

Deliverance from Evil
 Luke 8:26-39
 Tampa Covenant Church
 16 March 2025

Proposition: Through his person and work, Jesus Christ delivered us from the power of evil and commissioned us to testify of his goodness and grace to others.

FCF: Fear leading to unbelief over faith in Jesus Christ.

(#1) Introduction:

We're continuing our study in Luke's gospel; discovering each week how Jesus came to seek and save the lost. In our text today, Jesus encounters a demon possessed man who's suffering under the torment of evil. Not something we deal with regularly in our day and age. The narrative is horrific to say the least but amid the horror and mayhem, something beautiful emerges through the power of our Savior. So, I pray this true story that took place so long ago serves to assure us we can rest in the person and work of Christ and answer the call to serve as his faithful witnesses of his glorious gospel. We'll look at the story **(#2) under 4** headings: Torment, Deliverance, Rejection and Witness. So, let's go to our Lord in prayer as we open our hearts to **(#3) receive his word.**

A Horrific Torment: *Real perpetuation of evil (vv.26-27)*

(#4) v.1 of the text reads, "*Then they sailed to the country of the Gerasenes,¹ which is opposite Galilee.*" Recall from last week, it's Jesus who initiates this boat trip to the other side of the lake. And on the way over, they encountered a storm. To which, Jesus rebuked the winds and the raging waves, leaving the disciples in awe and utter astonishment in seeking to come to grips with his identity. I bet the remainder of the trip may have been a little awkward as the disciples were trying to process everything. Now, the exact location of the Gerasenes is unknown but it was on the eastern side of the sea of Galilee and all scholars agree; Jesus was enroute to Gentile territory.

And there was no parade or welcoming party waiting on the other side. When **(#5) they arrived,** Luke tells us, *Jesus stepped on the land and was greeted by a man who'd been running around naked for a long time and living among the tombs.* How'd you like to go on a luxury cruise and get off the ship to this situation? It's the last thing you'd expect because it's not normal. **(#6) In v.29,** we're told this man was guarded, bound with chains and shackles but he would break the bonds and be driven by the demon into the desert. **(#7) Mark tells** us that "*no one had the strength to subdue him. Night and day and among the tombs and mountains he would be crying out and cutting himself with stones.*" This man was isolated beyond the margins of society and completely incapable of normal social contact with others. And one of the many ironies in this story is that no chain or shackle could subdue him but in reality, he was chained and shackled under the vicious tyranny of demonic oppression.

(#8 Blank) Living in modern western society, we have a tendency to overlook the relevancy of these kind of texts. Imagine one of our visiting missionaries sharing a mission's moment. On this particular Sunday, they share an eyewitness testimony of an encounter they experienced with demonic forces on the mission field. How would we respond? With skepticism (yeah right)? or would we allow the testimony

to wake us up to the reality that the presence and threat of demonic forces still exist in our world?² It's often said, there are two errors we can make concerning demons. 1) Deny their existence. They love this because it makes their job easier in placing a bullseye on the naysayer's back. 2) Or we can attribute every ill we encounter to demons. So much so that we ignore the depravity lurking in our own hearts.³ So we don't want to blindly accept every testimony concerning demonic activity but at the same time, we don't want to be dismissive of things we can't explain. If we acknowledge the reality of demonic forces beyond the physical realm and also recognize that there is evil that befalls us due our own sin, it serves as a delicate balance in how we view spiritual warfare as redeemed Christians.

In the spiritual realm, there's only one devil but there are many demons who stand ready to do their master's bidding. The 1st century Jewish world did not ignore this reality. Jewish historian, Josephus tells the story of how a Jewish exorcist sought to cure the demon-possessed by holding "[plant] roots" under the victim's nose in attempting to lure the demon out into the open.⁴ And the gospel writers, were not shy in detailing the evil demons brought to bear on their human subjects. It wasn't necessarily evil in a moral or ethical sense but the kind of evil we see in the text: Evil in the form of physical and mental affliction, self-destructing and isolating behaviors. All entailing suffering and torment of the highest order.⁵ And nowhere in scripture do we read that Jesus dismissed demonic activity as fairy tale.⁶ That's why he taught us to pray specifically in that 6th petition, "*Lead me not into temptation but deliver me from evil.*" (#9) This brings us to our second heading...

A Powerful Deliverance: *The Power of Jesus over demonic forces (vv.28-33)*

(#10) Here in v.28, we're told when the demon-possessed man 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 not to torment me.*" Another irony of sorts; the one doing the tormenting is begging not to be tormented. And notice he recognizes Jesus as the "Son of the Most High God."⁷ Certainly, sounds like the answer to the disciple's question on the boat ride over. Now this demon wasn't worshipping Jesus; it's not in his nature to give glory to God. But he recognizes Jesus' power, authority and true identity. This isn't the first time we see this in Luke's gospel. (#11) In chap 4, Jesus is in the synagogue and there was a man possessed with a demon who cried out, "*Ha! What have you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are—the Holy one of God.*" And later in the chap, Jesus is healing the sick and diseased and we're told demons came out of (#12) many people, crying, "*You are the Son of God.*" Luke notes, Jesus wouldn't allow them to speak because they knew he was the Christ (Messiah). The one who came to deliver the spiritually oppressed from evil.

(#13) In this instance, look what Jesus does. After commanding the demon to come out of the man, he asks his name. We discover his name is "Legion" meaning this wasn't just one demon. Could've been hundreds or thousands...no one knows for sure.⁸ Doesn't really matter because despite their overwhelming numbers, they recognize (#14) Jesus' power. And they beg him not to cast them into the Abyss, (bottomless pit), the place of their once and for all final doom.⁹ Instead, they beg him to let them enter into a large herd of pigs feeding along the hillside. And with Jesus' permission, the demons come out of the man and into the pigs and the herd rushed down the steep bank into the lake and drowned.

Now that's bizarre. A lot of ink has been spilled in trying to make sense of this. Critics would say that Jesus was cruel to the pigs. And we can try to get him off the hook by saying the demons were responsible; all he did was give permission, they killed the pigs. Or we can say according to OT law, pigs were ceremonially unclean so who cares. To get bogged down in those details is to miss the miracle that actually took place. The fact that the demons went into the pigs confirms the fact that they came out of the man.¹⁰ The death of the pigs in a sense grants us a vivid picture of what victory looks like in the spiritual realm. And more importantly, shows how a tormented life, made in the image of God supersedes the lives of animals. (#15) In our third heading, we see how this powerful deliverance was met with a powerful rejection.

A Powerful Rejection: *The folly of unbelief*

(#16) The herdsmen witnessed the stampede, went and told everyone in the city and countryside, they went out and saw everything themselves then they went straight to Jesus. There they found the man, sitting at the feet of Jesus, clothed in his right mind. This man was healed! No longer being tormented by demons; he's now being tutored by his Savior. No longer running around naked; he's now fully clothed in his (#17 Blank) right mind. Growing up in church, Sunday nights were usually set aside for the congregation to testify. And my siblings and I loved it!! It was a break from the long sermons but more so it was hilarious. Because we always anticipated someone jumping up saying, *"I thank God for allowing me to see another day; he woke me up this morning and clothed me in my right mind."* We couldn't wait to get home to mimic the testimonies and laugh about it. Well, that was then but now it's no laughing matter. When you reflect on the horrific state of this man's mind and anyone else's who's been delivered from the evil of demonic forces; this passage showcases the beauty and the hope of transformation that comes through the power of Jesus Christ. (#18) But that wasn't the case with those who came in from the city and the countryside. They responded in fear at the sight of the man now transformed. Luke tells us they were seized with great fear to the point that they asked Jesus to leave the region. To which Jesus got into the boat and returned.

(#19 Blank) You would think, after witnessing such an amazing miracle there would've been all kinds of rejoicing and celebration. *We don't have to guard this guy anymore, no more running around naked, and no more howling from the cemetery because obviously he's been healed!* So, what are they afraid of... The herdsmen might have been fearing their financial losses. In Mark's account, 2K pigs rushed down that hill to their death. But maybe everyone was no kidding afraid of Jesus and his power to change their lives. Think about it, it's obvious the man needed to change; he was an absolute mess. However, in their minds, there was nothing in them that needed to change: We're good Jesus, we live in houses, we have good neighbors, we make a decent living, and life is good; right here, right now; why change?

Don't need you and your disciples coming over here on your boat, scurrying around trying to change us. It's another tragic irony in the story and it's all too common in our modern world. Because on the surface those who are far away from God may think they have it all together and maybe they do in many ways. But spiritually speaking, they fail to see they don't have it all together in terms of reconciling themselves to a Holy God. They too need to be delivered from evil; but in this case it's willful rebellion against God. (#20) The apostle Paul says, *"For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God's law; indeed, it cannot."* And that's what we see here; the townspeople; their minds were hostile

toward God. They didn't chase after Jesus with pick axes and shuffles. In their unbelief, they politely asked him to leave and that's exactly what he did. But the mission to seek and save the lost wouldn't be thwarted by the town people's unbelief; (#21) because the Lord always preserves a faithful remnant. This brings us to the last heading,

A Faithful Witness: *Faithfully serving as Christ's Witnesses*

(#22) And as Jesus gets into the boat we read in vv.38-39, 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.* Notice, Jesus tells him to declare how much "God" has done for you but Luke writes, *"he proclaimed how much Jesus had done for him."* This really speaks to how the power of God manifests itself in Christ in delivering us from evil. This is the gospel message and our call is to faithfully proclaim it in our individual contexts. Maybe some of our stories aren't as extreme as we've seen in this text but every follower of Christ has a story to tell of their deliverance from the evil of sin and misery.

(#23 Blank) The death of the pigs not only provided a portrait of victory in the spiritual realm but also revealed the great cost associated with deliverance. We've all heard the old adage, *"there's no such thing as a free lunch."* Meaning, if you think, you're getting something for free; think again. Because someone, somewhere, somehow had to pay for it. Every 4th of July and Veteran's Day we hear the mantra, *"freedom is not free."* Someone had to lose their freedom in order for us to enjoy the benefits of freedom. In the same way, the freedom we now have in Christ was absolutely free to us but very costly to him.

He's the very one who exercised all power and authority in making demons beg for mercy. But in paying our sin debt, he humbled himself by submitting to the horror of the cross and its shame. There he hung naked in being isolated from the Father and dehumanized by man. Although, he was chained and shackled by the weight of our sin, he never broke loose. Instead, he bled and died and was buried in a borrowed tomb. He experienced the torment of evil to the highest degree. And in so doing, brought the salvation healing we so desperately need in this world. Through his glorious resurrection from the dead, we've been formed into a community of people who have been given a new heart, a new record, a new hope and a beautiful testimony to share with others. And now that our Savior is seated at the right hand of the Father; we know he's made good on his promise to send us a helper in the Holy Spirit. Who empowers us to serve as faithful witnesses to the good news of the gospel.

And we don't begin our witnessing journey by learning a technique or methodology; we begin with prayer. The man who was healed had to return to his hometown, surrounded by unbelievers. In similar fashion, we live in a culture enslaved to the folly of self-sufficiency over the promise of freedom in the gospel. So, it goes without saying, we'll encounter challenges. So, we pray for wisdom, courage and discernment. Specifically, we ask God to help us love him more each new day. When we fully realize it's only by his grace we're able to greet another day, clothed in our right minds; we can't help but desire to love him more. Second, we ask God to help us love one another more in community. Because the Christian life was not meant to be lived alone but in community. The beauty of community is seen in its rich diversity stemming from the wisdom of God. Finally, we pray our love for God and each other will overflow in love for our neighbors. Those we come in contact with inside and outside of our web of

relationships. As the Lord provides opportunities for spiritual conversations, we put away arrogance and practice charity while we listen to another's story. And we don't just declare the gospel and move on, we continue to dialogue the gospel in telling our story and how it relates to God's mission of redemption through our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. And we leave the results to him.

Conclusion:

Last week I appealed to my catechism class for help with the sermon and asked them to give me a definition of evil: They were all spring loaded with various responses: Murder, natural disasters, darkness, things you say, violence against other people. And then Rocco Mendoza blurted out, *"it's the opposite of good."* I said, Rock-Daddy, I think you nailed it. Church, evil is real but by the grace of God, *we will not be overcome by evil but we will overcome evil with good.* Because we belong to Christ. We have been delivered from evil. We have been sealed by his Holy Spirit and marked as Christ's very own forever. And may he continue to confirm that truth in our hearts and minds for his glory and his glory alone.

¹ There are three options for the location of the “country of the Gerasenes,” each of which is located in relative proximity to the Sea of Galilee: Gergesa, a city on the east bank of the Sea of Galilee at modern-day El Kursi; Gerasa, located at modern-day Jerash; Gadara, located six miles (10 kilometers) southeast of Galilee at modern-day Um Qeis. Gerasa is the preferred reading of Mark and Luke in the earliest extant witnesses. Gerasa was a well-known city in the larger Roman world located about 35 miles (56 kilometers) southeast of Galilee. S. M. Kraeger, “Gerasenes,” in *The Lexham Bible Dictionary*, ed. John D. Barry et al. (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2016).

² Darrell L. Bock, *Luke, The NIV Application Commentary*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1996), 243.

³ Philip Graham Ryken, *Luke*, ed. Richard D. Phillips, Philip Graham Ryken, and Daniel M. Doriani, vol. 1, *Reformed Expository Commentary* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2009), 393–406.

⁴ David Seal, “Demon,” in *The Lexham Bible Dictionary*, ed. John D. Barry et al. (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2016).

⁵ Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, vol. 1 (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1997), 643.

⁶ *Ibid*, 645.

⁷ The reference to “Son of the Most High God” rather than “Son of God” is typical of Gentile polytheism, designating Jesus as the Son of the one, true, transcendent God. “Son of the Most High God” identifies the authority of Jesus and the universality of his power as the authority and power of God Almighty. James R. Edwards, *The Gospel according to Luke*, ed. D. A. Carson, *The Pillar New Testament Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.; Nottingham, England: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company; Apollos, 2015), 250.

⁸ Edwards posits in his commentary, “The name “Legion” was a painful reminder of Roman domination. A *legio* was the largest military unit in the Roman army, consisting of some 5,600 soldiers.” Edwards, 250.

⁹ Ryken, 393–406.

¹⁰ *Ibid*, 393–406.