

PROLOGUE

Mark 5:1–20

The squealing noise filled the air, and thunder echoed across the gentle incline. More than eight thousand feet pounded the ground, creating a thick blanket of choking dust. The dust soon became an opaque shield, blocking a complete view of the animal madness on display. That was a good thing as their contorted countenances would have frightened even the strongest-hearted herder. Quite frankly, the animals no longer resembled what they were—pigs.

The pigs numbered over two thousand. They headed down the hills, stampeding at full speed, driven by a need they did not understand. Their keepers were at a loss as to what to do. The men had tried everything to turn the suicidal animals away from certain destruction. The animals had never been close to the water, yet today they went berserk, running toward the sea as if fleeing some monster intent on devouring them.

One minute they had been normal, doing their usual activities of eating, rooting around, and squealing every so often, uttering those sounds that could only be interpreted as delight.

And then they went crazy.

Their squealing was no longer recognizable. Instead, the sounds that shrieked across the hills were filled with both fear and rage.

Every last one of them plowed into the water, not stopping until the water was well over their heads. They all perished but not

quickly. Drowning takes time. The sounds and sight of that herd thrashing in the water would be remembered by the witnesses of the event for the rest of their lives.

And then it was over. Those present would remember both the pigs and the man.

The man had been a wild man, obviously crazy. He was so tall and strong. Even the chains used to try to bind him he shattered as if they were made of clay. The man had tried so many times to harm himself that everyone was amazed that he was still alive. No one dared approach him, and he had been left to wander in the wilderness among the rocks. He ate what the pigs ate, meaning whatever was available.

Often his cries would be heard, and when the people that knew of him heard the shrieking of the pigs on that day, they would swear it was the same sound.

His family had tried to rescue him often but to no avail. He had not always been like this. Once he had been like any other man with dreams and ambitions. He had a future, until he listened to that voice, and everything had changed. That voice had morphed into thousands of voices, and each of the voices demanded attention.

His family would learn that the times he had tried to end his life were not always his own doing, although more than once his thought was to end the agony. Every time the idea had been his, he was rescued by the same voices who so often seemed to get pleasure by throwing him against the rocks to the point that he would black out. But he always awoke, and the unending beating started all over.

His life changed the same day the pigs died.

Another voice had commanded his presence. He was unsure whether he had run to the voice because of his own need, or had been driven by the voices that filled his mind, who were summoned. But when he heard that voice, he knew he was in the presence of real power, and so did the occupiers of his mind.

The voices had named themselves Legion, saying they were many. But they had answered to this man who commanded that they leave him. It had been their request to be allowed to enter the herd of swine, and this man had given them permission.

He stood beside this man and watched as the herd destroyed themselves, driven mad by the voices that no longer filled his mind with terror.

He had so many questions, but most of all, he was filled with awe and gratefulness. He would follow this man anywhere. But instead, this man had told him to go home to his family and town and tell of the intervention that had changed him.

He went gladly, realizing that it was this man who had saved him. He would testify to many what had been done for him. Many would seek out this man because of his witness. Others had needs that no one else had been able to provide for. Lame, blind, deaf, mute, lepers, and others like himself, all went looking for the man that had freed him.

The voices would never be able to enter him again.

He did not see the shadow that emerged from the water now covering the silent animals. The crowd had departed. The herders running to their town to tell of the demise of their former charges while he and the man's followers had moved from the area.

The shadow slowly took on more form. The massive figure cloaked with a cape filled with eyes. Each eye was joined to a voice, but all the voices were subservient to the greater voice. Not by choice, but by circumstance, each voice would remind the greater voice. Each longed to be more than they were, and the greater voice was quite aware of their desires. After all, it had been his desire as well. That was what they had been condemned for, wanting to be something more than what they were.

They had enjoyed the destruction of these creatures, even if they were, in their sum, so much less than their former habitation. Yet there was something more. There was no missing what had happened. Their enjoyment of the event was tempered by the fact

that they had been driven to the destruction. They had been given a glimpse of what was waiting for them. Even as they ran to the water, a different vision was flashing through their minds. A vision of a dark abyss, and they were all diving into it, into the darkness.

The greater voice had asked the question, the answer to which might have filled their beings with even greater dread. Yet the answer was “not yet.” There was still more time. Despite the presence of the One, once again, delay in judgment filled their beings with greater hunger.

There were many others that would still listen to their voices, but the time was growing shorter. For centuries they had been free to roam. Seldom had the One intervened to rescue those they possessed. Yet they knew, unlike before, that too was changing. Now there would be those that could and would intervene, destroying their former ease of taking and keeping control of these creatures.

This change had been whispered to them when they had been forced to leave their former place. The change was beginning.

The One had kept his promise. He was here.