

## Evangelism and the Mercy of God

Luke 8:34-39

September 30, 2018

Turn in your Bibles to Luke chapter 8. We have been working our way, over the past couple of weeks, through this amazing account of deliverance, as Jesus rescues a man from a severe, very severe case of demonic possession. The whole story is there in Luke 8:26-39. I'm gonna read the first part for you, the parts that we've covered, provide a little bit of review. If you're there in Luke 8, follow me as I read in Luke 8:26-33.

"Then they sailed to the country of the Gerasenes, which is opposite Galilee. 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. He had not lived in a house, but among the tombs. 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.' For he'd commanded the unclean spirit to come out of the man.

"(For many a time it had seized him, and 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.) And then Jesus asked him. 'What is your name?' And he said, 'Legion,' for many demons had entered him. They begged him not to command them to be, to depart into the abyss. Now a large herd of pigs was feeding there on the hillside. They begged him to let them enter these. So he gave them permission. And then the demons came out of the man and entered the pigs, and the herd rushed down the steep bank into the lake and were drowned." I'm gonna stop there for a moment.

God sent Jesus and his disciples across the Sea of Galilee, into this Gentile region of the Gerasenes. Matthew refers to the same region as the region of the Gadarenes. In either case, Gerasenes, Gadarenes, this is a place that's very much, in every way, opposite of Galilee. The cities that are represented by those names, Geh, Gerasa and Gadara are cities of the Decapolis, the ten cities that are, uh, Gentile-rule, carrying on the Hellenistic program of, gr, making the whole culture Greek. They were in collaboration with the Romans.

But they were, spiritually speaking, th, th, this land of the Decapolis, the ten cities, Gerasa, Gadara and all the rest, they were a land of outer darkness. They were in darkness. They were in spiritual blindness. As a people, the Gentiles of this entire region, they were separated from God, separated from Christ, separated from truth. They're alienated from God, they're strangers to the truth. They're utterly without hope in their lost condition. They had no knowledge of the true and living God. They had no light, no truth.

They were lost in, and enamored by, Greek culture, Greek mythology. They engaged in Pagan sacrifice, which is really, essentially, sacrifices to demons. They also engaged in all the accompanying immorality and degradation of that kind of lifestyle, that kind of living. They were, they were, essentially and fundamentally and most importantly, they were an enslaved people. They're a people who are shrouded in spiritual darkness. They're under the dominion of demonic influence in their land. They're worshiping in a demonic way, with a demonic religion, believing demonic doctrines.

So when Jesus steps ashore, and he meets this demoniac, he really is, in the truest sense, he is meeting a true representative of the Gerasene people. This is the cultural attache, so to speak. He's the one who's coming from the "Welcome to the Gersaenes" office. This man did represent an extreme case of demonic possession, but really he is a vivid and graphic portrayal of the people in the entire region. What they all were, inwardly and spiritually, this man portrayed outwardly and physically. So put it this way: You want to know how God sees the unbelieving? Read carefully about the demoniac's condition, and that'll just start to get you in the ballpark of how he sees the unregenerate. Not very pleasant.

Now the people of the region, even though they were also under the same demonic oppression and influence, the people were rightly, understandably, they were afraid of this man. Verse 29 tells us that they set a guard on this guy. They bound him with chains and shackles of iron, all to no avail. Though they'd been afraid of this man in his frenzied state, you need to see that they failed to see how they themselves are under the same kind of domination of demonic thinking. It's just a milder, subtler form of the same thing.

It's actually a more profound form of subjugation that they are in because they, too, were dead in trespasses and sins. They, too, according to Ephesians 2:1-2, they "followed the Prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience." So they're the same thing. The danger of their condition, and the more profound enslavement that they're in, is that they are utterly oblivious to it. None of them were foaming at the mouth. Num, none of them were running around naked and raving mad. None of them were cutting themselves, and breaking chains, and living with dead people in the tombs. They had families. They had jobs. They had civic responsibilities. They attended worship. They attended social gatherings. These are respectable Pagan people.

That's exactly where the demons intended to keep them. Right where they were. Self-satisfied, blinded by self-sufficient pride, disregarding the true danger of their condition, and then relegating, for them, relegating all spiritual forces into this man's extreme manifestations. If they can say, "All the bad things and evil spirits in the world, that's what they look like, not like me and all my friends, but like that;" long as they could point to the danger of evil in

the likes of this demoniac, they felt comfortable, relatively safe in their individual respectability.

Makes you wonder about people we know and live among, doesn't it? The demons used the demoniac, really, to perpetuate the wider superstitions of Pagan ignorance. To prey upon Pagan fears. To keep these Gerasenes fearful of what they do not understand. And all the while, these people are under the dominion of (as this man, the, the demons identified themselves as) the "Legion." These demons had organized themselves, they're militaristic. That's what the word "legion" means, or refers to, is the Roman legions. Almost 6,000 troops. They're organized, they're aggressive, and they are intent on holding the ground.

So yes, these demons are very powerful. Yes, they are organized. Yes, they are aggressive and militaristic. Yes, they're clever in their schemes. They're keeping these people enslaved to fear. They're keeping these people ignorant with all manner of misinformation about their true nature and how they truly operate. And what the decent people of the Decapolis failed to see was their own bondage to sin. What they failed to see is the demonic influence of false religion, how they're

captivated by what is destroying them, spiritual danger they face because of their sins. Because their dealings are not with demons, their dealings are actually before the throne of a holy God; to face, one day, his judgment, to stand before the true and living God and give an account for their lives.

Listen, as powerful and dominating as the demons were in the life of that demoniac, there is an even greater, more stubborn force in the world. It is the power of sin. Because of sin, the demoniac and the more outwardly sane people who are in this account, the people of this region, they are equally enslaved. They are equally lost. They are equally in need of Jesus Christ and his salvation, because they are all sinners before God. When it comes to enslaving the human race, when it comes to binding and damning all humanity, sin is the most powerful, most profound force that exists, far surpassing the power and the effect of demons.

That's what we're going to see as we conclude this narrative this morning. The binding, the blinding, damning power of sin. The power of sin, in this account, is set in contrast with divine grace. We see, we actually see the darkness of this

sin, these people's sin, against the bright light of divine grace and mercy. God sent his own Son to these people. He sent his beloved Son to visit them, to go to them, a people undeserving, uninterested; "to proclaim liberty to the captives and set the captives free." And that is exactly what Jesus did when he saved this poor demoniac.

And Jesus would have, for his part, extended the power of that saving grace and mercy to the rest of the people of that region, had they asked. Did they ask? They refused. So it wasn't the power of demons that threatened to nullify the grace of God. Jesus had cast out the demons without effort. It was the blinding power of human sin that tried to cast Jesus out of the region. God's grace is greater. His mercy is never-ending, as we'll see. And that's really, as I said, the theme of this entire account. And it's what I want to emphasize this morning, it's what I want you to see clearly this morning, that our God is a merciful God. He is compassionate, he is kind, he cares, he sees every single one of our individual situations, and he sees our situation as a whole. And he shows compassion. He shows kindness. And that's what we're gonna see, point by point, as we go through this morning's message.



Let's pick up the story where we left off last week and get right into a first point for this morning. As you can see, the deficient investigation of divine grace, that's point one. The deficient investigation of divine grace. We're gonna see in verses 34 and 35 that the people of the region, they, they went out to investigate what had happened, but their investigation was sorely deficient. Look at what it says. "When the herdsmen saw what had happened, they fled and told it in the city and in the country. And 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."

Notice the repetition in those two verses of the phrase "what had happened." Okay, that's summarizing all that we read from verses 26-33. "What had happened." It's repeated twice, one in each verse. Draws attention there to the reaction of the herdsmen who witnessed the destruction of the herd. And these Gerasene people, as they heard this account, as they heard this report, they are completely stunned by "what had happened." Probably the bigger deal for them is to see what happened to the pigs, two thousand pigs rushing down the steep hillside into the

s, into the lake and drowning, all in an, in a moment. That stunned them. So, "what had happened." Very important.

Also notice the repeated emphasis there in these verses on fearfulness, fearfulness. There at the beginning of verse 34, notice how the herdsmen, they don't just leave and go tell what had happened. The word used there is "fled." They fled, they got away from there in a hurry. The verb is *pheugo*, from which we get the word "fugitive." So it's like they're takin' off. They just watched a couple thousand pigs die, and die vi, violently, committing mass swine suicide. We can sympathize, huh, can't we, with how, how that must have freaked them out completely. What just happened? So they're, they're taking off like, fleeing like fugitives from a crime scene. And they run, and they report it to the people of the region.

The Gerasene people heard from the herdsmen what had happened, and they came out to see for themselves. When they arrived on the scene, notice the repeated emphasis on fear, again, in verse 35. "They were afraid." That is interesting, isn't it? What do, what do they see? They didn't come and find a raving lunatic. They didn't hear the howling of demons when they

came and arrived. They came to a scene of serenity and peace. Calm. The man is sitting there listening to Jesus teach. There's nothing to fear from Jesus or the recently-delivered demoniac who's sitting calmly before Jesus and the Twelve. But again, the people of the region, when they saw this for themselves, they also became frightened.

What do they have to fear? Fearfulness dominated the people of this region. And fear, you need to understand, fear does not result in clear thinking, in righteous judgments, in sufficient investigation into the facts. In fact, the dominant emotion of fear, for them (which was a craven, self-protecting fear), that fear undermined their ability to truly assess what had happened. Because of fear, they are unable to understand not only what had happened but, more importantly, how and why this had happened. Fear, here, it keeps them enslaved to their sin, enslaved to their ignorance. Keep that in mind about their fear.

Let's pause for a moment, though, and think about the passage of time here in these verses. Luke tells us in verse 34 that the herdsman fled, and they told the people of the region, those who lived, as it says there, "in the city and in the

country." Interesting. Then, in verse 35, all those people, they, from the city and from the country, they came from those places and went out to see what had happened. That is to say, they visited the scene to see for themselves. They're on the coast. So we need to understand that a good bit of time has passed, right?

As we've said, the little village of Gersa, or Gergesa, may have been very close to this, where this actually happened, within a few miles, maybe, of the scene. We can say, maybe, no more than a couple miles. Just South of Gergesa or Gersa, where this, uh, supposedly happened, was the city of Hippus, Hippus, which is the Greek word for "lake." It's one of the prominent cities of the Decapolis. It sat perched on top of a flat-topped hill about a thousand feet above the Sea of Galilee. And Hippus was within 5 miles of where this took place, so the herdsmen may have visited Hippus to deliver the report there, too.

We can estimate how much time it took for the herdsmen to report, and for the townspeople and country folk to come out there and visit. The whole time that passed from the time when Jesus cast out the demoniac, the herd rushed down, died in the

lake, and the herdsmen left, telling everybody in the city, in the country, and they all came back, we can estimate that at least a few hours had passed. Because of the sizable herd, probably can think, safely assume there were quite a few herdsmen, they're probably gonna go in separate directions, give their report. We can imagine, maybe, that they are reasonably fast herdsmen, maybe, maybe making eight-minute miles. I mean, again, it's hilly terrain, so it's not, it's not easy, it's difficult. But let's, let's, let's make these guys runners, okay, so they're eight minute miles over this terrain.

They're making their several stops along the way, delivering the news, and spreading the news took some time. Merely running to Hippus and back would take, at that estimation of eight-minute miles, would take a little, little over an hour and a half at best. It's far more likely that spreading the reports to the folks living in the city, and then more spread out in the country, to spread that report probably took them, for the herdsman, two or three hours. For the people to come out and visit the scene, that probably took another hour or so. So probably four or more hours had passed between verse 34 and verse 35.

So meanwhile, while they're doing all that, back at the exorcism site, Jesus, his disciples, this delivered demoniac, what's going on there? We read in verse 35 the man was wearing some clothes. We can assume the disciples clothed him. They either had an extra set of clothes with them, or an extra cloak, or something like that. Or perhaps they went to the s, nearest little hamlet or the village of Gergesa, purchased some closing, clothing for this guy. Clothing the man's nakedness obviously would be priority. It would be priority for me, wouldn't it for you? Want us restore for this guy some semblance of dignity, something he'd been robbed of for quite some time. Compassion would have demanded it.

We also read in verse 35, this man had been "sitting at Jesus' feet." Sitting at Jesus' feet. Again, that's not just an indication of restored sanity. This is much more than that. This is a picture of discipleship. This is discipleship. Just briefly, I want to show you that. There are several passages in Luke, one we've been through in chapter 7, but also in chapter 8, chapter 10, chapter 17, all these chapters show disciples sitting at Jesus' feet. I just want to mention them quickly, and you can run through them if you'd like to.

Starting in Luke 7:38. This in Luke 7:38, that's a passage we've already studied. There, a formerly sinful woman, a notoriously sinful woman in the city, she was delivered. She worshiped at Jesus' feet. Says there, in Luke 7:38, that she stood "behind him, at his feet. Weeping, she began to wet his feet with her tears. She, she wiped his feet with the hair of her head. She kissed his feet. She anointed his feet with the ointment." All that emphasis over and over and over on Jesus, his feet, and the worshiper at his feet. That almost really, for Luke, sets a paradigm for how we're to think about all the other references on Jesus' feet, the drawing attention to the worship at his feet. That is worship.

The passage right after the one we're studying now, in Luke 8:41, this man Jairus, he's a ruler of the synagogue, and he's got something that he can't handle. Something that is gripping him with concern and fear, anxiety, and he came and fell at Jesus' feet. A humble posture to seek the Lord's favor, the Lord, the man prayed to the Lord. He asked Jesus to come into his house and heal his dying daughter. Praying at Jesus' feet, this is an act of worship. Don't let anybody tell you that prayer is not worship. Sometimes you'll hear people who pray to saints.

They'll say, "Oh, that's not worship." Oh yes, it is. Every time you see prayer in Scripture, it's worship.

Later in Luke 10, Jesus, you may remember, Luke 10:39, if you want to see the reference, Jesus entered the village of Bethany in this account. He was visiting his friend Lazarus, his two sisters, Mar, Martha and Mary. And remember, we find Mary there in Luke 10:39, and she's in the familiar posture of a worshiping disciple. She's "sitting at the Lord's feet," remember, in contrast to her sister Mary, who is bustling around and doing everything. Mary has chosen the better part, and she's "sitting at the Lord's feet, and she's listening to his teaching." Listen, sitting at his feet, listening to the Lord, this is a direct parallel to the Gerasene demoniac who, like Mary, likewise is sitting and listening and learning at Jesus' feet. That's what's happening in these four hours of delay between, there, verse 34 and verse 35.

One more example, I want to give you, Luke 17. We read about Jesus in Luke 17 healing ten lepers. I'm sure you've remember that from Sunday School, that only one of those ten lepers returned to Jesus, came back to thank him, once they



found out that they'd been healed. One of ten. And get this, the guy is a Samaritan. All but one went on their way. That one, a Samaritan, returned to Jesus when he saw that he was healed. He "turned back, praising God with a loud voice, and he fell on his face at Jesus' feet, giving him thanks."

So listen, go back to Luke Chapter 8. Bowing at Jesus' feet, falling at Jesus' feet, sitting at Jesus' feet, or go back to that, that prototype of worship in that woman weeping, kissing, anointing, cleaning Jesus' feet. That is how Luke frequently identifies the community of believers, in humble reverence. If you picture yourself below somebody's feet, you are physically below them. That's where we as Christians, that's where we as believers see ourselves, is below the feet, at the feet of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. It's how Luke frequently identifies believers.

Numbered among the community of believers, get this, counted as true believers, number one: a notoriously sinful woman. Number two: a synagogue official. Number three: a villager woman named Mary. Number four: a Samaritan leper. Number 5, as we're studying: this demoniac. All of them, pleased

to worship at the feet of Jesus. All of them, pleased to bow humbly before the one who saved them. It's quite the motley crew, isn't it? All of them redeemed by the mercy of God. All of them subjects of God's compassion for them. God, aware of every hurt, every pain, every sorrow, everything they have brought upon themselves by their own sin, and everything that's been done to them. God knows. And he shows mercy.

Verse 35. Luke 8:35, "The people went out to see what had happened." And they personally meet the two principal subjects of the report that they received from the herdsmen. It says there that "they came to Jesus." That's one subject, of the subjects. And then they "found the man." That's the second. And then, more specifically, it's "the man from whom the demons had gone." So they've got the two principal subjects of the account that they have heard. They don't need to rely on the report of the herdsmen any longer. Now they're there. Now they can do their own investigation. Now they can ask whatever questions they want to ask, and they can ask straightforward questions, get to the heart of the issues, and get their answer.

And remember some of these people, if not many of them, they knew this guy (not Jesus, but they knew this man). They never met Jesus, but this man, according to verse 27, he was "a man from the city." This man had been their neighbor. He'd probably been a friend of many of them. Like all small town communities, I mean, these people knew his name. They knew his family. They knew his background. They knew his business. Some of them probably knew his business a little too much, right?

They'd also known, they'd witnessed for themselves this man's downfall into demonic possession. And for them, the, the whole sad tale, the whole sordid issue was very well known to them. And frankly, after their repeated, failed attempts to guard him, to protect him, to subdue him, they'd given up. Not only had they given up, but they had given him up. They'd given him up for dead. It was as if their former neighbor, by taking up residence in and among the tombs, it was almost like a, simply a, like an early move-in to his final resting place. So to this, to them, these, this man had been dead for a long, long time.

So for them to come out to the shore, to find this man, this man "sitting at the feet of Jesus, clothed and in his right mind," you know what they're seeing there, for them? Resurrection. They're seeing life from the dead. They are truly seeing, facing the unexpected. They expected to find one thing. They find something completely different. The clear, the compelling (and by the way, in light of recent, a, s, Senate Judiciary Committee hearing, uh, testimony), they're finding corroborated testimony, corroborated evidence that this man has quite literally come back from the dead. They observe that a dramatic and radical transformation has taken place.

Look at it. Instead of restless and frenetic, what's he doing? He's sitting there calmly. Instead of naked, he's clothed. Instead of raging and frenetic, he's stark raving mad, this man is now quiet and sober minded. And listening, instead of wandering around in isolation, all, away from people, he's now in the company of this small band of Jewish men, Jesus and his twelve disciples. This man is a picture of serenity, of quiet calmness, self-control. The man's dignity has been restored and, as symbolized by covering his naked body, the shame of his nakedness with clothing, there is every reason now to anticipate him being restored and re-entering into society.

He's emotionally stable, he's physically in control of his body, he's mentally in control of his reason. There's no denying the change that's taken place. No denying the depth and the extent of that change.

And by the way, all the changes are positive. They're healthy, they're edifying. Jesus has instantaneously turned this man into the opposite of what he was, into the neighbor that you have always wanted. And yet. And yet. End of verse 35, "They were afraid," 're afraid. Afraid of the delivered demoniac? No, not likely. Afraid of what? Afraid of whom? You know the answer. They're afraid of Jesus. They're afraid of Jesus. Again, their reasoning is subdued by irrational fears. They are harboring and thinking Pagan superstitions about the powers that are indwelling this man, that they cannot comprehend. So they back away.

Their attempt to investigate the truth of this situation, their attempt to investigate this manifestation of divine grace, all of it undermined by their fears, their superstitious apprehensions; frankly, by their sin. They have performed an investigation, yes. But it is an investigation that is utterly

deficient because it's been thwarted, undermined by their own fears. And so, in another instance of divine grace, in another instance of divine mercy and kindness, you know what God does? He gives the Gerasenes yet another opportunity to investigate. Another opportunity to come to a righteous and receptive conclusion about what had happened. They have observed the evidence for themselves. They have examined the facts, but notice now how there is another level of investigation which is designed to penetrate their blindness of superstition and fear.

Look again at your Bibles, verse 36. "Those who had seen it told them..." Who's the "them"? That's the people from the land, the region of the Ger, Gerasenes. "Those who'd seen it told them how the demon-possessed man had been healed." That word, "how" that is in the interro-d-givet, interrogative adverb, one that takes people beyond the bare facts to understand the means by which the man had been healed. So by discerning how the man was healed (that is by the power of God in Jesus Christ), by observing and discerning how the man is healed, the people from the city, the people from the countryside, they all had a unique opportunity here. They had the incredible chance, the opportunity to be introduced to the grace of God, incarnated in Jesus Christ.

So who's there to tell them how this happened? Well, they had the twelve disciples of Jesus Christ there. They had the Gerasene herdsmen who could take 'em so far, but they had the twelve disciples, the Ger, Gerasene herdsmen, they are the ones who'd seen the whole thing, and they were able to tell them how this happened. People of the region, they had such an incredible opportunity to get acquainted with this unique, marvelous stranger who'd come to heal, who'd come to set the captives free. They could come to understand not only the how, but the reason, the, the reason why Jesus healed. That Jesus is a man of mercy and kindness and compassion; that he represents the God of mercy and kindness and compassion. They could have come to, come to understand in this opportunity his unique mission to "proclaim liberty to the captives and set the captives free."

Beyond the fact that this man had been rescued, this demoniac had been rescued from incurring further injury and physical harm; beyond the fact that this man had been delivered from demonic possession and subjugation, and the mind-scrambling effects that that would have; as we said already, this man had become a disciple of Jesus Christ. And it wasn't just because the demons were gone. That's not what converted him. This man

became a disciple, became a worshiper, after having more than a four-hour conversation with Jesus. This man believed in Jesus Christ, and he was saved.

In fact, this is the word *lyo*, Luke uses here. Luke had a lot of words to choose from. He has a massive vocabulary in the Greek. He coulda used a number of words to summarize this man's healing, or deliverance, or rescue, but Luke chooses the word *sozo*. *Sozo*, "saved, salvation." And he puts the verb in the passive voice. This man was saved, indicating a divine passive. He was saved by Jesus. He was saved by the power of God in Jesus Christ. He was saved, not just from the condition of demonic possession. This man was saved from his sins. He's sitting at Jesus' feet, having been forgiven, and now he's a worshiping disciple.

In the aftermath of this man's deliverance from the demons, as we said earlier, he had several hours to ask Jesus questions, to understand what had happened to him, to learn about his true condition. And the man learned, really, he learned Gospel truths. He learned about his own personal sin before an utterly holy God. He learned about how, in his sinful and unbelieving



condition, he was always under the power of demonic influence. Possession is simply a more severe and outwardly-manifest condition. Learned about his personal guilt before that God. Learned about his need for forgiveness, lest he fall under judgment. Jesus himself led the way. Jesus himself, "the way, the truth, and the life;" Jesus himself taught this man the way of salvation by faith.

So we tighten our focus just a little bit. We can see most clearly here how it had to be, in verse 36, it had to be believers who told the Gerasene people, quote, "how the demon-possessed man had been healed." Because only believers have that kind of spiritual insight. Only believers understand the holiness of God, and the sinfulness of man, and the coming judgment for sin. Only believers know that in this man, Jesus Christ, is full and final salvation. The herdsmen could explain some of this on some level. But it was Jesus' disciples who took all these people the rest of the way.

They, along with Jesus there, they're able to sweep away the superstitions. They're a, able to correct all the misinformation. They're able to tell the whole truth. They could

explain, not just deliverance from demons, but they could de  
explain, not just the deliverance from that lesser fear of  
demons, but they could explain deliverance from the wrath of the  
true and living God, which is a far greater fear. They could  
explain salvation by faith in Jesus. That's what the  
investigation of these Gerasene people should have led them to,  
right? This is what they should have learned.

Well, did it? What did their investigation actually yield?  
What happened next? Sadly, due to the ruinous effect of fear on  
their reasoning, their investigation into this incredible  
miracle of divine mercy was completely deficient, as we said.  
Their investigation is deficient. Completely, utterly deficient.  
They have no resources on their own to understand this.

And their deficient investigation led them to, second point  
in your outline there, the ignorant rejection of divine grace.  
The ignorant rejection of divine grace. The blinding, enslaving  
power of sin, which is the reason for all human ignorance and  
fear, it is more debilitating than being inhabited by a legion  
of demons.

Verse 37, it teaches a sober lesson. And this is the lesson: Fear is more sinful and enslaving than demonic possession. Fear is more sinful and enslaving than demonic possession. Jesus had cast out demons, but fearful people here will cast out Jesus. Look at verse 37, "Then all the people of the surrounding country of the Gerasenes asked him to," what? Leave. "Asked him to depart from them, for they were seized with great fear. So he got into the boat, and he returned." The demons had twice requested that they be allowed to get away from Jesus, and so Jesus sent the demons away. And now these people request that Jesus get away from them, and so Jesus gets into the boat and accommodates. He goes away. Sad, isn't it? That is the power of fear. That is the power of sinful fear, irrational fear, ignoring all the evidence, to respond in sinful unbelief.

As the hours passed by, the people of the surrounding country of the Gerasenes, it's a crowd that, m, gathering, little by little. We can imagine as people show up (at least dozens of people showing up, probably even hundreds of people), we can imagine if the, they come from the city of Hippus, and the towns that are around there, and the hamlets and villages, probably hundreds of people. But collectively, with no known exception except this one man that Jesus saved, the Gerasenes

collectively preferred the demons to Jesus. It's very sad, isn't it?

What are they afraid of? What are they afraid of? Some suggest it was fear of financial loss, and they point to the destruction of the pigs, right? So people thought Jesus would come kill off their livelihood if he stayed any longer. You know, they'd just, he'd destroy more livestock, and so they'd become poor and starving. And no doubt that their loss of their pigs registered in their minds. I mean, that's natural. How could it not have? But the way they should have reasoned here, it should have, they should've reasoned along much different lines. The way they reasoned here demonstrates that they weren't merely fearful about financial loss. They're not just thinking about material concerns.

I like how William Hendriksen voices, gives voice to what should have been going on in their heads. This is how the, the Gerasenes should have been thinking. This is their thought process, he puts it into a quote. Quoting the Gerasene people figuratively, he says, "They should have said this: 'We now see that the loss of our property was a small price to pay for the

lesson we have learned. These pigs, that property meant everything to us. We were selfish. We never felt concerned about the needs of our fellow citizen, this poor wretched man, and now we see things differently. We now understand that human values per, surpass material values by far.'" End Quote.

Boy, you would have hoped that they would have said that, and far more. You would have hoped and think that they'd congratulate this delivered man. They coulda say, "Hey, this is awesome, to see you, yiddicoo, wearing clothes for, for one thing, for starters. But now, I mean, I can have a conversation with you." They congratulate, welcome him back into the community. "Hey, we'll kick the renters out of your house and get you back in." Neighbor healed, cured, now seeming to be thriving. You'd think they woulda considered their, their own loved ones, those who are afflicted with disease, infirmity, maybe thinking about some who were likewise under the dominating power of demons. Beyond totally perplexing them about what to do, now they know what to do. You'd think they might come and ask Jesus to tarry just a little bit longer, heal their sick, heal their demon-possessed.

Even further, you'd think that among that excitement that developed, you'd think that at least a few of the more spiritually-curious souls among them would've asked deeper questions. I mean, who wouldn't want to know more about the nature of demons? And mine the depths of Jesus' mind, his knowledge of, his understanding of the invisible spiritual forces at work on the Earth. I mean, if this guy can command the demons, he surely, certainly understands what's going on, and things I don't get. I mean, maybe a first question would be, "Jesus, after the pigs drowned, where'd the demons go?" I mean, I want to know that, don't you? Secondly, most immediately, "Can you protect us from the demons? If they're wandering around here, can you keep 'em from coming back? In fact, can you reconsider not sending 'em into the abyss? I'd really like them to go there." I mean, at least those requests.

So now they're gonna have a further conversation. Conversations they should have had with Jesus would lead them into questions about reality. About beginnings and endings, about God and man, about sin and righteousness and judgment. About mankind standing before a holy God, about future judgment, about my place in all of this. And of course, ha, the way a sinful man can be reconciled to a holy God, the most perplexing

question of all humanity. Sadly, none of that came up. None of it came up. Why not? The text tells us. What's it say? "They were seized with great fear."

As I said, fear is more sinful and enslaving than demonic possession. The word "seized," *synecho*, literally means "to be held together with, to be restrained, held tightly, gripped by something, paralyzed by it." The gripping, paralyzing power that seized all these people, identified as "great fear." The word *mega*, mega-fear, *mega phobos*. They had no power to break free from this paralysis of fear. You ever felt that, something that just made your s, your skin crawl? A fear like I had it, before when I was a little kid, and you just feel paralyzed, you just feel like "I can't move. I'm so terrified of whatever this phenomenon is." Sometimes it's, you know, in your own head. Other times it's truly, some of you have experienced true fear. Someone who made you fearful, someone who made you afraid. You felt paralyzed. You felt traumatized. You felt terrified. Mega-fear. No power to break free.

In response to this fear, which is against all evidence, but in response to the fear, Jesus concedes. He grants the

request. "He got into the boat and returned." What a gentleman, right? He's such a gentleman that he refuses to violate their free will. So he leaves them in captivity to their irrational, blinding fears and damning sins, and he gets away, and he goes and floats away. Before you agree to that false statement, take a moment to wrestle with the reason that Jesus left these people standing on the Gerasene shores.

First of all, shouldn't we interpret Jesus' response here as his acknowledgement of the sovereignty of human free will? Does he see this decision that they made (by the way, under the influence of sin and fear and deadness; under the influence of their condition), should we interpret his response here as his bowing to the sovereignty of human free will? "Oh, they made their decision. I can't violate that. I'm gonna leave." No. We have Jesus' own words on the matter, which help us to understand what he's thinking here. Jesus knows, John 6:44, that no one can come to him "unless the Father draws him." John 6:44, that's talking about ability. No one has the ability. No one is able to come to Jesus Christ "unless the Father draws him."



You know the word for "draw?" It's the word for casting nets, catching fish, and pulling them into the boat. No one can come unless the Father drags them into the boat. John 6:37, Jesus knows that all those whom the Father gives him will come to him. So Jesus understands the utter inability of mankind, including these Gerasenes, to break free of their sinful condition on their own. They need the initiative of divine intervention. They need the initiative, the primary, fundamental initiative of the divine grace. Otherwise there is no salvation. Jesus is not here worried about losing any of those whom the Father has chosen. Why? Because, John 6:37, all of them (not "might," not "maybe," not "probably," not even "most"), all will come to him. No anxiety on Jesus' part here. No fretting, hand-wringing about failure of his mission. If they belong to God, God will bring them to salvation at some point. Jesus, he's gonna carry on.

Second, should we interpret Jesus' response here as divine judgment? Is he demonstrating a judgment here, a resignation toward these people, remanding them, basically, to their own blindness in an act of justice for spurning the grace of God that had visited 'em that day? Is his departure here a rebuke for the fact that they did not receive him humbly and gladly and

joyfully, but instead rejected him in fear? Is it? In truth, it could be. I mean, that's what they (and by the way, beloved, all of us) deserve. You know what justice is? Getting what our deeds deserve. We don't want justice. We do want justice for the praise and glory of God. We just don't want the justice to fall on us. We want mercy. We want mercy.

There's more to the story here than judgment. It tells us that that's not all that's going on here. God is under no obligation to reveal truth, to show grace. If he's under obligation, then by definition that's not grace, right? Grace is a gift freely given, unconditionally given to the undeserving. God has every right to give full grace, partial grace, measures of grace. He has full right to do whatever he wants with his gifts of grace. If it's under obligation, by definition it is not grace. But by sending Jesus away, there is a judgment going on here. There's a kind of judgment that results here. There's a consequential judgment attached to their decision. Because by sending Jesus away, you know what they're saying? I'm gonna continue.

And by the way, those demons, those entered into the herd of pigs. Where'd they go? I don't know. They gonna find some home in one of these people? Even without the demons, they're continuing in the blindness of fear, and superstition, and sinful ignorance. You know, continuing in that condition, that is gonna leave a mark. It could have, for some of them, for many of them, eternal consequences, resulting in eternal and final judgment and damnation. They've made a decision here that they're gonna live with, and it's gonna hurt. It's gonna hurt in the, in the temporary. And it's gonna hurt, for some of them, in the eternal.

So although Jesus is confident in the wise plan of God to save all of his people, and although there may be an element of judgment implied in Jesus' departure, there's another reason why he departs. As we learned last week, Jesus had a good reason for granting the demons' request to enter into the swine. Here there's also a good reason for Jesus to grant these people's requests for him to leave the region. He's not just bowing to their wishes. No, he's got a plan in mind. He's all-wise, he's all-good, and he has a reason. The reason is that Jesus intended to overcome these people's ignorant rejection of divine grace. He intended to overcome it. How?

Point three: With the beneficent extension of divine grace. The beneficent extension of divine grace. It's what we see here. The spiritual condition of the people in this region is not beyond his power. That's what the salvation of the demoniac proved. Nothing beyond his power. It's not beyond his will either. But Jesus is responding here to what Providence has revealed. What has Providence revealed? These people aren't ready. These people are not ready.

Remember, they're strangers to the covenants of promise. They're strangers to the entire Old Testament. They don't have any truth. There's no foundation of truth to build upon. More time is required to absorb what happened that day. More truth is required to help them interpret what happened. And so Jesus perceived, in the revelation of divine Providence, that it wasn't the right time. On God's time, timetable, not the Gerasenes' timetable. God's. So Jesus chose here to return to his messianic priority. To return to preaching the Kingdom of God to the Jewish people, and very soon to turn his attention to the Cross.

Time for Gentile salvation would come. The time for folding the Gentiles into his flock would come, but first he had to go to the Cross and provide for their salvation. He had to deal with the fundamental problem, which is the reason for their rejection here. Deal with a fundamental problem first. Sacrificing himself as the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world. "The world," by the way, a term that in John means "Jew and Gentile." After that, the message of the fullness of God's grace would be ready to preach, and to extend the Gospel ministry to the Gentiles in full earnest. So that's why Jesus leaves here.

But as he's leaving, notice in verse 38 that he receives one more request. "The man from whom the demons had gone begged that he might be with him, but Jesus sent him away." Wait a minute. What is that about? I mean, Jesus has granted the request of the demons. He has granted the request of the sinful Gerasenes, but here he refuses to grant the request of his newest disciple. What is this about? Hadn't this man been through enough? And didn't this man's fledgling faith need the nearness of Jesus' physical presence? Evidently not. Jesus has answered this man's request as he always answers our requests, with a heart of kindness and compassion. In full accord with

divine goodness, according to the perfection of divine wisdom, and yet we can plainly see here, this man did not get what he wanted. He got what Jesus wanted, which is God's best for him. And God's best, by the way, for many others, according to the will of God.

That's instructive for us, isn't it? Sometimes God denies us what we want in the moment, to accomplish his greater purposes, not just in us, but in many others as well. It's good to ponder, think about. That's what we're gonna see here as we keep reading. "The man from whom" (uh, verse 38 again) "The man from whom the demons had gone, begged him, begged that he might be with him. But Jesus sent him away, saying, '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."

At this time, for a Gentile to return to Israel with Jesus and the disciples, for a Gentile to accompany the disciples on their mission to Israel, not best. Now, that's not racial prejudice. But it is a practical consideration. Bringing a Gentile along would not be a good fit for this Gentile. Thun,

likely become a distraction from the larger mission to Israel. So the best use of this man's joy and gratitude is to turn it back to his own people, which is what Jesus has in mind.

Listen, this entire crowd of Gerasenes (save this one Gerasene) but the rest of them, collectively, sent Jesus away. There are no other Gospel witnesses in the Decapolis. And in compassion, Jesus cared for them too. So he commissioned this man, he put him to work as his chosen witness to the region. Jesus graciously, in the mercy of God, left the Gerasene people a witness. He left 'em one of their own. He left 'em with a great witness. Listen, this guy is a living monument of God's saving power. This guy is a trophy of God's grace. Jesus set him up on a pedestal in the middle of the city and said, "Preach." He announces the grace of God to his own people, the Gerasene people, and also throughout the entire region of the Decapolis.

Jesus tells the man in verse 39, "Return to your home." Jesus is returning to his home. He's gonna go and work in his appointed field of ministry, directed by the will of God, and he's directing this man to do the same thing. He's basically saying to him, "Listen, go back to your home, move back into the

house, get situated, get your old job back if they've held it, settle into your former life. But now, as you settle in, you go back armed with a brand new purpose; namely, as it says here, to "declare how much God has done for you." That word "declare," very important word for Luke in particular. Luke, this, it describes the very thing Luke was doing in the writing of this Gospel. In Luke 1:1, He, he wrote "to compile" the word "narrative," to "compile a narrative of the things that have been accomplished among us."

The word translated "narrative," *diegesis*, comes from the verb *diegeomai*, which means "to set something out in detail, to carry a narrative through from beginning to the end." So Jesus is commanding this new disciple, "Return to your home. Declare how much God has done for you. Tell the story, and narrate all the details. Get into everything." Mark 5:19, we find out just a little more to the message. It says there, "Go home to your friends. Tell them" (I like how the word "friends" is used there. Remember, that's our mission field. These pagans who rejected Jesus? They're your friends.) "Go home to your friends and tell them how much the Lord has done for you and," by the way, "how he has had mercy on you."



That's what non, that's what non Christians do not know, and do not understand. They have no acquaintance with a merciful God. Even though they live and move and have their being every single day living under the manifold miss, mercies of God, they don't know him. And so they're slaves of fear and death and ignorance, sin. That's why Jesus came, Hebrews 2:14-15, "to destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil, and deliver all those who, through fear of death, were subject to lifelong slavery." So Jesus sent this newest disciple to evangelize his own friends, to go back into his own community, to go to his own people. Jesus is showing compassion for these ignorant pagans, blinded by fear, trapped in superstition.

So, verse 39, that's exactly what the man did. He went away, proclaiming throughout the whole city how much Jesus had done for him. And as we've said before, Luke is intentional here about helping us see the divine nature of Jesus. Putting those two lines in parallel of what Jesus said and what the man actually did. Jesus said, "Declare how much God has done for you." What did the man do? "He proclaimed how much Jesus had done for him." For him, God is working in Jesus Christ. He sees them as one and the same.

Notice also, Jesus commanded the man to narrate, *diegeomai*, but Luke tells us the man obeyed, not by just narrating the whole story. He obeyed by preaching. Now that "preaching," the verb there can assume and encompass *diegeomai*, "to narrate," but the verb is *kerysso*. It became the word for proclaiming the Apostolic message, *wid be*, which became known as the *kerygma* of, also from *kerysso*. The message of the Gospel. This man became a preacher. This man became a Gospel preacher.

Some see this man as one of the first missionaries in the Gospels. But technically, if we're talking about cross-cultural missions, this man isn't a missionary in that sense. In point of fact, it's Jesus and his disciples. They are actually the ones who cross the geographic and cultural barriers, venturing into Gentile country. So if you want to find a model for cross-cultural missions, Jesus, his disciples. Look to Jesus.

Jesus sent this man, though, back into his own home, into the city he came from. He knows their culture. He knows their language. He went to evangelize his own people in their own tongue, and he was very, very effective. Luke tells us he became prolific, preaching, proclaiming throughout the whole city. Mark

tells us the man's preaching ministry went even further. Mike, Mark 5:20, "He went away, began to proclaim," not just in his own city but, "in the Decapolis, how much Jesus had done for him." Decapolis, ten cities. Jesus would, after this, a, account here, and we're gonna read, then, go into the next one next time, verses 40 and following. But Jesus in Chapter 9 is going to Commission his disciples to preach, just as he'd done in commissioning this Gentile.

We also need to understand that in this account, this man's commissioned by Christ as a Gentile going into Gentile regions. This foreshadows the entire book of Acts, Luke's second volume. The Acts of the Apostles, or as it's also known, the Acts of the Holy Spirit, it portrays, really, the extension of what started here in the Decapolis, among these demon-dominated, ignorant, fearful pagans. Listen, this helps us to see the motive for evangelism, doesn't it? Helps us see the motive for all true missionary enterprises. Our evangelism, our missions work, when faithful to the Gospel commission we've received, it is powerful to drive away the demons, to cast the darkness of demonic influence and demonic doctrine aside, to shed light in the darkness, to proclaim the Gospel of how much God has done for us.

So t'be an effective evangelist, to be an effective missionary, this has to have happened to you. You will never deliver with power what God has not done for you. It's our task too, beloved. It's our joyful and holy privilege. We continue what our Lord began: To proclaim liberty to the captives, and then watch as he sets at liberty those who are oppressed, here in this year, this time of the Lord's favor. It's our joyful commission too, isn't it, here in our time, in our town, in our language, in our culture, among our people. Let's go do it. Amen? Let's pray.

Our God and Father, Father of the Lord Jesus Christ and our Father by faith as you've united us to this Savior, we thank you for what we've learned in these past couple weeks about Jesus' kindness, compassion, mercy, and power to set the captives free. So many of us in this room have experienced that salvation. And our lives, our thinking, our world view, our hearts, our minds are deeply, radically, profoundly transformed. We can't think the way that we used to think. We can't think about what used to be important to us. We've set aside old ambitions, and we've, we've called old loves that we've had, we've, we've, we've said we hate those things.

Instead, what's important to us is you and your truth, and spreading the truth of salvation, this Gospel, to as many as we can. We want to see people delivered. We want to see people set free. Father, would you be pleased, by your Holy Spirit, in the name of Jesus Christ, to take the Gospel from us and through us and out of our mouths, help us to be accurate in proclaiming it. But please, by your Spirit, save many. Bring them to faith in Jesus Christ. Let them bow before you as worshippers at Jesus' feet. We pray this in Jesus' name, amen.