

## **“A Great Savior”**

### **Luke 8:26-39**

Last week we saw the power of God over the natural world demonstrated by Jesus Christ. He rebuked the wind and the waves and they obeyed him. What man can do this? No man, such power only belongs to the Creator.

As we continue in Luke 8 we see the power of God over the spiritual world demonstrated by Jesus Christ. In our text this morning we see how Jesus delivered a man from deep spiritual bondage. Just as Jesus had the power to command the elements of nature, so Jesus demonstrated that he had the power to command the spiritual world as well. In this text we see a great bondage, a great deliverance, and a great commission and we see Jesus revealed as the great Savior. By the grace of God, may all of us leave here today with a renewed focus on Jesus Christ our great Savior.

### **I. A Great Bondage**

Verse 26 tells us that Jesus and the disciples arrived on the other side of the Sea of Galilee, at the country of the Gadarenes. This region was named after the principle city in that area: Gadara. It is located near the south-east end of the Sea of Galilee. The ruins of this city are still there today. The Bible never mentions this city by name, but it is well-known in history. It was an important fortress city in

the region. And it was also a center of Greek culture. It was considered one of the most Hellenized cities in the area. The Jewish population in this city had adopted Greek culture. Because of this, the city enjoyed special political and economic privileges.

Gadara was one of the primary cities that made up the Decapolis, a league of 10 cities and the surrounding regions. It was an important city for Roman military and economic control in the region. During periods when the Jews revolted against foreign powers, this city, though it had a large population of Jews, often sided with the foreign powers. This was the case during the Maccabean revolts, the resistance to Pompey, and the First Jewish Revolt against Rome. They would take part in the brutal suppression of Jewish resistance to foreign rule. This context gives us some insight into why the people in this area responded to Jesus as we see in this text.

As Jesus and the disciples disembarked they were met by a man in great bondage. This passage tells us quite a bit about man. Verse 27 tells us he came out from that city. He had lived in that city. Whether he had been born there or had moved there later in life we don't know. But he had come out from that city.

Verse 27 also tells us he had been demon-possessed for a long time. This wasn't a passing affliction. This wasn't a new bondage. For a long time this had been his life. He lived under this bondage. It had been going on for a long time and there was no end in sight.

This verse also tells us that he did not wear any clothing. He went about naked. This demon possession had robbed him of his dignity. It is always the nature of sin to rob mankind of his dignity. Man is not a mere creature, but he was made in the image of God. God gave man innate dignity. Sin robs man of his dignity. The world rejoices in behavior that robs men and women of their dignity. Shameful behavior is celebrated and encouraged. Our society encourages people to do shameful acts shamelessly. But to have no shame for sin is not a sign of freedom. It is the opposite. It is evidence of bondage.

So it was for the demon possessed man in this text. He had been robbed of his dignity. He had no shame. And as a result, he did not wear any clothing.

The last detail we see in verse 27 is that he did not live in a house, but in the tombs. A house is where people live. Tombs are where people are placed when they die. This man lived among the dead. Driven out from human society he lived in the tombs.

Living in the tombs indicates a deeper separation that we might not immediately think about. Contact with a grave made a person ceremonially unclean under the Mosaic Law. Numbers 19:16 stipulates, “Whosoever toucheth . . . a grave, shall be unclean seven days.” By living in the tombs this man was perpetually unclean. Even if he had wanted to, he would not have been allowed to take part in any form of worship as part of the covenant community. He was ceremonially cut off.

In verse 28 we see that this demon possessed man saw Jesus as a tormentor, not a deliverer. The demons had such complete possession of this man that it was their voice that spoke to Jesus. So complete was his possession that he had no control over his faculties, at least at certain times. Here was Jesus, One who had the power to deliver this man from demon possession, but he had no power to ask Jesus for deliverance. Instead, it was the demons who addressed Jesus. And notice what the demons say to Jesus.

First, they cause the possessed man to fall down before Jesus. As we will see in this text, this is a powerful man. He is able to break chains and is a terror and a scourge to the countryside by the power of the demons indwelling him. Yet the demons, who know the identity of Jesus, cause this man to fall down before Him. And the first thing they said was, “What have I to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of God most high?”

“Why have you come? This doesn’t concern you. You are God. We are just possessing a sinful man. What have I to do with thee?”

Then the demons appear to ask for mercy: “I beseech thee, torment me not.” James 2:19 says, “Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble.” The devils know who Jesus is and they know that one day he will judge them. And so these demons said to Jesus, “Torment me not.” This demon possessed man saw Jesus as a tormentor, and not a deliverer.

In verse 29 we are told that the demons would often seize this man. His behavior was so bad and his condition was so notorious that he was kept bound with chains and in fetters. No one could help this man. The best they could do was bind him securely so that he could not hurt anyone else. But not even this was successful.

Under the power of demon possession he would break the chains and fetters. The demons would drive him out into the wilderness. Again, away from other people. Away from the comfort and fellowship of friends and family. This is just another aspect of the terrible oppression this man suffered.

The final detail I want us to consider about this demon possessed man from this text is found in verse 30 where we read his name was Legion for all the demons that possessed him. A legion was the largest unit in the Roman army and at this time in history it had a strength of about 6000 men. It seems almost impossible that one man could be possessed by so many demons, and it could be hyperbole. Though we do know from Mark's account that it was a herd of about 2000 swine that these demons went on to possess (Mark 5:13). Regardless of the exact number of demons, this was a mighty and terrible oppression. The demon-possessed man in this text was under great bondage.

Now let's make application to ourselves. If you are outside of Christ, if you are not a Christian, you are in great bondage. Bondage to sin. The Bible warns that you are under the power of Satan.

Listen to the description we find in Ephesians 2:1-3 about unbelievers, “And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins; Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others.”

II Corinthians 4:4 says, “The god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not.”

II Timothy 2:26 describes unbelievers as in the “snare of the devil” and “taken captive by him at his will.”

Just as the possessed man’s bondage cost him terribly, so bondage to sin and Satan comes at a terrible cost. Sin is the way of death (Romans 6:23). Sin is a poison that destroys all it touches. When we sin we act against ourselves, against others, and worst of all, against God.

And one of the greatest dangers of sin is its subtlety. Sin, on the surface, in the moment, doesn’t seem so bad. Sin agrees with our nature. We like it. And though we hear a thousand warnings we carry on, paying no heed to the danger until it is eternally too late. Do not be deceived. There is no freedom in sin. Only bondage and death.

So far from our text we have looked at the great bondage suffered by the demon-possessed man. By the grace of God you may not be possessed by a legion of demons, but if you are not a Christian you too are in great bondage. Sin reigns within you. Though you may do as you please, what pleases you is sin and sin only leads one place: death. Like the demon-possessed man you see Jesus not as a deliverer but as a tormentor. What you need is great deliverance. And that is what we will see next in our text.

## **II. A Great Deliverance**

The beginning of verse 29 tells us that Jesus commended the unclean spirit to come out of the man. And it seems that the words from the demons that we looked at earlier were in response to this command. Jesus commanded them to come out of the man. And the demons replied, “What have I to do with thee?” And then they went on, “I beseech thee, torment me not.”

The command of Jesus was enough. The demons could not hope to receive any reprieve from him. There was no negotiation here. The demons had no hope of receiving any mercy from Jesus. But they tried

In verse 31 the devils asked Jesus not to command them to go out into the deep. This is the judgment the demons will ultimately face. They will be bound in hell. Cast into the lake of fire.

Just like us, the demons do not know when the ultimate day of judgment will come. But sinful man and demon alike to see any day of judgment as having come too soon. We seek a reprieve from God's day of judgment, not to repent but to press on in sin. If you are outside of Christ do not abuse the mercy of God. Every day that God suffers this wicked world to go on is a day of mercy. Repent, for a day of judgment is coming.

In verse 32 the demons requested Jesus to suffer them to possess a near-by heard of swine. This is an interesting request. First, it is interesting that there was a heard of swine near-by. These animals would be offensive to conservative Jews. But remember, this was a very Hellenized portion of Israel. Greek influence was very strong. There were also a large number of Gentiles who lived in this area. These swine may have belonged to Gentiles. Or they may have belonged to Jewish farmers who sold them to Gentiles. Regardless of who owned them, a heard of swine was probably not something you would have found in Galilee or Judea.

Because the swine were unclean animals, the demons may have thought that Jesus wouldn't care. Maybe these unclean animals were outside His sphere of authority or at least outside His sphere of concern. "We may lose our human host, but let's try to get the best, most secure accommodations we can right now. Jesus, let us go into these swine."



What did Jesus do with this request?

Remarkably, the end of verse 32 tells us, “And he suffered them.” The Lord granted this request. Did the Lord make a deal with the devil? Did the Lord compromise or bend his command?

God forbid. There is no hint of compromise or negotiation with these demons. Jesus was going to deliver this man and these demons would be left with nothing. The man would be set free and the demons would not possess anyone else. And remarkably, in suffering the demons to do as they requested, Jesus accomplished both of these things.

Learn from this that the judgment of God is not bound by the will of the creature. Woe to the wicked who think they can bargain with God. Woe to the wicked who think they are free in their sin. Woe unto those who think they can escape Christ’s authority. You cannot escape God’s judgment.

When God releases His restraints: the restraints of conscience, the restraints of institutions, the restraints of authority, the restraints of providential hinderance don’t mistake that for freedom. Those restraints are part of the common mercy of God that holds back human wickedness. When God removes those restraints He is removing His mercy and bringing you unto judgment. We are so inclined by our nature to be contrary to righteousness that we bring ourselves to judgment. If God lets you go into a sinful path you desire be assured it will ultimately lead to the

judgment God has appointed. If you will not submit yourself to the grace of God in Jesus Christ, you will face God's judgment.

There is no escape. You can't bargain with God. You can't escape His kingdom, the realm of His authority. And we see that clearly in this text.

The swine immediately ran into the lake and drowned (v. 33). This is unnatural behavior for swine. Pigs are extremely intelligent. Studies have found that pigs are more intelligent than dogs or even chimpanzees. Other heard animals have been known to foolishly self-destruct, like sheep following each other off of a cliff, but pigs don't do that. They are very intelligent.

Pigs can also swim. They are natural swimmers, that is, they are born with the ability to swim. They are naturally buoyant. Because of their large lungs and their high body fat percentage they float. It is difficult for a pig to drown.

The mass self-extermination we see in this passage is unnatural to swine. Whether these swine destroyed themselves of their own volition, under the influence of the demons, or by the direct command of God, we see God accomplished His will in this.

Throughout Scripture when we see animals behaving in an unnatural way it is often a sign that God is at work. When Balaam's donkey spoke, when the milk cows left their calves in the land of the Philistines and returned the ark to Israel, when ravens fed Elijah in the wilderness, when a great fish swallowed Jonah: all

these times, and more, these animals acted contrary to their nature according to the will of their Creator.

So it was for this herd of swine. They would not serve as hosts for these demons. God would not allow it. And so these swine cast themselves into the Sea of Galilee and were destroyed. This was the end of these demons. We hear of them no more. They were cast out of their hosts. First the man and then these swine. Jesus triumphed over Legion.

We see the evidence of this great deliverance in verse 35. The wild man now sat at the feet of Jesus, clothed, and in his right mind. No longer driven as a madman, but sitting. Jesus had brought him rest. No longer naked, but clothed. Jesus had put away his shame and brought him dignity. No longer insane, but in his right mind. Jesus had brought him sanity.

So it is when Jesus has brought us great deliverance from sin. We are no longer driven by our lusts, by our sins, but we can rest in Jesus Christ.

We no longer live in shame, or worse, oblivious to the shame sin brings upon us. Rather we are clothed with Christ's righteousness. He returns to us our dignity.

We are no longer being conformed to the insanity of this world, but our minds are renewed in Jesus Christ.

The power of sin is great, the bondage in sin is terrible, the end of sin is death. Praise God for our great deliverance! Jesus has broken the power of sin. He

has set us free from bondage to sin. And he has delivered us from the the judgment of sin: death itself. Praise God for our great Savior!

Notice the response of the people of that city when they saw the deliverance Jesus had brought in verses 34 and 35. Those who took care of the swine went into the city and surrounding region and told the people what had happened. I wonder what they said. Did they go into the city and say, “The demoniac has been healed!”

Or did they say, “The herd of swine is gone!” Remember, this was a huge number of pigs. Mark’s gospel says about 2000.

As you would expect, the people came to see what had happened. “What do you mean, the pigs are gone?” or “What do you mean, the demon possessed man is healed?”

They went to see for themselves. We are not told how they responded to the loss of the pigs, but we are told how they responded when they saw “the man, out of whom the devils were departed, sitting at the feet of Jesus, clothed, and in his right mind.” What does the end of verse 35 say?

They were afraid. This is the same response we saw last week from the disciples. When the disciples saw the power of God demonstrated by Jesus over creation they were afraid. When the people in this text saw the power of God to deliver from Satan’s dominion demonstrated by Jesus, they were afraid. It is the same word.

They were terrified. In verse 37 we are told that they were taken with “great fear.” They were mega afraid, super afraid.

Why?

You would think that they would be happy. This man had been a terror, now he was tranquil. He had lived like a beast in the tombs, but now he sat at the feet of Jesus as a man, clothed and in his right mind. So why were they afraid?

They knew how to handle this man when he was demon possessed. They could drive him out. They could chain him up. They could make him live out in the tombs like a wild animal. But they didn’t know how to respond when he was delivered.

This was something they did not understand. This was something beyond them. This was a power they could not control, so they asked Jesus to leave. They besought him to depart from them.

There are two possible outcomes when you are exposed to the gospel of Jesus Christ, the great Savior. You will either experience great deliverance or you will seek separation from Him. You can’t temper the gospel: take the parts you like, reject the parts you don’t like. You can’t control the gospel. You can’t be neutral to the gospel. Either you accept Jesus Christ at His terms, by the grace of God, or you reject Him. There is no middle ground. Are you like the man seated at the feet of Jesus, the great Savior, or are you among those who ask Jesus to depart? Will you know God in His mercy or will you face Him in judgment?

And as a Christian, don't be surprised when the world rejects you. Men love darkness because their deeds are evil. When you were living as a slave to sin, even if you were exceptionally obnoxious and destructive to others, the world knew how to handle that. They could ignore you. They could push you away. They could put constraints upon you to limit the effect your sin had on others. But now that you are a Christian they don't know what to do with you.

They want nothing to do with the power of God that can bring freedom from such bondage. The world might like the results of the gospel, but they don't like the terms of unconditional surrender, so they reject Christ and so they will reject you. If you face that sort of rejection in your life from friends or family or the world in general, don't be surprised or discouraged. Count it a blessing to suffer as our great Savior suffered.

In Acts 5:41 after the apostles were publicly reprimanded and beaten we read, "And they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name."

I Peter 2:23 says, "Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps."

Listen to the words of Jesus in John 15:18-19, "If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you. If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you."

Do not be discouraged if the world rejects you. The Lord accepts you. Find your rest and your identity in Him.

So far from our text we have seen a great bondage, and then we saw a great deliverance. And we have made application to ourselves. In sin, we are in great bondage. In Jesus Christ there is great deliverance. The final point I want to consider from this text is a great commission.

### **III. A Great Commission**

Verse 37 tells us that after the people of that region asked Jesus to leave He got back into the boat and returned to the other side of the lake. Beware of rejecting the Lord, for He may leave and you will be left in your sin. Isaiah 55:6 says, "Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near." The people of that region asked Jesus to leave, and he left.

But before Jesus left, the man who had been delivered made a request. Verse 38 tells us that he wanted to stay with Jesus. This man who had been in bondage for a long time, when he was set free, he did not want to return to the life he had lived before. His desires had changed. He wanted to stay with his great Savior.

So it is for us. When we experience great deliverance, our affections change. Our desire will be toward our great Savior.

Now look at what Jesus said to this man. In verse 39 Jesus said, "Return to thine own house, and shew how great things God hath done unto thee." Jesus sent

him away. Specifically, Jesus told him to go to his house. He was told to go and declare the great things God had done unto him.

The rest of verse 39 tells us that this man obeyed. For years he had been in great spiritual bondage and had been driven by his demonic masters to do all sorts of things. Now he had a new master, Jesus Christ. Jesus asked him to do something that was not his expressed desire. He wanted to stay with Jesus. Jesus sent him home to declare how God had delivered him. This man was no longer possessed, no longer driven against his will. But his will was now submitted to God, and we see in this text that he obeyed. He declared his deliverance in the whole city. He glorified Jesus, his great Savior.

You and I, fellow Christian, are also under command from Jesus Christ. Having experienced a great deliverance from a great bondage we also have a great commission. How we long to be with Jesus! “Lord if only we could be where you are!” As Paul said, “For me to die is gain.”

But the Lord doesn't bring us immediately into His bodily presence. He has ordained work for us to accomplish. Jesus commands us to go out and testify to others about the great things God has done for us. Like the man in this text, may we be faithful with this commission. Declare to others what great things God has done for you. Magnify Jesus Christ before others. Rejoice in and glorify your great Savior.



From our text this morning we have seen a great bondage, a great deliverance, and a great commission and in all of these we have seen Jesus revealed as a great Savior.

All of us, apart from Christ, are under great bondage. We may think we are free, but in reality if we do not serve God we labor under the yoke of Satan. There is no middle ground. You are either for Christ or against Him.

If you are a Christian, you have experienced great deliverance. Your deliverance was no less significant than the deliverance of the man in this text. You were a dead man under the power of Satan. By the grace of God you were brought to life in Jesus Christ.

As this man was given a commission from Christ, so you Christian, have a great commission. Jesus commands you to bear testimony to others of what God has done for you.