

Miracles of Jesus 12-06-17a

But this is Sunday, the 17th of June, 2012, and as we have been looking together at the miracles of the Lord Jesus Christ, having seen last week in two sessions, because it's such a mighty miracle, the stilling of the storm on the Sea of Galilee, and we're going to spend two sessions this morning on the next mighty miracle, which is like unto it. And this is the casting out of the demon known as Legion, because he is representative of a group. We are many, he says.

But he's the spokesman, and he says, call me Legion. Call me lots of them. And so that's going to be our study this morning, Matthew chapter 8, Luke chapter 8, Mark chapter 5. We will begin in Luke, but we'll begin even before that by taking a moment to go to the Lord in prayer.

Father, what a blessing it is to be in the company of believers who are enthusiastic about the Lord Jesus Christ and the life that we have in Him and through Him, the opportunities to learn and to grow and be challenged here on this earth in preparation for life with You and with Him in the ages to come. We thank You for the sustenance that You provide to us through Your Word that nourishes and strengthens and edifies our souls, fortifies our hearts, establishes our faith, enables us to exercise love in the light of our hope of the certain return of the Lord Jesus and our gathering to Him. We pray that as we look at these passages together this morning that God the Holy Spirit will superintend in the delivery and in the reception that each of us will find pertinent and meaningful truth that will stick with us, that will be a source of application and challenge in the days ahead so that we can live a life that reflects Your glory and the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ.

We pray it in His name. Amen. As I said, you can turn to Luke chapter 8. I think this is probably the fullest account of the various details that are presented to us by the three gospel accounts that record this act of the Lord Jesus.

When you get three accounts you know this is a good one, this is a big one. Luke chapter 8 verse 26, Then they sailed to the country of the Gadarenes, which is opposite Galilee. And when He stepped out on the land, there met Him a certain man from the city who had demons for a long time.

And he wore no clothes, nor did he live in a house, but in the tombs. When he saw Jesus, he cried out, fell down before Him, and with a loud voice said, What have I to do with You, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I beg You, do not torment me. For He had commanded the unclean spirit to come out of the man.

For it had often seized him, and he was kept under guard, bound with chains and shackles. And he broke the bonds and was driven by the demon into the wilderness. Jesus asked him, saying, What is your name? And he said, Legion, because many demons had entered him.

And they begged Him that He would not command them to go out into the abyss. Now a herd of many swine was feeding there on the mountain, so they begged Him that He would permit them to enter them. And He permitted them.

Then the demons went out of the man and entered the swine, and the herd ran violently down the steep place into the lake and drowned. When those who fed them saw what had happened, they fled and told it in the city and in the country. Then they went out to see what had happened and came to Jesus and found the man from whom the demons had departed, sitting at the feet of Jesus, clothed and in his right mind.

And they were afraid. They also who had seen it told them by what means he who had been demon-possessed was healed. Then the whole multitude of the surrounding region of the Gadarenes asked Him to depart from them, for they were seized with great fear.

And He got into the boat and returned. Now the man from whom the demons had departed begged Him that He might be with him. But Jesus sent him away, saying, Return to your own house and tell what great things God has done for you.

And he went his way and proclaimed throughout the whole city what great things Jesus had done for him." Well this is a fascinating account. It is fraught with details and even in two sessions we will be doing well to cover it. Let's begin in verse 26, Then they sailed to the country of the Gadarenes, which is opposite Galilee.

If you look at my air map or if you think of the Sea of Galilee you know where Capernaum and Nazareth are up at the north edge, right? And opposite is south and a little bit east. This is where they have sailed. They have gone sort of maybe from eleven o'clock to five o'clock on a round Sea of Galilee.

And it says, To the country of the Gadarenes. And you will see, you probably have a text note there where it reads Gerasenes. There are three choices here.

You've got Gadara, you have Gergesha, or Gergesa, and you have Gerasa. And this guy is variously known as the Gerasene demoniac, the Gadarene demoniac, or the Gergesene demoniac. Which one is it? Well, it's really pretty simple.

You remember my clock of five o'clock? If you just extend a line from that part of the shore down about 33 miles, kind of more of a four o'clock or four-thirty direction, basically southeast, on that line there are three towns. The one on the shore, right at the shore, is Gergesa. G-E-R-G-E-S-A, or S-H-A, just depending on who you talk to.

But we'll call it Gergesa. That's on the shore. About six miles on that line, southeast, you have Gadara.

And Gadara being six miles away has land or has territory associated with it that extends all the way up to the shoreline. And Gergesa is in that Gadarene, you might think of it as

a county, and Gadara is the county seat. The larger region with more of a Roman presence and so on, the largest city, is 33 miles down from the coast on that southeast line, and that is Gerasa.

Oddly enough, the best manuscript evidence has Gerasa or Gerasene in this place in the text. But it seems the least likely because it's the furthest away. Well, we don't really need to solve this problem, and that's why God hasn't seen fit to give us concrete textual evidence.

The texts vary. Nobody can really figure out which one it's supposed to be. It doesn't matter a whole lot.

We know where he is. He's on the shore. We know that there's a town immediately nearby.

Think about this. The people are informed by the herdsmen when the demons are cast out. They go to the town, and everybody from the town comes back.

If this was truly Gerasa, that would be a 66-mile round trip. How long would that take? Even if you're dog-trotting along at five or six miles an hour, this would be 10, 12 hours. Don't think that's going to happen.

It's one of the closer towns. I've given you the Greek names. There are Aramaic or Hebrew equivalents.

But the other thing to keep in mind about the location, the geography, is this is a largely Gentile region. The only Jews who would choose to live over here would be those that were so Hellenized that they didn't really care much about observing the Law of Moses. This is why you have herds of swine as one of the primary businesses.

But this is considered to be a Gentile region. This is sort of in the larger area dominated by the Decapolis, the cities of Rome over on that side. So that's our setting.

You'll remember last time that Jesus basically did the powerboat thing getting here. It's a sailboat. It didn't have an outrigger on the back, so He cranked up the wind and went to sleep.

Well, the disciples are extremely fearful about this situation. They're not used to being driven at 12 to 15 knots across the water by a high wind. And of course the wind kicked up waves, and they're getting green water over the bow, and they panic.

And Jesus wasn't worried. He was asleep. He figured, well, you know, better get a nap in the few minutes it's going to take to get across the lake.

And so we saw that last time. But now they have arrived. So it says they sail to the country of the Gerasenes, Gadarenes, Gergesenes.

Take your pick. We know where it is. Opposite Galilee.

Now, opposite Galilee. He could have just given the notice and not related it to Galilee. Why do we say opposite? Opposite Galilee.

It's opposite in a lot more than just geography. Galilee is Jewish. The Gadara, Gergesa, and Gerasa area is Jewish.

Galilee is almost entirely Gentile. There are a few Gentiles up in Galilee. There are a few Jews over here.

But it's opposite. It's a different thing. And Jesus has gone here intentionally.

If you look back at verse 22, Jesus got into a boat with His disciples and said to them, let us cross over to the other side of the lake. Jesus intended to go here. And He has a specific reason.

He knows that this man is there. Now, we may as well dispense with something else. Keep your finger in Luke chapter 8 and turn back to Matthew chapter 8. Matthew chapter 8 verse 28 kind of reminds you of Romans.

But instead of Romans 8.28, this is Matthew 8.28. Matthew 8.28. When He had come to the other side, to the country of the Gergesenes, there met Him two demon-possessed men. You say, wait, is this a different episode? Look up above. Wind and waves obey Jesus.

Same episode, same time. He's crossed over to the other side of the lake. And there are two demon-possessed men coming out of the tombs exceedingly fierce so that no one could pass that way.

In Mark and in Luke, there is only one man mentioned. So, is it a mistake? Is it an error? Is there a goof in the Bible that Matthew's got two and Mark and Luke only have one? No. What does this tell us though as we compare these accounts? Of these two men, one is dominant.

One is prominent. The other guy is just in his shadow. He's a follower.

He doesn't say much. He's along for the ride. This one man is the focus.

He's the spokesman. He's the instigator. He's the initiator.

And of the demons that are possessing these two men, the senior demon, the ranking demon, the spokesman demon is in the man that is the focus of Mark and Luke. And nothing is really added to the account by the presence of the second man in terms of what the point of the miracle is. And this is important.

And the reason God has given us the clue in Matthew that there were actually two men is this is a way of filtering out what is important, what the purpose of the miracle is. The fact that one account says there's two men and two accounts say there's one man tells us that the number of demoniacs is not important and that the identity of the demoniacs in terms of their, you know, we're not given names, you know, Rufus and Gaius or Bert and Ernie or whatever these two guys' names might be. They're not given.

And it's important. The fact that we have the variation is itself significant. God has done it on purpose.

Far from being an error, it is a clue. It is an indicator. And it tells us don't worry about the man himself.

And we're going to see this in the Luke account especially if you turn back to Luke chapter 8. And I'll just point this out now. And if you want to make little marks here, you'll see this. If you look in verse 27, it says, when he stepped out on land, there met him a certain man from the city.

Notice a certain man from where? He's not from the country. He's not a farmer or a rural guy. He's from the city, right? He's known in the city.

He's got roots in the city. He's got family in the city. But he's developed this demon problem.

And so he's from the city who had demons. So he's a man who had demons. That's his identity.

And he's had them a long time. If you look, you know, these verses describe all of the affliction and the circumstance that attends the presence of these demons, all of the effects that it has. And when you look down at verse 33, the demons went out of the man.

So after that, in verse 35, how is he identified now? In verse 35, he is the man from whom the demons had departed. That's his identity. Look at verse 36.

They who had seen it told him by what means he who had been demon-possessed was healed. Wouldn't it have been easier in storytelling to just give this guy's name instead of saying he who had been demon-possessed, he who had been demon-possessed, he who was possessed of demons? But this is his constant description. This is his identity.

And this is the focus. This is the emphasis in the story. So the whole multitude asked him to depart from them.

They were seized with great fear. Look at verse 38, now the man from whom the demons had departed. It doesn't just say the man.

It's always emphasized. It's very emphatic. Look at all the times that this is given.

So looking at Matthew, we see that it is the presence of these demons. This is the real focus. And that's why I've chosen to title our study, The Casting Out of Legion.

We tend to say, well, it's the story of the Gerasene, Gadarene, Gergesene demoniac, but that's not what the Bible tells us to focus on. It is the legion that we focus on. So as soon as Jesus steps out on land, there meets him this man.

Now the other thing I want you to notice, and you may have seen this as we went through the story here, especially in Luke. When Luke tells this story, there is significant backwardness of time. He jumps and then backs up.

He jumps and then backs up. He jumps and then backs up. It's not a nice chronological telling.

If you were going to tell this chronologically, you would say, and behold, in the land of the Gergesenes, there was a man possessed of demons. And oft times they had caused him to hurt himself. They tried to bind him, and he and the other guy were really fierce and wouldn't let anybody pass that way.

You would get the whole background. And behold, Jesus came to land, and the man fell at his feet. And Jesus said, come out of him.

What is your name? And the whole conversation. And then he comes out. Wouldn't that be the logical way? And you think, well, isn't that what we read? Look again.

Sailed to the country, and when he stepped out on the land there met him a certain man from the city. So the man has already come out and met him. We know from the other Gospels that he falls at Jesus' feet.

But now we're going to back up and get the back story after the man falls at Jesus' feet. He wore no clothes, didn't have a house, lived in the tombs. And then when he saw Jesus, he cried out, fell down before him.

Well, that's a repeat. We already said the man came out to meet him, and now we've gone back. We've got back story.

And now with a loud voice he says, what have I to do with you, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I beg you, do not torment me. Then we back up, and we get a past perfect, for Jesus had commanded the unclean spirit to come out. Why didn't Luke put that first? Jesus commanded him to come out, and this is what the guy says.

So it's displaced. It's kind of almost confusing. And now we get some more back story.

For it had often seized him, and he was kept under guard, bound with chains and

shackles. And he broke the bonds and was driven by demons into the wilderness. Wouldn't this belong up in the previous account where he was naked and lived in the tombs? Jesus asked him, saying, what is your name? He said, Legion, because many demons had entered him.

And they begged him that he would not command them to go out into the abyss. Now, there is knowledge here that the man could not possibly have, and it comes out in the conversation. Immediately identifies Jesus, not just the name Jesus, but Jesus, Son of the Most High God.

Now, the Most High God is a specific title, and it prevails in Gentile regions. In fact, there were proclamations of Caesar where he was called the Most High God, because he was considered deity. But you find this appellation or title very rarely in a Jewish context.

In Judea and Galilee, they don't say it very often. This is more in the Gentile context. Why? Because Most High God acknowledges God with reference to any other gods that are being looked at.

In Israel, it was a given. Well, God is God, and there are no others. The Lord our God is one Lord, and that's it.

Thou shalt have no other gods before me. But in other regions, there was competition. There were other options and alternatives.

And so, when he says the Most High God, this says a couple of things. First of all, in this Gentile region, it doesn't matter what other god you think might have any sway. This is the God of gods.

We call Jesus the King of kings and Lord of lords. And it's an interesting thing if you're an editor. Do you capitalize both words, kings and king, and lords and lord, or do you just capitalize the first one? When I do it, I only capitalize the first one, because he is the capital K King of small kings, all human kings.

And he is the Lord capital L of all human lords. But if you view it as a title, then you would capitalize them both. But I don't like to capitalize them both, because otherwise it looks like he's the capital K deity king of other capital K king deities, and I don't want to do that, so we don't.

But Son of the Most High God. Son of the Most High God. Doesn't call him the Most High God.

Calls him Son of. Why? He is in incarnate form. These demons know their theology.

They know and have observed what is unfolding in the plan of God. And they recognize the sonship, because they also know the Davidic covenant. They know that David will

have a son, and that this will also be God's son, and there is a nexus.

There is a coordination of promises and identities here, where Jesus is the small s Son of David and the capital S Son of God. These demons know what's going on. That's why they're here.

That's why there's more demon possession noted at this time in history than any other, because they figure, well, if Jesus is going to come in the flesh, then we will wrestle with Him in the flesh. We're not going to do it all at the principality and power level. We're going to oppose Him on that battlefield.

He's incarnate. We'll be incarnate. He's visible.

We'll be visible. He will exercise power. We will exercise power.

And that's what they're doing. There's never been a time before or since. You don't see this sort of thing in the Old Testament.

How many Old Testament exorcisms do you see? Odd, isn't it? Same people, same region, and yet here we just get demons. You can't swing a cat without hitting a demon-possessed person. Why? Because meeting on the strategic turf.

Well, notice that this is a problem outside human control. The man cannot control himself. He's from the city, but he can't live in the city.

It is a living death of a different kind. We've seen leprosy as a living death in the physical disease sense. This is a living death in the social sense, in the relation to other people sense.

He is destructive, and he cannot be controlled. And there's an interesting illustration here of the limits and the weakness of human measures to control the evil that is in men's hearts, whether it is demonic or innate. As you look a little bit further down, it had often seized him, and he was kept under guard.

They tried to watch him and keep him from doing things. Human guards could not suppress his behavior. So they bound him with chains and shackles.

The chains were manacles on the arms, on the wrists. The shackles were on his feet, and he shattered these. If you look at the Greek verb here, he wore away the bonds, and he shattered the shackles.

The guy had superhuman evil strength, literally, and human measures could not contain him, could not control him, could not hold him. And it's a reminder that when it comes to the problem of evil, internal evil, there are no step programs. There are no counseling sessions.

There is no mentoring. There is no psychotherapy. There is no chemotherapy.

There is nothing that can get rid of the innate evil that is behind these destructive behaviors and these antisocial actions. Man tries, and it fails. And this will always be true.

We certainly have laws, and we have law enforcement, and we do the best we can. But in terms of rehabilitation, in terms of managing proliferation of evil, simply trying to contain it, to guard it, to shackle it, will always fail. And that's represented here.

Not only that, but this evil has results. He cannot live in the house. This divides households.

It breaks up families. It destroys the proper function. This man should be the father and the husband, should be a leader, should be a policymaker, should be a defender and a protector and a provider.

He can't do any of those things, because evil has taken him over, and he's outside. Not only can he not provide for his own family, can he not be a functional, fruitful member of his community, but he is an antagonist and an attacker of anybody else. We know from Matthew that nobody could even pass that way, and he was sort of a terrorist.

He wore no clothes. Of course, this is a rejection of social convention. What difference does it make if you're demon-possessed if you have clothes on or not? Well, he's markedly different.

You see him coming at a distance, and you say, this guy is a threat. Look at him. He's not wearing clothes.

He's disregarding any propriety, any consideration of others. Wearing clothes is primarily consideration to others. You don't want to shock them.

You don't want to put them off. You don't want to distract them. You don't want to cause traffic accidents and things.

You have clothing on. It is out of respect and consideration to other people that we clothe ourselves. When is it you're unclothed? When you're by yourself.

You're getting ready to take a shower. You're in your bedroom, switching clothes and so on. You close the doors and windows, and you don't bother anybody when you're in a state of undress.

Well, this guy is out in public doing this because it is a rejection and a repudiation of any consideration for others. It is a mark of evil. Evil is characterized by, I mean, it goes almost without saying, but it's inconsiderate.

It is abusive. It is antagonistic to the well-being or the welfare or any other benefit to other people. So he wore no clothes, nor did he live in a house but in the tombs.

And you know, remember what kind of tombs they have in the ancient world? What kind of tomb was Jesus put in? It's a cave. They would dig holes in the rock, find natural formations and hollow them out. And so he can get out of the weather.

He can get out of the wind and so on. He's naked. So he and, of course, his companion are sleeping in these tombs.

And, of course, this would be defiling. Even in the Gentile world, people didn't like hanging around corpses and rotting bones and so on. This guy doesn't care.

Completely opposite. And you see subcultures in our country and elsewhere that seem to gravitate toward and take pride in antisocial, that's why they call it counterculture, and where you wouldn't poke holes in yourself and ink yourself all up. Well, these people do.

And not that that's intrinsically wrong, but it is representative of something. It is a statement. I am not like you.

I am like people who partake of this other culture who also poke holes and ink themselves all up. I side with them. I like their values.

I like their repudiation and their rebellion of norms and conventions and traditions. So, he lives in the tombs. When he saw Jesus, he cried out and fell down before him.

It's very interesting because you get the idea that the falling down before him is the man. The man wants deliverance, but the man can't speak. The demon's got control of his vocal cords.

And it's interesting what God will and will not allow demons to do. These demons do not want to be sent to the abyss. They do not want to be tormented.

They don't want anything to do with Jesus. What have I to do with you? I don't want to be here, says the spokesman demon for the legion. But he's there.

Why? Because they cannot prevent the man from coming to Jesus. There's not just one demon. There's a host of demons.

And all of these demons, with all of their power, cannot prevent this one poor, benighted man from running to Jesus and falling at his feet. No evil, no satanic plan or effort can stop people from coming to Christ. Nothing on earth or in the heavens above the earth or in the air around the earth can stop anyone who wants to come to Jesus.

Nobody had more potential opposition than this man. And yet he doesn't just stagger. He doesn't crawl.

He runs. He is completely free to go to the Lord Jesus and fall at his feet. Maybe he can't speak, but the action speaks louder than words, doesn't it? He runs to him and falls at his feet.

The appeal is intrinsic. It's obvious. As soon as he sees Jesus, and you almost get the idea that the demons have undone themselves, because how would the man know who Jesus is or what power he has, except that the demons are all in a stir.

And the man says, whatever this is, this host of demons doesn't like it, so it's got to be good. And he runs in that direction. They tell the man what the man could not know in his human knowledge.

They are the source of their own undoing. What have I to do with you, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? And the man says, I am in the right place. I have come to the right man.

This man can help me. And he falls at his feet. So it's a reminder also that God works all things together for good.

And even the efforts of evil in this world can be a means of deliverance and salvation. Why did the man run toward Jesus except that the demons got so excited about not wanting to be there? How could he have known? Well, they gave it away. If they'd played cagey and not given out their fear and their concern over the presence of Jesus, the man might have stayed up in the hills.

Jesus might have had to go track him down. But he can tell by their agitation, and he runs to Jesus and falls at his feet. What have I to do with you? Remember, Jesus said this same phrase to his mother when she said, they're out of wine.

He says, what have I to do with you? What is there between you and me? What's our business? And it's a stock phrase. But they immediately plead, I beg you, do not torment me. We also know that they say that they begged that he would not command them to go out into the abyss.

Now what do we know about the abyss? Any Old Testament references to the abyss or demons going there or demons, period. We have some unclean spirits and the Witch of Endor and that sort of thing and prohibitions in the law against those who consort with. But in terms of possession or in terms of the fate of these spirits, these demons, this is something we learn from the demons themselves.

They know that their fate is torment and the abyss, and they don't want to go there. And remember, the other demon says, have you come to torment before the time? They know they've got a space of time allotted to do whatever it is they're going to do, and then they're going to be consigned. And they're worried, well, has that time come? Well, here's the point for our first session.

Jesus intentionally drew near. Jesus put his foot incident on the lake, stilled the wind and the waves, arrived at the other side. His whole intention is to meet this man, actually these two men.

That's the reason he comes. And it is a Gentile region. This is the first and only time that we see Jesus intentionally heading over into Gentile land.

Gentiles will come to him, Roman centurions, Syrophoenician women. But he goes to this side of the lake, and this is the only time recorded where he does so, specifically for this man. And the man is in the right place at the right time.

We know there's a big region here, but he happens to be there. Jesus arrives at a time when he knows the man will be near. The man sees him.

The man runs to him, and there's going to be deliverance. This is what in Acts chapter 13 is called, as many as are willing as were appointed unto eternal life, believed, as many as were set in place, as many as were disposed, the disposition of place and time, so that salvation draws near. This is an act of God.

This is God's sovereignty in salvation. As many as were disposed, as were appointed, as were tithemed, put in place, with a view toward salvation, believed. God knew that there were people who would accept the gospel if they could just hear it, if they could be in the right place at the right time.

They could receive deliverance. They could establish a relationship with God through Christ. And so God appointed the apostles to be there and to preach, appointed their caravan to have a delay so that they didn't get to the city until that day.

They had business in town. Whatever it is, God orchestrates circumstances to bring about the opportunity for salvation, but it is still an act of choice and of will on the part of believers to receive when that appointed day comes, when that confrontation and that testimony is given. It is a free act of choice.

By the way, in Acts chapter 13, if you look, Paul tells the others who came and did not accept the gospel, who were mostly Jewish, he says, since you have judged yourselves unworthy of eternal life, you have judged yourselves not to need this deliverance, we go to the Gentiles. You have judged yourselves. That's the free will part.

God creates the condition and establishes all of the parameters of salvation, makes it possible. Jesus draws near. It's not up in heaven that you have to ascend.

It's not down in the depths that you have to descend. It's near. It's in our hearts.

It's on our lips, this opportunity. That's God's sovereignty. Choice is what do you do with that option, with that grace gift from God.

As many as received Him, to them God gives authority to be called sons of God, even to those who believe. Well, so this man is not inhibited. He's not prevented.

Jesus comes to the shore. The man comes to Jesus. That is a divine appointment.

That is a sovereign orchestration of circumstances. God has limited what demons can do. You can tell by the way they talk to the Lord Jesus, they know they are under limitations.

They are under a time limit. There are certain things they can and cannot do. They can't choose where they go when they are cast out.

If Jesus casts them out and says, go to the abyss, they have no choice but to go there. They can't say, well, I'm rebelling against God. He told me to go, but I'm not going to go.

When Jesus says, go, it's out of their control. They go because He says so, and His word supersedes any power, any option, any choice that they might have. That's why they have to beg and plead, because it is His choice where they go, not theirs.

It's a reminder to us, God is in His heaven. He is on His throne. There is no evil in this world that can overtake us beyond what God allows.

Let's pause here and take our break. When we come back, we'll pick up in the midst of this very interesting account and see some details we might not have thought about before.