What is Your Name?

Mark 5:1-20

Key Verse: 5:9 “Then Jesus asked him, ‘What is your name?” “My name is Legion,” he replied, “for we are many.’”

The most watched TV drama in the world in 2021 was the Netflix show ‘*Squid Game*.’ It is reported that 1.7 billion watched this Korean drama. This drama has been criticized because of violent and anti-Christian content, and still it became a global sensation because it shows the real picture of a materialistic and inhumane modern society. In the drama 456 people, who are all in deep financial debt, risk their lives to play a series of deadly children’s games for a chance to win the prize of W45.6 billion ($38 million). Among 456 players there remains only one survivor in the game, and all others die. After watching the drama, I asked myself, “Where are human beings going?” “What is human value?” ``What is it about money that people risk their lives for?”

In today’s passage Jesus heals a man with impure spirits. Mark also describes this man as a demon-possessed man. This story ends with an ending opposite from the story of Squid Game, still Jesus asks our generation the same question as he did to the demon-possessed man. “What is your name?”

First, Is he an offender or a victim? Look at verses 1-5. “***They went across the lake to the region of the Gerasenes. When Jesus got out of the boat, a man with an impure spirit came from the tombs to meet him. This man lived in the tombs, and no one could bind him anymore, not even a chain. For he had often been chained hand and foot, but he tore the chains apart and broke the irons on his feet. No one was strong enough to subdue him. Night and day among the tombs and in the hills he would cry out and cut himself with stones.***” As soon as Jesus landed on the other side of the lake Galilee, he met an abnormal person with impure spirits. He lived in the tombs. In the Palestine area people used natural caves or cutout rocks from the limestones for their burial sites. It was good for travelers to use them as a shelter to avoid rain, but not to live as homes. This man lived in the tombs because he was not allowed to live in the town. He was so violent that his people bound him with iron chains. But he tore the iron chains apart like rubber bands and went back to the tombs. He displayed supernatural power because he was demon-possessed. What made him worse was his self-torture. Night and day among the tombs he cried out and cut himself with stones. He didn’t realize it even as his whole body became bloodied.

We don’t know why this man became like this. His life might have been driven by his sinful desire. The town he lived in was Decapolis, which means ten cities. At that time the cities were occupied by Roman soldiers and a pagan pig industry, which most Jews hated. This man might have sold something illegal to the foreign soldiers for money. The culture of the pagan army was violent, immoral, and idolatrous. Little by little this man sold his conscience for money until his heart was filled with all kinds of impure spirits. He might have been a victim of society. Statistically speaking, 55% of prostitutes in USA have been sexually abused when they were children. More than 70 % of juvenile criminals in jail are raised from broken homes such as single mothers or from families without supervision. They live like sheep among wolves which are about to devour them at any moment. Before we blame this demon-possessed man, we must ask first whether this man was an offender or a victim.

The townspeople saw him as a trouble-maker who needed to be removed. So, they chained him, but they failed to control him. I know one young man who suffered from chronic depression. Since his only sister died, his symptoms became worse. His mother put him into a healing center, where treated him with strong medication and even electric shock. It seemed to be effective for a while, but the symptom came back worse. To my eyes his fundamental problem is not a mental problem, but a spiritual problem. He needs healing and a strong Savior who can rescue him from the depression more than anything else. In today’s passage the townspeople tried to control the man by physical forces, but they failed. The situation became worse both to them and to this man. This man needed Jesus. He needed a Savior who is stronger than the demons. How did Jesus help him?

Second, what is your name? (6-9) Look at verses 6-9. “***When he saw Jesus from a distance, he ran and fell on his knees in front of him. He shouted at the top of his voice, “What do you want with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? In God’s name don’t torture me!” For Jesus had said to him, “Come out of this man, you impure spirit!” Then Jesus asked him, “What is your name?” “My name is Legion,” he replied, “for we are many.***” Let’s analyze this man’s action. He ran to Jesus as if he attacked Jesus. But when he got to Jesus he fell on his knees as if he begged Jesus for help. He shouted at Jesus not to torture him. This man’s personality was split into many parts. He acted for help, but rejected him right away. We call him mentally ill, and psychologically speaking, he suffers from schizophrenia. These days people would put him in a mental hospital. How did Jesus help this man? Jesus asked his name. Why did he ask his name? Name represents his identity and personality. How did this man answer? He answered, “*My name is Legion, for we are many.*” His original name should not be Legion, but something else like others, Simon or Joseph and so on. Legion is the army unit with 6,000 soldiers. This means that this man was possessed by as many as 6,000 demons. We can’t bear even one demon, but this man was possessed by 6,000 demons.

What is your name? This was the first question which a medical team asked me in an ambulance after I got a cardiac arrest. The doctor asked me my name to see if I was conscious or not. In today’s story this question calls for self-awareness, which is the same as the question, “Who are you?” In the Garden Adam hid himself behind trees after sinning against God. God called Adam, “Where are you?” God asked this not because he didn’t know where Adam hid, but because he wanted Adam to be aware of himself as a sinner. Many people of these days live every day without self-awareness or self-realization. They don’t know why they live and how to live. Man’s heart is like an empty container which holds spirits. When our hearts are filled with the Holy Spirit, we live as godly men. When our hearts are filled with impure spirits, we live like demon-possessed men. Self-awareness comes from the awareness of God. We know who we are when we know who God is. When we stand in the presence of God, we know who we are and where we are going. C S Lewis said in *Mere Christianity* that we can see ourselves and the world by the reflection of God who is light. (*I believe in Christianity as I believe that the sun has risen: not only because I see it, but because by it I see everything else.”*) Like other philosophers and thinkers, I tried to know who I was and where I was going. Even though I went up to a mountain all by myself to have an answer through deep meditation, I failed. Self-awareness came to me only when I found myself in the presence of God. Jesus who died for my sins taught me that I came from God, live for Him, and will go back to Him. I know who I am and know where I am going even today.

Jesus said that man does not live on bread alone. He meant that man should live for something more meaningful, valuable, and eternal than for just eating, drinking, and pleasure seeking. We often forget who we are and how we have to live because we are too busy to think about ourselves. Even though we know ourselves, we are too weak to live as godly people. Jesus asks us the same question, ‘What is your name?’ Jesus challenges this generation with the same question, “What is your name, this generation?” We have mounts of problems in and out including coronavirus. We have many domestic, economic, social, national, and global problems which need answers and solutions. We know the answer and only solution for all these, who is Jesus Christ. Jesus is the answer. He is the way, the truth, and the life. The answer is that we must repent of our sins, find ourselves in the presence of God, and live according to the truth of God.

Third, Jesus sacrificed 2,000 pigs for one lost soul. (10-20) How did the demons respond to Jesus’ word? Verse 10 says that he begged Jesus again and again not to send them out of the area. The demons did not want to lose their territory, so they asked Jesus to send them out to the pigs, which were feeding on the nearby hillside. Look at verse 13. “***He gave them permission, and the impure spirits came out and went into the pigs. The herd, about two thousand in number, rushed down the steep bank into the lake and were drowned***.” Pigs are not spiritual beings. When the demons came into them, the pigs became crazy and rushed down into the lake and all died. Jesus sacrificed 2,000 pigs to save one seemingly worthless man. Jesus valued this poor man more than 2,000 pigs, which were priced for $2 millions today.

 How did the townspeople respond to this event? Look at verses 14-17. “***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***.” The townspeople should have been joyful and thankful to Jesus, but they were afraid. They were afraid of their financial loss because of Jesus. They thought Jesus came to ruin their pig business. They valued their money more than man’s life. They are not much different from the people in the Squid Game. But Jesus was different. Jesus came to give his life to save other’s lives. He sacrificed his own life to save the sinner's life who did not deserve it. I know who I am and how I was saved. As Galatians 2:20 says, “*I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God who loved me and gave his life for me*.” Amen. This is the confession of a man with self-awareness in the sight of God.

Jesus challenges us today. He challenges this generation. We need to see this world through the lens of Jesus. We need spiritual discernment to tell demon-possessed men around us. There is no one who is not worthy before God. There is no one who cannot be changed by the power of Jesus. We are all precious children of God in the sight of God. We are all created to do God’s work. In the early 19th century there was a Korean gangster named Mr. Lee, who beat American missionaries and burnt his church. He was possessed by alcohol demons and violence demons. Once he injured himself after burning the church. An American missionary named “Samuel Moffett” visited him, forgave him, and healed him. Mr. Lee was moved by Jesus’ forgiving love. He repented of all his sins and went to a seminary and became one of the seven first Korean pastors. When he was in his right mind, he became a great man of God. Let us pray that God may raise many disciples of Jesus who values one lost soul as worthy as the whole world. Amen!