

Matthew 20-02-16a

Good morning, welcome to the Sunday morning services at Grace and Truth Bible Church. We're going to continue this morning our study in the gospel of Matthew. Picking up here in chapter eight, looking at the demonic activity that Jesus encounters specifically and in some detail across the Sea of Galilee, south and a little east in the region of Gerasa, Gadara, and the consequent study that we're taking time to do on demons in general.

This is a good time to look at the overall, you might say, doctrine of demons, not what they teach, but the knowledge that we can glean from them in scripture and the observation we can make of their activity in the world. Let's take a moment as we begin or resume, you might say, to go to the Lord in prayer, ask his blessing on our fellowship and on our study, and we'll begin. Father, we thank you for this day.

We thank you for the opportunity for fellowship and for instruction in your word. We thank you for the teaching ministry of your Holy Spirit from whom we all learn and are not only taught but reminded and encouraged and given perception to see the fruit that these truths can bear in our lives as it is implanted in the soil of our souls. And we pray that as we look at these things together that it will not only be of interest and renew our enthusiasm for the Lord Jesus and for our place in your plan and purpose, but also prepare us and challenge us for application, for laying hold of righteousness by faith, and fulfilling your purpose for our lives now and in the ages to come.

We pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen. The subject, as I say, is found in Matthew chapter 8. And after calming the wind and the waves, which is a prominent Old Testament figure, the stormy sea in particular, for the presence of chaotic and uncontrollable evil in the world, you have this manifestation beginning in verse 28 and extending through the end of the chapter, verse 34, of the legion of demons.

And so we began talking about them last time. And let me say at the beginning that one of the reasons I think this is of interest is that I don't think the subject is primarily historical. I don't think that we're interested in this because we can go back and see what demons were doing in the days of Christ or at some earlier point in biblical history.

They are active now. We are, as we closed last time talking about, that's what we wrestle against, you and I, now. Our presence on the earth representing the Lord Jesus Christ is opposed by these principalities and powers and rulers of the darkness of this age, not a past age.

It's not a far off thing. It isn't pertinent to somebody else, but not us. It is pertinent to you.

It is pertinent to me. We are opposed by actual personalities who represent an enemy

agenda, a hostile activity that is bent on frustrating the plans and purposes of God, on hiding His glory, on obfuscating and confusing the minds of those who might seek to find God through Christ. Our presence is a counter effect.

Our presence is an antidote and is God's reaction, God's response. And so there is a warfare. There's no getting around it.

So as we look at what the Bible has to say about these unclean spirits, these representatives of the satanic agenda, we want to keep in mind that this illuminates today. It illuminates this afternoon. It illuminates circumstances in our lives in the present and in the future.

What about illness? What about hardship? What about the world situation? What about politics? What about international implications and our national entanglements therein? What should we be thinking and doing with this particular ray of light from the word of God in terms of ensuring that we are not neutralized, that we are not taken out of the conflict by these forces? Well, know your enemy is a very ancient axiom of warfare. And you can go back to Sun Tzu and some of the earliest distillers of truth when it comes to engaging in conflict and surviving it and achieving victory. And this is why we're looking at this.

If you wonder why I've given such a long introduction, I can shorten it. I can end it at this point. As long as you recognize that there is a need for this information, you need to know this, I need to know it.

And to the extent that we ignore it or are ignorant of it or forget it, we're going to be in big trouble because there is an active seeking of those who are recumbent and not prepared. I'll give you a quick analogy. Do you ever remember years ago, especially those of you that are older, anybody ever talking about identity theft or be sure that you don't let your private information get out because somebody will impersonate you and take your money and run up the total on your credit cards and print checks in your name? I mean, this was relatively unheard of until recent years.

Now you are a lamb among wolves if you don't take steps to protect your private information, if you don't password protect. Who had a password 30 years ago? Who had to worry about intrusion of the electronic kind? We were all buying master locks and deadbolts back then, but it's different now. So the study here is important because the landscape has changed, not only in terms of general security, your presence in and around the internet and so on, but I will submit to you before the class is over this morning, some other reasons why this is especially pertinent now.

As you look at Matthew chapter eight and notice the particular things we learn about demons here, one of the prominent ones is they seem to have a real desire for embodiment. If they can't be in these two individuals, then they would prefer to go into

the swine. They'd rather be anywhere than not here with some form of sensory apparatus.

What do men and swine have in common? Eyes, ears, senses. They've got the same five senses we do, although in different proportions. If their sense of smell was offended the way ours are, they'd run away from themselves.

But there is sensory apparatus, and this is something to which we'll return, but let's take a quick look at what you might call the doctrine of demons. We'll quickly survey some of the ideas that have been floated in the past as to who they are. We don't have the word demon in your King James Bible.

We do have a Greek word *daimonia* or *daimone*, but it's typically translated different ways. Sometimes it'll say devils. In the New King James, back in our previous chapter, remember when Jesus said, many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in your name, cast out demons in your name? The old King James said devils, but demons were mentioned by the Lord in the last chapter.

Earlier in this chapter, when evening had come, verse 16, they brought to him many who were demon possessed or possessed of spirits is what the old King James said. You could see the update in the language here in the New King James. Coming up just a page ahead of us.

If you flip over to Matthew chapter 10, verse one, when he called his 12 disciples to him, he gave them power over unclean spirits, unclean spirits. They're called foul spirits in Luke 9.25. Actually, I think I've screwed that reference up. And Luke 8.2, certain women who had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities.

Mary called Magdalene out of whom he had cast seven demons. So the New Testament is replete with references to these. And sometimes they are unclean spirits.

Sometimes they are just spirits. Sometimes they are, uh, *dymonia*, uh, and so on. Uh, in all you'll find references in the New Testament to these, this category, this group about 80 times, um, Jesus spoke of them.

Uh, remember he's going to get into an argument here in chapter 12 upcoming where the opposition says, well, he casts out demons by the prince of demons by Beelzebub. And, uh, interestingly they say by Beelzebub and he's going to say, if I cast them out by Satan, which tells us that Beelzebub is one of Satan's other names because Jesus changes the terminology there. And he says, if I cast out demons by Beelzebub, by whom do your sons cast them out? Therefore they shall be your judges.

But if I cast out demons by the spirit of God, surely the kingdom of God has come upon you. And he'll say, how can Satan cast out Satan in that same context? So, um, Jesus spent a significant amount of time in his ministry opposing and casting out these

demons. Um, Mark 1 34, you can't even get to the second chapter of Mark before you have Jesus, um, healing many who were sick with various diseases.

And he cast out many demons and he did not allow the demons to speak because they knew him. So, uh, the, the fact of demons is incontrovertible. Um, you can't spiritualize them away, uh, with any sort of serious approach to scripture and say, well, they're just, uh, a metaphor for, you know, the fallenness of the world or something.

They are actual entities. They think they speak, they have knowledge, uh, and this defines them as personalities as individuals, not as some sort of edge of the fog of darkness that touches and that has no mind or no, no will or no cognizance. This, this is a group of individuals.

So we want to figure out, uh, who they are and where they came from. And, and while we think we know this, you'd be surprised at some of the other, um, ideas about them. Uh, we know that they are not just spirits, but they are unclean.

Again, Matthew chapter 10, verse one, uh, Jesus is going to give the disciples power over unclean spirits. And the fact that they are described as unclean requires a bit of explanation that what kind of a catharsis is this? Um, and it's not too difficult to immediately understand that this is going to be moral impurity. It's not that they just need a bath in with their, whatever demonic substance they might have.

Uh, they are unclean in the sense of old Testament uncleanness related to unacceptability. Unacceptability reflects the presence of sin, evil, that which God cannot have in his presence. So this unclean is, is basically pulling from the old Testament idea of corruption and it is moral corruption, moral unacceptability.

And to grant that is to grant that there is such a thing that the Bible defines what it is. There are people in the world today who don't think anything is, is morally wrong. Uh, or at least a lot of the things that the Bible defines as such really aren't.

Uh, the Bible defines the fact of moral corruption, moral evil, moral uncleanness, and having stated its existence, it also defines it. And it is the biblical definition. If you are going to try to operate outside the Bible, as many do, uh, you've got to go back.

If you're not going to accept the Bible's definition of what moral corruption is, what evil is, what sin is. If you say, I don't accept those definitions. Well, you've thrown out the Bible.

So you can also not use it as a foundation for the existence of moral evil. So now you've got to define it yourself and you can challenge your, your atheists. Uh, if you ever find occasion and feel like doing so, uh, how do you define moral evil? What, what's your, what's your basis for even claiming that it exists? Because where you think that something is reprehensible or offensive, somebody who's perpetrating it may think

they've got perfectly good reasons.

And if it's, he said, she said, and it's your opinion versus their opinion, why is your opinion creating the existence of moral evil? You've got to have a foundation for it somewhere to, to prove that it exists. And if it's just, well, I don't like that, you know, pulling the wings off a fly that's morally evil. Well, some other guy says, well, I've got my reasons for pulling wings off of flies that keeps them from flying into my soup.

Uh, so I've got justification and pulling these wings off is not bad. Well, I mean, I use that as a very crude analogy, but hopefully you see the point. God creates the knowledge of moral evil.

That's what the tree in the garden did. The knowledge of good and evil. God did that.

God states it. And if you're going to say, well, I just think violence is the definition of evil. If you harm somebody, if you've caused them pain, that's evil based on what doctors cause people pain all the time.

Well, it's the reason, well, now you're just getting down a fuzzy road and it's just a matter of where do you draw a line? And we need God's claims about the existence of, and then the nature of the definition of moral evil. So that's sort of goes without saying, but it's worth saying once at least. So we have the unclean spirits.

We have the evil spirits, Luke 7 21, uh, that very hour, he cured many of infirmities, afflictions, and evil spirits. This is a different word. Ah, catharsis.

You can see the alpha privative. It's not clean. Uh, uh, catharsis.

You have poneiros. This is evil. And this is another, uh, facet of, of, uh, what is corrupt and unacceptable to God.

Uh, evil spirits. Uh, there are even some that are more evil. Some are more evil than others.

Jesus said there are least and greatest in the kingdom. And there are some who have greater offenses. There are servants who will be beaten with, be beaten with few stripes servants that will be beaten with many stripes.

There is a spectrum in the realm of, of righteousness and production. There's 30 fold 60 fold and a hundred fold fields. Same is true in evil.

How do I know this? Uh, upcoming in Matthew chapter 12, when Jesus talks about a, uh, spirit being driven out of a man and wandering in far away, dry places. And then he goes and takes, this is Matthew 12, 45. He goes and takes with him seven other spirits, more wicked than himself.

He's wicked, but there are seven others, more wicked, more evil. This is a form of poneiros. It's poneirotera.

And it is a greater degree of poneiros, more evil, interesting, more evil than himself. A very fascinating reference in Acts chapter 16, uh, that there is a Python demon, a Python spirit, Acts 16, 16, Paul and Silas, uh, are on their way to prayer. And a certain slave girl possessed with a spirit of divination met us who brought her masters much profit by fortune telling.

Well, the Greek there literally is a, uh, spirit of Puthona, P-U-T-H-O-N-A, U when it comes across from Greek becomes Y, it's Pythona. It's a Python spirit. And she, I'm not real sure that they understand exactly what that is, but she brought her masters much profit by fortune telling, but this is a snake demon, a snake demon, Python demon, Acts 16, 16.

Uh, and I'm going to, I'm going to now address another common feature of the demons as they interact with humans that I'd like you to pay close attention to because it is a very important principle and it is, it is helpful in terms of perception and identification of demon presence and demon activity, uh, because they're subtle, they're sneaky, they masquerade, Satan himself can masquerade as an angel of light. So do his minions. We have many cases of demons, uh, described as handicapping a person.

Handicap is a bad word in the modern, you know, educational and medical world. Well, too bad. It's a handicap.

It is a, uh, it is a loss. So for example, in Mark 9 25, um, there is a, a guy that's, that's got a, an unclean spirit. When Jesus saw people coming, running together, he rebuked the unclean spirit, saying to it, deaf and dumb spirit, I command you come out of him and enter him no more.

Really fascinating verse Mark 9 25. We learn several things here. It is a deaf and dumb spirit.

The presence of the spirit renders the man unable to hear and unable to speak. It is a spirit that has taken away the power of hearing and the power of speech. Secondly, notice the explicit command come out of him and enter him no more.

Remember back in Matthew chapter 12, the demon goes away for a while and then he comes back with his more evil friends returns and finds the house clean and swept. If steps are not taken by the cleansed individual, the demon that has been cast out can return. This one is commanded by Jesus to leave and not to return.

Other demons might have returned that he cast out. He cast demons out of many. How many of those people didn't change their ways, did not repent, didn't believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and set a new course are not like our garrison, gathering demoniac who was obedient and went home and celebrated what the Lord had done for him as a testimony

and a witness in his, in his hometown.

He set a new course. He has a new way of life. He's got a new purpose and, and his house has been clean swept and is now occupied by the things of God.

The demon can't return there, but Jesus has to explicitly command the demon in Mark 9.25, enter him no more. The implication being without that command, he would. You have the same idea in Mark 9.25. It's a reference to the same thing, deaf and dumb spirit.

I command you come out of him and enter him no more. Scripture says something twice, pay attention. So, the deafness and the muteness, actually I gave the same verse twice.

Didn't I? Sorry about that. But that story is, is repeated in another gospel, but I think the return to him no more is not. Luke 13.1, there are spirits of infirmity in Revelation 16.14. We have an interesting phrase, spirits of demons.

Sometimes we have unclean spirit. Sometimes we have demonia. We have the combination Revelation 16.14. They are spirits of demons performing signs, which go out to the kings of the earth and of the whole world to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty.

This is an explicit reference to spirits of demons, demon spirits, influencing and perhaps controlling world leaders and inciting them to engage in this war, to commit their troops and their resources in this attack on Israel. But not only do they influence behavior, they are behind many of the diseases that Jesus healed and deaf and dumb and so on. But here's the principle I want to point out.

You never find in scripture any positive effect that demons confer. You could argue from Acts 16.16, well, she could tell the future. She made money for her masters, this demon possessed girl with the python spirit.

She made money by divining, fortune telling. But there's no indication that this fortune telling actually profited people. You can dazzle them.

You can say, I know something about you that you didn't think I knew or that you didn't think I could know. All of the great artificers of the modern day that become adept at either researching people as they sign up for an event or as they walk in, they've got minions behind the curtain, getting on the internet, looking things up and saying, oh, I see this person listed in an obituary for their mother six months ago. So they'll talk to the guy in his little earbud and he'll call out, you know, Ruth in the audience and say, Ruth, I know you're grieving and your mother is here and wants to tell you that you're going to be okay.

And she says, how could she possibly know that my mother died? How could he possibly

know? Well, it's a combination of calculation, subtle manipulation by statements and questions and seeing what someone responds to. It's a great art. And many times it's quick research and an earbud, but the appearance is that, well, this is a supernatural power and I should now start using this to guide my life.

Well, the fortune telling demon that possessed this girl fascinated people, dazzled them, but there's no indication. Have you ever seen somebody who has somehow made material benefit in their life by hearing that their, their dead relative says, it's all going to be okay. Or, you know, I forgive you or whatever that there's no actual constructive benefit.

The press, here's the principle, the presence of evil always is destructive. It is never constructive. I don't often use absolutes, but it's never constructive.

Never. The presence of demons in Jesus day, you don't have guys walking around like Sampson with supernatural ability to for deliverance. They don't deliver a city.

They don't supernaturally feet of strength, dig a new well for people in a, in a dry area because they've got this tremendous strength. What is the tremendous strength that has conferred on these two demoniacs do? They beat people up and rob them. They're living in the tombs and stealing food and they're unmanageable and uncontrollable.

They use this power to break free of control, to shatter bonds and, and, uh, uh, you know, rip off their clothes and smash themselves with rocks. It's not constructive. The presence of a demon takes away the ability to speak, takes away the ability to hear, takes away the ability to be healthy and lead a normal life.

It distracts and deflects and gives people false hope. Oh, this girl knows things. I can guide my life.

I'll pay her masters and get ahead in life, but you never do. And this can be extrapolated to a more general principle. Those who are influenced by evil and specifically by demons never build anything good.

They never construct, they never create. God creates evil, destroys. It's a principle.

Look at politics. It's a whole lot easier. Look at, look at vandalism.

Is it easier to construct a building? Is it easier to plant trees? I've told you this a few times before, but I will never forget. One of the first times I really was sort of incensed at the world, uh, was when I was a Marine in Lawton, Oklahoma stationed at Fort Sill. And I was in my civilian clothes, went down, I had to go buy some stuff and they had a nice mall there.

And outside the mall, um, it was in a rough area of town. It had formerly been a red light

district and Lawton was trying to rehabilitate. And so the city had granted tax incentives and, and was trying to lift the neighborhood up and to improve it both for the people that lived there and to get new people to come in and just, you know, take it out of its really rundown slummy character.

And so this mall had been built, there were wonderful new stores. It was a great economic boom for that whole part of town. And outside they had had parking area and they'd planted these young saplings, these little trees.

And it was such a relief from the eyesore that it had been before. And so I go down there one weekend in my civilian clothes, I'm going to go pick up a few things at the mall. And, uh, kids had gone down and jumped up and grabbed the branches of these new little trees and just, just broken them off and torn them down.

And these trees are all destroyed just for kicks, just for the fun of it. You know, this is the kind of attitude and kind of thinking and kind of people that they were trying to, to lift and raise and change and give some new hope. And instead thousands of dollars in planting and cultivating these trees, putting in little watering systems for everything.

And you could imagine anywhere from two to a half a dozen teenage idiots went along and vandalized and just ripped up all of those trees. That's the inherent nature of evil. That's what you start doing when you come under the influence and the control.

It does not create, it does not build up. It can only destroy. Dr. Criswell talked about this in a, in an address he gave to the Southern Baptist Convention, uh, with the influence of liberalism on, uh, biblical authority and the text of scripture and preaching the infallible inerrant word of God and talked about the downgrade controversy in the Baptist world in Britain in the late 1800s.

You had Charles Haddon Spurgeon who was preaching the fire out of the Bible and he was a British Baptist. Well, the influence of, of, uh, Wellhausen and, and the, the German, uh, you know, dividing up a scripture and saying that it was a pastiche and a hodgepodge and it was written by men and, and poorly done and, and, uh, destroying the authority of scripture, trying to undermine it. And, uh, they, they were the Bart Ehrmans of their generation, uh, using biblical scholarship to tear it apart, but that's what they were doing.

They would have nothing to tear apart if it wasn't for scripture. They didn't, they didn't substitute anything. You see people who say, Oh, I mean, worldwide, you have people that say America is the boogeyman.

America is the, you know, the, you know, Western empire, evil meddling, uh, capitalist, uh, and, and certainly there are elements in our national operation that need fixing. We're, we're a real mix of good and bad, but people who look at that and say, why don't

we try to create new and better ways to do these things that will minimize the evil and maximize the good. There are people who say, throw it out.

You've got political candidates to say, tear it down, throw it out. Well, you can't just tear down. You can't run on tear down.

You can't run on, I mean, you can, but who are you appealing to? My thing is tear down what I see in front of me. Here's somebody I don't like. I don't care what else we do.

Get rid of him, get rid of them to the extent that that exists. That is the extent to which evil and the representatives of evil, which is the principalities and powers are involved. Don't kid yourself.

And I'm not trying to make a political statement. I'm not saying, you know, Republicans, good Democrats, bad or the reverse. I'm saying that where you see a predominance of tear it down, throw it out with almost nothing by way of this is what I will build in its place.

It's evil. This is what evil does. This is what demons do.

I'm not going to confer a benefit on this person that I inhabit. If they, if they love being embodied so much, if they love, you know, possession so much, why don't they make the person so productive that nobody can do without them, that their people bring them food and, and feed them and, and give them a claim and promote them and, and house them and so on. They tear them down.

They can't hear, they can't speak. They can't function in normal society. They can't live in a house.

It is emblematic that these guys have to live in the tombs. It's emblematic. What does a house represent? Order, structure, authority, a plan, provision, interaction with others.

My home is in a neighborhood of other homes. My family is a family among other families. There is society.

There is structure. There is institution. Well, these guys represent everything that tears that down.

If something is tearing down family, presence of evil, tearing down marriage, tearing down husband, wife, parents, monogamy, it's evil. And the proponents of evil and the representatives of evil are in it. They are behind it.

They are of it. They've done it even since Old Testament days, as we'll see. So just look for the fact that where, where God is present, there is construction.

There is creation. Uh, somebody can build a church. You think about the effort and the

time I'm talking about the physical building.

Uh, someone builds a church building. It's got stained glass windows. It's got, you know, beautiful, uh, ornamentation and so on.

How long does that take? How much resource does that take? How much organization, dedication, discipline, working with authority, compensation, fairness to workers and, and acquisition of materials, consistency, dedication over time. You think about that. How long does it take to desecrate and vandalize a church? How much effort does it take? How much of any of the good things that built it are required to screw it up? Somebody with a little bomb making ability or, you know, some matches and some arson materials can reduce it to ashes in no time.

Anything admirable in that? Anything constructive? This is the distinction. And don't kid yourself. These elements permeate and pervade both what God is a part of and what Satan and his minions are a part of and where you see a predominant attitude of let's tear it down, where someone has invested a lot in building up.

It's, this is one of your telltales, one of the ways to know what is the side of right and what is the side of wrong. You might not agree with all the architecture of that church. You might think the pews should have been upholstered differently or the, you know, the windows should have been done differently.

The bathroom should have been closer. But what is that compared to? Well, I'm on the side of the guy who thinks churches just take up good space that could have been used to build housing for the poor. There is destruction and you see this in the demons.

So they are evil, more evil. They produce deafness, dumbness, infirmities, and they lead world rulers to the venue for destruction. And God allows it because it is going to be destruction by God.

We've already seen that they are in fact persons. Where do they come from? I had this question last week. It's a good question.

All the questions my mother asks are good. And how do we know where exactly do they come from? Are they exclusively from the past in heaven? Are they anything to do with Genesis chapter six? Scripture talks about some spirits that are in prison and Jesus preaching and those that are reserved under judgment. And so are those demons also do unclean spirits and disobedient spirits? Are they? Well, this is a very important distinction that we need to make an identification that we need to clarify.

So we're going to pause here and take our break. When we come back, we will establish the origin and the definition of what a demon is. And distinguish them from other types of angels.

We'll do that when we come back.