

**The Making of a Worshipper**  
**Luke 8:26-39**  
**Englewood Baptist Church**  
**May 30, 2010**

Please open your Bibles to Luke 8.

An artist who works with clay want to make a curvy pot or a flower-filled vase out of that doughy material. A mason who works with bricks can create a solid wall or a sky-reaching tower from the material. The lady at the salon who works with hair, can create a smooth style and turn a few heads with a certain cut. All these laborers have something in common: they take pre-existing material and mold it into something more beautiful and attractive.

Jesus loves to work with clay. Paul said, “We have this treasure, the glory of God, contained in jars of clay, the all-surpassing power of God in us.” Jesus takes flesh and these bones, and only He can make something so beautiful out of us, only He can make a worshipper out of me.

*You and I were made to worship*  
*You and I are called to love*  
*You and I are forgiven and free*  
*You and I embrace surrender*  
*You and I choose to believe*  
*You and I will see*  
*who we were meant to be*

*He has filled our hearts with wonder*

26 years ago, the Lord took an ordinary, common boy from rural Illinois, and filled his heart with God-sized wonder. He made a worshipper out of me, and I stand here today to testify of His power. I am a worship leaders and the Lord wants to make you a worship leader too. He wants to fill your heart with so much wonder that you will testify to His power. He wants you to be forgiven and free. He wants you to embrace surrender.

And surrender is a funny thing. Freedom is a strange state of being. When you follow Jesus, you forfeit your freedom and yet you gain more than you ever had. The Christian life is a paradox. The great Reformer Martin Luther commented on this once, saying:

***“A Christian man is the most free lord of all and subject to no one. A Christian man is the most dutiful servant of all and subject to everyone.” --Martin Luther***

What Luther meant was simple. In Christ, we lose our freedom so that we can discover a greater freedom. We surrender so that we can be free. That’s what we all want. That’s why we love this country. In this nation we feel free, but in Christ we receive a much higher form of liberation: free of stress, and sin, and guilt, and fear, and sorrow.

In the passage of Scripture we study today, we meet a man who felt like a prisoner, a man who had distant memories of freedom and fun, but his heart had grown so cold and his life had become such a mess.

Has your life ever been a mess? Have you ever felt lonely? Have you ever felt despair or discouraged? Watch how Jesus can take a defeated, demon-stuffed man and turn him into a victorious free-walking disciple. Jesus can make a worshipper from even the hardest crustiest clay.

Read Luke 8: 26-39.

Every pastor has their favorite style of preaching. Some men love to preach the difficult doctrine of Romans, others find greatest joy in preaching end-times prophecy from Revelation, still others love to dig into the Psalms and the Proverbs. Personally, my favorite passages to preach are the narratives of the Bible. The stories of real people and real events. Some of these people have names like Nicodemus or Zaccheus or Jairus. Still others are left unnamed. Just as real, but purposely anonymous.

The demon possessed man of Luke 8 has a name, and he lives today in victory and in heaven for sure. We just don't know what his mother called him the day he came forth from the womb. And we don't know what his childhood was like or his teenage years, whether he was happy or depressed. But we do know this, by the time he reached adulthood, his life was completely chaotic.

The man was a seven-day stalker, which sounds funny to say, but in actuality, he was viewed as animal. This passage is clear: Satan will take a pig or he'll take a man, but when he takes a man, he turns him to an animal. Satan loves loneliness; he loves to drive people from other people. Satan loves solitary places. V.27 says this man lived in the tombs, he had no house. He was considered unsafe around the children, like an offender today. He was a write-off, a person that people had written off, as good as dead, but still breathing. He had no victory in his life whatsoever.

All of us should relate to this man in some way. He represents so many people today. They are still breathing, still walking, and yet their lives are filled with darkness and with the smell of death. They feel depressed, they feel all alone.

And Jesus' encounter with the Gerasene demoniac teaches us valuable lessons about the Lord's desire for each of us. Let's follow Jesus in this passage and see what we can dig up.

### **Jesus and the Demoniac: What Do We Learn?**

- 1. Jesus purposely entered the land of pigs and demons.**

Hang with me and I'll help you understand the meaning. V. 26 says that Jesus intentionally sailed to the region of the Gerasenes. The exact location of that ancient city is unknown, but we know this: the area was smack dab in the middle of Gentile country. It was located in the midst of the Decapolis, the collection of Gentile cities beside the Sea of Galilee. In this region, pigs could be raised, sold, and eaten—something unimaginable in Jewish territory. Jews detested pork.

Now why was that? Let me explain. Pigs were seen as the ultimate "non-kosher" animal. The Old Testament placed pigs in the category of "unclean" and unfit for human consumption. So a man who tended swine was outlawed from the temple and little piggy was associated with the pagans. Hence, Jesus tells a story about a prodigal son and says that his life had reached an all-time low when he resorted to keeping the pigs and eating from their trough. The extreme humiliation of the prodigal was described in the stall of the swine.

This demonized man was one who lived among the dead, but also one who lived among the swine. He was, in Jewish estimation, a "low-life." He lived in the Gentile country, the unclean, and he lived near the pigs. But the pigs were the least of his problems. This man was in the midst of a spiritual battle and he was losing badly. His life was in shambles. Nobody wanted near him. Nobody wanted him in their home. Nobody wanted him near their zip code.

And yet Jesus makes a point to pay him a visit. Jesus enters into his world of pain. And Jesus was the answer to his problems. Jesus didn't bring the cure. He was the cure.

Let's all be honest here today. Most of us are uncomfortable walking on the other side of the Sea of Galilee. I'm one of those. We like to hang out with our friends, and to stay among the clean and to avoid the awkwardness of the "unusual." Most of us would prefer to surround ourselves with "normal" people who have few emotional problems and personal demons. We like to be healthy, to live among the healthy, and to keep all those "sick" people in jails, asylums, or fenced-in areas. Out of sight, out of mind. That makes us comfortable. It's human nature.

But Jesus defies human nature in that he sails intentionally to land of pigs and demons. He does it deliberately. It was one of his pre-planned stops along the way. He didn't get stuck there; he strategized to go there. Let me ask you: Where is God calling you to deliberately do that? Could it be that Jesus is prompting you to enter into the pain of people? Who has God put into your life, that has a lot of needs, that needs a lot of encouragement, that you purposely avoid? Would you be willing to get your hands dirty with demoniacs? Or do you just write off the "weird" people?

But let me go one step further in application. It would be wise also, for you and I to see that we not only should go to the swine people. We ARE the swine people. This church is filled with messed up people, with a lot of filth and dirt in our lives...of which I am one. Paul said, "I am the chief of sinners." We are all struggling with sin sickness, with insecurity, and pride, and ego, and judgmentalism, and greed, and envy, and fear. We all

face some daily demons. Let's stop pretending that we are completely clean and completely healthy, when we're not. We're all in need of grace, so let's be honest about that.

Do you know why the Jews hated the pigs worse than the other unclean animal? I was fascinated for me to discover this. Listen. The Jews hated pigs because they were hypocritical creatures. When a pig lies down in the mud, the creature sticks out its feet and seems to show off its clean qualities. The pig passes the foot test because it has a split hoof, the sign of a clean animal. But the second sign of a clean animal was in its cud. The creature had to ruminate or we say, "chew its cud, eating slowly and deliberately." A cow doesn't eat like a pig. Your children might, but a cow doesn't. So a pig showed off its kosher quality, its feet, but on the inside, the creature was considered filthy and unclean. Pigs had so much pretense, thought the Jews.

And so do people. So do people. Our lives are filled with pockets of pain, just like this demon-man, but the difference is, we just put our best foot forward in public and conceal the pain that hides within. We chime in at Sunday School to offer an interesting fact or observation, but we keep silent about the divorce papers that were filed. We greet people with warmth in the hallways of our church, but we hide the rage we feel toward our own families or coworkers. We are like pigs. As long as we put our best feet forward, we can ignore the fact that we're filthy inside.

And guess what Jesus does about this? He deliberately sails right into our lives, and he exposes us. He meets us in our pain, and he doesn't stand down from our demons. He wants to set us free, if we'll embrace surrender, if we will choose to believe. You and I will see what we were meant to be. Just look at v.28 and see how much Satan loves surrender...

Notice the demons resist the Son's presence, but they do not deny his power. They know what He is capable of.

## **2. To follow Jesus means reaching out for His power.**

"We beg you!" the demons said. "Do not torment us." Now I want you to take note that the forces of the evil become beggars at even the sight of Christ. And these demons were no softies. They supply this man with herculean strength. V.29 says that this possessed man was so strong that he could snap the chains on his hand and on his feet. He had Samson-like strength, and yet Jesus simply asks him his name, "What is your name?", and he whines like a toddler who lost his toy. He becomes a little beggar.

This is an important observation because we live in a day when so much emphasis is placed on physical strength. The size of your bi's, the size of your tri's, the definition of your abs, the tone of your quads or calves...these are the marks of strength among human beings. But in the eyes of God, you can be a human bodybuilder, and yet still be a spiritual lightweight. Human strength and heavenly strength are not one in the same.

This man had extraordinary human power, but it paled in comparison to Christ. And I want you to notice that Jesus throws his weight around just a bit here. He's a little bit like a bouncer at a night club. He does not stand down or show sign of intimidation. Instead, he approaches the man and demands some information. Let me see your ID, son. What is your name? Jesus inquires in v.30. And the man replies with Legion. That sounds like a smart alec response. What kind of name is that? Legion was the name for 6000 Roman soldiers. To the Jewish mind, Legion brought the image of relentless strength and size. It would be like someone walking up to you today and saying, "What's your name?" And you say, "You can call me 'Marines.' Or my name is Navy Seals. To the Jewish mind, the name Legion carried the idea of great military power.

And Jesus doesn't even flinch from this fortitude. He provides some theatre, a show of his capabilities. Almighty power on display, and he casts those demons into the pigs, off a cliff, and into the bottom of the sea with a single word. And the people said, "Wow."

Now don't lose track of what the Gospel writer Luke look is trying to convince us of in this text. Notice the context of this story. Immediately preceding this account is what? Look at the story above! Jesus rebuking the wind and the waves. Jesus has power over nature. Look at the story that follows this account. What is it? It is the story of Jesus bringing Jairus' dead daughter back from life and a bleeding woman back to wholeness, when doctors had run out of remedies. Hence, Jesus has power over life and death.

So Luke makes it clear in this section of Scripture that Jesus controls the breeze and the boats, he can conquer disease and death, but here, in the end of chapter 8, we learn that Jesus has power over demons and devils. He can drop the enemy into the bottom of the sea with a single word. In the beginning, God created with a Word. In the end, God can destroy with a word. He is all-powerful!

Now...a warning to us all. If you are a believer, then Satan and all of his demons are coming after you, your wife, your family, and your church. Satan hates what God loves, and God loves you. God want to make a worshipper out of you. And the devil wants to make a partner out of you, in his pain.

So be alert and be vigilant, says the Bible. "Your enemy, the devil prowls like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour," but so long as you stay near to the cloak of Christ, and connected to His heavenly power, the Enemy can't get close. Greater is He that is in you! You have resurrection power at your fingertips and demon stomping strength through Christ.

So let's just take inventory. What are you up against?

Is he seeking to discourage you?  
Is he tempting you to evil?  
Are you feeling insecure?  
Are you feeling fearful?

Are you feeling defeated? In all these things, Jesus has given you power to live in victory.

But you have to reach out for the power. You must pray. And stay in the Word. And stay close to the body of Christ. And you are safe. Jesus is your mighty fortress, your strong tower. He wants to display His power in your life, and help you defeat the evil that surrounds you.

Now, let's move on in the text, because I want you to see what happens next.

### **3. To follow Jesus means to be transformed.**

Look what happens in the before and after picture of the madman. We have already seen him naked, and unkempt, and crazed. Look at the makeover Jesus provides. VV.34-35...

Look at the transformation! Jesus had undone Satan's work. The Bible says the uncouth, uncivilized, unclean man was changed into a saint by the word of Christ. Three phrases describe the man.

- *He was sitting at Jesus' feet.* That man who had once dwelled among the dead now dwelled among the living. He had become a man under authority. He was no longer free to do his own thing[?]. And yet, he had never felt more free in all his life. Jesus is the only master that makes slavery feel like kingship. When you choose to submit the plan of God for your life, then you experience a new level of joy and peace. This man was at peace. Are you? Are you living for Christ? That's the only way to peace.
- *He was dressed.* Being dressed in public has its obvious perks. In case you hadn't noticed, it puts others at ease when you're wearing pants and shirt. But even more than that, this is a picture of a man whose appearance and countenance had changed. He looked different. He no longer had the look of a madman. Instead, he had the look of a disciple. He was decent. That is, he looked respectable, a man capable of honor. Jesus makes men like that: good, honest, sincere, Spirit-filled men. Those are the kind he produces. There was one of them, exhibit A.
- *He was in his right mind.* As a pastor, I have been involved with many people in counseling. Their problems are diverse and wide-ranging, but ultimately, all counseling comes back to one central idea. We must think differently if we are going to act differently. We must be transformed by the renewing of our minds. And Satan does his best work in our minds. He convinces us that we are, unprepared, unworthy, undisciplined, unruly, unmanageable, unbecoming, and unsuitable for service in the kingdom of God. And Jesus Christ is the only one that can "undo" the depravity of our mindset. Only Christ can change your heart, your mind, and your outlook on life. Follow Jesus, and you will gain the mind of Christ, says Paul to the Corinthians. Have you asked the Lord to change your mind? What a powerful prayer, "Lord, change my mind."

What a beautiful picture of total life transformation is found in Luke 8. Luke could have stopped right there in v.37, with Jesus being run out of town because of his power over people. But the most wonderful scene in this story is captured in vv.38-39. Look what happens...

Vv.38-39...

I believe I have found what I want on my tombstone. Could there be a more beautiful epitaph than this? Here lies Ben Mandrell: he told all over town what Jesus had done for him.

Ben Mandrell was a worshipper of Jesus. Wow. That's powerful. I hope my sons and my daughter grow up seeing their daddy transformed by Jesus and testifying of his power. That's my heart. My goal. It ought to be yours too.

Do you know what God wants to do with your life? He wants to take your twisted, distorted, misshapen soul, and he wants to make a worshipper out of you.

Are you willing? Will you embrace surrender?