

Mark 5:17

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And they began to pray him to depart out of their coasts.

Analysis

And they began to pray him to depart out of their coasts. This shocking response reveals the tragedy of valuing temporal comfort above eternal salvation. 'They began to pray him' (ἤρξαντο παρακαλεῖν αὐτόν, ērxanto parakalein auton) uses the same verb (parakalein) employed for earnest pleading—the same intensity used by those seeking healing. Yet here it expresses the opposite desire: 'depart out of their coasts' (ἀπελθεῖν ἀπὸ τῶν ὁρίων αὐτῶν, apelthein apo tōn horiōn autōn)—leave our region.

Why would people who witnessed supernatural deliverance reject the Deliverer? Fear of further economic disruption, unwillingness to acknowledge Jesus' authority, or preference for familiar bondage over costly discipleship. This mirrors those who prefer comfortable slavery to demanding freedom (Exodus 14:11-12). The Gadarenes valued their pigs and predictable lifestyle above the Prince of Peace. Their rejection fulfilled Jesus' teaching that 'the gate is narrow and few find it' (Matthew 7:14). Reformed theology emphasizes that regeneration is necessary for willing response to Christ—natural man resists divine authority and prefers autonomy to submission. This passage warns against rejecting Christ when He disrupts comfortable sin patterns.

Historical Context

Jesus' miracle threatened the region's economic foundation. Pig farming was lucrative in Gentile territories where Jewish dietary laws didn't apply. The herdsmen and pig owners faced substantial financial loss, creating community-

wide anxiety about Jesus' continued presence. Would He disrupt more industries? Challenge more practices? First-century economic systems were less diversified than modern economies—losing one industry could devastate a region. The townspeople faced a choice: economic stability or spiritual transformation. Their choice to prioritize economics echoes throughout history—Ephesian silversmiths rioted when Paul's preaching threatened their idol-making business (Acts 19:23-28). Early church fathers noted the irony: these Gentiles rejected Jesus while He would eventually be embraced by Gentiles worldwide. Jesus respected their free will, departing when explicitly rejected, though leaving the healed demoniac as ongoing witness.

Related Passages

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

Study Questions

1. What economic interests, comfortable patterns, or familiar systems might you be protecting that prevent full surrender to Christ's lordship?
2. How does the Gadarenes' rejection of Jesus despite witnessing His power warn against prioritizing temporal security over eternal transformation?

Interlinear Text

καὶ	ἤρξαντο	παρακαλεῖν	αὐτῶν	ἀπελθεῖν	ἀπὸ	τῶν
And	they began	to pray	him	to depart	out of	G3588
G2532	G756	G3870	G846	G565	G575	

ὁρίων	αὐτῶν
coasts	him
G3725	G846

Additional Cross-References

Matthew 8:34 (Parallel theme): And, behold, the whole city came out to meet Jesus: and when they saw him, they besought him that he would depart out of their coasts.

Mark 1:24 (Parallel theme): Saying, Let us alone; what have we to do with thee, thou Jesus of Nazareth? art thou come to destroy us? I know thee who thou art, the Holy One of God.

Acts 16:39 (Parallel theme): And they came and besought them, and brought them out, and desired them to depart out of the city.

Mark 5:7 (Parallel theme): And cried with a loud voice, and said, What have I to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of the most high God? I adjure thee by God, that thou torment me not.

Luke 5:8 (Parallel theme): When Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord.

Luke 8:37 (Parallel theme): Then the whole multitude of the country of the Gadarenes round about besought him to depart from them; for they were taken with great fear: and he went up into the ship, and returned back again.