

## **Jesus Has Authority Over the Demons**

Call to Worship: Psalm 34

1st Scripture: Luke 8:26-39 / Mark 5:1-20

2nd Scripture: Matthew 8:28-34

### **Introduction**

Last time, we travelled with our Lord and His disciples across the Sea of Galilee, as they were now heading into the country of the Gergesenes. And from the standpoint of the disciples, something unexpected happened, which provided another opportunity for the Lord to reveal His glory and power, unto the further authentication of His Messianic ministry and office. There, on the boat, as the wind and waves beat upon it, threatening to drown them all, the Lord calmed the wind and waves, showing His power and authority even over the elements.

This morning, we now reach the shore of the other side of the Sea, where once again, the Lord reveals His power and glory, this time, in the delivering of two men from severe demonic possession. Our Lord hardly steps off of the boat, when he is confronted by these two demon-possessed individuals.

### **I. Jesus Has Authority Over the Demons**

Before drawing out the relevant teachings that come out of this text, let us walk through the text, verse by verse, seeking to gain a general understanding of all that takes place here.

“When He had come to the other side, to the country of the Gergesenes, there met Him two demon-possessed men, coming out of the tombs, exceedingly fierce, so that no one could pass that way” (vs. 28). Now, what is interesting here is that Matthew has the most generalized description of this account, leaving out many of the details, but he includes an interesting detail that both Mark and Luke omit. Matthew notes that Jesus had dealings with *two* demon-possessed men here, while the others only mention the one. None of this is contradictory. It’s just that each author limits the details to the scope of their purpose in recording this event. Again, I believe that these kinds of differences actually further affirm the profound authority of the Gospels, rather than allegedly creating problems. Each author has enough differences to

show the originality of their Gospel, enough similarities to affirm their united testimony concerning the events, and no contradictions to tarnish their witness. Again, God doesn't waste ink in His divinely inspired Word. Getting the facts in these ways, from different authors (writing to different audiences), all the more testifies to the divinely inspired backing of the Gospels.

And so, interestingly enough, Jesus and His disciples get off in an area near the tombs, where no one would pass by, out of fear of these demon-possessed men who were there. Matthew makes note of the fact that these men were fierce, and the other Gospel writers provide us with more details concerning why these demon-possessed men were fierce and greatly feared. It's not only that they were potentially destructive and violent, but even when they were secured with chains and shackles, they would actually break them and escape. And so, ultimately, they hide out in the mountains and among the tombs, where they are left alone, and in fact, feared and avoided. And there, Mark tells us that they would cry out and cut themselves with stones.

But, Jesus goes right into their territory, by choice. And so, Matthew tells us that when they had arrived in the country of the Gergesenes, these men immediately met him there. Now, before we come to verse 29, it is important to note the actions of these demon-possessed men, as described in Mark's Gospel, which accompanies the words spoken by them here in our text. There, we are told that when they saw Jesus, they ran to Him and worshiped Him. In other words, the demons that were possessing and controlling these men, recognized something about Jesus, which led them to fall down before and worship Him, when they saw Him. Now, think about that for a moment. These are demons, who hate God, who seek the ruin and destruction of man because of their hatred of God, who desire to contend with the will and design of God to glorify His Son...and yet, they are compelled, as it were, to fall down before Jesus and to worship Him. Now, we must understand that this was not something that they delighted in, or wanted to do. It was something that they had to do by necessity. In other words, they could do nothing less than fall down before Jesus in worship. And as they kneel there in subjection to the Lord, understanding the glory, power and authority of this Jesus, they then plead with Him, as beggars would plead with a King, whom they know has every bit of power and authority to do with them as He pleases.

“And suddenly they cried out, saying, “What have we to do with You, Jesus, You Son of God? Have You come here to torment us before the time?” (vs. 29).

More than likely, incapable of even looking Jesus in the eyes, they then cry out these words. And what they say is absolutely profound and revelational, showing that even the demons recognized the truth of all that Jesus had taught concerning the ultimate success and glory of His Person and His Kingdom. And in essence, here is what they are saying by these words. “Jesus, why do you come to bother us now? What business do we have with you in the present, you Son of God? The time of our torment and destruction is not yet here. Are you here to bring the judgment due us, upon us, right now, before the appointed time?”

You see, these demons know the power and glory of this Jesus. They know who He is. They know that He is the Son of the Living God, as Peter later confesses at Caesarea Philippi, and that He has the very authority, ability and power to do with them, as He pleases, whenever He so pleases. They know that this Jesus, who, while gracious and merciful beyond comprehension, is also a Mighty King, who will crush all of His enemies in the end; that He is a Jesus to be adored by those who know and love Him, but that He is also a Jesus to be revered and feared, and the worst nightmare of all who reject Him. They know of His eternal existence before time. And they also know that their coming doom and torment is certain. They know that they cannot defeat this glorious King, who cannot fail or lose the battle. They know that their days are numbered, and they wish to carry out their remaining existence until that time, bringing about the same torment of men. It’s not ironic that the very ones who were in the very business of tormenting others, in recognition of their own impending torment, yet seek some form of temporal grace and respite from the Lord. That’s how evil works in all who are possessed by it. They love to administer evil; they delve head-long into it, but they dread being the objects of the very pain and torment that they cause others to experience. Is it not the case that some of the most evil, treacherous, tormentuous villains in our world are ultimately cowards when they are brought to endure even the least of the hurts that they had once joyfully inflicted upon others? It is a frightening reality, but one worthy of deep consideration now in the present, to know that God will recompense all evil on the Day of Judgment. What a man/woman sows in this life, they will reap in the next, if Christ doesn’t rescue them by His cross.

In verses 30&31, we are then told, “Now a good way off from them there was a herd of many swine feeding. So the demons begged Him, saying, “If You cast us out, permit us to go away into the herd of swine.” And so, in subjection to the authority of Christ, these demons request that they be allowed to enter into the swine, rather than be cast into the abyss before their time. Now, in the other Gospel accounts, we find that when Jesus asks these demons to state their name, they use the name “legion,” which indicated that they were actually many demons. And so, these two men were possessed by a large gang of demons, as it were. And we also know that they were many, because Mark tells us that the swine that they go into, number around two thousand. But note again, that these demons, the whole lot of them, recognize that Jesus is able to direct all of them at once, wherever He should want them to be cast, with but a “word.” And, in a very real sense, we see a connection here with what just happened in the boat, don’t we? We find an essential display of the power that Christ has, in the mere speaking of His words. Remember, it was when He rebuked the wind and the waves (with but the words, “Peace, be still”), that they obeyed His voice and they immediately became calm. And here, the demons understand that whatever Jesus says, they must do, immediately. And so, should he direct them into the abyss of torment, even before the time, they would immediately have to go there. Are we not supposed to recall the God, who created all things, by the mere speaking of His Word, when we see Jesus here? Who else ever had such power and authority...ever? No one, of course!

And so, it not yet being the time of judgment, Jesus extends the leash, as it were, allowing this legion of demons to enter into the large heard of swine. In verse 32, we are told, “And He said to them, ‘Go.’” Having been granted permission, we are then told in verse 32b, “So when they had come out, they went into the herd of swine. And suddenly the whole herd of swine ran violently down the steep place into the sea, and perished in the water.”

Grateful for the opportunity to find another place of rest, the demons then come out of the men and enter into this large herd of swine. However, probably much to their surprise, the irrational swine are not as easily controlled as are men. And so, the swine, all at once, violently rush off of a precipice on the mountain, spilling into the sea, where they all drown.

And in verse 33, we are told, “Then those who kept them fled; and they went away into the city and told everything, including what had happened to the demon-possessed men.”

Apparently, this large herd of swine was being kept (cared for) by some men, who after witnessing all that had happened, fled into the city to report the event to others. You can imagine them saying something like this: “You know the violent demoniacs who dwell in the tombs and the mountains... well, some man who had just crossed over the sea had just commanded all of the demons to come out of them, and they did, and they went into the herd of pigs that we were caring for, and then, all of the pigs ran off of a cliff and into the sea. We were so taken aback by the power of this man, that we ran away. He is probably still there if you want to see Him for yourself. Honestly, this is what happened.” Well, this news was spread all throughout the city, so that, we are told in verse 34:

“And behold, the whole city came out to meet Jesus. And when they saw Him, they begged Him to depart from their region.” Now, in the other Gospels we find two other important facts that can help us understand what happened here. First, we are told that when they came to Jesus, they saw the once violent, demon-possessed men, clothed (they were naked before), at peace and in their right mind. They knew very well of these demon-possessed individuals, and so, they were utterly shocked to see such a transformation that had taken place. And then, secondly, we are told that they were afraid. While we are not given all of the details concerning the reason for this fear, we can presume by their response, that they greatly feared the power and glory of Jesus, who had tamed these men, not with chains and shackles (which *they* could not do), but by the words of His mouth. This being the case, they beg Jesus to leave their territory and He does. You won’t find Jesus remaining long, where He is not welcome.

And then, finally, in the other accounts, at least one of the formerly demon-possessed men (probably both), in contradistinction to the entire city, begs Jesus to let him go with Him. Ironically, the formerly most insane man from the city has become the most rational and wise person of the city. But, Jesus sends him back to his home to tell others what God had graciously done for him. He appoints the man, as an evangelist, as it were. And we are told in Mark 5:20 that the man, “departed and began to proclaim in Decapolis all that Jesus had done for him; and all marveled.”

And that concludes our contextual survey of the events that take place in our text.

## **II. Relevant Applications**

1) Brethren, consider again, the profound reality of the glory, authority and power of Jesus. Remember, all that our Lord did with calming the winds and the waves with but spoken words, and all that He did during the entirety of His ministry, revealing His glory, authority and power, were *before* His death and resurrection. Following His resurrection, we are told that He has been given authority over all things in heaven, on earth and under the earth.

Now, from the standpoint of our present text, we find that this authority of our Lord's includes the entire spiritual and demonic realms. Do you see how this multitude of demons all fluttered in fear, while falling down before the feet of Jesus? Do you see them pleading with Him to spare them before the time of their final judgment? Why is this important? Because brethren, no matter how chaotic our world may seem, no matter how many worldly powers (backed by demonic powers) are at work, seeking to contend with the will and design of God, none of them (nor all of them combined), can for a moment even, undo a single strand of God's will and desire for His creation and for His church. Jesus has authority over the demons. Jesus has authority over satan. And they all know that their days are numbered. And while they are hell bent on reeking havoc on the world, they know that they are ultimately fighting a losing battle. They are hell bent on doing evil. That is absolutely true. Their nature compels them to do that. But, they are all leashed, to the extent that even every ounce and minutia of evil that they perform, does nothing more or less than ultimately contribute to fulfilling the perfect and glorious will of God. Do they intend evil? Yes. Are their motives impure? Absolutely. But, the glory of God is revealed in that He takes even what they intend, and uses every particle of it for the glory of His Kingdom, and for the further exaltation of His Son! The cross is the greatest confirmation of this reality, is it not? In the crucifying, tormenting and murdering of the Son of God, they have actually served to enthrone Him, giving Him the victory over our sins, so that God's wrath toward our sins would be propitiated and we would be reconciled to God. Do you see the glory in that, brethren!

And so, while we ought not to walk casually through this life; while we still have the responsibility of watching and being alert and fighting the good fight, recognizing the attacks and wiles of the devil, we yet, do not have to fear him or his multitude of minion followers.

Because greater is He, who is in us, than he who is in the world! We are more than conquerors in Christ, who loves us, and who has given Himself for us! Jesus has authority; complete and absolute authority over the demonic realm! Indeed, they will all ultimately fall down and worship Him, in the end!

2) Friends, let us see here, pictured in these demon-possessed men, that while we are accountable for our sins, to live a life of rebellion against God while clinging to our sins, is the most irrational, maddening thing that a human being can do. It is destructive in every direction, and especially to our own lives. If you are outside of Jesus Christ, this morning, you are committing spiritual suicide. In fact, you really are spiritually dead, and you are heading for destruction. All of the lusts and sinful desires that you are running after in this life, are the equivalent of the demon-possessed men cutting themselves with stones as they wailed aloud. Sin is destructive and irrational like that. It seems so good for the moment, but it ruins your life and ultimately serves to bring about your eternal condemnation in hell. And like those demon-possessed men, ultimately no one in this world (not even yourself) can restrain or arrest your sin nature. You are like a mad man/woman living among the tombs. You have not even begun to live life, with any lasting meaning, because you are an enemy of the living God. You are naked, exposed in your sin, and heading for certain destruction. And understand this. The very Jesus, who is often painted as a weak and beggarly savior, by the world, will ultimately be your greatest enemy if you die in your sin. The One who is most lovely to those who come to Him in faith and repentance, will be your worst nightmare, if you die in your sin. Indeed, your worst nightmare ought to be standing before Jesus, having not bowed before Him in this life. In Revelation, we read of Jesus trampling His enemies in the wine press of His wrath, with the blood of His enemies coming up to the bridal straps of the horse's mouths!

But, you see, that doesn't have to be the case, if you come to Him now, before it is too late. This same Jesus, who hates sin, so loved the world, that He bore the wrath of God in His own body, so that, sinners who embrace Him by faith now, could be redeemed from their sins, and welcomed into the family of God, as children of the living God. Don't be like the city of the Gergesenes, who when they had the golden opportunity of embracing this Jesus, pled with Him to leave, out of fear. What a sad reality. And He left. Don't reject the Savior, this morning!

Children, this Jesus can save you, today, if you will but seek Him in truth. Call upon Him!  
Confess your need of His forgiveness and grace. And He will save you. And He will clothe you  
with His righteousness, and He will put His Spirit in you, and set you in your right mind! And  
you will never, ever, regret it! [The Gospel!!!]

Amen!!!

Benediction: Jude 1:24-25