

Before we begin, I want to briefly share something about the sermon I preached two weeks ago. I was planning on sharing this last Sunday, but I thought we'd have guests and I didn't want to take away from celebrating the Resurrection. I understand this might be unnecessary, but even if it benefits only one or two people I still think it's worth saying.

Two weeks ago I taught on **verse 35** which says the demoniac was **sitting at the feet of Jesus, clothed and in his right mind**. I said that I have prayed this verse for people I've met who have mental illness. I also mentioned Saul in the OT and how he looked bipolar wanting to murder David one moment, then sobbing the next, then back to trying to murder him. I said it had nothing to do w/ hormones, and everything to do w/ sin.

After the sermon a couple people asked me, "Do you think all mental illness or hormonal issues have to do w/ demons or sin." I definitely don't think that. Just b/c we see instances of that in Scripture doesn't mean I think every mentally ill person or hormonal issue is related to sin or demons.

As a pastor, for every one or two people who ask you something, you always assume there are 4 or 5 people w/ the same question...but not asking. Over the last two weeks this bothered me enough I wanted make this clear in case anyone else had the same question.

With that out of the way, let's pray!

The title of this morning's sermon is, "*The Peace Christ Brings.*"

On Sunday mornings we're working our way through Luke's Gospel verse-by-verse, and we find ourselves in the account of Jesus meeting the demoniac who said his name was Legion. We've looked at **verses 26-30**, and we'll continue where we left off.

But let's back up to **verse 34** to get the context...

34 When the herdsmen saw what had happened (this refers to the pigs running down to the water and drowning), **they fled and told it in the city and in the country.**

Since this probably sounded like the craziest story these people had ever heard, and since they were afraid of losing this many pigs, they went to check things out for themselves...

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.

So they didn't find their pigs, but they found the demoniac **sitting at the feet of Jesus**, which is to say he had become Jesus' disciple.

Considering how this demoniac had terrorized these people for some number of years – or decades – here are the two things you'd expect the townspeople to do...

First, you'd expect them to celebrate the demoniac's deliverance. **Rom 12:15** says to rejoice with those who rejoice. So you'd expect them to:

- Celebrate w/ this man.
- Be elated for him.

They're going to say, *"We're upset about the destruction of our pigs, but what a small price to pay considering this man has been saved from demons as a result. Let's welcome him back and rejoice with him!"*

Second, Jesus brought peace to this demoniac, but by delivering this man He also brought peace to the entire community. So as soon as they see Jesus...

- They're going to thank Him.
- They're going to welcome Him.
- They're going to worship Him.

They're going to say, *"Only someone from God could do something like this. Let's tell others about Him. Let's get all our sick and handicapped and bring them to this Man!"*

Nope.

Look at **verse 37** to see what actually happened...

37a Then all the people of the surrounding country of the Gerasenes asked him (this is Jesus) to depart from them, for they were seized with great fear.

There's no sign of them rejoicing with the man. There's no excitement for him or thankfulness regarding his new condition. My suspicion is they were too depressed about the loss of their pigs. When you consider how much more valuable this man's life was than the pigs, it shows you how shallow these people were.

Second – unbelievably – after watching the way Jesus helped this man, they actually asked Him to leave! Not only that, look at the way it's worded...

Then ALL THE PEOPLE of the surrounding country of the Gerasenes asked him to depart from them.

They were united. They all came together to make this request. Jesus' work had a very unifying effect on them...but not in a good way.

Spurgeon said, *"Here was a whole city at a prayer meeting, praying against their own blessing...Horrible was their prayer."*

I look at these people's request and I think, *"Are you kidding me? What were they thinking?"*

Commentators provide a few reasons they might have asked Jesus to leave...

1. First, they were mad. They just lost 2,000 pigs. This was a huge economic loss to this community. Jesus was to blame, so they want to get rid of Him.
2. Second, they might have been worried about further economic damage to their herds. They lost the pigs and they didn't want to lose anything else. Jesus was bad for the pig business.

But even though a number of commentators made these points, I don't think that's why they asked Jesus to leave. These points might have been true, but the main reason is given to us twice:

- At the end of **verse 35** it says **they were afraid**.
- In **verse 37** it says **they were seized with great fear**.

This is why they asked Jesus to leave:

- They were ungodly people frightened to be in the presence of such spiritual power.
- The demoniac's conversion is one of the most powerful in all of Scripture, it really shook up the people, and they saw Jesus as the one responsible for it.

Of course they had no reason to be afraid of Jesus, and this brings us to Lesson 1...

LESSON 1: PEOPLE REJECT JESUS BECAUSE THEY'RE SPIRITUALLY BLIND.

We see people make bad decisions throughout Scripture, but if you're looking for the worst decision a group of people ever made together, can you think of anything worse than this? They had the Son of God in their midst, but they sent Him away.

This account is one of the most unique in the Gospels b/c it's the OPPOSITE of what happens the rest of the time. Elsewhere in the Gospels:

- Everyone is trying to reach Jesus...
- Everyone is trying to get close enough just to touch Him or see Him...
- Everyone wants to hear Him...

But then you read about these people who actually asked Him to leave.

Let me show you a verse that shows how blind these people were. Briefly look at **verse 41**...

And there came a man named Jairus, who was a ruler of the synagogue. And falling at Jesus' feet, HE IMPLORING HIM TO COME TO HIS HOUSE.

Jairus is the opposite of the people **of the Gerasenes**. His daughter was dying and he knew only Jesus could help her. In other words, he wasn't spiritually blind. He knew what he had in Jesus.

There's an account in the OT that reminds me of this situation, and I want to briefly mention it b/c of the similarities...

Last week I told you people in the OT couldn't approach God or they'd die. God's presence was located above the ark, and as a result people couldn't touch it.

When David was bringing the ark into Jerusalem, a man named **Uzzah** touched the ark and God killed him. Just like God said He would do. Listen to this...

2 Sam 6:7b God struck [Uzzah] down because of his error...8 David was angry because the LORD had broken out against Uzzah...9 and he said, "How can the ark of the LORD come to me?" 10 David was not willing to take the ark...into the city. [He] took it...to the house of Obed-edom. 11 The ark remained [there] three months, and the LORD blessed Obed-edom and all his household.

Here are the similarities I see:

- David was afraid of the ark, just like the people of **the Gerasenes** were afraid of Jesus.
- The ark was the location of the presence of God, and in a true and greater sense Jesus was the location of the presence of God, in that He was the God-Man.
- David sent the ark away, like the people of **the Gerasenes** sent Jesus away.
- The ark went on to bless **Obed-edom** and his household, just like Jesus returned to Israel and blessed the Jews.

You have to sort of wonder what the people of **the Gerasenes** missed out on...

- Everywhere else Jesus went He healed people, helped people...
- Even in this area He helped the only people He could: the demoniacs.

What else would Jesus have done for these people if they had embraced Him?

Instead they sent Him away and...

- There's no record of Him doing anything else here...
- There's no record of Him returning here again.

And why did they ask Him to leave? They were spiritually blind. They didn't know what they had in Jesus.

In **verse 36** look at the words **And those who had seen it told them**. This means they saw what happened to the demoniacs physically, but they didn't see it spiritually. They didn't really understand what took place. They knew the man was different, but they didn't know how that happened.

Look back at **verse 10** to see what Jesus said to His disciples...

10 he said, "To you it has been given to know the secrets of the kingdom of God, but for others they are in parables, so that 'SEEING THEY MAY NOT SEE, and hearing they may not understand.'...12 [These] are those who have heard; then the devil comes and takes away the word from their hearts, so that they may not believe and be saved.

This describes what happened w/ the people of the **Gerasenes**...the seed fell upon their unfertile hears and bore no fruit.

Jesus makes the point in the parable that hearing isn't enough. I think most of us understand that hearing isn't enough, but this account w/ the demoniacs also teaches that seeing isn't enough. These people didn't just hear what happened w/ this man, they saw it w/ their own eyes. But even though they saw it physically, they didn't see it spiritually.

These people witnessed a tremendous miracle - to see this man go from what he was in **verses 27 and 29** to what he was in **verse 35** would be amazing - but here's what you also see: this miracle didn't cause them to believe...and this brings us to Lesson 2...

LESSON 2: WITNESSING MIRACLES DOESN'T PRODUCE SPIRITUAL SIGHT.

People like to think that if they just see a miracle then they'll believe.

In the Parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus, this is what the Rich Man said...

Luke 16:30 “Father Abraham, if someone goes to [my brothers] from the dead, they will repent.” **31** [Abraham] said, ‘If they do not hear Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be convinced if someone should rise from the dead.’”

When Abraham mentioned **Moses and the Prophets** he was referring to the OT. He means if the Word of God isn't enough to produce faith then no amount of miracles will do it.

They didn't see someone **rise from the dead**, but they might as well have! The transformation of that man from the kingdom of Satan to the kingdom of God was a powerful miracle. But it wasn't enough to give them spiritual sight. The reason is, even great miracles cannot produce faith!

Let me remind you of Exodus...

- Moses went in to Egypt and performed the most dramatic miracles that were seen in the entire Old Testament.
- Then something else amazing happened: Pharaoh and all of the Egyptians repented and came to faith in Yahweh.

Let me remind you of most of Jesus' ministry...

- Jesus walked through Israel performing more miracles than you can count.
- That's why all of the religious leaders and the Jews repented and put their faith in Christ.

Nope!

Rom 10:17 Faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word.

When people hear the Word and it doesn't produce faith, then witnessing some amount of miracles won't do it either. The people of the **Geraseses** are a perfect example...

Something fascinating about this chapter is it shows the effect miracles have on believers versus unbelievers:

- After Jesus calmed the storm, in **Luke 8:25** it says **they** (this is the disciples) **were afraid**. This is holy fear! For believers, miracles create awe and reverence. This is the sort of fear that gives believers a higher view of God.
- At the end of **verse 35** it also says **they** (the people of the Gerasenes) **were afraid**. This is NOT holy fear or reverence. For unbelievers, miracles can create the sort of fear these people had that made them want to get as far away from God as possible.

And this brings us to the next fascinating part of the account. Look at the end of **verse 37**...

37b So he got into the boat and returned.

And this brings us to Lesson 3...

LESSON 3: JESUS ACCEPTS REJECTION.

When Charles Spurgeon commented on **verse 37** he said the way **all the people asked [Jesus] to depart** was like a big prayer meeting. If you look at it that way, you could say Jesus answered their prayer. They wanted Him to leave and He left!

Follow me for a moment...

We see great power and authority from Jesus throughout these verses:

- In **verses 22-25** He controls nature, calming a storm that's about to tear a boat apart.
- In **verses 26-36** He controls the demonic realm, casting demons out w/ a word.

These are great demonstrations of Jesus' power and authority:

- He can do whatever He wants.
- Nobody gets to order Him around.

But when the people of the town asked Him to leave, He did:

- They wanted to get rid of Christ...and they did!
- Jesus wasn't forcing the favor of His continued presence on unbelievers who didn't want Him there.

So you read this and say, *"Did Jesus abandon them completely?"*

No, He didn't. As much as these people might have deserved that, there's a touchingly beautiful conclusion. Look at **verse 38**...

38a The man from whom the demons had gone begged that he might be with him,

This is a wonderful desire. He wanted to travel w/ the Lord. He's the opposite of the townspeople:

- They ask Jesus to leave.
- He asks Jesus if he can stay w/ Him.
- They wanted to be as far away from Jesus as possible.
- He wanted to be as close to Jesus as possible.

Verse 35 said the man sat at Jesus' feet, which is to say He was Jesus' disciple. As Jesus' disciple He wants to stay w/ Him, learn from Him, follow Him. This man is a good example of what should be the case w/ every disciple of Christ:

- If you've truly repented and put your faith in Jesus...
- If you believe He died for your sins and has given you eternal life...
- If you have even a small understanding of what He's done for you...

You've got to have the desire this man had!

I'm not saying we're...

- Always going to want to read our Bibles...
- Always going to want to spend time in prayer...
- Always going to want to be at church...

But when you meet people and they say, "Oh yeah, I'm a Christian" and they don't seem to have any desire to spend time w/ Jesus, that's very concerning:

- Part of being a Christian means having a spiritual hunger and thirst.
- When people don't have that you've got to wonder if they're really Christians...if they really know – and appreciate – what Jesus did for them.

Before we read Jesus' response to the man's request to stay w/ Him, let me get you to think about something...

Jesus looks very gracious up to this point when it comes to granting requests:

- He granted the request of the demons that wanted to enter the pigs...
- He granted the request of the townspeople when they asked Him to leave...

So of course He's going to grant the request of this man when he asks something as wonderful as being w/ Him.

Look at the rest of **verse 38** to see Jesus' surprising response...

38b 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.

If I were this man I'd want to get as far away as possible from these townspeople too. But Jesus sent him right back to them!

The man's desire was good, but Jesus said, "No"...and this brings us to Lesson 4...

LESSON 4: IT'S NOT ALWAYS A SIGN OF GOD'S DISPLEASURE WHEN HE SAYS, "NO."

Initially I worded the lesson, “It’s not a sign of God’s displeasure...” but I added the word “always” b/c there are times it IS a sign of God’s displeasure when He says, “No”...

Jam 4:3 You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly, to spend it on your passions.

So sometimes God says, “No” b/c of the request.

But there are other times God says, “No,” and it’s not a reflection of His displeasure w/ us or the request. Those are the instances I want to discuss!

In the OT think of David’s desire to build a house for God:

- It was such a wonderful request when David shared it w/ Nathan the prophet, in **2 Sam 7:3** **Nathan said, “Go, do all that is in your heart, for the LORD is with you.”** That’s how good it sounded to Nathan!
- God seemed so blessed by the request He blessed David in return. In **2 Sam 7:9-13** God said, **“I will make for you a great name, like the name of the great ones on the earth...I will give you rest from your enemies...I will make you a house [that lasts] forever.”** God told David the Messiah would come from him. And all this was in response to David’s request!

God seemed really, really pleased...but He still said what? *“No. You will not build Me a house.”*

In the NT think of the number of times Paul said he wanted to visit people. This was a good desire. But God kept forbidding him.

The point is this...

Sometimes God says, “No” and it’s not a sign of his displeasure w/ us or the request.

Let me briefly share a personal story that I hope helps illustrate why I think this lesson is important...

The first or second week after I attended a Christian church for the first time, a friend of mine gave me a study Bible. I started reading it and I really enjoyed sharing w/ others everything I was learning...

- If I was at a Bible study, I wanted to tell people what I just read...
- If I was at church I’d ask people what they were reading in their Bibles, hoping it would start a discussion about what I was reading: *“Oh, that’s what you’re reading? That reminds me of what I was just reading!”*

Really early on after becoming a Christian, my pastor’s wife said, *“My husband and I have talked and we could see you behind the pulpit someday.”*

I hope that doesn’t sound prideful – b/c I don’t mean it that way – I simply mention it to say I had confirmation pretty early on from people about being a pastor. That was exciting, b/c I really wanted

to become a pastor. My passion for teaching elementary school really decreased and my desire to be in ministry really increased.

But there was just one problem: nobody was asking me to be a pastor. I'd go to church every Sunday and nobody said, *"Hey why don't you be our pastor."*

Then one day Pastor Joe called my house trying to reach my roommate Shawn, but Shawn had moved out. When Pastor Joe shared w/ me that he was calling Shawn about a part-time pastor position, I said, "I'm interested. Tell me about it." And the rest is history.

I look back now and it wasn't really that long that I had to wait to be in ministry. And to be honest, I'm glad it wasn't a day earlier, b/c I'm sure I wasn't ready.

But here's why I'm telling you all this...

During that time of waiting I started wondering things like:

- *Is something wrong w/ me?*
- *Have I displeased God in some way, so He doesn't want me to be in ministry?*
- *I see other men in ministry. Are they better than me?*
- *Is there something I have to do that I haven't done?*

At the time I was attending Calvary Chapel, and they teach that after salvation you can receive the "Baptism of the Holy Spirit." When you receive that you're really equipped to serve the Lord. So I started wondering:

- *Have I not received that baptism?*
- *Why haven't I received it?*
- *How come other people receive it, but not me?*
- *Or maybe I received it and I just don't know?*

There were all unhealthy questions that hurt my relationship w/ the Lord.

If I could go back and talk to myself, I would share this lesson...

I would say, *"When God rejects our requests – or delays answering the way we want – it's not always..."*

- *Because we did something wrong...*
- *Or b/c there's something wrong w/ the request itself."*

I hope some of you can be encouraged by this...

- I think of single people in our church who want to get married, but that prayer request hasn't been answered...
- I think of people who want to have a child – or another child – and God hasn't answered that request...
- I think of people who have prayed for a person's salvation...
- Or people who have prayed for a person's repentance...

- Or people who have prayed for a person's healing...

And it looks like God hasn't answered that request.

My hope is they can remember this lesson - that when God says no, or when He hasn't answered a request yet – it's not a reflection of His displeasure w/ us or the request.

One other point about this lesson before we move on...

It could've been discouraging for this man to be told he couldn't go w/ Jesus. But I tend to think it wasn't that bad, b/c he could pretty easily see WHY Jesus rejected his request: Jesus wanted him to go back to his people as a missionary.

Knowing why Jesus said, "No," probably made it much easier to hear, "No."

The reason I mention this is...

We don't always get this sort of insight:

- We could spend the rest of our lives not knowing why God said, "No."
- And it would be really unfortunate if we started thinking it's b/c God is displeased w/ us or our request.

So we might need to remind ourselves of this lesson:

- It's not a sign of God's displeasure...
- It's not b/c we've done something wrong...
- It's not b/c our request is bad...

It's simply b/c God has a plan, and answering that request the way we want – or when we want – isn't part of that plan.

Finally, look back at Lesson 3 for a moment: "Jesus accepts rejection."

Let me use this account to illustrate what it means when people reject Jesus...and this brings us to our last lesson...

LESSON 5: REJECT JESUS AND REJECT PEACE.

Much of this chapter is really about the peace Christ brings. Follow me for a moment...

- First, in **verses 22-25** you've got a fierce, raging storm.
- Then you've got hysterical, terrified disciples.
- Then you've got screaming, clamoring demoniacs.
- Even the frenzied pigs add to the chaos of the account...2,000 pigs running over a cliff to their deaths is pretty wild.
- Finally you've got a village filled w/ scared, angry people.

But in some of these situations, Jesus brought tremendous peace:

- First, He calmed the storm.
- Then He turned and calmed the disciples in the boat w/ Him.
- When He arrived on shore He calmed the demoniacs by casting the demons out of them w/ a word.

You see Jesus moving from one situation to the next introducing peace into each one.

But when the townspeople find Him it comes to a screeching halt. They reject Jesus and in doing so they reject any peace He would've given them:

- **Verse 35** says **they were afraid**
- **Verse 37** says **they were seized with great fear.**

And this is how the account ends for them...there's no verse showing that Jesus introduced any peace into their lives.

As believers, we have not rejected Jesus, so it's easy for us to look at them and pass judgment on them. But this past week I was reflecting on a way in which I am exactly like them...

Scripture says there are two types of peace Christ gives:

1. First, there's the peace Jesus establishes between us and God: **Rom 5:1** **Since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.** This is the salvific – or saving – peace unbelievers reject.
2. But there's also the peace Jesus offers believers in our day-to-day lives:
 - a. **John 14:27** Jesus said, **"Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid."**
 - b. **Col 3:15** says **Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts.**
 - c. This is the peace we reject at times!

Here's what this rejection looks like...

We go through a trial and we say:

- *I'm going to go through this myself.*
- *I can handle this.*
- *I'm not going to turn to Christ.*
- *I am not going to cast my cares on Him, even though He cares for me.*
- *I am going to carry this burden without Him.*

We are – in a sense – choosing to send Jesus away.

What we need to do instead is trust the words of **Phil 4:6...**

Phil 4:6 Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. 7 And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

We have a choice here:

- We can pray, letting our requests be made known to the Lord and have this peace that surpasses understanding.
- Or we can reject Jesus and send Him away.

Let's make sure we're not like the people of the **Gerasenes**...

Let's humble ourselves before Christ, cast our cares on Him, and embrace the peace that only He offers.

Let's pray.