

## FREEDOM IN THE TIME OF COVID - PART 1

Scripture used: [Mark 5:1-8](#) and [Mark 10:17-22](#) (NIV)

### OVERVIEW

Yesterday we celebrated Independence Day. This is the day when the United States of America claimed its freedom and started a new nation based on self-government. The USA is built on freedom, which itself comes from a vision of human dignity substantially derived from Scripture and the idea that we are created in God's image. Yet in this year 2020, we experience a lack of freedom as we are sheltering in place and are restricted in our ability to move and meet people. The sense of freedom that is lacking in this season accentuates the challenges with feeling free that we often face: concerns about health and physical limitations, stress with finances that hold us back; and feeling stuck in relationships that we can't escape and that have become burdensome and exasperating to us. And freedom is not equally shared in our country: many experience injustice, discrimination, and violence in a way that actively restricts freedom.

Scripture points the way to God's liberating intent for us: the truth will set us free; and so will Jesus ([John 8:32](#)). We are called to be free. ([Galatians 5:13](#)). God desires greater freedom for all of us, and encourages His people to work towards greater freedom. Nevertheless, the most important freedom is one we always are capable of possessing: to be able to say "yes" to God and to fulfill His purpose for our lives, no matter what the circumstances.

### KEY POINTS

- 1) Our first text tells the story of the "Gerasene Demoniac", who has an impure spirit, and embodies both an ambition for pure freedom as well as lack of freedom -- a blurry line. He rips through chains and cannot be restrained, yet he is also in deep spiritual bondage. The story reminds us that true freedom starts with an encounter with Jesus. And the freedom that Jesus brings is not merely a freedom *from* (constraints, oppression), but, even more importantly, a freedom *for* the purposes of God. Despite the desire of the man to stay with Jesus, Jesus directs the man in Mark 5 to go home to his family and people and share the good news of what God has done for him. The man's ability to say "Yes" to God and fulfill His vision for his life is the true indication that he is free.
- 2) Our second text is the story of the Rich Man in Mark 10. He is wealthy, healthy, comfortable, and in full control of his life. But something is still missing, and in desperation he goes to Jesus, and his interaction with Jesus reveals that he is very similar to the Demoniac when it comes to being freedom-challenged. He and the demonic man instinctively know that Jesus has the answer. Both are compelled and repelled by Jesus. Both are called to make decisions and take directions they never anticipated. The Rich Man cannot bring himself to say "Yes" and is sad as a result. Jesus loved him, but the Rich Man did not stay with Jesus long enough to allow God's love to break through into his life. We learn from this man that we will only be able to fully say "Yes" to God if we deeply experience His love for us.
- 3) God gives us an opportunity every day to decide what to do with our lives! We should ask Him as we pray and reflect what He is calling us to do to reflect His goodness and make a difference in this world because of His great love for us and for others. We have the freedom to say "Yes" to how God is calling us!

### DISCUSSION

- 1) **HEAR** - How free do you feel right now? What are the things that make you feel less or more free?
- 2) **UNDERSTAND** - Consider the Gerasene Demoniac in Mark 5 and the Rich Man in Mark 10 - do you identify with one more than the other (or both or neither)? Do you have a sense of what God is calling you to do to follow Him in this season? It could be something specific that God has put on your heart, or it could be more general - God has called all of us to love God and love others, to do justice, love mercy, and walk humbly with Him (Micah 6:8). How might this look practically in your daily life to say "Yes" to God? Are there things that God is asking you to do that take you outside your comfort zone or feel particularly difficult? What other challenges make it hard for you to answer the call, to say Yes?
- 3) **DO** - Say "Yes" to what God is asking you to do! If it feels difficult, pray especially for God to show you how much He loves you and is for you, so that you can trust Him to say "Yes"!