

UNSHACKLED

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Scripture: Luke 8: 26-39

Then they sailed to the country of the Gerasenes, which is opposite Galilee. And when He came out onto the land, He was met by a man from the city who was possessed with demons; and who had not put on any clothing for a long time, and was not living in a house, but in the tombs. Seeing Jesus, he cried out and fell before Him, and said in a loud voice, "What business do we have with each other, 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 seized him many times, and he was bound with chains and shackles and kept under guard, and yet he would break his bonds and be driven by the demon into the desert. And Jesus asked him, "What is your name?" And he said, "Legion"; for many demons had entered him. They were imploring Him not to command them to go away into the abyss. Now there was a herd of many swine feeding there on the mountain; and the demons implored Him to permit them to enter the swine. And He gave them permission. And the demons came out of the man and entered the swine; and the herd rushed down the steep bank into the lake and was drowned.

When the herdsmen saw what had happened, they ran away and reported it in the city and out in the country. The people went out to see what had happened; and they came to Jesus, and found the man from whom the demons had gone out, sitting down at the feet of Jesus, clothed and in his right mind; and they became frightened. Those who had seen it reported to them how the man who was demon-possessed had been made well. and all the people of the country of the Gerasenes and the surrounding district asked Him to leave them, for they were gripped with great fear; and He got into a boat and returned. But the man from whom the demons had gone out was begging Him that he might accompany Him; but He sent him away, saying, "Return to your house and describe what great things God has done for you." So he went away, proclaiming throughout the whole city what great things Jesus had done for him.

You've probably heard this passage read and preached a few times; but I've never ceased to be surprised and amazed at how much stuff there is in this passage. It seems to be so full of meaning and every time I mined it, I have found something more. Yet it seems to be a very simple narrative.

Jesus sails to the country of Gerasenes which is opposite to Galilee and when He comes into the land, He's met by a man who is demon-possessed, possessed by many demons, so much so that his very name is 'Legion', which means many. Then the demons inside plead with Jesus and say, "Leave us. What do you have to do with us?" verse 29 says that Jesus had commanded the unclean spirit to come out of the man.

Then we see a very strange way of getting rid of demons, and some other unfortunate animals as well. yet, I don't think that Luke would have us obsess about why the swine had to die in that particular way. I really don't think that's where we ought to be headed, although I doubt that many people would pull that out of this text and begin to enquire. I think there's more to it that getting rid of the demons and the way that Jesus did it.

What really is at the heart of this entire text, for me, is that no one is beyond God's healing and redemptive love. God loves us so much, and God loved this man so much that He sent Jesus on a journey just to touch this man, and then leave. As you can see, Jesus reached there in a boat, all He did was interact with this man, heal him, free him, unshackle him. And then the townspeople came they begged Him to leave. And Jesus left.

The only thing that He did there was to free a man whom everybody had thrown away. He lived out in the tombs, shackled; and even then, he would break those shackles. This meant that they would tie him again, which meant that they needed many people to put him to the ground and then tie him – people who were stronger than him or who outnumbered him by a lot. And yet, God in His infinite love, spotted this demoniac in the Gerasenes area, and directed His Son to go there and touch him.

As I looked at this passage, I thought that it wasn't a very convenient thing. We read that for Jesus to get there, (vs 22-25) it says: *They got into a boat and Jesus said, "Let us go over to the other side of the lake." So they launched out. But as they were sailing along, He fell asleep; and a fierce gale of wind descended on the lake, and they began to be swamped and to be in danger. They came to Jesus and woke Him up, saying, "Master, Master, we are perishing!" And He got up and rebuked the wind and the surging waves, and they stopped, and it became calm. And He said to them, "Where is your faith?" They were fearful and amazed, saying to one another, "Who then is this, that He commands even the winds and the water, and they obey Him?"*

Through all of this, there seems to be the Father's single-mindedness in sending His Son. Why do I say this? Because consistently through, Jesus says, "I only do the things that My Father wants Me to do,"

This Sunday we looked at that familiar verse: God so loved the world. I continue to be amazed at how pregnant with meaning that two-letter word 'so' is. So full – for God *so* loved the world that He sent His Son even to the Gerasenes to free a demoniac whom God loved so much.

What is so hard to even gauge from this passage is how a community can look at one of their own who has been released and freed and unshackled; and yet begged the one who did it to leave them, to go away from them. "Leave us" they pleaded of Jesus. "Go away."

As I read that, I've often wondered whether sometimes we have that attitude as well. we've seen Jesus do things in our lives, but the things that we want Him to do are the little things. We get very scared when things that are powerful happen in our midst. And when we have that kind of a mindset, then we begin to ask Him for the things that won't frighten us so much – those things that we can accept, that fit our mind, our grasp of things. We say, "Lord, work within these categories, because all the other things that sometimes we read about in Your Word are scary."

I wonder this evening, whether some of you are in that place where you've brought God's power down to something that you can understand, something that you can cope with, and something that you won't get burnt with. And you just say: If it doesn't happen, then it's okay. When was the last time that you and I went out on a limb and said, "Lord, if you don't show up, I'm dead, I'm gone?" Do we take those kinds of risks anymore? Have we begun to

play safe with a God who spoke and this world came into existence, and whose Son said, “Greater things than these you will do?”

But even beyond that, whether people beg Him to go, Jesus turns around and got into the boat and returned. But the man from whom the demons had gone out, was begging Him that he might accompany Him. “Jesus, I want to come with You; You’ve touched me, You’ve saved my life. You’ve done an extraordinary thing, let me walk with You.” And Jesus says, “No! return to your house and describe what great things God has done for you.” So he went away proclaiming throughout the whole city what great things Jesus had done for him.

There used to be a Latin phrase – ‘Veni, vidi, vici’ attributed to Julius Caesar, who sent a message to the Roman senate saying that he had won the battle. “I came, I saw, I conquered.” It’s almost like that’s what Jesus did: He came, He saw, and He conquered; and then He left.

He told this person who is freed now, clothed and in his right mind, “Go and describe what great things God has done for you.” Verse 39 says, “*Return to your house and describe what great things God has done for you.*” What great things did God do for him? If we follow the narrative, the only thing that happened was that Jesus healed him. Jesus freed him. Why did Jesus say: What great things I have done for you?

I do believe that when we are touched by God in a particular way, there are other things that also happen simultaneously, which we forget. Let’s unpack what could have happened with this man....

- God freed him from the demons.
- He could now live and interact with his community.
- He could now get a job.
- He got back his self-respect.
- He could get married.
- He could have children and a lineage could now be established through him. Hitherto, this would have been unthinkable.

Each of these things were given to him on a beautiful platter when Jesus healed him and got rid of the demons from him. Two questions I want us to ask ourselves this evening:

1. Do you need God’s healing or His redemptive love in your life today? Do you need it? And if so, have you asked Him for it? However difficult it may seem to you for God to do, God is the one who can do anything. For him, nothing is impossible. But, have you gone to Him and said, “Lord, this is what I needed from You?” Have you taken that thing that has been something that has always weighed you down or stolen your joy or not permitted you to be who God wants you to be? Have you kept that down, and just asked Him generically to bless you every morning, or to help you to have a good day, or help you to do your work well? Have you kept that to the side saying that it’s a biggie and you don’t know whether that can still be done, whether God can fulfill that?

I wonder this evening, whether you would be willing to say to Him, “Lord, I need Your love to reach out from the heavens and touch me and do a redemptive healing work in me. I’ve never asked Lord, but this evening, I’m asking. I’m asking for that touch that freed a Gerasene. Would You touch me like You touched him?”

2. Maybe you've already had a healing redemptive touch from God, and God said, "I've touched you. Now let people know about it. Go and talk about all of these things that I have done in your life." Maybe you've talked about the healing or something. I wonder whether you would be able to look a little broadly, just as we did for this man, and say: Are there things that God has done for me beyond just healing me, that I've never, ever spoken to another person about because you thought that was the main thing? And God is saying to you today: Return to your house and describe what great things I have done for you.

Revelation 12:11 says – *And they overcame him because of the blood of the Lamb and because of the word of their testimony.*

We know this – the moment this verse is talked about, we are able to finish it. But do we practice it? Do we talk about the things that God has done in our lives?

I look at myself and I've told you and others everywhere how God healed my back. But today I was thinking – what happened because He healed my back.

- I'm able to stand up everywhere and preach.
- I'm able to travel anywhere I want to preach, which I have been assured that I would not have been able to do.
- I have full mobility in my neck, to turn this way and that, which they told me I wouldn't be able to do.
- I can carry a big suitcase and walk around when they told me I would be able to even carry a briefcase in my hand.

Go and tell people the things that I have done in you. I wonder this evening, whether God's Spirit is stirring your spirit and saying: There is a lot more I've done in your life than you are talking about. There's lots more! I wonder this evening, whether that's what we need to take away and say, "Lord, I will speak about the great things that You have done in my life. I will not be silent, for You have blessed me beyond measure – not just giving me a job, not just healing a relationship, not just helping me with an addiction, not just brought healing to me – but there are myriad other things that are associated with it that I have never talked about. I wonder whether God is saying to you and me this evening, "Will you start talking about those things as well?"

Unshackled – beyond the things that bound us, I wonder whether our tongues can be unshackled as well to be able to speak about it.

So, we close this evening, and as the Spirit moves in our midst, if there are decisions that you are making, telling the Lord that you need that touch from Him, I'd like to pray for you at the end of the service as you pray yourself. But I want to invite you to the altar and pray, say, "Lord, touch me!" Maybe this evening, you are saying, "Lord, I've been mute of the things You have blessed me with. Lord, would You unstop my mouth that I can speak about these things again? Would You inspire me, Lord? Would You let Your Spirit move in me, to do that?" For these two areas, if you need to come to the altar, would you come, would you pray. The worship team is going to come and lead us with our closing song and then I'm going to close in prayer.

Let's together say, "Lord, You've done wonderful things for me. Maybe there's just one more wonderful thing that You want to add. Or maybe you need to talk about the wonderful things."

Beautiful Lord, wonderful Savior,
I know for sure, all of my days are held in Your hands
Crafted into Your perfect plan.
You gently call me into Your presence
Guiding me by Your Holy Spirit,
Teach me dear Lord, to live all my life through Your eyes.

I'm captured by Your Holy calling
Set me apart, I know You're drawing
Me to Yourself, lead me, Lord, I pray.

Take me, mold me
Use me, fill me
I give my life to the Potter's hands.
Hold me, guide me
Lead me, walk beside me
I give my life to the Potter's hand.

Lord, we come to You. You are omnipotent God, and for You, nothing is impossible. You are above and over every situation and circumstance. Lord, I pray for those who are here who are saying, Lord, this is something so difficult but you can author it. Lord, would You touch these ones, Master? Would You let them know that You have heard their prayer, their cry? Lord, would You touch them and give Master to them whatever it is that has brought them here, trusting in Your great love, in Your redemptive power and Your omnipotence. Lord, for these who are saying, Lord touch my lips, help me to speak more about what You have done in my life. touch these ones, Master, empower them by Your Spirit. Allow them Lord, to be wonderful spokespersons for the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords. I Jesus' precious name, we pray. Amen.

Dearly beloved, and now unto Him who is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before His eternal throne of grace, to Him be all majesty, glory and power, now and always. Amen.