



Luke 8:26–39

26 They sailed to the region of the Gerasenes, which is across the lake from Galilee. 27 When Jesus stepped ashore, he was met by a demon-possessed man from the town. For a long time this man had not worn clothes or lived in a house, but had lived in the tombs. 28 When he saw Jesus, he cried out and fell at his feet, shouting at the top of his voice, ‘What do you want with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God?’

I beg you, don't torture me!' 29 For Jesus had commanded the impure spirit to come out of the man. Many times it had seized him, and though he was chained hand and foot and kept under guard, he had broken his chains and had been driven by the demon into solitary places. 30 Jesus asked him, 'What is your name?' 'Legion,' he replied, because many demons had gone into him. 31 And they begged Jesus repeatedly not to order them to go into the Abyss. 32 A large herd of pigs was feeding there on the hillside. The demons begged Jesus to let them go into the pigs, and he gave them permission. 33 When the demons came out of the man, they went into the pigs, and the herd rushed down the

steep bank into the lake and was drowned. 34 When those tending the pigs saw what had happened, they ran off and reported this in the town and countryside, 35 and the people went out to see what had happened. When they came to Jesus, they found the man from whom the demons had gone out, sitting at Jesus' feet, dressed and in his right mind; and they were afraid. 36 Those who had seen it told the people how the demon-possessed man had been cured. 37 Then all the people of the region of the Gerasenes asked Jesus to leave them, because they were overcome with fear. So he got into the boat and left. 38 The man from whom the demons had gone out begged to go

with him, but Jesus sent him away, saying, 39 ‘Return home and tell how much God has done for you.’ So the man went away and told all over the town how much Jesus had done for him.

Reflection

Today’s passage comes from Luke 8:26–39, in it we pick up the story of the demon possessed man that Jesus and his disciples encountered on the shores of the Sea of Galilee, and see his story through to its conclusion. Let me read it to you now,

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demon-possessed man from the town. For a long time this man had not worn clothes or lived in a house, but had lived in the tombs. 28 When he saw Jesus, he cried out and fell at his feet, shouting at the top of his voice, 'What do you want with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I beg you, don't torture me!' 29 For Jesus had commanded the impure spirit to come out of the man. Many times it had seized him, and though he was chained hand and foot and kept under guard, he had broken his chains and had been driven by the demon into solitary places. 30 Jesus asked him, 'What is your name?' 'Legion,' he replied, because many demons had gone into him. 31 And they begged Jesus repeatedly not

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32 A large herd of pigs was feeding there on the hillside. The demons begged Jesus to let them go into the pigs, and he gave them permission. 33 When the demons came out of the man, they went into the pigs, and the herd rushed down the steep bank into the lake and was drowned. 34 When those tending the pigs saw what had happened, they ran off and reported this in the town and countryside, 35 and the people went out to see what had happened. When they came to Jesus, they found the man from whom the demons had gone out, sitting at Jesus' feet, dressed and in his right mind; and they were afraid. 36 Those who had seen it told the

people how the demon-possessed man had been cured. 37 Then all the people of the region of the Gerasenes asked Jesus to leave them, because they were overcome with fear. So he got into the boat and left. 38 The man from whom the demons had gone out begged to go with him, but Jesus sent him away, saying, 39 'Return home and tell how much God has done for you.' So the man went away and told all over the town how much Jesus had done for him.

The disciples' nerves are shot. After almost dying at sea and then perhaps the even more terrifying realisation of just how powerful Jesus really is they now find themselves confronting an angry, na-

ked mad man, possessing superhuman strength and screaming at the top of his lungs.

As with the storm at sea I imagine Jesus placing himself between his followers and danger, placing himself once more right in the middle of their fear. Jesus calmly asks the man his name. In an otherworldly voice that makes the hairs on the back of your neck stand on end he replies, 'Legion', as if to say, 'For we are many'. I don't know about you but whenever I see taxis from that taxi company 'Legion Cabs' my skin crawls. There were about 5,600 soldiers in a Roman legion, which must give us an idea of what was going on inside this poor man. He's been overtaken by a legion of demons, he lives in the tombs, a dead man walking, in those rare lucid

moments cutting himself with stones trying to force whatever it is inside of him out; dehumanized, animalised, marginalised, terrorized, hated and feared – surely there is no more miserable person in all of Scripture.

But what is perhaps most striking about this account is the absolute authority displayed by Jesus. The one who has just calmed the wind and the waves with a word now commands a legion of demons who cower before him.

‘What do you want with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I beg you, don’t torture me!’ ... 31 And they begged Jesus repeatedly not to order them to go into the Abyss.

Five times in his Gospel Luke reminds the reader that 'the name of Jesus' is the sole power capable of vanquishing the demonic (4:34, 41; 8:28, 9:49; 10:17) and the demons here realise that there can be no contest between themselves and the Son of God. They know who Jesus is, they know they are doomed, they know that they will be judged and cast into hell alongside Satan at the end of days and just like Satan they are intent on taking as many people with them as possible. Like Satan they are cunning, devious and defeated.

They're cunning; the game is up with this particular host. But they're also devious: 'Send us into the pigs Jesus.' The implications are chilling. Demons won't die until the appointed time. And demons need hosts. From the man to the pigs. Jesus

commands and they enter the pigs. But they're cunning as well and as violent as ever. Immediately the huge herd of pigs rushes down the steep bank and drowns in the water. Only, pigs can swim quite well; these pigs didn't drown, they were killed by the demons – the implication being that they then left those pigs and went out to find other hosts. Chilling isn't it? But also cunning, as I'll show you in a moment.

At this the whole town went out to meet Jesus. The man had been returned to them in sound mind – someone's husband, brother, son – a powerful miracle. What would you expect their response to Jesus would be? The whole town came out and then the whole town asked Jesus to leave. Cunning demons killing the pigs

of townsfolk who prefer pigs to people, who prefer money to men. Cunning demons killing not just pigs but a whole town who choose material things over eternal life – a town who will now one day most likely join those demons. Except perhaps for the missionary endeavours of this demon possessed man who is now, in his right mind, fully possessed by God. What an ending,

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Think

Take some time now to think over the implications of this passage. We live by faith and not by sight; and our faith is in the supernatural. The Bible tells us that there is a great spiritual battle going on. The enemy is defeated; but he's still fighting to the death. Satan has power over our world and demons are real. While we should not be overly focussed on Satan and demons, many of us never give their activity in this world a passing thought, which is dangerous and treacherous and out of step with Scripture. Take some time to meditate over this passage and especially Jesus' authority and power over the supernatural realm. Spare a thought also for the change that came of the demon possessed man after Jesus freed him. Are

we not just like him? Enslaved to our sinful nature, utterly incapable of saving ourselves, dead people walking until we encountered Jesus, were cleansed and set free. How is it you imagine he spent the rest of his days when it came to spreading the good news of what Jesus did in his life?

Pray

Then pray. A whole town unmoved and rejecting Jesus. A man ravaged by violent mental illness. Needs just as great in our present day and age, and a Saviour just as great, and just as relevant today as back then. Pray for these needs and whatever else God has put on your heart as you've considered his word this morning.