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## *The Gospel According to Matthew*

### *Jesus, Demons, and a Herd of Pigs*

*September 9, 2018*

**Sermon Text:** Matthew 8

**Scripture Reading:** Revelation 5

We need to make just a couple of final comments on the last account in chapter 8 –

Mat 8:28-34 And when he came to the other side, to the country of the Gadarenes, **two demon-possessed men** met him, coming out of the tombs, so fierce that no one could pass that way.

(29) And behold, they cried out, "What have you to do with us, O Son of God? Have you come here to torment us before the time?"

(30) Now a herd of many pigs was feeding at some distance from them. (31) And the demons begged him, saying, "If you cast us out, send us away into the herd of pigs." (32) And he said to them, "Go." So they came out and went into the pigs, and behold, the whole herd rushed down the steep bank into the sea and drowned in the waters.

(33) The herdsmen fled, and going into the city they told everything, especially what had happened to the demon-possessed men. (34) And behold, all the city came out to meet Jesus, and when they saw him, they begged him to leave their region.

Now, remember that when you are reading Matthew, Mark, and Luke, there are often parallel accounts given of the same instance. And so it is here.

Mar 5:1-20 They came to the other side of the sea, to the country of the Gerasenes. (2) And when Jesus had stepped out of the boat, immediately

there met him out of the tombs **a man with an unclean spirit.** (3) He lived among the tombs. And no one could bind him anymore, not even with a chain, (4) for he had often been bound with shackles and chains, but he wrenched the chains apart, and he broke the shackles in pieces. No one had the strength to subdue him. (5) Night and day among the tombs and on the mountains he was always crying out and cutting himself with stones.

(6) And when he saw Jesus from afar, he ran and fell down before him. (7) And crying out with a loud voice, he said, "What have you to do with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I adjure you by God, do not torment me." (8) For he was saying to him, "Come out of the man, you unclean spirit!"

(9) And Jesus asked him, "What is your name?" He replied, "My name is Legion, for we are many." (10) And he begged him earnestly not to send them out of the country.

(11) Now a great herd of pigs was feeding there on the hillside, (12) and they begged him, saying, "Send us to the pigs; let us enter them." (13) So he gave them permission. And the unclean spirits came out and entered the pigs; and the herd, numbering about two thousand, rushed down the steep bank into the sea and drowned in

the sea.

(14) The herdsmen fled and told it in the city and in the country. And people came to see what it was that had happened. (15) And they came to Jesus and saw the demon-possessed man, the one who had had the legion, sitting there, clothed and in his right mind, and they were afraid. (16) And those who had seen it described to them what had happened to the demon-possessed man and to the pigs. (17) And they began to beg Jesus to depart from their region.

(18) As he was getting into the boat, the man who had been possessed with demons begged him that he might be with him. (19) And he did not permit him but said to him, "Go home to your friends and tell them how much the Lord has done for you, and how he has had mercy on you." (20) And he went away and began to proclaim in the Decapolis how much Jesus had done for him, and everyone marveled.

Here is Luke's account of it:

Luk 8:26-39 Then they sailed to the country of the Gerasenes, which is opposite Galilee. (27) When Jesus had stepped out on land, **there met him a man from the city who had demons.** For a long time he had worn no clothes, and he had not lived in a house but among the tombs. (28) When he

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, do not torment me."

(29) For he had commanded the unclean spirit to come out of the man. (For many a time it had seized him. He was kept under guard and bound with chains and shackles, but he would break the bonds and be driven by the demon into the desert.)

(30) Jesus then asked him, "What is your name?" And he said, "Legion," for many demons had entered him.

(31) And they begged him not to command them to depart into the abyss. (32) Now a large herd of pigs was feeding there on the hillside, and they begged him to let them enter these. So he gave them permission.

(33) Then the demons came out of the man and entered the pigs, and the herd rushed down the steep bank into the lake and drowned. (34) When the herdsmen saw what had happened, they fled and told it in the city and in the country.

(35) Then people went out to see what had happened, and they came to Jesus and found the man from whom the demons had gone, sitting at the feet of Jesus, clothed and in his right mind, and they were afraid. (36) And those

who had seen it told them how the demon-possessed man had been healed. (37) Then all the people of the surrounding country of the Gerasenes asked him to depart from them, for they were seized with great fear. So he got into the boat and returned.

(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.

There are several points we want to take note of and then we will spend the rest of our time thinking about this matter of the people wanting Jesus to get out of town.

### The Synoptic Gospels

As we have noted, when you study one of the three "synoptic" (ie, from the same view) Gospels – Matthew, Mark, and Luke – you can be greatly helped in understanding a passage by reading its parallel in the other two Gospels. There will not always be a parallel text, but often there is.

You will also see when you do this that the "Synoptic Problem" will be seen. We have it here. Luke and Mark both say that there was one demon-

possessed man, while Matthew says there were two. Critics who reject the inerrancy of Scripture love to jump on these seeming contradictions as proof that the Bible is not the inerrant inspired Word of God. There is always however one if not more good explanations. For example here, Matthew may have wanted for his purposes to emphasize that there were two possessed men while Mark and Luke chose to focus upon the most visible and vocal of the two.

This parallel feature of the Synoptic gospels also is the reason that you can buy what is called a “harmony” of the Gospels. A harmony is an attempt to synthesize the three synoptic into one chronological account by printing them in parallel columns. But it is not always easy to discern what is a true parallel and what is actually a similar instance but not the same one. Here in these 3 accounts of the Gadarene demoniac as he is often called, it is pretty apparent that these are all describing the same event.

### The Gadarenes

The Sea here is the Sea of Galilee. Thirteen miles in length and 7.5 miles wide. Listen to William Hendriksen describe where these events occurred: [New Testament Commentary, The Gospel of Matthew, Baker]-

The original as represented by the Greek NT has *Gadarenes* in Matthew 8:28; *Gerasenes* in Mark 5:1; and *Gergesenes* in Luke 8:26. In each case variant readings are recognized in the Greek NT footnotes.

In order to locate the place where Jesus landed, a description as given in the Gospels is helpful. We learn that it was a region of caves used as tombs, and that a steep hill descended sharply to the very edge of the water. This description does not fit Gerasa, a town situated at least 30 miles to the SSE of the Sea of Galilee. It does however, suit *Kheresa*, which could very well be indicated as the town inhabited by the Gerasenes or Gergesenes.

If it be assumed that the larger city of Gadara, mainly located a few miles SE of the entire district to which Kheresa belonged, the various geographical designations begin to make sense. Moreover, at Kheresa, situated on the NE shore about 6 miles over sea SE of Capernaum, there is indeed a hill descending sharply to the edge of the water. There are also many caves, evident even today, suitable for tombs.

Even more helpful to our understanding of this event are these facts given by Hendriksen:

The place where the party landed was predominantly Gentile. When Jesus

and his disciples stepped ashore they were suddenly confronted by two demoniacs, who came down from among the tombs.

Jesus is demonstrating His authority as King and His realm, the kingdom of God. He had already cast demons out, but now He intentionally comes to Gentile territory. He is going to show that His sovereignty extends over ALL nations, not just that of the Jews. All men must bow to Him, all angels, all demons, all of creation.

### The King's Authority over Demons

Listen again to the possessed men's words:

Mat 8:28-32 And when he came to the other side, to the country of the Gadarenes, two demon-possessed men met him, coming out of the tombs, so fierce that no one could pass that way. (29) And behold, they cried out, "What have you to do with us, O Son of God? Have you come here to torment us before the time?" (30) Now a herd of many pigs was feeding at some distance from them. (31) And the demons begged him, saying, "If you cast us out, send us away into the herd of pigs." (32) And he said to them, "Go." So they came out and went into the pigs, and behold, the whole herd rushed down the steep bank into the sea and drowned in the waters.

The demons do more than many people do. They knew who Jesus was and they said so – The Son of God. They fear Him. They know that they are subject to His authority and furthermore that one day “the time” is going to come for their final judgment. His enemies must bow to Him.

Jesus does, with just words, what no one else could do – he subdued the men by subduing the demons. Just think of what we see from the 3 Gospels concerning these demoniacs:

- So fierce no one could pass that way
- Couldn't be bound even with a chain
- No one had the strength to subdue them
- They were naked and ran around in the tombs even all night, cutting themselves
- There is this whole business of being called “legion.” [A Roman division of 3000 to 6000, a vast host, great in number]

But when they see Jesus, this is their response:

When he 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, do not torment me."

This is of course the demon leader speaking through the tormented man. The “large” or “great” herd of pigs also indicates that there were a very large number of demons in these two men.

Notice carefully then the absolute rule Christ has over the demons, and the fact that even the demons know this. They fear Him. They know that they have to obey Him and leave these men, and they *ask permission* from Jesus to enter the pigs.

Remember:

Col 1:15-17 He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. (16) For by him all things were created, **in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible**, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities--all things were created through him and for him. (17) And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together.

This reminds us that Satan and his kingdom is absolutely subject to the authority of Christ. He is a defeated foe and his power over Christ’s people is gone, though he still works to tempt us and deceive us, but Christ has given us every means to stand against him.

Heb 2:14-15 Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he

himself likewise partook of the same things, that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil, (15) and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery.

Another point we should be reminded of here is that Satan and his demons are real. There really is a kingdom of darkness. That is the kingdom that EVERY human being who is not in Christ belongs to. Furthermore, it can be truthfully said in this regard:

***The natural, unregenerate man is a Satanist whose god is the devil.***

How can we say such a thing? Because:

2Co 4:3-4 And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing. (4) **In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers**, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.

Their god is the devil. He holds sway over them and has blinded their minds so that the glory of Christ is not seen by them. The control of Satan over these demoniacs in the tombs was obvious. Naked, living in the realm of death, supernatural strength, fearsome, a demon speaking through them and so

on. But the fact is that if you are here this morning and you are unsaved, if you do not know Christ and have not been born again, then you are in every bit as much bondage to Satan as those demoniacs were. Perhaps even in a more dangerous way because it is not so obvious as it was with them.

### Get Out of Our Town

Finally, let's give some serious thought to this:

Mat 8:33-34 The herdsmen fled, and going into the city they told everything, especially what had happened to the demon-possessed men. (34) And behold, all the city came out to meet Jesus, and **when they saw him, they begged him to leave their region.**

Mark gives us more detail:

Mark 5:14 The herdsmen fled and told it in the city and in the country. And people came to see what it was that had happened. (15) And they came to Jesus and saw the demon-possessed man, the one who had had the legion, sitting there, clothed and in his right mind, **and they were afraid.** (16) And those who had seen it described to them what had happened to the demon-possessed man and to the pigs. (17) **And they began to beg Jesus to depart from their region.**

(18) As he was getting into the boat, the man who had been possessed with demons begged him that he might be with him. (19) And he did not permit him but said to him, "Go home to your friends and tell them how much the Lord has done for you, and how he has had mercy on you." (20) **And he went away and began to proclaim in the Decapolis how much Jesus had done for him, and everyone marveled.**

And then Luke-

Luke 8:14 The herdsmen fled and told it in the city and in the country. And people came to see what it was that had happened. (15) And they came to Jesus and saw the demon-possessed man, the one who had had the legion, sitting there, clothed and in his right mind, **and they were afraid.** (16) And those who had seen it described to them what had happened to the demon-possessed man and to the pigs. (17) **And they began to beg Jesus to depart from their region.**

(18) As he was getting into the boat, **the man who had been possessed with demons begged him that he might be with him.** (19) And he did not permit him but said to him, "Go home to your friends and tell them how much the Lord has done for you, and how he has had mercy on you." (20) And he went away and began to proclaim in the Decapolis how much

Jesus had done for him, and everyone marveled.

Several vital things here for us to note. First, *they feared*. Think of it. The people in the region knew about these demoniacs. About their violence, their nakedness, their breaking of chains. They had to know that this was demonic. But when they saw the men sitting there healed, delivered, in their right mind, *they feared Jesus and begged him to leave their area*.

In contrast:

**the man who had been possessed with demons begged him that he might be with him.**

There is more here than I probably understand. But we see two opposite reactions to Christ and I suspect that we are meant to realize that the same is true today. That all human beings are in one group or the other when it comes to dealing with Christ:

- Beg Him to leave and get away from you
- Beg Him to let you go with Him

Every single one of us here this morning is in one group or the other. If you love the world, then really, though you know about Christ and fear His judgment on you, you want Him to just go away and leave you alone. It freaks you out to be made to think about the

Day when you must stand before Him. So you beg Him to leave.

But if you know Christ and love Him, then you want to be with Him. Furthermore, you want to do this:

And he did not permit him but said to him, "Go home to your friends and tell them how much the Lord has done for you, and how he has had mercy on you." (20) **And he went away and began to proclaim in the Decapolis how much Jesus had done for him, and everyone marveled.**

Probably the greatest mission field for any Christian is his or her own home town. They all knew you before you came to faith in Christ, and now here you are telling them about Jesus and the great thing He has done for you.

As Hendriksen said, Christ went away from those people, but having caused them to fear, He then left them with a missionary to lead them to saving faith too. One day we will find out just how many in that region came to know Christ as a result of that once naked, raving, fearsome, demon-possessed man's preaching to them.