonder when will be our turn. All of that stuff.

But God, if God was not part of my life, I could have walked away from the situation. You see, it’s painful. But God had mercy on us, he had a different plan that five years later, last September, last Local Missions Weekend I was up here, I told you guys that we adopted two girls. Yesterday, exactly one year later, God blessed us with not one, but two. There’s a picture of us. [Applause] Thank you. This is God’s doing in our lives. Sometimes God has a different way of doing things in our lives. For me, that was important because of the cultural pressure, the family pressure perhaps, thankfully I didn’t have the family pressure. But just, the cultural pressure was enormous. It was painful. And the text we are going to see today, the Gospel of Mark 5:1-20, if you have your Bibles you can open your Bibles. Mark 5:1-20. The story we’re going to look at in the text today is of this man who is demon possessed. And this man, the pain, both physical and emotional he endures, is just absolutely incredible. It’s hard for him. So the story goes like this, in Mark 5:1-20. Jesus and his disciples are arriving in the region called Gerasenes. And there, Jesus met a man who was demon possessed. And now you’re sitting here, man, I brought my kids and the family, you’re talking about that crazy stuff, what’s wrong with you? It’s in the Bible. [Laughter] There, Jesus met a man who was demon possessed, and it says no one could bind him, even with chains because he would break out of the chains. This man used to live in the tombs, he would cry day and night. He would harm himself. It was painful for him. He was probably rejected by the community, by the family. And it says that he was never dressed, like he was just talking nonsense. And then, Jesus shows up, as soon as this demon possessed man sees Jesus he starts to run. And as he’s running, he fell on his knees right in front of Jesus. And now these are the demons that are talking to Jesus through this man, “What do you want with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? Don’t torture me!” Then Jesus asked him, “What is your name?”



“Legion, for we are many.” So Legion, there are many, and yet he is begging, “Please don’t torture me. Please don’t kick us out of this region. Allow us to go into the pigs that are nearby being fed. Those pigs over there, allow us to go into there. Just have mercy on us,” in other words. Don’t torture us. Don’t harm us. And yet these demons are harming this man. And Jesus tells the demon-possessed man and tells the demons, “Come out of this man.” So we pick up the story from Mark 5:14-20, we have the verses up on the screen,

“Those tending the pigs ran off and reported this in the town and countryside [so by the way, when they’re like, “Allow us to go into these pigs,” Jesus is like, “Okay, you have permission, go.” And those pigs just run into the lake nearby and they drown, it’s just like, okay, there’s nothing left for the man who owned those pigs. “Those tending the pigs ran off and reported this in the town and countryside] and the people went out to see what had happened. When they came to Jesus, they saw the man who had been possessed by the legion of demons, sitting there, dressed and in his right mind; and they were afraid. Those who had seen it told the people what had happened to the demon-possessed man—and told about the pigs as well. Then the people began to plead with Jesus to leave their region. As Jesus was getting into the boat, the man who had been demon-possessed begged to go with him. Jesus did not let him, but said, ‘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.’ So the man went away and began to tell in the Decapolis how much Jesus had done for him. And all the people were amazed.”

This is a great story. Jesus comes, delivers this man. The owner of the pigs, he runs, he’s like, “What has happened to my pigs?” He sees this man who has never been dressed, who has never been in his right mind, he sees this man sitting in his right mind, he’s dressed, a normal human being. And they’re like, “What has happened here?” These people are afraid, and you wonder why they’re afraid. They’re afraid because they’re like, man, this guy lost his business. Now they had every right to be mad and to tell Jesus to leave, because, okay, how are we going to feed our family? But they’re also afraid, man, if this guy can take care and deliver this man who’s been demon possessed for a long time, I wonder what else he can do. So they were afraid, they’re like, “Leave. We cannot have you here anymore.” See, to them, to have their business was more important than seeing a fellow human being restored to life. To have a new hope, a new meaning in life. So when they see, now imagine this guy who’s been delivered, when Jesus tells him, “Hey, you need to go home, tell your own people,” and he’s just running and singing *How Great Thou Art*, or *Bless the Lord, Oh My Soul*, all the songs he’s singing, he’s like, “Hey, Jesus has done this for me. Remember, I could not even talk to you guys, I couldn’t even say ‘hello’ to you, I couldn’t even carry a conversation with you guys. And yet, Jesus shows up and he delivers me. I am that man. He has set me free. He’s the Jesus who came in the form of man, he’s God himself, he came, and he delivered me.” So it says the man then goes, he begs Jesus first of all, he’s like, “Let me follow you.” That’s a true act of worship, he wanted to be a disciple. “Hey, can I follow you?” Jesus is like, “No. You need to go back home, tell your own people how much the Lord has done for you and how much mercy he has shown to you. Go tell them. Because they will see, they’ll be like, ‘Are you the same guy?’” So, he probably was the first missionary to the Gentiles there.



Do we tell how much the Lord has done for us? Do we even realize how much the Lord has done for us? Is this not an evidence of God's grace, that all of us are sitting here today, singing *Bless the Lord, Oh My Soul*, because of the great work he has done in each one of our lives? And therefore we are proclaiming, we are singing, and we're praising him. You see, when you and I thought, there's no hope, there's no way out of this mess that we were involved in, God, in the form of Jesus comes, he picks us up, he forgives us, he cleanses us, he washes us, he clothes us, he gives us a new meaning, a new hope, a new purpose in life. He saved us through his son Jesus Christ who came and died on the cross for you and me, so that we can be delivered from the very sins that put us in those situations. From the pain that we're experiencing. All of us in this room, I can tell you this, that we have experienced pain in one way or another. Or if you haven't, you will. It's part of life. But remember, it is Jesus who came, who delivers. And when he delivers us and he creates this story in us, in all of us, what are we to do with that? Go tell that.

I could tell you this though, one of my uncles back in Pakistan, he was demon possessed for a number of years. And every time the demons would come and just make his life miserable, my cousins would call my dad, "Hey, can you come and pray?" And all of us would surround him, like two guys on one leg and holding arms and legs, and trying to hold him-there was no way we could hold this guy. He would drop out of the bed, he's on the floor, it's just an absolutely messy situation. The whole village is around you like, man, what a great show it is. It's embarrassing, shameful, painful. Physically, emotionally, in every way. Imagine this guy who's been delivered, the joy that he's experiencing, the freedom, and then Jesus is like, "Go home, I don't want you to follow me. You need to go back and tell your own people." So, the story God's created in us, go tell that story.

### **[Use Every Opportunity to Tell]**

Do you tell, second point, do you tell how much the Lord has done for you? My second point is, use every opportunity to tell. Now, imagine you go to the doctor's office and you're sitting there, you make the appointment for 10:00 or 11:00. And it's about half an hour, you're still waiting there, 45 minutes. And if you're like me, you're like, man, what's the point of making an appointment if you still have to wait? [Laughter] Yes. Most of you are probably pretty patient, but I go crazy. I go to the receptionist, like, "Do you know how much longer?"

"Oh just five minutes." And those five minutes become Indian five minutes. It could be 45 minutes. [Laughter] There's no difference between all of us, we're all the same at the end, right, when it comes to time. But just imagine you're sitting there for 45 minutes, you look around and you're like, a lot of people there for the very same reason. And you go on your phone. You don't want to talk to people, because culturally, we're not supposed to bother anyone, correct? I see a lot of nods there. Or, those of you, there's a coffee shop in town called Sippchai Cafe on Townline, those of you who have been there, so imagine you are meeting a friend there and you go early, and you go into the coffee shop, waiting for a friend. And as you go in there, you see a picture of Mother Teresa in there, you see a picture of Nelson Mandela, you see a picture of Gandhi, you see a picture of a Hindu god and a Sikh guru, very religious in every way. And you're a Christian, and you go, you look around, and you smile, you nod your head, and you're like, this is crazy. And you carry on. Go back to your phone while waiting for your friend.



And then you go home, and you read a text like Acts 17, when Paul was in Athens. And as he was preaching the gospel he was forced to leave, and his friends drop in to Athens, and as he's there, it says that he was waiting for his friends Silas and Timothy to join him, so they can come and they can carry on the gospel proclamation. And in Acts 17:16-17 it says,

“While Paul was waiting [while you and I were waiting at the doctor's office or SippChai Cafe, while Paul was waiting] for them in Athens, he was greatly distressed to see that the city was full of idols. So he reasoned in the synagogue with both Jews and God-fearing Greeks, as well as in the marketplace day by day with those who happened to be there.”

So now, Paul is in Athens, he goes and he's waiting for his friends to join, just like you and I go wait for a friend at the coffee shop. He looks around, he's like, man, these people are very religious. This is crazy. But I know my God, I know what he has done for me. I need to tell these people. Because he sees a sign that says, “To Unknown God.” Man, these people have no idea. He's the God who created the heavens and the earth, he's the God who became man. He's the God who became man that he died and he rose again for you and I, to give us hope and to give us life. He engages with them, he uses this opportunity while waiting. So Paul, being the smart guy, he could have been either writing or reading or doing something else, but he's like, no, this is good. This is a great opportunity, I need to go and tell these people. So as you read the text from 16-32 (go home and read that) you'll see Paul, he started to talk to whoever comes his way. It doesn't matter. He reasons with them. The word “reason,” it's not like preaching, he started to dialogue with them, he started to discourse with them. It was just a conversation. “Hey, I see your sign, what's up with that?” I go to SippChai Cafe, for example, “Hey, what's up with this? Can you tell me?” And you never know where that conversation will go.

See, when Paul started to talk, it says at the end that many believed, and there were people who wanted to hear him to talk more. Listen, you and I have plenty of opportunities no matter where we go. We carry the story that God has created in us wherever we go. And opportunities come. Now I understand, whether we are at the doctor's office or the coffee shop, or you play sports or you're driving your son or daughter to a sport. You sit in the sideline, you see other parents around you. I can choose to be on my phone, I don't want to talk to these people, or I can choose to say hello. While waiting for your son or daughter to finish. Or next week, even. School starts, so you're at school, waiting for your son or daughter to come down and you see all the other parents. Opportunity is there. Your story is there with you, what God has done in each one of our lives. I'm not asking you to go and fully evangelize and become evangelists. No, I'm not asking you. I'm asking you to use the story that God has created in each one of you to make him known, just like Paul does. Because you know your God, you know what he has done for you, you know who you were three years ago, five years ago, ten years ago, and you know where you are today. Just look back and look where you are now. Is that not what God has done? Is that not part of the story? Is that not what you're supposed to tell?

Now imagine, let's say... cancer is huge in our culture unfortunately. Or depression. So imagine, you were sick with cancer, and someone tells you, you need to go and see Dr. Joe, for example. And you go, you get the treatment that you need to, and all of a sudden you find out three months later, or however long, you find out you're cancer free. No more cancer. Now you see another fellow human



being in a similar situation. Would you not go and tell them, “Hey, go and see Dr. Joe”? You would, right? Because you have benefitted from the very same thing. I need you to go back. It’s the same thing. I don’t understand your story, I don’t know what mess you’re in, but I was in that very situation. I was probably drug addicted 10 years ago, I was probably depressed 3 months ago. I couldn’t have children. And yet, God picked me up, he gave me a new hope, he gave me a new meaning in life, he gave me a purpose. He restored me, he delivered me from all of this. Can I tell you about that? That’s the God we’re talking about. Can I warn you, by the way, that we live in a culture that is very result-oriented? That if you do something or you talk to someone, you expect them to become Christians right away. This is not you and I who do that. We do the telling part. God does the changing hearts part. Make sense? We do the telling part, God does the changing hearts part. Therefore, let’s go and tell, wherever. Use the opportunity to tell. You may have 45 seconds, you may have 45 minutes. You’ve got to start somewhere.

To make it more realistic and practical, I’m going to invite my friend Sanjiv to come up, and he’s going to tell us what God has done with his life, and here’s his story. Sanjiv, can you come up please? This is my friend Sanjiv, Sanjiv’s been coming to Northview for about two years now?

#### **[Start of Interview]**

**Sanjiv: Yeah, two years plus.**

Imran: Him and his wife were doctors in India a number of years ago, and then they moved four years ago to Canada, correct? Three years ago?

**Sanjiv: Yeah, four years ago.**

Imran: Got it right this time. So anyway, they’ve been part of our church, it’s a delight to have them. And I was just hearing his story a while ago, and it’s absolutely incredible. So, can you tell us, please, what God has done for you?

**Sanjiv: I would love to share. I was a Hindu, belonging to a Brahman family in Delhi, India until 22 years ago. Very devout, I thought I did all my things right. I was honest with my god. Something happened several years before that, that during my final years in my university the trials of my family, the problems overwhelmed me, and I lost hope in whatever I was doing. I thought, it’s no use to do all these things, such a hard labour, and I just lost hope, and I didn’t want to do anything, and I wanted to give up. But just for the sake of the family, I went in to my final exams. During those days, one of my toughest days, something happened that I found a great favor coming to me, and I didn’t know how it happened. I was just kind of surprised, shocked rather. When I came home to my friend’s room in the hostel and we were discussing what we did in our exams, a song started playing in his radio. It was a song in Hindi, a very old song, which meant “you are the ocean of love.” That song touched me deeply. I felt somebody was calling, beckoning me, and my gods didn’t explain it to me, because I never had any personal**



relationship with my gods. I felt courage to move on, I did fairly well in the rest of my exams, moved on with my life.

During the internship, one of my friends, who later led me to the Lord, developed a friendship with a nurse. And one day he invited me, “Let me take you to a guy who gives us nice coffee.” Like, 25 years ago in India, not India, nice coffee was rare. [Laughter] Right? So we are the tea people. So I went, okay, “Here is Mr. James, he makes nice coffee.” He really made nice coffee. And afterwards, whenever we would need a nice coffee we would knock, “Okay James, we are here. How are you?” And he would just talk to us. He later became my pastor in India, but at that time, he was just starting out. He just wanted to be with people.

Okay, these days pass, I move on to my job later in the federal services, and two years later, I started developing a disease which made me very infective, and I knew it was going to kill me ultimately. And I would be very limited in my physical performance during all those years until it's going to kill me. I got really discouraged and I thought, well, it's the same story back again. I wanted to give up, and I decided, okay, in such and such a time, I'm going to kill myself. And one of those days, I thought, let me talk to my friend in Delhi, through a long distance call. From a telephone booth I called him and said, “What was that Jesus you mentioned?” He had come to the Lord some time ago, and I thought he was crazy. So I would not talk to him a lot, but that day I wanted to talk to him, because I thought, let me try this, my faith has not helped. Over the phone he told me only one verse. Romans 10:9,

“If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.”

I did not know what he was talking about, we didn't have much time to understand. But I just kept on repeating that verse like the chanting we do in Hinduism. And over the next two weeks I just kept on repeating. Hope grew in my heart that, you know, it's not the right time to kill yourself. Go to Delhi, meet this guy. So I met my friend, I went to Delhi, met my friend, he took me to the same James, the coffee guy. [Laughter] That couple prayed for me, gave me a small Gideons Bible. I came back some more hopeful, and I thought, okay, I must read this thing, what they have given me. For those of you who know what King James Version is, for me, an ESL guy trying to read that thing was a trial. [Laughter] Like, I would get stuck in the first chapter, and you know why. But I had to go back one and a half months later and meet them again. And I had to tell them that I did something with the book they gave me. So one day I decided, I'm going to read it religiously, in a disciplined way, the way I read my religious books which I read and never understood, so I started reading the King James Version. Matthew, one chapter every day. On the eleventh day, I came across this verse, Matthew 11:28,

“Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.”

That verse spoke to me. And I understand this. And after that, that same English really became easy for me to understand. This was just a window for me to know a God who was personal,



**never had I had that experience before. And that song, which God had called me, that song followed me, kept on coming to me through radio, till the day I believed in him. So, this is my story. Thank you. [Applause]**

Imran: So then, did you go home and tell your people? Like it says in the text, your family? What was their reaction?

**Sanjiv: Yes, it was difficult, because in a close society like India, religion means faith. And it means family. You'd better leave your family before you leave your faith. And it was difficult, but I had a large family living in the same city. I told whomever I could tell. I told whomever I could tell in whatever way I could. For my job, I just carried a Bible with me. I would be traveling in buses and reading my Bible. Some people would be interested. I didn't speak a lot, I don't speak a lot. But people would get curious to know what I am reading and why my name, which signifies a Hindu name, what I am doing with this book. A lot of people in my family believed, some of my clients believed, because they came to me in a very hopeless situation, and all I could offer them was the Word of God. And some did not believe, but a lot of people believed, and their life did change.**

Imran: Thank you Sanjiv. [Applause]

**Sanjiv: Thank you.**

Imran: So I hope that this can encourage you, this can also remind you, and this can also challenge you for the work God has done. Let me end with this, Psalm 105:1-2 says,

"Give praise to the LORD, proclaim his name; make known among the nations what he has done. Sing to him, sing praise to him; tell of all his wonderful acts."

Amen? [Amen] Let me pray for us. Father, we're grateful for this opportunity to be here and to worship you. You are a good, kind father who picked us up and gave us new hope, new life, one we could not even hoped or dreamed of. And yet, you sent your son, Jesus, to die on the cross for us. And here we are, sitting and worshipping you, and listening and being reminded and encouraged and challenged in the work you've done in each one of our lives. I ask that as we leave this place that we would use our story, the work that you've done in our lives. We'll start with our family, our friends, and whoever comes our way. So I ask that you equip us, encourage us and challenge us by your Holy Spirit. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.