

Message #35

Luke 8:26-39

Several years ago, I listened to a man give his testimony and it was fascinating. Prior to his salvation he was a rough, rowdy character. He was known to be a heavy drinker. He spent time in jail because of it. He was abusive to his wife physically, verbally and emotionally. She was on the verge of leaving him. He was at times hostile to his own children. One day he went to church and he heard the message of the saving grace of God. Sitting in that service, he turned his life over to Jesus Christ.

The drinking stopped. There was no more time spent in jail. There was no more physical, verbal or emotional abuse of either his wife or children. Jesus Christ completely transformed this man and revolutionized his life.

Now I am certain that most people in this sanctuary would say, "Praise God." What a fantastic testimony of the power of God. But that is not quite how everyone saw it.

One of the first things this man did was to report to his family what had happened to him. He told his father and mother, his brothers and sisters, his aunts and uncles. Now you would think that when this family saw that he no longer got drunk, got thrown in jail, was not abusive that they would have rejoiced and wanted a relationship with the same Savior who made such a remarkable difference in his life. But that is not what happened.

Some in his family thought he had lost his mind (as if drunkenness, jail and abuse is the mark of a well-developed mind). Some thought he had become a religious fanatic. Most of them sort of disowned him in this sense that when they would have some of their get together, he was not invited. What this story teaches us is this:

WHEN JESUS CHRIST DRAMATICALLY CHANGES A LIFE, NOT ALL PEOPLE ARE HAPPY ABOUT IT AND SOME PEOPLE REACT WITH NEGATIVISM AND REJECTION.

One thing you may know with certainty and that is when Jesus Christ transforms a person, it won't be the majority who will favorably respond to that; it will be the minority. Many will reject the person and respond negatively to the new life.

That lesson was one Christ's disciples would learn here. Jesus Christ was in the process of training His disciples for ministry. In this context, Christ goes head-to-head with demonic forces and demonstrates that He has total sovereign power over them. What these disciples would see and learn is that Jesus Christ was rejected by the people. **Christ wanted His disciples to realize that powerful, impacting ministry will not be popular with most of the people.**

Dr. Luke tells this story, with precise details. There are six lessons we may see concerning a Christ-like ministry:

LESSON #1 – A Christ-like ministry tries to minister to new areas of people. **8:26**

There has been some debate as to where the “country of the Gerasenes” is specifically located. The problem is further complicated by the fact that Matthew calls it the “country of the Gadarenes” (Matt. 8:28).

What we learn here is that this area was “opposite Galilee” on the other side of the Sea. From this we learn that this was primarily a Gentile area, which was known for its polytheistic Roman and Greek religions. This is a very significant point. **Jesus Christ was in the middle of a program specifically aimed at Israel, which is one reason why he will not allow this Gentile to travel with Him when He leaves (8:38-39).**

What Christ is doing here is expanding His ministry and taking a brief moment of time in a program aimed at Israel to reach out to the Gentile area. What would the disciples learn from this? They would learn that they need to be willing to take the Gospel to different people who live in different places. We need to remember this even when our ministry is primarily focused on one area.

LESSON #2 – A Christ-like ministry tries to minister to the worst people. **8:27**

Of all of the people that Christ could have initially selected, he chooses a demon-possessed man who does not wear any clothes, who lives in a cemetery.

As soon as Christ got on the land, He was met by a demon-possessed man, who was not wearing clothes, who lived in tombs. Cemeteries were usually outside the city on some hill. That is where this guy lived out in the cemetery. This is a real demon-possessed man. Luke is the only one who points out the man did not wear any clothes.

There are three observations I want to make about real demonic activity:

Observation #1 - Demonic activity is closely linked to public nudity.

Satan and his demonic forces are closely connected to people who remove their clothing. Now certainly there is nothing wrong with this in the context of marriage, but outside of marriage it is demonic. In fact, in the Tribulation when demons are dominating the world, public nudity will be the norm (Revelation 16:14-15). It will be the rare person who will have any moral wits at all.

Observation #2 - Demonic activity is closely linked to dark morbidity.

Demonic activity is closely connected to darkness and death. It is no coincidence that Satanic and demonic people wear black clothing and seem to be controlled by darkness. It is not uncommon for people connected to demons to be drawn to cemeteries, caskets and things connected to death.

Demons are closely connected to suicides and as we near the Rapture of the Church, more and more of this activity will intensify.

Observation #3 - Demonic activity is closely linked to private isolationism.

People who get caught up with Satanic things are often loners, who isolate themselves from others.

Jesus Christ can change the worst of sinners. Jesus Christ can transform demon-possessed Satanists.

LESSON #3 – A Christ-like ministry confronts the demonic world. **8:28-33**

When the demon-possessed man saw Jesus Christ, he cried out and he fell down before Him. He immediately recognized Him. Now demons do not worship Jesus Christ, they worship Satan, but they bow before Jesus Christ because they know who He is and what He is capable of doing. There are five facts we see here concerning the demonic world:

Fact #1 - Demons know Christ's identity. **8:28b**

These demons knew they were in the presence of Jesus, the Son of the Most High God. What that means is that they know that God is much higher than Satan, to whom they have given their allegiance. Those fallen angels were created by the Most High God and they know Jesus Christ is His Son.

The fact is, these demons had a better grasp of who Jesus Christ was than His own disciples (8:25). **What we learn from this is that knowing who Jesus Christ is and having a relationship with Jesus Christ are two different things.** People can know about Jesus Christ and end up burning in hell like these demons.

Fact #2 - Demons know their own destiny. **8:28c, 31**

When the demons beg Christ not to “torment” them, they are using a word that refers to eternal damnation in fire (Matt. 25:41; Rev. 20:10). When they request that He not send them to the “abyss” (**8:31**), they are requesting that Jesus not send them to the bottomless pit where Satan and his demons will be confined for 1,000 years during the Millennial Reign of Jesus Christ, just prior to their eternal condemnation (Rev. 20:1-3, 10). Luke alone mentions the abyss.

Demons know their destiny. They have a complete understanding of eschatology. They know that when Jesus Christ establishes a Kingdom on earth, they will be confined to the abyss and they also know they are heading to eternal fiery torment.

These demons know that Jesus Christ is the One who controls them.

Fact #3 - Demons do have supernatural power. **8:29**

Demon possession is very real and very powerful. According to **verse 29**, this man could break chains and shackles. You could bind him from hand to foot and he could break the chains. Demons do have power to control a person. Demons are very powerful and although we are never told to fear demons, but fear God, certainly the wise person will stay far away from anything that resembles demonic activity: Ouija boards, Tarot cards, Palm Readers, Fortune Tellers, Psychics, Séances, Horoscopes, Witchcraft - stay away from that because there is a real demonic world and you may be linked to it.

Fact #4 - Many demons can be in one location. **8:30**

What we learn here is that the demon's name was Legion and there were many of them in this man. We know from Mark's account that there were at least 2,000 of them (Mark 5:13). If we connect the name Legion to what it meant to the Roman military, it is possible that there were somewhere between 4,000 and 6,000 demons in this one man.

We suspect that there was a lead demon named Legion, who was over all the demons in this man. Now how does demon-possession actually work? How would it be possible for thousands of demons to be in one man? The evidence of this was the supernatural power the man had.

Psychologists and Psychiatrists have been able to observe that there are hundreds of thousands of electrical impulses that are in the brain daily. Each brain supposedly has 100 billion neurons. Each impulse generates some type of response. As near as I can determine, a demon-possessed person is one in which demons control a certain number of these responses. Obviously the more demons involved, the more the person is controlled.

A believer cannot ever be demon-possessed. His body is the temple of the living God (I Cor. 6:19). Also, when one has the Spirit of God in him, "greater is He who is in you than he who is in the world" (I John 4:4). Once a person has Jesus Christ in the life, he is a child of light and no property of God may be indwelt by demons.

A believer may be demon-oppressed or demon-obsessed but cannot ever be demon-possessed.

Fact #5 - Demons are subject to Jesus Christ. **8:31-33**

Satan and the demonic world are subject to the sovereignty of God. They cannot do anything unless God permits it. Demons are always subject to limitations God has placed on them and they cannot do or accomplish anything without His permission, as clearly demonstrated by the case of Job. This point should comfort every believer. Demons are subject to the Savior who lives in you and no Satanic agent can touch us unless God the Father and God the Son, our Savior, permits it.

Now the demons requested that Jesus let them enter the herd of swine grazing on the side of a field. What we suspect is that if demons cannot possess something, they are sentenced to the abyss. So they requested that they could enter the swine. The fact that you have the swine shows this is a Gentile area, for you would not find this in Jewish land.

According to **verses 32-33**, Jesus gave them permission to enter the swine and when they did the swine immediately committed suicide, by running into the sea and drowning. There is nothing life-producing in the demonic world. Everything Satan touches ends up miserable and dead.

Now many have questioned why Jesus permitted these demons to destroy the swine. Let me give five reasons:

Reason #1 - Christ was in the process of saving a human soul, more valuable than the wealth of the world.

Later in this very book Jesus will say that people are more important than sparrows (Luke 12:6-7). To many people the swine were more important than a man's soul. In our day, babies are aborted and executed and animals are loved.

Reason #2 - Christ demonstrated that to the Jews the swine were unclean (Lev. 11:7; Deut. 14:8).

Christ's program was under the O.T. law and was aimed at Israel, and swine were unclean. So what we have here is an unclean spirit requesting to enter an unclean animal. There is no way that an unclean spirit could enter something clean.

Reason #3 - Christ wanted to show that Satan and demons destroy things.

Satan and demons destroy anything they touch.

Reason #4 - Christ is God and He can do what He wants.

Jesus Christ is the One who made the swine and He can do whatever He wants with them.

Reason #5 - Christ wanted to demonstrate His power over the Satanic and demonic world.

Christ demonstrates that the entire demonic world is subject to Him.

LESSON #4 – A Christ-like ministry stirs the curiosity of many people. **8:34-36**

When the herdsmen saw this, they ran to town and told everyone and everyone went out to see this. When they got there they would have seen a couple of thousand dead pigs and they also saw the demon-possessed man sitting at the feet of Jesus Christ, wearing clothes and in his right mind.

Now you would think they would be happy about this, but they were frightened. Here is a man transformed by Jesus Christ for the good and that causes them to be afraid.

LESSON #5 – A Christ-like ministry is rejected by the majority. **8:37**

Here is one of the saddest things you will ever see. The people would rather have demons in the land than Jesus Christ. These people from Gerasenes would rather have Satan over Jesus Christ. They actually asked Jesus Christ to leave.

Wherever you have the true work of God, there will be those who hate it and will want to get rid of the agent of God.

LESSON #6 – A Christ-like ministry is loved by the minority. **8:38-39**

Out of all of the people, the only one who wanted to be with Jesus Christ was the man who had been cured. Look carefully at this text. In a complete reversal of this man, he is now clothed, he is sitting at the feet of Jesus in his right mind and he wants to go with Him. Initially he wanted Christ to get away from him.

He had been an outcast and now he was clean. As the people were asking Christ to leave, he was begging Christ to go with Him.

Christ would not let him for two reasons:

Reason #1 - He wanted a witness in Gerasenes. **8:39** - notice Jesus Christ is identified as God.

Reason #2 - His program was aimed at Jews, not Gentiles.

He did reach out, but His program was aimed at Israel.

Notice what the man did, “he preached and proclaimed the truth of God” (v. **39**). The word for “proclaim” (κηρυσσω) means this man became a public preacher of the truth about Jesus Christ. Talk about an amazing transformation, this is one.

It does not matter how depraved or corrupt you have been in life; Jesus Christ can completely transform your world. Perhaps you have dabbled in the occult, the world of Satan. Perhaps you have been involved in immoral things. Perhaps you have been involved in that which is dark and depraved. Jesus Christ can forgive you, cleanse you and use you.