

The Gospel According to Luke
March 3, 2019
(*Matthew 8:28-34 and Mark 5:1-20*)

Sermon #35
Luke 8:26-39

From Torment To Testimony

Darkness

Because of history over the last 2000 years and even the short history of our lifetimes one may observe the moving of many areas of the world and our society away from God. The effect has been painful. When people no longer believe as God has commanded the result is not that they do not believe in anything but rather they believe in everything. Our society has become ever more obsessed with the occult, witchcraft, astrology, spirit guides, ghosts, fantasy worlds, video games, movies and these venues are ever growing more open in their embracing evil.

Os Guinness, the great-great-great grandson the founder of Guinness brewery in Ireland and the son of missionaries to China has served in a variety of Christian enterprises throughout his life. He is concerned with the result of the decline of Christian influence in the world. Os writes, “*Early hunters on safari in Africa used to build their fires high at night in order to keep away the animals in the bush. But when the fires burned low ... they would see all around them the approaching outlined shapes of animals and a ring of encircling eyes in the darkness. When the fire was high, they were far off, but when the fire was low, they approached again. As we witnessed the erosion and breakdown of the Christian culture of the West, so we have seen the vacuum filled by an upsurge of ideas that would have been unthinkable when the fires of the Christian culture were high.*” (The Dust of Death, InterVarsity, 1973)

People are drawn to the supernatural for it is just beyond their ability to understand. God is the supernatural Creator of the universe, but when people

move away from God they are drawn to the fallen realm, to the evil one and his demons, and unfortunately, they are drawn to their destruction. The Bible is the only accurate knowledge of the supernatural, both good and evil. This has been a problem since Adam's fall. The prophet Isaiah spoke of the need to stay focused on God, ¹⁹“When they say to you, ‘Inquire of the mediums and the necromancers who chirp and mutter,’ should not a people inquire of their God? Should they inquire of the dead on behalf of the living? ²⁰To the teaching and to the testimony! If they will not speak according to this word, it is because they have no dawn. ²¹They will pass through the land, greatly distressed and hungry. And when they are hungry, they will be enraged and will speak contemptuously against their king and their God, and turn their faces upward. ²²And they will look to the earth, but behold, distress and darkness, the gloom of anguish. And they will be thrust into thick darkness.” (Isaiah 8:19-22) The heart of men is broken and only can be repaired by a relationship with their Creator. Christ purpose for coming to the earth is to “save his people from their sins” (Matthew 1:21) and “to destroy the works of the devil.” (1 John 3:8)

Prior to Jesus coming to the earth there are very few demonic activities recorded in the Old Testament, only about 4 – found in Gen. 6:1-4, Lev. 17:7, Deut. 32:17 and Ps. 106:37. Outside the gospels and Acts there are no references to demonic possessions. Only during the time of the tribulation and in Revelation do we again find open demonic activity at the end of history. But during the earthly ministry of Jesus, during that short 3-year period there was a frenzy of demonic activity and we need to take note that demons were not attacking Jesus, but Jesus was attacking the demons as he brought a limit to the evil one's powers. Just because today we do not see obvious and open demonic activity that often or possessions does not mean that the armies of hell are not active. In fact, the Spirit of God speaks of this through Paul, “Now the Spirit expressly says that in later

times some will depart from the faith by devoting themselves to **deceitful spirits and teachings of demons**,² through the insincerity of liars whose consciences are seared..." (1 Timothy 3:1-2) The deceitful spirits tend to stay behind the scenes using deceived people who present themselves as teachers of truth, but in truth they are liars whose conscience has been seared by demons. Paul also made clear is it "no wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light."¹⁵ So it is no surprise if his servants, also, disguise themselves as servants of righteousness." (2 Corinthians 11:14-15) This is something that continues to this very day.

Jesus had just performed the miracle of calming the waters and they now sail to shore where the next miracle will take place. This morning the story before us is different; it is not a miracle performed on the physically sick or over nature. It is about the power of demons and Jesus' power over demons.

Demons

Reading from Luke chapter 8 beginning at verse 26, "Then they sailed to the country of the Gerasenes (gad·ar·ay·nos) meaning "reward at the end" which is certainly the result of this story, 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.)" In Matthew's account he writes of two demon possessed men, but Mark and Luke focus on the one Jesus delivers. This man is a Gentile or unbeliever and as such belongs to the world influenced by the evil one and this is

true of unbelievers today. This man is without a doubt demon possessed; the demons control his behavior to the point that he is referred to as a maniac with wild and uncontrollable behavior. This man had been indwelt by demons and they controlled his behavior and speech and tormented him. One cannot find anywhere in the Bible where Jesus delivered someone from a demon and he forgives that person of their sins nor of the delivered person repenting. However, that does not mean the result is a person unchanged and unrepentive. Jesus delivered people in spite of their being unbelievers and their sinfulness for only God, and Jesus is God, has authority over sin, demons and all things in the universe. The apostles delivered people by the authority and power given to them by Jesus and in the power of his name.

There is also no record in the Bible of a believer being possessed by a demon. That should bring comfort to those of us who have given our lives to Christ. Believers are possessed or indwelt by the Holy Spirit and that leaves no room for an evil spirit. However, believers can have sins in their life that opens the door for a demon to harass them and have an influence over them. You and I do not have the power of angels and demons and this is why it is so important to submit to God and his Holy Spirit for God's power is greater than any other.

Since the time of Adam's fall nakedness has been a sign of shame. The Old Testament uses nakedness as a representation of sexual sin. Here this demon possessed man is naked exposing not only his sin but his physical body to the elements. In our society nakedness is becoming common place and it is just one of many examples of society's attraction toward sin, the diminishing influence of Christianity and the influence of the evil one.

So deprived was this man that he found greater acceptance living among the tombs of the dead than he did the living. The demons caused him to do violence to

others and gave him strength to break chains that he was bound with. The demons propelled this man towards the shore when he saw a boat and men landing. The last person the demons wanted to encounter was the Lord. Why? Because Jesus has sovereign authority over them and has determined their eternal destiny. What this showed me is that the demons are more aware of who Jesus is than many people – Jesus is the Son of God, very God and the Lord of this earth. Remember Satan approached Jesus in chapter 4 of Luke to tempt him, saying in verse 3, “If you are the Son of God, command this stone to become bread.” The result of Satan’s temptations of Jesus was he recognizes Jesus as God, “And when the devil had ended every temptation, he departed from him until an opportune time.” (v.13) Satan and his demons are always looking for an opportune time to inflict evil and suffering.

Luke says when the demon spokesman recognized Jesus, he cries out in verse 28, “I beg you, do not torment me.” Matthew adds, “torment us before the time?” (Matthew 8:29) The demons understand eschatology, the events and path of history of God’s redemptive plan for mankind, and know their judgement does not come with Jesus’ first coming but his second and their encounter with Jesus is before this time. They understand their fate, as Jesus pronounced, “Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels.” (Matthew 25:41) John saw in his vision of the Revelation of Jesus the defeat of Satan with the return of the King Jesus and the result was, “the devil who had deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and sulfur where the beast and the false prophet were, and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.” (Revelation 20:10) The demons understood who Jesus was and that against him they had no power. Therefore, they pleaded that their time had not yet come. The second coming of Jesus is at some point in the future that we do not know, but our time is finite here on earth and judgement comes when a person draws their last

breath. Time grows short, when will you or those you love draw their last breath? We do not know, but this is why I say, “Come to Christ, live for his glory while there is time, come now to Jesus!”

Jesus

The story of this encounter continues in verse 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.” What a turn of events!

The spirit world is just as real as our physical world, but since one cannot see, or touch it the approach is to discount or elevate it out of its proper order. We know from Peter’s 2nd letter, “angels, though greater in might and power” (2 Peter 2:11) than humans are locked into their place and destiny. Fallen angels or demons cannot be redeemed. Angels and demons have more knowledge than humans because they have existed throughout history and are ageless for, they live outside of the physical realm. What is fascinating to me is that this man was possessed by many demons – seems to me like it would be crowded. When asked by Jesus their

name the spokesman for the demons says, “[Legion.](#)” This is a direct reference to the military term. A Roman Legion was 6000 men – I do not know if this man was possessed by 6000 demons, but there were a number in him.

In verse 31 the demon spokesman begged Jesus “[not to command them to depart into the abyss.](#)” We know from Revelation chapter 9 that the abyss is a bottomless pit where some demons are bound until they are cast into the lake of fire at the end of history. These demons are terrified knowing that Jesus has the authority to bind them in the abyss until they are cast into the lake of fire for eternity. They desire to continue harassing and doing evil until Jesus’ 2nd coming. Because of their fear of Jesus and his authority they make a bizarre request to enter a herd of pigs. I do not understand this but perhaps because of their pursuit to cause evil in the physical world the pigs offered an opportunity to continue. This demonstrates Jesus’ authority and power over the demons because they could not enter the pigs without his permission.

The demons enter the herd of pigs with the same crazed energy that they had possessed the man with. They turned the man into a destructive maniac and now the pigs are invaded with this same evil from a legion of demons and they rush into the lake and destroy themselves. People had tried to help the man by binding him in chains to prevent him from hurting himself and others, but there was no one to restrain the pigs and destroying themselves was the only way to rid themselves of the demons.

Once the herdsman recovered from the shock of what happened to their pigs in verse 34 it says “[they fled and told it in the city and in the country.](#)” The result is that people came to investigate and see what had happened for the story told by the herdsman would have been fantastic. Matthew’s account says the whole city came out. When the people arrived, they found the formerly demon possessed maniac

man “sitting at the feet of Jesus, clothed and in his right mind, and they were afraid.” What a picture of how Jesus transforms sinners. I may not have been a lunatic in chains but I was fully of the world and Jesus gave me, like this man, a new heart and mind that desired God. A mind that brought peace and calmness in a world of rushing manmade desires. I would have expected the people of the city to rejoice. The man was no longer a threat, he no longer needed chains, he was at peace and in a functioning sound mind. But they were afraid because it showed them their own sin nature, although not to the extreme of this man, they knew Jesus exposed sin and they were afraid. They failed to see Jesus could offer them a solution to their sin. I do not know about your transformation when you were saved, but when Jesus saved me – instead of people being happy for me, some, not all, did not want me to change for it also exposed their sin. Some people faced with Jesus decide to hold fast to their sin for they have less fear of what they know – their sin, than living with Christ and they fear the unknown.

Truth

Our story ends with - what one is to do with sin and truth. Reading beginning at verse 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 (*gad·ar·ay·nos*) meaning “reward at the end” and this is the result for at least for one, 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.”

The maniac is saved but the power of sin over the lost blinds them to the truth. Sin does not just blind people to the truth but makes them hate the truth and reject it and they work hard to deny the truth that exposes their sin. One would think that seeing a powerful miracle and this man's transformation would cause people to see their need for a Savior, but sin has such a strong hold over the people, as verse 37 says, "all the people of the surrounding country ... asked *Jesus to depart from them, for they were seized with great fear.*" Why does a miracle seize people with fear? Jesus clarified why this happens in John's gospel, "*this is the judgment: the light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the light because their works were evil.*"²⁰ *For everyone who does wicked things hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his works should be exposed.*" (John 3:19-20) Without the Holy Spirit regenerating a person's soul one's natural bent is to love darkness rather than the light.

The positive result of this story is the possessed maniac is freed from demons and is transformed. He is willing to forsake all and begs Jesus to allow him to go with Jesus. He knows Jesus is his Savior. However, Jesus has other plans for this man saying, look at verse 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.*" He recognizes what God did and Jesus is God. This sinner turned to saint becomes a missionary among the people of his city proclaiming Jesus. This is to be the life of all believers – whether they stay as this man did or go to another city, country or continent, their lives are to be marked with their living for and proclaiming the glory of Jesus as their Lord and Savior. Is this how you see your life's purpose? We need to look for ways to help each other to fulfill God's calling and live proclaiming Christ. Amen!

With the time left - does anyone have questions about the teaching this morning.