

Jesus' Power over Demons: The Gerasene Demoniac
Matthew 8:28-34; Mark 5:1-20; Luke 8:26-39

Introduction

Most of popular psychology has a philosophical premise in which man is believed to be innately good and that his problems arise from having been raised in or being in a bad environment. From this foundation arose the logical conclusion that a person would become more corrupted the longer they were influenced by less than ideal living conditions and situations and hence the strange idea of the "wisdom of the children" because they were less corrupted. From this developed many parenting strategies in which children are provided what they want with parental direction and correction kept to a minimum for fear of causing them psychological harm. However, the Scriptures are clear that the opposite is true. Children have foolishness, not wisdom, bound up on their hearts and therefore parents must direct, discipline and correct them so that they might gain wisdom (Proverbs 13:1, 24; 19:18; 22:15; 29:15-17; Deut. 6:4-7; Eph. 6:1-4, etc.). Man is innately sinful, not good.

One of the many manifestations of the sinfulness of man is his innate self-centeredness. People approach life based upon the affect and effect things will have on themselves. What is most important in a person's life varies greatly with circumstances and time. The primary quest of a little boy could be trying to figure out how to avoid eating his peas and still get the ice cream for desert. High Schoolers are often concerned about what to wear to school social functions, or how they will do on a test, or which college to attend next year. Collegians are also often concerned with tests and such in getting through college, but their minds also become increasingly occupied by adult questions such as "what will I do after college?" and "where will I get a job?" and "whom will I marry?" As life goes on the questions change as employment is gained, marriages occur and children come, but the questions continue to be in relationship to self. "Should I stay at this job?" "Should I move someplace else?" "What am I going to do about my kids?" "What am I going to do about retirement?"

Let me suggest to you that while all those questions of life are important, they are not the most important questions of life. The two most important questions to ask at every point in your life are: 1) Who is Jesus Christ? 2) How am I going to respond to Him? All the other questions of life should be approached only after those first two questions are answered.

Should I eat my peas? First, who is Jesus Christ? He is your creator and He gave you parents to care for you. How should you respond to Him? Obey Him and His command to obey your parents. Eat your peas.

What school should you go to? Who is Jesus Christ? He is the sovereign Lord of all and your life belongs to Him. How should you respond to Him? Go to the school that will best prepare you for what He wants you to do with your life. That means the moral environment you will live in is as or more important than the academic excellence of the school.

Who should you marry? Who is Jesus Christ? He is the one who established marriage and marriage is to be a reflection of Him and the church. How should you respond to Him? Find someone who also loves Jesus and with whom you can establish a marriage that will glorify Him and enable you to fulfill His will in your life.

What job should you take? Who is Jesus Christ? He is your Lord who has promised to provide for your needs as you seek first His kingdom and righteousness. How should you respond to Him? Seek a job in which you can walk in righteousness and actively glorify Him.

Where should you live? Who is Jesus Christ? He is the one that has gifted and equipped you to serve Him. How should you respond to Him? By living in a place where you can use your spiritual gifts to further God's kingdom through an existing church or strategically establishing a new one.

In our study last week we saw that Jesus' disciples were still learning the full nature of Jesus' identity. They were greatly afraid as the wind and waves from the storm tossed their boat about and they were being swamped and in grave danger of sinking. Jesus was asleep in the back of the boat and in a panic they woke Him up and plead with Him to save them. They had a new fear when Jesus rebuked the wind and the sea and said, "Hush, be still," and the wind ceased and the sea was suddenly calm. Now they marveled and said to one another, "*Who then is this, that He commands even the winds and the water, and they obey*" (Luke 8:25). As their understanding of who Jesus is changed, so did the way they lived their lives.

This morning as we continue our study of the life of Christ we will find the disciples learn another aspect of Jesus' identity as they watch Him control a legion of demons. As I pointed out last week from Colossians 1:16, "*For by Him all things were created both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities - all things have been created by Him and for Him,*" Jesus is the creator of all things so it should be expected that He has authority over nature. But Jesus is also the creator of the supernatural, so He also has authority over that realm, and His exercise of that authority increases our understand of who He is and therefore also of how we should respond to Him.

The Demonized Men of Gadara - Mt. 8:28; Mk 5:1-8; Lk 8:26-29

Turn to the following passages and put book marks in them since we will be looking back and forth from all three accounts: Matthew 8:28, Mark 5:1 and Luke 8:26.

Matthew 8:28. "*And when he had come to the other side into the country of the Gadarenes, two men who were demon-possessed met Him as they were coming out of the tombs; they were so exceedingly violent that no one could pass by that road.*" Remember that the day before Jesus had been busy in the area around Capernaum on the north-west shore of the Sea of Galilee. That night He and the disciples left Capernaum to cross to the other side of the Sea. As already mentioned, sometime during the night a very severe storm arose that was swamping the boat. The disciples woke Jesus up and cried out to Him to save them which He did by commanding the wind and the sea to be still and they were immediately. The disciples marveled what kind of man Jesus must be that He could command nature and it would obey Him. They have now completed their journey across the sea and it is a new day in which they would soon be marveling what kind of man He must be to command the supernatural and it obeys Him.

They land in the country of the Gadarenes which is on the North-east shore of the Sea of Galilee about 6 miles southeast across the sea from Capernaum. Mark and Luke call it "Gerasenes" and some English versions translate it as "Gergesenes." It is all the same place. The description of the geography of the place puts them near the town of Khersa from which the names "Gerasene" and "Gergesene" are derived. However, the region as a whole took its name from a larger city to the south called "Gadera." This is within in the larger region of Decapolis which was predominately Gentile in population.

As Jesus and the disciples come out of the boat and begin making their way to the village, they are immediately met by two demon-possessed men who come out to them from a nearby tombs. There are those that doubt the existence of demons or that if they do exist they cannot control a man, but these Scriptures present the evidence that demons do exist and in some cases can control the actions of individuals.

If you study this topic throughout the Scriptures you will find that demon can influence people to various degrees. The word here is not "*demon-possessed*" but *e[cwn daimovnia / exōn daimonia* or "*having a demon.*" The most common word translated as "demon possessed" is *daimonivzomai / daimonidzomai* or "demonized" which is used of one of these men a little later in Mark 5:18. Demons

cannot “posses” in the sense of “own,” but they can influence to various degrees all the way up to the point the person has yielded so much control that demons can take up residence within the person as was the case with these two men.

Demonic influence can be greater than just in an individual. Psalm 32, 106 and 1 Corinthians 10:18-21 all point out that demons are the power behind false religions. Paul warns in 1 Timothy 4:1-3 about demonic influence in the church itself through false teachers who pay attention to “*deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons.*” He mentions in specific two such doctrines in that passage - forbidding marriage and abstaining from foods which God has created to be gratefully shared in by those who believe and know the truth. How active are demons today? How many churches do you know that advocate one or both of these demonic doctrines. In addition, note the proliferation of false religions, cults, and apostasy in the professing church. Demons are as active today as they were back then.

Demons can also influence to cause both mental & physical illness. In Matthew 17:15-18 a boy is described that was suicidal because of a demon. The men in our text this morning are mentally deranged because of demons. In Matthew 12:22 there is a man made both dumb and blind by a demon. In Luke 13:11-12 there is a woman that is physically deformed by a “spirit.” I do not believe all disease and mental illness is caused by demonic activity, but I do believe that much of what we call “mental illness” is demonic in nature and that some physical problems are also demonic.

Demons can also manifest themselves supernaturally through humans. In Acts 16 Paul casts a “*spirit of divination*” out of a girl that was following him around. In Acts 19 a man who was demonized overpowered seven men and left them bruised, battered and naked. Demons are real; they are powerful, and they are dangerous, but as we shall see in our text for this morning, they are no match for Jesus.

Matthew states that these demonized men were coming out of the tombs. These men were so mentally deranged by the demons that they were actually living in a graveyard. Their place of residence matched the condition they were in for they were defiled and unclean. Matthew also states that they were so exceedingly violent that no one could pass by that road any more. It is with good reason that the people in the area were afraid of these men who had demons.

Mark and Luke only talk about one of these demonized men. There have been several reasons suggested for this, one of which is that he appears to be the more dominant of the two as expressed in the greater detail given about him. Mark 5:3-4 describes his great strength saying, *no one was able to bind him anymore, even with a chain; because he had often been bound with shackles and chains, and the chains had been torn apart by him, and the shackles broken in pieces, and no one was strong enough to subdue him.*” This man in particular posed a threat to those nearby and to himself, and since Luke 8:27 indicates that he was from the city, he would have been personally known to them before he went mad. They had tried to capture this man and end his attacks on people in the area, but he proved to be too strong. No one was strong enough to bring him under control, and even when a group did manage to capture him and bind him with ropes or even shackles and chains, he would break free and break the chains into pieces and the demon would drive him into the desert (Luke 8:29).

Mark and Luke also describe in greater detail his mental derangement. Luke 8:27 states that “*he had not put on any clothing for a long time,*” and Mark 5:5 says, “*And constantly night and day, among the tombs and in the mountains, he was crying out and gashing himself with stones.*” The demons residing within him manifested themselves by causing him to be deranged, masochistic and have superhuman strength.

The Response of the Demons - Mt. 8:29-32; Mk 5:6-13; Lk 8:28-33

Mark 5:6 points out that this man sees Jesus from afar and the two of them ran to him and at least one of them falls down prostrate before Jesus and they both cry out to Him, “*What do we have to do with You, Son of God? Have You come here to torment us before the time?*” This is not coming from the men themselves but rather from the demons in them. These men would not have known that Jesus was the

Son of God, but the Demons did know. Demons are fallen angels. They are spirit beings, and as such they recognized Jesus' spirit though they had not encountered Him in human flesh before. Mark and Luke indicate that at least one of the men even fell down before Jesus in saying this. They are rebellious spirits, but even so they have no choice but to fall down and obey Jesus. According to Philippians 2:10-11 there is a day coming when "*at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those who are in heaven, and on earth, and under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.*" It is actually only a matter of timing for every knee shall bow and every tongue shall confess Jesus is Lord. This will include every kind of created being including the demons. For humans, you will either do this willingly in this life because you believe in and love Jesus or you will be forced to do so when you stand before Him in judgment.

These demons not only recognized Jesus, they also knew that they were going to be judged by Him. Demons have better theology than some preachers. James 2:19 reveals that they believe there is one God - and they shudder because of it. The demons know that eventually they will be judged and face everlasting condemnation in Hell (Matthew 25:41). The demons dwelling in these men are wondering if Jesus was going to torment them before that final judgment. 2 Peter 2:4 reveals that some fallen angels have already been committed to pits of darkness reserved for judgment. Jude 6 adds that they are kept there in bonds as they await the judgment of the great day. Revelation refers to this place as the abyss as do the demons in Luke 8:31. Did Jesus come to torment them before that time of judgment? Mark 5:7-8 and Luke 8:28-29 both record that Jesus commanded the unclean spirit to come out of the man and that the demon began to plead and beg that Jesus would not torment them.

Both Mark and Luke record at this point that Jesus asked the demon his name and the demon replies that it was Legion since there were many indwelling the man. People who get involved with exorcism often use these verses as justification for commanding demons to reveal their names in their effort to cast them out of people. Frankly that is both silly and dangerous. I realized that when I had a demonized woman in my office many years ago. Demons are liars so you would not know if they told you the correct name, and that would not make any difference anyway. I am not an apostle so I have not been given authority to command demons to do anything. Jude 9 reveals to us that we are to deal with demons the same way that Michael the archangel dealt with Satan. He did not dare pronounce a railing judgment but instead said, "The Lord rebuke you!" Those who think they have power over demons put themselves in the same dangerous position as the seven sons of Sceva in Acts 19.

Why does Jesus demand the demon's name? Because it is a sign of His authority, and showing Jesus' authority was important to both Mark and Luke since demonstrations of power were important to the Romans and Greeks to whom their gospels are written. The demon answers back that it is Legion showing not only there were a lot of them since a Roman legion had 5,600 men in it, but it also heightens the power being demonstrated. Jesus is one person and they are a hoard of demons, yet they must yield to Jesus.

At this point the demons begin to entreat Jesus not to cast them into the abyss (Luke 8:31) or to send them to another country (Mark 5:10). Mark 5:11-13 records that a large herd of about 2,000 swine were feeding on the mountain side nearby, and Matthew 8:31 records that "*the demons began to entreat Him, saying, 'If You are going to cast us out, send us into the herd of swine.'*" This is not the "if you decide to cast us out" because that was already clear. This is an earnest request of permission to go into the swine as recorded in Luke 8:32. Jesus gives them leave to do this and said, "Go!"

Nothing in any of the accounts indicates why the demons wanted to go into the herd of pigs other than this was a better option than being cast into the abyss. We do not know why the demons wanted to go into anything other than a reference in Matthew 12:43 that indicates they prefer to indwell something for they find it more restful than wandering around. It is safe to assume that they knew Jesus would not grant them permission to go into other people, so possibly they thought Jesus would accept this option since they were unclean and so were the swine according to Jewish law.

Having been granted permission, Matthew 8:32 records, *“And they came out, and went into the swine, and behold, the whole herd rushed down the steep bank into the sea and perished in the waters.”* The first case of deviled ham. The evil and violence of these demons is displayed in the causing the pigs to go mad. They rush down the steep hillside and then out to the water where they drowned.

There has been quite a bit of speculation about why Jesus granted the request of the demons. Some suggest it was to punish the owners of the swine because pigs were unclean by Jewish law and therefore they should not have been raising them. But that assumes the owners were Jewish, but Jesus was in a predominantly Gentile land. None of the accounts indicate why Jesus allowed the demons to go into the swine, but certainly it was better that they go into the pigs than into people.

The Response of the People - Mt. 8:33-34; Mk 5:14-17; Lk 8:34-37

All three accounts tell about the response of the people of that area. Luke 8:34-37 gives the most detail. ³⁴ *When the herdsmen saw what had happened, they ran away and reported it in the city and out in the country.* ³⁵ *The people went out to see what had happened; and they came to Jesus, and found the man from whom the demons had gone out, sitting down at the feet of Jesus, clothed and in his right mind; and they became frightened.* ³⁶ *Those who had seen it reported to them how the man who was demon-possessed had been made well.* ³⁷ *And all the people of the country of the Gerasenes and the surrounding district asked Him to leave them, for they were gripped with great fear; and He got into a boat and returned.*

The herdsmen report what happened to the people that lived in the nearby city and surrounding area and they came out to see it for themselves. They found the formerly demonized man radically changed. He was clothed instead of naked. He was in his right mind instead of mad. He was sitting peacefully at the feet of Jesus instead of being violent. They would have also seen dead pigs floating in the water or washed up on the shore. They now knew for themselves that the report about what Jesus had done was true. He had cast out the multitudes of demons from the man. This Jesus was no ordinary man. Luke says that they were *“gripped with a great fear”* and asked Jesus to leave their region.

Why did they want Jesus to leave? Some have speculated that they valued their swine more than the demonized men and feared losing more of their livestock if Jesus would cast out more demons from other people. Perhaps, but the emphasis in both Mark and Luke is that they became afraid when they saw that the formerly demonized man was made whole and knew Jesus had cast out the legion of demons. They were afraid of Jesus' power. They had seen enough to know that Jesus was not an ordinary man and they wanted nothing more to do with Him. They pleaded with Jesus to leave and He complied.

The Response of the Healed Man - Mark 5:18-20; Luke 8:38-39

From Matthew's account we understand that Jesus cast the demons out of both of the demoniacs, but Mark and Luke record only the response of the one in whom Legion had dwelt. He was sitting at Jesus feet, clothed and in his right mind. We don't know what happened to the other man. Mark 5:18-20 tells us what this man did when Jesus was about to leave, *“And as he was getting into the boat, the man who had been demon-possessed was entreating Him that he might accompany Him. And He did not let him, but He said to him, “Go home to your people and report to them what great things the Lord has done for you, and how He had mercy on you.” And he went away and began to proclaim in Decapolis what great things Jesus had done for him; and everyone marveled.”*

This man understood what Jesus had done for him and so he wanted to follow Jesus like the other disciples, but Jesus had other plans for him. The people of the city would not tolerate Jesus' presence, so God in his mercy to that city and that whole area was going to leave a witness to them. Jesus told the formerly demonized man to return to his home in the city and tell others about what Jesus had done and God's mercy. The man not only did that, but he also went throughout the region of Decapolis telling others what Jesus had done so that they were amazed.

Conclusions

The demons, the demoniacs and the people of the area had to face the question of “who is Jesus?” We have to face it as well. These accounts add to the evidence that Jesus is God in human flesh. Jesus has authority over disease. Jesus has authority over nature. Jesus has authority over the supernatural. Who but God has such authority?

You also have to face the question of your response to Jesus in light of the evidence of His identity. What is your response to Jesus?

You could be like the demons. They knew Jesus’ identity but that did not bring them any benefit, in fact, they trembled because of it because they also they knew He was their judge. They were rebellious and obeyed Him only when they must. Do you recognize who Jesus is but your response remains a state of rebellion and you only obey when you have no other choice? If so, then be warned that you are in grave danger of spending eternity with the demons.

Are you like the people of the city? They were curious about Jesus, but they became afraid when they found out He was not like them. If Jesus could so radically change the life of a demonized man, then He might change their own lives as well. Let me be frank, if you like your life the way it is now, then you have reason to be frightened of Jesus. He loves you too much to let you remain as you are. He wants to cleanse you from all sin. Not just the outward things, but also the hidden sins of the heart. The Holy Spirit is the business of bringing sinners to repentance and salvation and those who are saved into a closer walk of holiness. Are you afraid of what Jesus will do to your life? Then be warned that if you send Him away, He will go. Are you willing to risk that?

Jesus wants people like the demoniac for He became a man in order to seek and save the lost. His death, burial and resurrection were all done to redeem you and transfer you from the kingdom of darkness into His kingdom of light. If you come to Jesus and confess your sins, He will forgive you and cleanse you just as He did the demoniac. The response He desires from you in return is the same as that of the demoniac - to sit at His feet in your right mind and be willing to follow Him and go and do whatever He says. As you learn of Him and His word you will know better what He desires you to do, but you don’t have to know much to get started. The healed demoniac simply told others what Jesus had done for him. Any Christian can at least do that.

Let me quickly add here that for believers, Jesus’ authority over the supernatural is our protection against Satan and the demonic, for “*greater is He who is in you than he who is in the world*” (1 John 4:4). What then should be your response when facing demonic activity? “*Submit to God, resist the devil, and he will flee from you*” (James 4:7).

Who do you think Jesus is? What do you think you should do in response to Him? Jesus is God. I pray your response will be one of trust and obedience.

Sermon Notes: *Jesus' Power over Demons: The Gerasene Demoniac*
Matthew 8:28-34; Mark 5:1-20; Luke 8:26-39

Introduction

A premise for most popular psychology is that man is innately _____ - his environment caused his problems
Children are born _____, not wise, parents must discipline to remove foolishness and instill wisdom
People approach life from a _____ perspective - what affect & effect will it have on them?
The Two Questions: 1) _____ is Jesus Christ? 2) _____ am I going to respond to Him?
Jesus is your creator and He gave you _____ to care for you - eat your peas!
Jesus is the sovereign Lord & your ___ belongs to Him - go to the school that will enable you to glorify Him
Jesus established _____ to reflect Him - Marry a godly spouse who help you glorify Him fulfill His will
Jesus is your _____ - Seek first His kingdom and righteousness in whatever work you do
Jesus has equipped you to _____ Him - live in a place where you can spiritually grow and serve Him
The severe storm caused the disciples to _____ and wake Jesus up
The had a new _____ when the saw the storm stop at Jesus' command
Colossians 1:16 - Jesus is the creator so He has _____ over both nature and the supernatural

The Demonized Men of Gadara - Matthew 8:28; Mark 5:1-8; Luke 8:26-29

Matthew 8:28

They land 6 miles _____ from Capernaum in the country of the Gadarenes / Gerasenes / Gergesenes
Jesus and the disciples start toward the village they are met by two demonized men coming from the__
Demons cannot "possess" in the sense of "_____", but they can influence to the point of controlling
Demons influence large _____: false religions (Ps 32, 106, 1 Cor 10:18-21); demonic doctrine (1 Tim 4:1-3)
Demons can also influence to cause both mental & physical _____ - Matt. 12:22; 17:15-18; Luke 13:11-12
Demons can manifest themselves _____ through humans - Acts 16; Acts 19
One of the demonized men has incredible _____ and could not be bound - Mark 5:3-4, Luke 8:27
This demonized man was naked, lived among the tombs, and would cry out and _____ himself with stones

The Response of the Demons - Matthew 8:29-32; Mark 5:6-13; Luke 8:28-33

The demons recognize Jesus, the cause the man to _____ before Him, and then speak through him
Demons have better _____ than some theologians (James 2:19) and know they will be judged (Mt. 25:41)
Claiming power to exorcize demons is _____ (Acts 19) - be like Michael the archangel in Jude 9
Jesus demands the demon's name out of His _____ - it is Legion for they were many (5,600 in a legion)
The demons entreat Jesus not to cast them into the _____, but to instead be allowed to go into nearby swine
Swine is better than the abyss, but we don't know _____ they had to go into anything when cast out

Matt. 8:32 - the demons cause the swine to go mad and _____ themselves

It is not stated why Jesus allowed - better into _____ than people

The Response of the People - Matthew 8:33-34; Mark 5:14-17; Luke 8:34-37

The people come and find the formerly demonized man radically _____: clothed, in right mind, peaceful

They were “gripped with _____” at seeing the evidence of Jesus to cast out multitudes of demons

The Response of the Healed Man - Mark 5:18-20; Luke 8:38-39

Mark and Luke only record the response of the man that had the _____ of demons

The man wanted to _____ Jesus, but Jesus had other plans for him

The man not only told the people of his city what Jesus had done for him, but also throughout _____

Conclusions

Everyone has to face the question of “_____ is Jesus?”

Everyone has to face the question of how they will _____ to Jesus in light of the evidence of His identity

Respond like the demons in obeying only when you _____ and you risk spending eternity with demons

Respond in fear of Jesus’ power like the people from the city to send Him away - and He will _____

Respond like the demoniac and you will be radically changed to be in your _____ mind and do His will

KIDS KORNER

Parents, you are responsible to apply God’s Word to your children’s lives. Here is some help.

Young Children - draw a picture about something you hear during the sermon. Explain your picture(s) to your parents at lunch. **Older Children** - Do one or more of the following: 1) Count how many times the disciples are mentioned. 2) Discuss with your parents their reaction to both the storm and to Jesus commanding it to cease and your reaction to the things that frighten you.

THINK ABOUT IT!

Questions to consider in discussing the sermon with others. Is man innately good? Why or why not? Is a bad environment the cause of man’s problems? Why or why not? How have you seen people demonstrate their self-centered nature at different stages of their life? Who is Jesus and how should you respond when it comes to questions such as: What school to attend? Who to marry? What job to take? Where you should live? What did the disciples learn about Jesus’ identity when He calmed the storm? Can a person be “demon possessed”? Explain. To what degree can demons influence a non-believer? A group? A Christian? In what ways can demonic influence be manifested? How were the demons manifesting themselves in these men? Why did the man fall down before Jesus? How did he know Jesus’ identity? Why was he afraid of being “tormented before the time”? Why does Jesus ask the demon to tell Him his name? Should Christians try to find out the name of demons in order to exorcize them? Why or why not? How should Christians respond to demons? How many men are in a Legion? Why do the demons ask permission to go into the swine? What did they cause the swine to do? How many swine were there? Why would Jesus grant such permission? Why did the people come out to see Jesus? What was the condition of the formerly demonized man when they saw him? Why did this cause them to fear? Why did they want Jesus to leave? What did the man want to do when Jesus started to leave? What did Jesus want the man to do? What did the man do? Who do you believe Jesus to be? What is your response to Him based on His identity?