

The preceding passage was about the storm the disciples encountered on the Sea of Galilee. Jesus had instructed them to go to the other side and then promptly fell asleep under the quarter deck. The passage today begins after Jesus calmed the lake and they arrived at their destination. The area in which they landed was part of the Decapolis, a confederation of ten Greek city states. It was a Gentile region, and this was Jesus' first real outreach to them.

²⁶ Then they sailed to the country of the Gerasenes, which is opposite Galilee.

Luke 8:26 This is where they were headed when the storm arose, going from the northwest to the southeast side of the lake. The prince of the power of the air had tried to stop Jesus on the way here so that He would not reach out to this Gentile region. Have failed to drown Him, he sent a demonic welcome committee to stop Jesus at the shore. Matthew tells us there were two men and that they were so fierce that people would not travel by the area (Matthew 8:28ⁱ). Luke focusses on just one of the two men.

It was not uncommon at the time to record the part of the story that the author was focusing on and leave out other characters who were involved. We see this same style in the record of the two blind men on the road to Jericho. Matthew records two men and Luke only mentions one. These are not discrepancies but rather an accepted way of writing at the time (Matthew 20:30ⁱⁱ; Luke 18:35ⁱⁱⁱ).

²⁷ When Jesus had stepped out on land, there met him a man from the city who had demons. For a long time he had worn no clothes, and he had not lived in a house but among the tombs. Luke 8:27 As soon as Jesus' feet hit the shore this demon possessed man came running from the tombs down to Jesus. He had been bound with chains but kept breaking them (vs 29), and he often cut himself (Mark 5:3-5^{iv}), probably to turn his mind from inner pain to outward pain.

High School kids intentionally harming themselves is becoming common in our nation now at a rate of 15%. The college student rate is even higher.^v They are trying to escape the pain sin causes whether it is from school bullies, or feeling unloved or inferior, or the inability to cope with some other stress in life. In the process, they sometimes open themselves up to the demonic realm. We can lead them to the comforting acceptance of Jesus' love and the value God places on our lives when we find He values and loves us. The stresses of life can be placed on Him instead of turning to comfort in destructive behaviors.

We should avoid the extremism of seeing demons in everything, but neither should we pretend they don't exist. I've met people in our town clearly acknowledging they were tormented by a spirit. I've heard first hand accounts from missionaries I knew personally who witnessed what was clearly demonic activity in the areas where they ministered. This goes beyond psychological illness and symptoms. There is no need for us to fear evil if we are in Christ. The same One who commanded these spirits to leave lives in us and gives us authority over them. The Lord is our Shepherd (Psalm 23:1^{vi}).

²⁸ When he saw Jesus, he cried out and fell down before him and said with a loud voice, "What have you to do with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I beg you, do not torment me." Luke 8:28 It must have looked like an attack as he ran toward Jesus while screaming. Jesus commanded the unclean spirit to come out. Then he fell at Jesus' feet

and yelled, "What have you to do with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I beg you, do not torment me!"

Just a short time before this, the disciples could scarcely believe their eyes when they saw the raging lake instantly calmed. ^{25b} ... *they marveled, saying to one another, "Who then is this, that he commands even winds and water, and they obey him?"* Luke 8:25b Now they are hearing demons, who have never seen Jesus on the earth, proclaim Jesus is the Son of the Most High God. How did they know His name is Jesus? And how did they know He is the Son of the Most High God? It was quite a title of honor and only used in scripture by this legion of demons.

What does it mean that Jesus is the Son of the Most High God, beyond being one with Almighty God and representing Him? And what is this declaration that Jesus can torment them? All of this had to make a huge impression on the disciples that Jesus was much more than a great rabbi. What would you think if you saw Jesus command wind and waves and then heard demons pleading for mercy and calling Him Son of the Most High God?

Here was a naked man driven mad with demons, living in a cave and attacking passersby. He would have been filthy, foul smelling, unkept, tormented inwardly, avoided by all people, covered with scabs from the cuts he inflicted on himself. We can hardly imagine a man in a more wretched condition. And yet, this man was made in the image of God. His eternal soul is as valuable as ours is. Jesus knew that and had mercy on him. No matter the physical or spiritual condition of a man or woman, their soul is priceless. Sometimes the worse the condition the greater the possibility of transformation. People in Jesus' day would look at scribes and Pharisees and think that if anyone was getting into heaven it would be them. It is the lame, disabled and blind who are invited (Luke 14:21^{vii}). It is an invitation to those who know they are invited not because they are worthy but because He is (1 Corinthians 1:26-29^{viii}).

Tertullian was right when he said, "The glory of God is a man fully alive," and thus the degeneration of man—the distortion of the divine image through sin—is a direct attack on the glory of God. We must recognize that anything that is degrading and animalizing to humans is in line with Satan's plan, be it an attitude, a habit, an addiction, a sexual practice, or a mental preoccupation. (Hughes, Kent - Preaching the Word – Luke, Volume I: That You May Know the Truth.) We are fully alive when the glory of God is seen in us as we yield to the Holy Spirit and are increasingly transformed to be more like Christ (2 Corinthians 3:18^{ix}). We are the least alive when we act like animals, thinking only of this world, what to eat, how to be comfortable, and concerned only with how to meet our needs (Philippians 3:19^x).

²⁹ *For he had commanded the unclean spirit to come out of the man. (For many a time it had seized him. He was kept under guard and bound with chains and shackles, but he would break the bonds and be driven by the demon into the desert.)* Luke 8:29 Luke explained the desperate condition of the man and how the demons had tormented him. As the demoniac came running up to Jesus, Jesus commanded the spirits to come out of the man. That's when he fell at Jesus feet.

³⁰ *Jesus then asked him, "What is your name?" And he said, "Legion," for many demons had entered him.* ³¹ *And they begged him not to command them to depart into the abyss.* Luke 8:30-31 Jesus asked the demon to reveal his name. This is another indication that Jesus set aside His omniscience to become man. The demon knew Jesus' name, but

Jesus did not know the demon's name. They knew Jesus because they had once been angels in the heavenly realm and served Him, but they rebelled with Satan and were cast out (Revelation 12:4^{xi}). They know Jesus' authority, and they know the days are numbered until they are cast into the abyss. Some Jews considered the depths of the lake they were standing beside to be the abyss.

The demon said their name was Legion, because there were so many of them in this man. A Roman legion was about 6000 soldiers. This hoard of demons pleaded to not be cast into the pit. That would mean an end to their mischief in this world and confinement with only those like themselves. Instead, they suggested going into the herd of 2000 pigs. Jesus gave them permission. We can see from this that they can only do what they are allowed to do by God's permissive will. There are God determined boundaries on their activities.

³² Now a large herd of pigs was feeding there on the hillside, and they begged him to let them enter these. So he gave them permission. ³³ Then the demons came out of the man and entered the pigs, and the herd rushed down the steep bank into the lake and drowned. Luke 8:32,33 The demons entered the pigs and immediately the pigs ran into the lake and drowned. Some scholars suggest that the pigs went mad because of the demonic presence and that they ran into the lake to rid themselves of the spirits who ended up in the Abyss anyway. Another idea is that the demons wanted to free themselves by killing the pigs. Another is that it was Satan's plan so that the death of the pigs would cause the owners to ask Jesus to leave. We can't be sure, but my guess would be the last possibility. If the storm and the demonic welcome committee were Satan's attempt to keep Jesus from preaching to the Gentiles, then this was a clever next move (Genesis 3:1^{xii}). Pigs were unclean to the Jews but were a sacred, sacrificial animals to the Greeks. It would appear to them to be a religious intrusion by a Jewish prophet.

³⁴ When the herdsmen saw what had happened, they fled and told it in the city and in the country. ³⁵ Then people went out to see what had happened, and they came to Jesus and found the man from whom the demons had gone, sitting at the feet of Jesus, clothed and in his right mind, and they were afraid. ³⁶ And those who had seen it told them how the demon-possessed man had been healed. Luke 8:34-36 The herdsmen told those in the city and the people went to see for themselves. The demoniac was freed and sitting at the feet of Jesus, clothed, and in his right mind. Sometimes Jesus' transformation of a life is instantaneous, such as with this man. The local citizens were afraid because Jesus appeared to be a powerful Jewish prophet who had destroyed their sacrificial animals and cast the demons out of this man and restored his mind. Their fear was not fear of respect and admiration but of losing more of their wealth and that their gods would be challenged.

The disciples had witnessed Jesus calm a storm on the lake and a storm within the human soul. There is no soul that has sunk so low that he or she is out of the reach of Jesus. No matter what your addiction or vice is, whatever your weakness may be, the power of Jesus can set you free, and you too can sit at Jesus' feet in your right mind. He can set you free from your baser instincts and set your mind and heart on things above (Colossians 3:1,2^{xiii}). The scars upon your heart may even be open wounds, but Jesus can heal them completely with the balm from His own wounds. You must simply surrender it all to Him and place yourself unreservedly in His hands (Luke 14:33^{xiv}). He wants to restore the image of God's glory in all of us. He wants us all to be truly alive.

37 Then all the people of the surrounding country of the Gerasenes asked him to depart from them, for they were seized with great fear. So he got into the boat and returned. 38 The man from whom the demons had gone begged that he might be with him, but Jesus sent him away, saying, 39 "Return to your home, and declare how much God has done for you." And he went away, proclaiming throughout the whole city how much Jesus had done for him. Luke 8:37-39 The local people were afraid of what a powerful Jewish prophet might do. He had already caused a great economic loss. Fearful of what else it might cost them, they asked Jesus to leave. Jesus does not force Himself upon people. Love persuades. It looked like the demons had been victorious and kept Jesus away from the Gentiles. But the battle wasn't over. There are often battles that seem to be defeat until the final plan leads to victory. Isn't that the case with the crucifixion?

The man who had been delivered begged Jesus to be allowed to go with Him. That should be the response of every transformed soul, continual communion with Jesus, to follow Him wherever He goes (Matthew 10:38^{xv}; John 12:26^{xvi}). Jesus sent the man to be the first New Testament missionary to the Gentiles. And he did a good job too, telling people throughout the city how much Jesus had done for him.

"Return to your home and declare how much God has done for you." I've taken a college course in evangelism. I've taught evangelism. But here is Jesus' simple instruction that anyone can do. Testimonies are powerfully sincere. They are hard to deny. An unbeliever can listen to people preach the gospel and deny the message, but when someone tells how Jesus transformed their life, it is hard to argue. This man not only told his family but proclaimed it throughout the city. The news about town turned from the destruction of pigs to how much Jesus can do for us.

In the end, the message still reached the city in the way that it was going to reach the world, through transformed lives who share their testimonies. And when Jesus comes to the area again, 4000 men along with their families will come to experience what Jesus can do for them (Matthew 15:38^{xvii}). Sometimes it looks like the enemy has won a battle, but we can know that Jesus will win the war. It certainly appeared that the enemy had won when the disciples laid Jesus in the tomb. But as we celebrated last week, three days later the war was won. **The Lamb always wins in the end!**

Whatever you are facing, and no matter how many times you have faced defeat, know that Jesus' love is still reaching out to you, and has the power to transform you. This man was the most hopeless man in the eyes of the world, but Jesus could see the man's eternal worth. Jesus could heal the man's inner scars. Jesus set him free, and He can set us free as well (John 8:32^{xviii}). Nothing is too hard for Him (Matthew 19:26^{xix})!

There is a true account of a man that prison guards named "The Animal." He was a prisoner so violent that he had to be held in solitary confinement. He was often held in an eight by eight underground cell with sixteen-foot-high walls three feet thick with one square hole in the ceiling. It was aptly called "The Hole." Seven days in that pit cured most men of violence, but it wouldn't be 24 hours before the man would attack a guard and be back in The Hole. Time after time The Animal was forced back into The Hole. One day one of the guards above him shouted, "Here animal," as he kicked a little book into the hole at the top of his cell. It was a booklet by Merlin Caruthers entitled, From Prison to Praise. As he read the book, he mocked everything written in it. He scoffed at the idea of thanking God for things that had happened to him. In derision and scorn he

said, “OK, God, I thank you for that 3-foot-thick cement wall. See, it’s still there. Thanking you didn’t do anything.”

Item by item, the prisoner thanked God for each wall, the floor, the 16-foot-high ceiling and the steel-barred door in the ceiling. Laughing and mocking, he continued to challenge God. “Why don’t you do something, God?” Then he thanked God for the damp coldness, the numerous cockroaches, his hunger pangs and his aching bones.

The prisoner later told the author that after exhausting his thankfulness for everything he could see, he thanked God for the guards that he hated, the prisoners who despised him, the judge who sentenced him, his worthless attorney, the witnesses who lied about him, the policemen who arrested him, the people who had kicked and beaten him when he was a boy, and for his drunken, abusive parents. The list of people to hate seemed endless.

When The Animal finished his list, he went back and started all over. Hour after hour he laughed at God and dared Him to do something, anything, as he gave mocking praise and thanksgiving.

On the seventh day, the ladder was again lowered to let the prisoner climb out. The guard told the author that he was totally flabbergasted when the man came through the trap door. He was smiling! He had never seen him smile. Even his eyes looked happy. He was a different man!

The prisoner later told the author what had happened. After days of thanking God, something had occurred that defies a natural explanation. A “man” had appeared in his cell and said, “I love you,” just those three words. “I knew it was true,” ‘The Animal’ said. “His eyes were full of love for me.” The following hours were filled with *genuine* thanksgiving to God. The prisoner realized that he had waited his entire life to have that one moment with the man he now knew to be Jesus!

He was a current day picture of the demoniac in our passage for today. But he is just one of millions who have been transformed by the salvation that Jesus offers us through His sacrifice for our sins on the cross. No one is too bad for Jesus, only too good to think they desperately need Him. In our Revelation study we just read that those who come to fight against Jesus and the saints are kings, captains, mighty men, free and slave, small and great (Revelation 19:18^{xx}). That includes every status of life. You may not be tortured by demons or attack people, but we all need Jesus just as much as the demoniac or The Animal. Do you recognize your need? His arms are open. Will you hear Him say, “I love you!”

Questions

- 1 What had just previously taken place?
- 2 Describe the scene?
- 3 How did the demons know Jesus?
- 4 What do they fear?
- 5 Describe the man?
- 6 What were the demons up to? Did it work?
- 7 Why did the ask Jesus to leave? Why did He go?
- 8 What did the healed man do?
- 9 Who won in the end?
- 10 Did something in the account of The Animal speak to you?

i Matthew 8:28 (ESV)

²⁸ And when he came to the other side, to the country of the Gadarenes, two demon-possessed men met him, coming out of the tombs, so fierce that no one could pass that way.

ii Matthew 20:30 (ESV)

³⁰ And behold, there were two blind men sitting by the roadside, and when they heard that Jesus was passing by, they cried out, "Lord, have mercy on us, Son of David!"

iii Luke 18:35 (ESV)

³⁵ As he drew near to Jericho, a blind man was sitting by the roadside begging.

iv Mark 5:3-5 (ESV)

³ He lived among the tombs. And no one could bind him anymore, not even with a chain,

⁴ for he had often been bound with shackles and chains, but he wrenched the chains apart, and he broke the shackles in pieces. No one had the strength to subdue him.

⁵ Night and day among the tombs and on the mountains he was always crying out and cutting himself with stones.

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vi Psalm 23:1 (ESV)

¹ The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want.

vii Luke 14:21 (ESV)

²¹ So the servant came and reported these things to his master. Then the master of the house became angry and said to his servant, 'Go out quickly to the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in the poor and crippled and blind and lame.'

viii 1 Corinthians 1:26-29 (ESV)

²⁶ For consider your calling, brothers: not many of you were wise according to worldly standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth. ²⁷ But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; ²⁸ God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are, ²⁹ so that no human being might boast in the presence of God.

ix 2 Corinthians 3:18 (ESV)

¹⁸ And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.

x Philippians 3:19 (ESV)

¹⁹ Their end is destruction, their god is their belly, and they glory in their shame, with minds set on earthly things.

xi Revelation 12:4 (ESV)

⁴ His tail swept down a third of the stars of heaven and cast them to the earth. And the dragon stood before the woman who was about to give birth, so that when she bore her child he might devour it.

xii Genesis 3:1 (ESV)

¹ Now the serpent was more crafty than any other beast of the field that the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, "Did God actually say, 'You shall not eat of any tree in the garden?'"

xiii Colossians 3:1-2 (ESV)

¹ If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God.

² Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth.

xiv Luke 14:33 (ESV)

³³ So therefore, any one of you who does not renounce all that he has cannot be my disciple.

xv Matthew 10:38 (ESV)

³⁸ And whoever does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me.

xvi John 12:26 (ESV) ²⁶ If anyone serves me, he must follow me; and where I am, there will my servant be also. If anyone serves me, the Father will honor him.

xvii Matthew 15:38 (ESV) ³⁸ Those who ate were four thousand men, besides women and children.

xviii John 8:32 (ESV) ³² and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."

xix Matthew 19:26 (ESV)

²⁶ But Jesus looked at them and said, "With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible."

xx Revelation 19:18 (ESV)

¹⁸ to eat the flesh of kings, the flesh of captains, the flesh of mighty men, the flesh of horses and their riders, and the flesh of all men, both free and slave, both small and great."