

Text: Luke 8:26-39 (NIV)

²⁶They sailed to the region of the Gerasenes, which is across the lake from Galilee. ²⁷When Jesus stepped ashore, he was met by a demon–possessed man from the town. For a long time this man had not worn clothes or lived in a house, but had lived in the tombs. ²⁸When he saw Jesus, he cried out and fell at his feet, shouting at the top of his voice, “What do you want with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I beg you, don’t torture me!” ²⁹For Jesus had commanded the evil spirit to come out of the man. Many times it had seized him, and though he was chained hand and foot and kept under guard, he had broken his chains and had been driven by the demon into solitary places. ³⁰Jesus asked him, “What is your name?” “Legion,” he replied, because many demons had gone into him. ³¹And they begged him repeatedly not to order them to go into the Abyss. ³²A large herd of pigs was feeding there on the hillside. The demons begged Jesus to let them go into them, and he gave them permission. ³³When the demons came out of the man, they went into the pigs, and the herd rushed down the steep bank into the lake and was drowned. ³⁴When those tending the pigs saw what had happened, they ran off and reported this in the town and countryside, ³⁵and the people went out to see what had happened. When they came to Jesus, they found the man from whom the demons had gone out, sitting at Jesus’ feet, dressed and in his right mind; and they were afraid. ³⁶Those who had seen it told the people how the demon–possessed man had been cured. ³⁷Then all the people of the region of the Gerasenes asked Jesus to leave them, because they were overcome with fear. So he got into the boat and left. ³⁸The man from whom the demons had gone out begged to go with him, but Jesus sent him away, saying, ³⁹“Return home and tell how much God has done for you.” So the man went away and told all over town how much Jesus had done for him.

Theme: We All Have a Lot to Tell!

There is something that is rather strange in this story. Every other time that Jesus heals someone, He orders them to not tell a soul. For instance in Luke 5 He healed a man with leprosy, and he ordered the man, “*Don’t tell anyone!*” But in this case He tells this man, “*Tell how much God has done for you.*” That is also the Lord’s charge to us since His ascension into Heaven. Like that man we all have a lot to tell.

I. The devil inflicts a lot of suffering on this world.

This man suffered from demon possession. It says that he had not worn clothes for a long time, and he lived in the tombs in the area. The demons that afflicted him made him strip of all of his clothes and run around naked. He lived in the cemeteries and used the little caves, that the people dug out of the hillsides as tomb, for his home. This man was freaky! There were times when he was caught and chained hand and foot. He was kept under a guard, and he was still able to break out and escape into the wilderness. Could you imagine coming across this man? The Lord just stepped ashore, and this man comes to meet Him. What a welcoming committee!

What caused all of this misery to him and so much fear to those who encountered him? He was possessed by a legion of demons. Jesus cast out many demons. In every other case, it was one demon. This man was possessed by a legion. At that time a legion in the Roman army had 6,000 men. There were thousands of demons that were torturing this poor man.

The devil tries his best to torture us too. He never leaves any of us alone. One of the verses in Paul

Gerhardt's hymn "If God Himself Be for Me" says,

**Who clings with resolution
To Him whom Satan hates
Must look for persecution;
For him the burden waits
Of mockery, shame and losses,
Heaped on his blameless head;
a thousand plagues and crosses
Will be his daily bread.**

Martin Luther had a lot to say about the work of the devil. He once said, **"Although you are well armed in one place, he will attack you at another; and if he cannot overthrow you at that point either, he will yet again assault you somewhere else. Thus he never gives up, but he circles around you and never lets you rest in peace."**¹ He also showed how the devil's intent is to destroy us all when he said, **"If he could kill you in your mother's body, he would do it. He is not satisfied to let us have one kernel of grain in the field, one fish or piece of bread, or anything good."**² The devil's desire is to destroy us. He confronts us with temptation around every corner. He knows our every weakness. He brings sickness, sorrow suffering, and fear into our lives. In the end death is a result of all the evil that he has brought into this world. Worse of all is that we have the sinful nature, even as Christians, which loves the evil things of this world. We are often plagued by those sinful desires and evil passions. We want to do what is right, but too often we fall into the sins that we wish we could avoid.

II. Christ frees us from all the power of the devil.

He did it in a dramatic way to this man. The demons knew of Jesus' power. They were afraid, but they also pleaded for His mercy. They didn't want to be sent to hell, so they begged Him repeatedly to be cast into a herd of swine. Jesus allowed them to do so. Immediately the pigs rushed down a steep bank and were drowned in the lake. What happened to the demons? They were now sent to the abyss. It didn't work out for them as well as they had hoped. There were thousands of demons; and yet, one man, Jesus, struck fear in them and had the power to cast them all from this man and send them to hell. After all of that excitement, the townspeople now found the man, dressed and sitting at Jesus' feet, listening to Him. The Lord had delivered him from his affliction.

Christ will deliver His people from every evil attack of the devil. Paul was able to declare that confidently when he was in prison and about to be martyred when he wrote to Timothy, *"The Lord will rescue me from every evil attack and will bring me safely to His heavenly kingdom."* (2 Tim 4:18) The devil tries to destroy us with his temptations and the evil that he brings into our lives. Christ delivers us from every single one of these evil attacks. The devil brings us into temptation, and then he accuses us, "And you call yourself a Christian!" but Jesus delivers us. He forgives our sins, reminds us that He gave His body and shed His blood for our forgiveness, and He strengthens us against temptation again.

¹What Luther Says, page 400 #1176

²Ibid, page 398 #1170

The devil brings evil into our lives. Sometimes God ends that trouble. Sometimes He gives us the strength to bear it. In all cases He works it for our good in the end. When this life is over, unlike the demons that were sent to hell, Christ's angels will take our souls to everlasting life with Him. When we look at our lives as Christians, we cannot help but thank and praise God for all His goodness to us. We know that not even a legion of demons can ever separate us from God's great love in Jesus Christ.

III. When we have received the Lord's deliverance, we cannot help but want to tell what God has done for us.

We don't always witness in ways that we wanted. The man, whom Jesus healed, begged to follow the Lord as the apostles and others were doing. Jesus said, "No." Has the Lord ever said, "No," to you? Did you ever have plans of a special way that you wanted to serve Him, and it became apparent that this was not what the Lord had in mind? There are times when we want to serve the Lord, and He has something else in mind. Paul also went through that on his second mission trip. He wanted to go east, and God made him go west into Europe. We also have times when we would like to do this or that for our Lord, but He points us in a different direction. It doesn't mean that what we wanted to do was wrong. Jesus just has other plans for us.

The Lord's plans for us bear fruit. The man did what Jesus said. He went back home. He told everyone what the Lord had done for Him. Matthew and Mark tell us that when Jesus returned to this area, there was a large crowd that met him. They brought their sick and begged Him to heal them. (Mk 6:53ff) This man's witness caused people from throughout that area to trust in Jesus.

Our witness has more effect that we think. There are times when someone will tell me years later how much something that I told them helped them. They might pull out an old crinkled note that they jotted something on, remember something that I said in a sermon or wrote to them in a note or call me out of the blue when they are in trouble again. I am always amazed because I thought that I failed in many of these cases, but God's Word didn't return empty. All that this man did was to tell what God had done for Him. When we simply share what God has done for us, it will also have an effect on those who hear us, just like the people of that town. They will come to know the great deliverance from evil that God gives to those who trust in Him.

We have all had a number of times in our lives when the devil has harassed us, but we can also look back and see how God has delivered us from evil, just as He told us to pray. Like the psalmist we can say, "¹⁶ *Come and listen, all you who fear God; let me tell you what he has done for me.*" (Psalm 66) Like this man in our text and all of God's people throughout the centuries, we all have a lot to tell when we think of the great things that God has done for us.

Amen.

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