

THE SON OF MAN, DEMONS, AND REJECTION
LUKE 8:26-39

We have an enemy.

- ✓ He is intelligent — “You believe that God is one. You do well; the demons also believe, and shudder” (Jn. 2:18).
- ✓ He is strong — “Put on the full armor of God, so that you will be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places” (Eph. 6:11-12)
- ✓ He is the deceiver — “And the great dragon was thrown down, the serpent of old who is called the devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him” (Rev. 12:9).
- ✓ He is against us — “So the dragon was enraged with the woman [Israel], and went off to make war with the rest of her children, who keep the commandments of God and hold to the testimony of Jesus” (Rev. 12:17).

We have an enemy. And he is also a defeated enemy. “You are from God, little children, and have overcome them; because greater is He who is in you than he who is in the world” (1 John 4:4). But it doesn’t always feel like Satan and his demons are defeated. Sometimes it feels like they win. Sometimes it feels like sin rules, not Christ. We need a reminder that Christ, the Son of Man, is victorious. Over our enemy. Permanently. And we have such a story in Luke 8:26-39 in the healing of the Gerasene demoniac. In this story we learn (are reminded and encouraged) that —

CHRIST IS AUTHORITATIVE OVER SATAN AND SIN...BE CONFIDENT IN LIVING UNDER AND DECLARING HIS AUTHORITY.

Last time we saw that troubles aren’t greater than Christ’s power and authority. In this passage we see that sin and the author of sin is not greater than Christ’s authority. It’s a story filled with hope — confident expectation. When tempted by sin and when confronted with the powerful work of Satan, the believer is safe because of Christ. He is the Son of Man. In this story, Luke reveals Christ’s authority in **three scenes**:

1. **The Son of Man CONFRONTS Demons (vv. 26-29)**
 - ✓ Jesus and the demoniac
 - ✓ The nature of demon possession
2. **The Son of Man CURES a Demoniac (vv. 30-33)**
 - ✓ The healing of the demoniac
 - ✓ The limitations of demon possession
 - ✓ The provision for demon possession
3. **The Son of Man CONSIDERED (vv. 34-39)**
 - ✓ His rejection by the people (vv. 34-37)
 - ✓ His commission for the man (vv. 38-39)

1. The Son of Man **CONFRONTS** Demons (vv. 26-29)

• Jesus and the demoniac

- ✓ This story actually starts in v. 22 when Jesus says, ***Let us go over to the other side***. They were in Capernaum (northwest Sea of Galilee) and they were headed some 15 miles to the southern end of the Sea of Galilee to the area of ***the Gerasenes***.
 - Jesus doesn't say why He wants to go; given that He immediately returns to Capernaum after this miracle, it seems that the main purposes were to still the storm for 12 and heal this man.
 - There is a question about ***where they landed*** (Matthew calls it Gadarenes)— ***Gadara*** was about six miles from the coast; ***Gerasa*** was even further inland (about 35 miles) and ***Gergesa*** was further north along the eastern shore. All of them were in the Trans-Jordan and were largely populated by Gentiles, which is the main point of the geographical note.
 - Mark and Luke are probably referring to the town of Gerasa that gave its name to the region, while Matthew referred to the name of the closest town (Gadara — Gadarenes). It's all Gentile.
- ✓ As soon as Jesus (and the Twelve) reached shore, they were ***met by a man from the city*** (Gerasa).
 - The first thing we are told about him is that he is possessed ***with demons*** (pl.).
 - Throughout the beginning of the story, the demons are entirely controlling the man so it is safe to assume that he is not coming to Jesus but the demons are compelling him to go. They are wanting a confrontation with Jesus (though Jesus has come to liberate the man!).
 - Satan meant to discredit Christ (***4:13***), Jesus used the confrontation to reveal His authority.
- ✓ This is the second of four stories Luke tells about Jesus casting out demons (***4:31***; 9:37; 11:14). Confrontation with demons was an important part of Jesus' ministry to demonstrate His authority.
- ✓ While demon activity is frequent during Jesus' ministry, it is much more rare in the rest of Scripture. It seems that, "so great was their terror in the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ that they could not help revealing themselves." [MacArthur] {Be wary about assuming you see demons...}
- ✓ What was the effect of the demons on this man?
 - ***He was living without clothes*** (v. 27b)— he is socially appropriate and humbled.
 - ***He had suffered a long time*** — this was a persistent possession (and not recent).
 - ***He was living in tombs*** (v. 27b) — Luke emphasizes that he was not living in a house, but among the dead. These tombs were ***cut out of the rock*** of mountains/hills and were about six feet square. Because they were the houses of the dead, they were also ritually unclean.
 - ***He was afflicted with repeated seizures*** by the demons (***v. 29b***) — such activity was not unusual in those days (cf. ***Mk. 9:20, 22***). {Don't assume all seizures or ailments are from demonic influence.}
 - ***The demons controlled his mind and words*** (v. 28) — while his vocal chords were being used, it is clearly the demons who are speaking — he is "a pawn in a cosmic spiritual battle" of authority.

- ... The demoniac ***fell down***... not in worship, but the demons had to submit to His authority.
- ... Then they say, ***what business do we have with each other?*** It has the sense of “leave us alone — it’s none of your business!” (The plural ***we*** also suggests it is the demons talking.)
- ... And they identify Him as Jesus, ***the Son of the Most High God***. The man almost certainly would not have known Jesus; since the demons were in Heaven prior to the fall, they did. And they knew His true nature, which they couldn’t stop themselves from acknowledging.
- ... The only other places this title is used of Jesus is in the annunciation section (1:32, 35-36) and 6:35, which is ironic — the demons affirm that Jesus came to fulfill the messianic promise. While He is veiled to many, they understood him fully and were terrified.
- ... They asked ***“Do not torment me”*** which is also ironic. The voice of the man is speaking, but Jesus is not there to torment him, but release him; the demons are the ones tormenting him.
 - The demons obviously are speaking; they don’t want to be tormented by Jesus so they can torment the man more. This is the evil of Satan and the end of all his sinful temptations.
 - They are illegally “squatting” in a home they have overtaken; the “torture” they want to avoid is being expelled from that home. They want to “keep their immoral gains.”
 - That they ask this of Jesus also shows us that they can only act within His will. They are powerless to act against His will. They can’t stay in the man if He demands they leave.

“The terror is the demon’s, the comfort is ours. It’s as if as soon as Jesus comes, there is an invisible compulsion that propels these denizens of darkness to show submission to the Sovereign they so intensely despise and to confess the truth of His supremacy. This leaves us in no doubt about how the so-called cosmic conflict will play out. The terror of the demons is the hope of the church.” [Davis]

- ***He was uncontrollable*** (v. 29b) — He could not control himself and ***chains*** on his hands and ***shackles*** (likely ropes) on his feet could not control him (also indicating his unusual strength).
- ***He was alone*** — driven into the ***desert*** by the demons (v. 29c).
- We are meant to see the desperate condition of the man. He is *suffering*.

• The nature of demon possession

- ✓ Demon-possessed people are almost always linked with those who are suffering physically; it is a manifestation of suffering, not a statement about the moral condition of the one possessed (6:18; Mt. 4:24; 8:16; 9:32-34; 10:1, 8; 12:22ff; Mk. 6:13; Acts 5:16; 8:7).
- ✓ The casting out of demons is typically spoken of as “cured” or “healed,” like a physical disease or suffering (e.g., v. 36; Mt. 17:18; Acts 5:16).
- ✓ In Scripture, demon possession is almost always unwanted — those who are demon possessed are sufferers, experiencing something outside their control. And Jesus heals them to alleviate suffering.
- ✓ Demon possession is limited to unbelievers as one cannot be indwelt by both the Spirit and the devil (1 Jn. 4:4).

2. The Son of Man **CURES** a Demoniac (vv. 30-33)

• The healing of the demoniac

- ✓ When Jesus asks, **what is your name?** He is speaking to the demon who spoke in v. 29.
- ✓ **Legion** was a unit of 6000 soldiers in the Roman army. Here they are probably using it figuratively since they went into approx. 2000 pigs (Mk. 5:13). Regardless of how many, the man was overwhelmed with demonic power. “It is one against many. The war is on.” [Bock]
- ✓ Despite outnumbering the man they inhabited — they are “outnumbered” by Christ. So as often as **He commanded** them to come out (v. 29a), they are **implored** Him not **to go away into the abyss**.
 - Generally, the abyss is a place where the dead are awaiting judgment (Ps. 107:26; Rev. 17:8).
 - It is also a place where some demons have been held since the fall of Satan (2 Pt. 2:4; Jude 6), and it is where Satan will be bound during the Millennial Kingdom (Rev. 20:1-3).
 - They are asking not to be judged prior to the final judgment — “give us more time.”
 - [Aside: in ancient poetic thought the abyss was synonymous with the “watery deep” — a vast cosmic sea under the earth; so the request is “don’t send us into the waters of judgment.”]
- ✓ Luke tells us that there were many **swine** in the area — an indication this is Gentile territory. And that’s where the demons asked (**implored**) Him to go. *Why?* It’s not clear, but evidently if they couldn’t be in a man, then an animal was fine — anything but the abyss of judgment.
- ✓ Jesus **gave them permission** — another indication that despite their number and power, they were powerless to do anything if Christ restricted them. *They controlled the man, but He controls them.*
- ✓ Gaining permission, the swine went **rushing down the hill** and into the water and drowned — it’s ironic in two ways — they wanted to avoid the abyss of the watery deep so they went into the depths of the Sea of Galilee; and they went from the unclean man to the unclean pigs!
- ✓ The temptation is to ask, why would Jesus allow the herders to experience such loss? Or, wouldn’t PETA be upset? Or, what happened to the demons? The account is given to demonstrate two truths:
 - The destructive nature and power of Satan and demons. Satan is a killer (Jn. 8:44). [And if the man is freed from the demons by the cost of a herd of pigs, then it is a small price to pay.]
 - The power of Christ to control Satan and his angels and heal (v. 36) demon possession. No one is greater in power than Christ:

- **The limitations of demon possession** — Satan and his demons can only do what Jesus allows them to do. Throughout this story, Jesus is commanding them, and all they can do is ask and plead for something else. They cannot contradict the Son of Man. He is powerful over them. Cf. Rom. 6, 8.

“The Lord Jesus Christ is stronger than the ‘strong man, fully armed’ (Luke 11:21) who is always at war with our souls. The Lord Jesus is able to deliver us from the Devil. He proved his power over him frequently when on earth. He triumphed over him gloriously on the cross. He will never let him snatch any of his sheep from his hand. One day he will crush him and bind him (Romans 16:20; Revelation 20:1-2).” [Ryle, 110-11.]

- The provision for demon possession (and sin)

- ✓ Jesus cast out demons. Should we?
- ✓ Only four NT books refer to casting out demons (Synoptics and Acts).
- ✓ While the disciples were given authority to cast out demons (9:1), no biblical passages ever commend or command believers to cast out demons. (And the disciples cast them out to alleviate suffering, not as a short cut to sanctification — casting out the demon of pride or gluttony or...).
- ✓ Casting out demons was an authentication of the Messianic message (Heb. 2:3-4). So what do we do?
 - Preach the gospel of repentance from sin and faith in Christ (1 Jn. 4:4; 2 Cor. 5:17).
 - Practice the basic pattern of sanctification (put off sin, renew the mind, put on righteousness).
 - Recognize the power of Satan but do not be afraid of him — “Submit therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you” (Js. 4:7). “The Lord God omnipotent reigneth!”

“The greatest weapon which the Church possesses is the Word of God proclaimed in the fulness of His Spirit. Here are the facts, and no fact is truly understood when divorced from the Divine revelation of Holy Scripture. The Gospel unfolded in Scripture is said to be the ‘power of God unto salvation’ (Rom 1:16)... When we face Satan with the sword of the Spirit, we do so with the weapon he dreads most. Our Lord in His temptation used no other weapon. Let the Lord’s people unite to rely in faith and obedience upon the sole mighty Word of God, and God will give peace to them, blessing their efforts in accordance with His sovereign purpose of grace, and using the prayerful proclamation of that Word to bring about the ultimate doom of the adversary.” [Leahy, *Satan Cast Out*, 168.]

3. The Son of Man CONSIDERED (vv. 34-39)

- His rejection by the people (vv. 34-37)

- ✓ Luke doesn’t tell us what the **herdsmen reported** after the event, but it’s not hard to imagine (given the response of the people). It was likely something like, “This guy showed up and cast all the demons from the demoniac into our pigs and *we lost our whole herd!* We are financially ruined.”
- ✓ Notice that they went back into **the city** (six miles) and throughout the **countryside**. Everyone knew. And crowds of **people went out to see what had happened**. And it was true!
 - They **found the man sitting, clothed, and in his right mind** (v. 35b). Everything he was at the beginning of the story has been transformed. (Often demon possessed people were only healed without an apparent transformation into believers; this man is obviously a believer; v. 39).
 - Now the man is with Jesus instead of opposed to Him, sitting (in humility) instead of running, clothed instead of naked, learning instead of resisting, and rational instead of irrational.
 - He is transformed inside and out. He is a picture of what salvation does; it changes us. The curious onlookers clearly saw his transformation. It was obvious. Does our own life reveal that we have been transformed by Christ? Do our lives say, “the power of Christ has visited him?”

- ✓ And everyone saw the man and the Son of Man and repented and believed! Nope.
- ✓ They **became frightened** (v. 35) and in that fear (despite hearing and seeing that the man had been made well, v. 36), **all the people...asked Him to leave them**, because they were afraid.
 - There is a kind of fear that compels people to go to Christ (v. 25); and there is a kind of fear that compels them to run from Christ. That is rejection. And that's what happens here.
 - What makes them fearful? Perhaps the fear of lost income. That seems unlikely. It's more likely, "if Christ transformed this man, what else will he transform? If He is so holy He can command the demons this way, what will He demand of me?" And wanting sin, they reject Him.
 - Their rejection is also an indication of how blinded blind people are (2 Cor. 4:4). They were in the presence of Christ who could liberate them and they wanted nothing to do with Him.
 - So, **He got into a boat and returned** (to Capernaum). Those are haunting words. They rejected Him, *but He left them*. And there is no indication He ever returned to them. He went there to liberate this man and being rejected by the inhabitants of the region, and He left.
 - Jesus did not stay and try and convince them; He simply left (which is what He would instruct the Twelve to do, 9:5). Jesus offers Himself to all, but He also is willing to leave them when they reject Him. This is a warning against rejecting Him — there is danger if He is not persisting in exhorting His hearers.
 - You might have heard the gospel many times. You might know it well. But you aren't interested. If you persist in rejecting Him, He may leave — and reject you. Oh friend, repent and believe in Jesus Christ as the Son of Man who has come to liberate sinners from their sin.

- **His commission for the man (vv. 38-39)**

- ✓ In contrast to the crowds of people, the healed man wanted to **stay with** Jesus (v. 38).
- ✓ He was repeatedly begging (pleading) with Jesus to stay with Him — and Jesus said no. Again, there is great irony: the people begged Jesus to leave them and He answered their request; the man asked to stay with Jesus and He denied him. Because Jesus had a better plan and ministry (v. 39).
- ✓ **Return...and describe...he proclaimed.** Often after a healing like this, Jesus commands the healed people to remain silent; here He commands him to proclaim. Perhaps it is because the man is in Gentile territory and the message wouldn't be misunderstood as a political challenge by the Jews.
- ✓ Regardless of the reason, Jesus left, but His testimony remained. The man **proclaimed** (preached) the message of the **great things** (gospel good news) of what Christ had done for him.
(Thanksgiving week would be a good time to remind yourself of the good work of Christ for you — maybe even this week, cultivate joy in Christ by praying prayers of gratitude and not request.)

- ✓ The commissioning of the healed demoniac reminds us what God sends all his followers to do:
 - It is another indication in Luke that **the gospel is for all men**, even Gentiles (good news for us!).
 - It is a reminder of **the simplicity of preaching the gospel**: “what has God done for you?”
 - It is a reminder of **the evaluation of one’s ministry** — “are we faithful to do what He says?” ***He went away proclaiming...*** points to the faithfulness of the man; while his desires were contrary to Christ’s command, he faithfully carried out the task. How people responded was irrelevant to Luke’s account: he wants us only to see the obedient faithfulness of the healed man.

CONCLUSION: We have an enemy.

But he is a defeated enemy. He still tempts. He still actively works in the world system to influence our thinking and lead us astray. And he directs his demons to work against us.

But he is a defeated enemy. He can do nothing against us apart from God permissively allowing him. He control us, inhabit us, or defeat us. He has rejected Christ and his followers reject Christ. But he has been rejected and defeated by Christ. And we are safe. And we have a message of hope to declare to those who are ensnared by him.

Do not be overwhelmed and discouraged by his influence.

Do be active in declaring the truth of the victorious Christ.

BENEDICTION: **Jude 24-25**