



Peace of Mind:
Mental Health from a Christian Perspective
(A follow-up sermon on Mark 5:1-20)

Introduction

- Something different this week: an “add-on sermon”
- Selections from Mark 5:1-20 as a springboard to explore the issue of mental health from a Christian perspective
- Note: The PowerPoint slides will be available with the recording of the sermon on the New Life Fellowship website.

Definitions:

- “Peace” = “wholeness”
- “Maladies” = situations or conditions of Creation that are not as God created them
- Types of causes: necessary, sufficient, contributing
- “It’s complicated”: there is usually a combination of factors leading to positive or negative mental health

Outline

I. The Natural world as a baseline for discussion

II. Medical connections to mental health:

III. Psychological connections to mental health:

A. Therapeutic (healing from negative experiences and thoughts)

B. Motivational (positive actions for human flourishing)

C. Guilt (the fact of wrongdoing)

D. Shame (the emotional feelings from being disconnected)

IV. Theological connections to mental health:

A. Demonic “Oppression” (Demons/Satan are external)

B. Demonic “Possession” (Demons/Satan are internal)

V. Liberation and Flourishing through Jesus Christ!

I. The Natural world as a baseline for discussion

A. The orderly operation of Nature is disrupted by human sin

Before the Fall: “And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good” (Genesis 1:31)

After the Fall: “the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. ²² For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now. ²³ And not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies.”

--(Romans 8:21-23)

I. The Natural world as a baseline for discussion

B. Jesus as Creator of the universe calms the storm

- God's supernatural intervention to bring peace to Nature
 Jesus calms the storm on Sea of Galilee (Mark 4: 35-41)
- Prayer for God's blessings on Nature (e.g. a "*Novena*")
- Yet, human responsibility required for "stewardship" of Nature
 (e.g. soil conservation)

Before the Fall: "The LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it" (Genesis 2:15)

After the Fall: "thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you" (Genesis 3:18)

II. Medical connections to mental health:

- A. Similar to Nature, the orderly operation of the human body is disrupted by human sin.
- B. A flawed universe manifested in physical and neurological maladies

“Whereas **anatomy** is about structure, **physiology** is about function. **Human physiology** is the scientific study of the chemistry and physics of the structures of the body and the ways in which they work together to support the functions of life.”

II. Medical connections to mental health:

- Medication and medical treatments are often necessary
 - Example: taking a prescription for a chemical imbalance
- “Shaming” by the Church for lack of faith is misguided and cruel
- Prayers for healing and effective treatment
(Are prayers necessary, sufficient, or contributing? Yes, so pray always)

III. Psychological connections to mental health

A. Therapeutic (healing from negative experiences and thoughts)

- **Some causes and signs:**

Trauma:

- Physical abuse
- Emotional abuse
- Sexual abuse
- Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)

Anxiety:

- Cutting oneself
- Suicide (veterans, farmers)

- **Contributing Problem:** the myth of the Stoic, silent individualist (“rugged individualism”). **Reality:** God created us as social beings.

III. Psychological connections to mental health

A. Therapeutic (healing from negative experiences and thoughts)

- **Some treatments:**

- Talking Cure (“Ministry of Presence” reduces isolation)

- Claiming Bible passages as one’s own (affirmations)

- ¹³ For you formed my inward parts;

- you knitted me together in my mother's womb.

- ¹⁴ I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. [\[a\]](#)

- Wonderful are your works;

- my soul knows it very well. (Psalm 139:13-14)

- Professional counseling by licensed Christian counselors

III. Psychological connections to mental health

B. Motivational (positive actions for human flourishing)

1. Church activities: fellowship and a feeling of belonging

“I have come that you might have life,
and to have it abundantly” (John 10:10)

- Sunday service as a mental health initiative:
 - Praise & Worship
 - Prayer
 - Studying God’s Word
- Wednesday Prayer and Discussion
- Fellowship of Young Adults

III. Psychological connections to mental health

B. Motivational (positive actions for human flourishing)

1. Church activities: fellowship and a feeling of belonging

- Other possible events for edification and fellowship
 - communal meals/brunch
 - “Feast with Friends”
 - Sunday break-out sessions for youth and young adults
 - Small groups
 - Discipleship training sessions

III. Psychological connections to mental health

B. Motivational (positive actions for human flourishing)

2. Individual activities: taking control of the controllable

- **Personal Habits: “self-nurturing”**

- Daily devotionals

- Reading the Bible in a Year

- Positive Self-talk (positive language and reinforcement)

- The “Reverse Golden Rule”

- Routines (e.g. Benedictine monks)

- Boundaries (say “no”)

III. Psychological connections to mental health

C. Guilt (the fact of wrongdoing)

- The fact of having done something wrong.
- It is the *objective* state of being responsible for a transgression
- It is NOT the *feeling* of having done something wrong. The *feeling* is “*shame*,” which ordinarily is the emotional by-product of being guilty.

III. Psychological connections to mental health

D. Shame (the emotional feelings from being disconnected)

- “‘Shame’ is the subjective, personal, and painful emotional experience that occurs when one feels disconnected”
 - Overcoming Guilt and Shame* by Daniel Green and Mel Lawrenz
- Three distinct forms of “shame”:
 - Moral shame
 - Imposed shame
 - Natural shame

III. Psychological connections to mental health

D. Shame (the emotional feelings from being disconnected)

- **Moral shame**

- The feeling of remorse one feels when they are guilty of violating an absolute, external standard. As a result, they feel disconnected from the source of those rules/laws and from people who follow the rules/laws.

- Example:

--When one violates the Ten Commandments or other instructions from God, resulting in feeling separated from God. This is a constructive form of shame in that it drives us to want to return to and make things right with God and other people.

III. Psychological connections to mental health

D. Shame (the emotional feelings from being disconnected)

- **Imposed Shame**

- A sense of shame that is imposed by one person on another. It is the remorse felt when someone is accused of violating a standard set by other people, who act as if the standard is absolute even though it is merely arbitrary. As a result, the accused person feels isolated from others—of not “fitting in” or being part of the group
- Examples:
 - Shamed for not wearing the most recent, popular name brands
 - Shamed for taking medication for a mental health condition

III. Psychological connections to mental health

D. Shame (the emotional feelings from being disconnected)

- **Natural Shame**

- The sense of being fallible, limited, or frail. It is a result of the disconnection between the human race and God because of “original sin” from Adam and Eve.
- It is necessary to accept that even though we strive to be better people, we will never be perfect.
- Examples:
 - Feeling that you have to be “perfect” in everything you do
 - Believing you are always right. Instead, practice humility within yourself and mercy toward others

IV. Theological connections to mental health:

A. Demonic “Oppression” (Demons/Satan are external)

1. Oppressing non-Believers

- Interfering with a person from hearing and embracing God’s Word
(Mark 4: the parable of the sower/four soils)
- Distracting a person by worldly temptations
- Causing a person to be more concerned with image than substance
- Causing a person to fear loss of prestige if they follow God’s ways
- Threatening harm if a person becomes a follower of Jesus

IV. Theological connections to mental health:

A. Demonic “Oppression” (Demons/Satan are external)

2. Oppressing Believers

“Satan’s objective is to render us ineffective. All he can do is use his lies and power to influence, attack, and oppress us. He tells us lies about God, ourselves, and others to try to deceive us into behaving in ways that don’t glorify God. He can inflict illness, adversity, and calamity to cause us to question the character or will of God.”

--Steve Johnson, *Insight for Living-Canada*

IV. Theological connections to mental health:

A. Demonic “Oppression” (Demons/Satan are external)

2. Oppressing Believers

- ¹⁰ Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. ¹¹ Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. ¹² For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. ¹³ Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm.
- Belt of truth, breastplate of righteousness, shield of faith, helmet of salvation, sword of the Spirit which is the Word of God
(Ephesians 6:10-20)

IV. Theological connections to mental health:

B. Demonic “Possession” (Demons/Satan are internal)

1. Unwitting or willing compromises by an un-Believer

--Review Mark 5:8,15

-- “Scarcity of data”: simply not enough information as to *how* the man came to be possessed by the demons

IV. Theological connections to mental health:

B. Demonic “Possession” (Demons/Satan are internal)

1. Unwitting or willing compromises by an un-Believer

- M. Scott Peck’s response to a patient who had made a seemingly harmless pact with “the devil,” whom the patient claimed he did not believe in anyway:

“You plead that you shouldn’t be held accountable for your pact with the devil because it was made under duress. Of course it was made under duress. Why else would one contract with the devil, except to rid oneself of some kind of suffering? . . . The question is not duress. The question is how people deal with duress.”

--People of the Lie, p. 32

IV. Theological connections to mental health:

B. Demonic “Possession” (Demons/Satan are internal)

2. Demons are incapable of possessing a Believer

“² By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, ³ and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you heard was coming and now is in the world already. ⁴ Little children, you are from God and have overcome them, for he who is in you is greater than he who is in the world.” (1 John 4:2-4)

IV. Theological connections to mental health:

B. Demonic “Possession” (Demons/Satan are internal)

2. Demons are incapable of possessing a Believer

“The Bible teaches that the Holy Spirit indwells believers (Romans 8:9–10; 1 Corinthians 3:16). Evidence of this is the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22–23). It is inconceivable that God the Holy Spirit would allow one who Christ died for, the one who is the temple of the Holy Spirit, and the one who now belongs to the Lord, to be inhabited and controlled by an evil spirit.”

--Steve Johnson, *Insight for Living-Canada*

V. Liberation and Flourishing through Jesus Christ!

- ⁶ Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may exalt you, ⁷ casting all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you. (1 Peter 5:6-7 ESV)
- “Blessed is the man who trusts in the LORD,
whose trust is the LORD. (Jeremiah 17:7 ESV)
- Accepting Jesus as Lord and Savior is the first step to mental health

Let Us Pray

