

Miracles of Jesus 12-06-17b

Let's pick up our study now in the Gospel of Luke chapter 8. We are looking at the Lord Jesus Christ dealing with the demon who claims the title legion because there are more than one. And we have seen that this is representative of the influence of evil and you'll notice that this legion is in a Gentile region on the other side of the Sea of Galilee. Now we saw a demon cast out on the other side of the lake up in Galilee, didn't we? Remember back in Mark chapter 1 and the vocabulary is quite similar.

In Mark 1.24 the demon that Jesus cast out of the possessed man that was in the synagogue, he cried out and said, What have you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are, the Holy One of God. And these demons always end up having to acknowledge who Jesus is. They seem to make that a big point.

But there is also this notion of destruction. They know that they are going to be destroyed. They know that their torment is in their future.

And they also know that there is a time. They have had a time allotted where they can do their worst, so to speak. And so that's sort of a parallel here back to Mark chapter 1. What have you to do with us? Why are you messing with us? But this is a defensive move because the man has brought them into proximity with the Lord Jesus.

The other thing we know in looking at the Mark account is that, and in Mark chapter 5, I'll just read this real quickly and this is the RSV. When He had come out of the boat there met out of the tombs a man with an unclean spirit who lived among the tombs and no one could bind him anymore even with a chain for he had often been bound with fetters and chains but the chains he wrenched apart and the fetters he broke in pieces. And this is what I was saying earlier is that there are different human measures.

Sometimes they try ropes on the hands. Well, they get wrenched apart. They get worn, abraded away.

There are shackles on the feet. Those are shattered and broken in pieces. No one had the strength to subdue him, it tells us in Mark.

And this is just the limits of human social efforts to try to subdue evil and affect positive change. It just doesn't have the strength. Why? Because the problem is internal and external application cannot fix an internal problem.

And this is something to remember when you see policies and those who advocate policies and they say, well, we will legislate, we will pass laws, we will try to control behavior on the outside and it doesn't address what's going on in the human heart. It's going to be a very limited value. Night and day among the tombs and on the mountains he was always crying out and bruising himself with stones.

Now, if you're a demon or a group of demons and you've gotten yourself a body to travel around in and operate, why would you bruise yourself with stones? This would be kind of like getting a new car and then dinging it up and keying it and throwing rocks at it and denting it up. Why would you do that? Well, you wonder, are these the demons or is this the man trying to get free of these demons? Is he trying to injure himself? Is he trying to kill himself? As you may remember, there will come a time during the tribulation where people want death and death will not come. And if this man was trying to free himself from the demons through death, they don't let him.

He can only bruise himself. He may be dashing himself on the rocks, but they've got control and he can't escape them even through injury or death. And there are people who engage in this behavior.

There's a psychotic behavior of slashing and mutilating oneself and there seems to be some of this involved. But, he saw Jesus, he ran and Mark says he worshipped him. He fell at his feet.

And again you'll see that sort of time displacement in Mark where the story goes forward and backward, forward and backward. And this almost reminds you of what the experience was like for the man. It's difficult to keep track and to have an orderly existence when evil is manifesting itself in so many different ways.

And one of the side effects, one of the ways we know that there are influences of evil in our lives is this kind of displacement. You have trouble keeping track of things. It's not orderly.

It's not manageable. It doesn't fall into place. And it's scattered.

God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power, of love and an orderly mind, self-control. The presence of the Holy Spirit and the power of the Holy Spirit, the presence and power of God's Word in our soul should yield order. We should be able to make sense of things.

We should be able to prioritize, to see clearly. The great gift that Jesus gave his disciples and gives to everyone since then who comes to faith in him is peace. What does he say to the storm? Peace.

And there is a relationship here of the chaos of the wind and the waves before which the boat of the disciples is driven. And Jesus says, peace be still. Look at this man.

All kinds of chaotic, destructive behavior to himself and others. And when Jesus drives out these demons, there is peace. Look at the contrast in the description of this man.

He is outside the city. He's wearing no clothes. He's running around in the tombs.

He's gashing himself. He's breaking bonds. He is unpredictable.

And afterward, look at verse 34 and following in Luke chapter 8. When those who fed them saw what had happened, they fled and told it in the city and the country. 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. He's not running around menacing people.

He's not running around hurting himself. What is sitting at the feet of Jesus? What posture, what does that connote? Sitting at the feet of someone is what? That's the pose of a disciple. You are a mathetes.

You are a learner. He is talking with the Lord Jesus. He's sitting at Jesus' feet, receiving from him, acknowledging his authority, expressing his thanks, enjoying the presence of Jesus.

For however long Jesus is going to be there, this man wants to be with him. So he's sitting at the feet of Jesus, clothed where he was formerly unclothed. Now he's clothed.

Here's a question for you. Where did these clothes come from? Seriously. The man's been running around naked.

The disciples have come across in a boat through a big storm. All of the swine herds have left. Where did these clothes come from? Somebody in the boat has donated some clothing to this man.

It is a contribution. It's a help. Remember one of the judgments in the Millennial Kingdom will be when I was naked, you clothed me.

When I was sick and in prison, you visited me. This is an expression of compassion. This is an expression of love in the sense of seeing a need and filling that need.

Somebody on that boat was motivated to give this man some clothing and help him cover himself up. That's a credit. He's clothed and in his right mind.

And they were afraid. Now this is what confuses me. They also who had seen it told him by what means he who had been demon possessed was healed.

The whole multitude of the surrounding region of the Gadarenes asked him to depart from them for they were seized with great fear. The people who came back and saw the man cured suddenly are afraid. And all the other people who come out and are told what has happened, everybody in the region, they are seized with a great fear.

Now help me figure this out. Picture this. Here's a man, actually two men, running around possessed with demons, threatening anybody that comes by, running around naked, screaming, gashing themselves and others with rocks, terrorizing the whole

neighborhood.

And you've got the swine herds out here managing the pigs and well as long as we stay in a group we'll be okay. They don't seem to be afraid of these vicious demon possessed men. Jesus comes, gets rid of the demons.

Here's a man sitting clothed and in his right mind and they're scared to death. And when they see Jesus and the power that he has, they're seized with a great fear. This tells you something about the people.

In the presence of evil they're comfortable. In the presence of, I sing the mighty power of God, they're afraid and more afraid. They're seized with a great fear.

What kind of person do you have to be that you're okay, well we'll just kind of stay, we'll work around the demon possessed man. We see him coming, we'll just move the pigs. We kind of know how he operates.

They're comfortable with the demons and they're afraid and seized with a great fear in the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ who drives these demons away. Comfortable with the pigs, comfortable with the demons, comfortable with the maniacs, not comfortable with Jesus and his disciples. Please leave.

We'd rather have the demons and the demon possessed man and our herd of pigs than you. Free will, free choice. The human heart will either respond or react to the revelation of God, specifically the revelation of God in Christ.

And it is a choice. Jesus came all the way over there. Wouldn't it have been great if there had been a mighty revival in the whole region of Gadara and all the Gergesenes and everybody from the whole territory of Gerasa would have all said, wow isn't this great, deliverance has come.

Stay with us and keep these demons from ever coming back. This is wonderful. We couldn't do it with the shackles and the bonds and we've tried to solve this problem and we had to give up.

You've solved it with a word. We're so grateful. Stay with us, please.

Come to our house. Let us feed you. Let us put your disciples up for the night.

Long way back across the lake. What a wonderful thing. Look, this man, our neighbor who was in our community and has been outside the city for these weeks or months or how long it's been, is now restored.

He's clothed in his right mind. Thank you, thank you, thank you. We've got a few other people here we think you could help.

Would you please come and stay with us. We'd like to enfold you and embrace you. What is the matter with these people? The power of God.

Who was the first one to be scared by the power of God in this story? Legion. With whom do these people have more in common? The man who is freed and clothed in his right mind, sitting at the feet of Jesus, can't get close enough to Jesus. Asks if he can stay with Jesus and accompany him as a disciple.

Or do they have more in common with the demons? Who, I adjure you, do not torment me before the time. Have you come to destroy us, O Holy One of God? Don't throw us into the abyss. And speaking of the abyss, here's another thing that's interesting to see.

It tells us that when Jesus asks, saying, what is your name? Now this demon, demons have names. Angels have names. They've all got names.

They've got personal, individual identities. They're not, to God, they are not a nameless, faceless horde like they are to us. We know the names of maybe three or four angels at most.

God knows all their names. And this reminds me of when I lived in a different place and we had an open area beside our house that little neighborhood kids used to go in and kick footballs around and play games and basically trespass and pick up rocks and break our concrete and do all kinds of things. And I had told them repeatedly, do not play here.

You've got your own yard. There's a park just down the road. Don't kick your footballs and bang your rocks and do all the yelling and carrying on climbing trees and breaking limbs and stuff.

Go elsewhere. This is private property. Well, one day there's two boys and they're kicking football back and forth and the ball went over our fence into our backyard.

And I heard it hit the side of the house and so I went out there. And here's this boy climbing our fence and he had turned around and was climbing down the inside to try to get the ball. Didn't want to knock on the door.

Didn't say, excuse me, the ball is just climbing over. And so I grabbed him by the belt in the back and he was petrified with fear. And my question was, what is your name? Well, he was so afraid he told me.

You know, he could have just tried to be anonymous, but he couldn't think straight. And I said, where do you live? And he told me his address. I still remember his address actually because I thought I might go visit his parents.

But you, in the ancient world and even in magic and in mysticism and so on, you know, knowing a name means control. It means authority. It means accountability.

This is why people love to do things anonymously. You get on the internet now and people want to post all kinds of trashy comments and horrible abusive vilification and they'll use some pseudonym, some little handle that isn't their real name. Well, we have a discussion board and we ask people to give their real names.

Not all of them do, but they have to give something that at least looks like a real name. They can't call themselves Chess Guy or, you know, Big Bob or something. They have to put a name.

It has to be at least John Smith or Sam Hall or something realistic because we want accountability. If you're going to say something, in George Washington's day, even some of his own cabinet members disagreed with his policy and so they founded a newspaper and then filled it with all kinds of calumnies and criticisms and Thomas Jefferson and James Madison wrote scurrilous articles criticizing George Washington. Jefferson was the Secretary of State.

But he was at odds with Alexander Hamilton and these guys were in kind of a blood feud. Jefferson wanted a republic. Jefferson trusted the people.

He said, oh, let the people decide. But of course the people had chosen Washington and he disagreed with Washington so it really put him in a quandary. He said, well, trust the people except when it comes to Washington.

Anyway, they wrote all these things and it got worse over the course of years. There was a paper called The Aurora. But these guys, instead of signing their names, they would pick some ancient Roman guy like Catullus or Camillus or some other guy and they would sign.

And the most, I'll tell you, the guy that wrote the most abusive letter about George Washington ever was Thomas Paine. Remember Thomas Paine? You cannot believe, disparaged him, said he was a lousy general, said he had no integrity, vilified him, slanderous, the worst thing in the world. But Thomas Paine didn't sign his own name, put some little Roman name underneath it.

But Washington figured out who it was just like he figured out these others. And even Jefferson who was kind of on Paine's side said he had to have been insane to write that. You cannot believe how mean, but they do it without a name.

Well, Jesus says, what is your name? Names are important. How do you know your salvation is secure? Your name is written in the book of life. What will come up at the judgment seat of Christ? A record of what has been done, the deeds done in the body by name.

Jesus says, my sheep hear my voice. I know them by name. I call them and they come.

It is personal. It is individual. Well, this demon doesn't want to give his name.

So he gives the club name. This is the legion club. Notice he does not give his name.

It is just as well because there would be a bunch of Satan worshippers trying to pray to this demon. So he says, well, we call ourselves the legion. This is like the Mickey Mouse club for demons.

It is a club. You know, M-I-C-K-E. They are going to give the Mickey name.

They are not going to give their own name. He doesn't want to give his name because he doesn't want to be held to account individually as a fallen angel. So he says, well, we just call ourselves.

Jesus already knows who this demon is just like the demon knows who he is. This is a demonstration of the resistance and the dodging. Also you will notice that Jesus has been saying, come out of him.

Well, they want to negotiate. You know, you can't just capitulate and say, oh, okay, to the abyss we go. And this is a characteristic of evil.

Evil always wants to negotiate, wants to mitigate, wants to try to soften it down. Be home by ten. Oh, but can we stay until eleven? What did I say? Be home by ten.

Well, but it is not over until ten-thirty. Can I stay until eleven? Everybody else is going to be, there is going to be an hour. Can't I? And you get this constant, well, can't we move? And sometimes it is just for its own sake because it is a power play.

It is a, well, but, you know, you start getting all of this sea lawyering and argumentation and look, this is what I said, come out. Well, it is very funny because they begged him that he would not command them to go out into the abyss. And they seem to want some sort of bodily existence.

They want to stay in the region. They are comfortable there. The people have been tolerating them.

They have come to a working accommodation with the population. And so they begged him that he would permit them to enter. Now look, they cannot do anything that Jesus does not permit.

Don't worry about demons. Don't worry about Satan. Don't be afraid that evil is going to overwhelm us and flood the gates.

Look at how they have to try to plead and negotiate with Jesus because what he says goes. They cannot go into the swine unless Jesus lets them. They don't just say, okay, we are leaving and we are going into the swine.

When he first said come out of him, why didn't they just jump into the swine then? They can't do anything except at Jesus' word. That is the power of the Lord Jesus Christ. We are in Christ.

We belong to him. Nothing can touch us. Nothing can harm us.

The only influences that can ever get near us are by the Lord Jesus' authority, by his permission. They begged him that he would permit them to enter the swine and he permitted them. Why? They think they have achieved a victory.

They think that they have gotten a compromise. But Jesus knows more than they do. Not only is he more powerful than they are, he is more knowledgeable than they are.

He is smarter than they are. He outwits them. And in giving them what they want, they are the agents of their own destruction.

Because the man or the men were trying to bruise themselves, trying to beat these demons out or die and to have them leave that way. And the demons wouldn't let them. But the swine, they haven't figured out swine controls apparently.

They are not used to the steering wheel and the ignition and everything. The gear shift is all in a different place. They haven't really inhabited swine and they are still trying to figure out how do you manipulate a swine brain.

In the meantime the pigs are saying, this is terrible. They are an unclean animal and they can't stand the unclean spirits and they drown themselves. They run straight into the sea.

And where did the demons go from there? Abusas, the abyss. They end up there anyway. You don't want to go straight there? You want to take a little detour? You want the fun of drowning first? Fine, knock yourself out.

And they literally do. So the herd runs violently down a steep place into the lake and are drowned. And drowning in the Bible, this is a bad way to die.

You know the Jonah story and you've got the armies of Pharaoh drowning in the sea. Not a fun way to go. But notice the reaction in the community and the reaction of the man.

The man in verse 38, from whom the demons had departed, begged him that he might be with him. But Jesus sent him away. Now, Jesus has sent away the demons.

Now Jesus is sending away the man. And you think, well, that seems kind of mean. Here's this man.

He's gratefully sitting at the feet of Jesus. Wouldn't that be the best place for him? He needs a little rehabilitation. He needs some encouragement.

He needs to get some teaching of the word of God from the Lord Jesus. Jesus sends him away. And what does he say? Return to your own house and tell what great things God has done for you.

Many times when he healed someone or sent them away in a better condition, he said tell no man. But he's not in Israel, is he? And remember in Israel there's a timetable. There's an unfolding revelation.

There's a kingdom program. This is Gentile country. And he says, you're a Gentile.

You're in a Gentile land. You don't need to come with me. The time of the Gentiles is not yet.

Jesus' disciples are all Jewish, right? They may have various persuasions. You can have zealots and people from Galilee and people from Jerusalem and people from all over. But you're Gentiles.

It's not the right time for a Gentile disciple to be accompanying the Lord Jesus. Can you imagine what that would do theologically and application-wise when we're trying to distinguish dispensations and what God is doing at different times? So it isn't the right time. And you think, well, but personally speaking this seems like a rejection.

How can it be wrong for me to want to be with the Lord Jesus? God's got a bigger plan. We have to remember God's got a bigger plan and our place in it is subject to His timetable, His priorities, His goals and objectives. This man has a better opportunity.

Jesus has already got 12 Jewish disciples to operate with and He's going to have another one in the Apostle Paul. And there will be a time when there will be a follower of the Lord Jesus who will proclaim. But in this time and in this case and in this region, this man, and notice the people in this region, are they receptive? The swine herds, are they receptive? Where is this man to go? There are some receptive people and they're in the family of this man.

Go home and tell those people. Tell the people that you know. Tell people who you have a familiarity with.

This is going to be a conversation-type testimony. Tell what great things God has done for you. And notice the parallel here.

If you line these two statements up, Jesus says, return to your house and tell what great things God has done for you. And He went His way and proclaimed throughout the whole city, that's His home, that's where He's from, what Jesus had done for Him. Jesus said, tell what God has done.

He tells what Jesus has done. And there's a link there to what the demon acknowledged.

Jesus is the Son of God.

What Jesus does is what God does. And He recognizes it. And He is grateful to the Lord Jesus and He does exactly what He has told.

He goes back to His home, goes back to His city, and proclaims what Jesus has done because that is what God has done. And it is a reminder that our first and best testimony is in our immediate periphery. We live the life to which we have been called.

We follow the commands that have been delivered to us. We walk by faith. We lay hold of righteousness.

We look forward in hope to the return of the Lord Jesus. And that is our witness. We don't have to be professional disciples.

We don't have to follow Jesus and His itinerant Galilean and Judean ministries. Each of us has a calling. Nobody gets a name here.

The demon doesn't give his name. The other demons don't give their names. This man, his name is not given.

He is the demon-possessed man and then he is the formerly demon-possessed man. He is identified by what God has done for him. That is his name.

I am the one who was once possessed by a demon or demons and am now no longer possessed by demons. That is my name. My identity is what God has done for me.

And it is a great reminder to us that the presence and power of the Lord Jesus Christ gives us our true identity. It is not our name. It is not our personal accomplishments.

It is not even our family connections. It is not where we are from. It is not our job or our title.

What has God done? And when God changes us within, when He drives out the darkness and the evil influences that we are born with and that we are subject to, that we absorb from our culture and our surroundings, when He drives it out and replaces it with the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, that defines us, that identifies us. And that light shines from within as we day by day live the life to which we have been called. Return to your own house.

What is the qualification for an elder in the church? A man has got to rule well his own house. He has got to be orderly in his own house. He has got to train up his own children in his own house.

He has got to treat his own wife right. He is largely defined, not given to anger and excess, in his house. Look at his personal immediate periphery.

That is where the qualification begins. That is where it is observable whether or not the presence and power of God is evident. Return to your own house and tell what great things God has done for you.

This is a part of our fellowship, the blessings that God bestows on us, the provision that He makes, the insight that He gives, the stability and the joy and the hope that belong to us because we are in the Lord Jesus. This is a far greater testimony than any excursion to the airport or any handing out of tracts or public speaking, let me give my testimony. It is in our own city, in our own home that that light shines best.

Well, this is such an instructive episode and if you have time in the coming week to read Matthew 8, read Mark 5, read Luke 8 and just compare and contrast the details and the condition of this man before and after this few hours with the Lord Jesus Christ. It is life changing. It is impressed upon the disciples that this is why they endured the storm.

This is why they came across the lake. One of them got the chance to donate this man some clothes. But they are eyewitnesses of the power of God.

Even the demons cannot help but testify that Jesus is the Christ, He is the Son of God, He is the Holy One of God and He is in complete and total control. Complete control. You would think nothing could be more manifesting of the power of evil than a demon or a pack of demons but they are abjectly subject to the authority of Christ.

So things that enter our life we can remember that God has got complete control. There is nothing that assails us but what God allows and it is for our good. Let's close here in a word of prayer.

Next week we are going to see a pair of miracles that are inextricably linked. This is what I like to call the sandwich miracles and we will see that next time. Let's close here in a word of prayer.

Father thank you for the truth of your word. Thank you for the encouragement and the instruction that it offers to us. We pray that God the Holy Spirit will remind us and give us fruitful perception of how these things apply in our personal circumstances and our daily lives.

We ask these things in Jesus' name.