

They sailed to the region of the Gerasenes, which is across the lake from Galilee. ²⁷ When Jesus stepped ashore, he was met by a demon-possessed man from the town. For a long time this man had not worn clothes or lived in a house, but had lived in the tombs. ²⁸ When he saw Jesus, he cried out and fell at his feet, shouting at the top of his voice, “What do you want with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I beg you, don’t torture me!” ²⁹ For Jesus had commanded the impure spirit to come out of the man. Many times it had seized him, and though he was chained hand and foot and kept under guard, he had broken his chains and had been driven by the demon into solitary places.

³⁰ Jesus asked him, “What is your name?”

“Legion,” he replied, because many demons had gone into him. ³¹ And they begged Jesus repeatedly not to order them to go into the Abyss.

³² A large herd of pigs was feeding there on the hillside. The demons begged Jesus to let them go into the pigs, and he gave them permission. ³³ When the demons came out of the man, they went into the pigs, and the herd rushed down the steep bank into the lake and was drowned.

³⁴ When those tending the pigs saw what had happened, they ran off and reported this in the town and countryside, ³⁵ and the people went out to see what had happened. When they came to Jesus, they found the man from whom the demons had gone out, sitting at Jesus’ feet, dressed and in his right mind; and they were afraid. ³⁶ Those who had seen it told the people how the demon-possessed man had been cured. ³⁷ Then all the people of the region of the Gerasenes asked Jesus to leave them, because they were overcome with fear. So he got into the boat and left.

³⁸ The man from whom the demons had gone out begged to go with him, but Jesus sent him away, saying, ³⁹ “Return home and tell how much God has done for you.” So the man went away and told all over town how much Jesus had done for him. (Luke 8:26-39)

Dressed and Ready to Go

Their lives had flashed before their eyes. Waves threatened to drown them. Winds tried to overturn them. Then he stands up, speaks, and even the winds and the waves obey him. “Who is this?” his disciples ask and ponder as they cross the lake from Galilee. They reach this region known as Gerasenes where Jesus steps ashore and is met with quite the welcome party. It’s a man from the nearby city; he’s completely naked, covered with self-inflicted wounds. According to Luke, this man hasn’t worn any clothes for a long time. Yes, he was from that city but that’s not where he lives. He prefers the company of the dead and lives among the tombs. The man is demon-possessed and, as we find out as this continues, it’s not just one

demon either. This unclean spirit had no interest in changing location happy to torment this poor man. He is absolutely terrifying to be around. This is someone your parents told you to stay far away from and have nothing to do with. This was the type of guy you heard about and shudder to think this could happen to someone. The town's people had tried to shackle him with chains and kept him under guard. But mere chains and shackles were no match for him. He would easily break the bonds and be driven back to the tombs by the demon to be tormented some more. And, maybe, there was a little thought there of: good riddance! He is a violent man overpowering anyone who passes on the road (Matthew 8:28). I'm sure you could hear his screaming and groaning from those graves as he cut himself with sharp stones (Mark 5). Better the naked, demon-possessed, violent, evil man stays out there than in the city, isn't it? They tried to help him. But that's just the way it is.

We see evil all around us. You hear it on the news and read it online. Everyday there is some more rushing in that causes us to shudder and wonder what is going on around here. Has the world just lost its mind? What are we supposed to do in the face of such reckless madness? In a way, like the towns folk in Luke, you learn to live with it. We try to chain it down and keep it under control with more rules and more laws. We keep a guard with a few extra policies and procedures. It works for some; others, not so much. Do we wring our heads and shake our heads feeling defenseless and already defeated? Do we turn a blind eye to the evil and wickedness, the injustice and those who suffer because we tell ourselves there's nothing we can do? Do we quickly label someone a "lost cause" and are slow to reach out to them again? Do we secretly—or out loud—say, "It's her own fault. He needs to fix himself. She needs to work harder, do better. He needs to be disciplined more harshly like back in the day." And if that doesn't work, "It is what it is!" Do you look at the sin in your own life, the wrong that you do with the temptations you face and you've convinced yourself there's nothing you can do about it? Yeah, you know what God's Word says that there's always a way out, but you ignore it telling yourself that's just the way it is.

The temptation is there to think that's how it goes "out there." Such evil shouldn't happen here. But you are smarter than that. On top of the sinful world, evil is not just a general concept. It is a being who seeks to devour you whole and wants nothing more than to drag you down into its suffering. Whether it's Satan himself or it's the demons, they are very real with the sole desire to separate you from God. Oh they are powerful; look at what this man is able to do to chains and shackles. The torment this man must have been in. What was this like for him? For his family? For other people? Yes, we should shudder at the thought of this. The devil and his demons are nothing to play around with or take lightly.

When the naked demon-possessed sees someone coming ashore he rushes down. Misery loves company and here's another person to terrorize! But where the disciples were wrestling with, "Who is this?" Even the demons know: this is Jesus, Son of the Most High God. Shouting at the top of his lungs he asks, "What do you want with me? I beg you, don't torture us!" (v.28). Why? What did Jesus even do?

He spoke. The same Jesus who went toe-to-toe in battle against Satan in the wilderness stands face-to-face against this Legion. Jesus could have left the man. This man isn't just haunted by one demon. No, their name is Legion because many demons had gone into him. Jesus could have went right back into the boat seeing this person who is visibly out of their mind and said, "Nope!"

Instead, he reaches the man personally for it is ones just like him that he had come to seek and to save. And when Jesus speaks, even the demons must listen and obey. And look: when the townspeople come back to see what happened to all their pigs, there the guy sits at Jesus' feet. You could hardly recognize him but there is no mistaking who he is. You no longer hear the echoes of his screams in the tombs. No more naked, violent evil rushing down hills to terrorize. There the once-possessed now sits dressed and in his right mind.

Now, you are sitting here wearing clothes—thank you. At the same time, this is what we are by nature; not demon-possessed but objects of wrath held tight in the grips of Satan. You maybe don't remember it personally but at one time you too cried out against Jesus, "What do you want with me?" By nature the sinful mind is hostile towards God and does not want anything to do with him. We stood naked before God in the shame of our sin, slave to it and its desires—we could not stop being sinful no matter how hard we tried even if we wanted to ! There we were roaming the place of the dead because death is the consequence and result of our sin. Jesus could have turned away from you too.

Instead he speaks. By the very same Word that casts out demons Jesus sets you free. Satan and his demons have no power here against Jesus' Word. After all, Satan's head is crushed under the weight of Jesus' perfect foot. Having skin and bones, muscles and flesh just like you and me, Jesus dies destroying the devil's work along with his powerful hold of death. You are no longer a slave to sin—by his spoken Word Jesus sets you free. You are no longer an enemy of God—you are baptized. You are his child. No longer do you stand naked before him with the guilt of your sin. That guilt has been hurled into sea. Your sin has been claimed by Jesus himself and left buried in his tomb. With Jesus rising from the dead, he wins the victory over death so you stand dressed in Jesus' holiness set apart as God's child. You stand wearing Jesus' robe of righteousness so that right now you stand right before God who does not count your sins against you. Think about that as you

continue to wrestle with sin and temptation that feels you can't get out from underneath. If Jesus' Word drives out the very demons of hell, what does that mean for that temptation? You are free. You are baptized. You are dressed and in your right mind before God.

When the townspeople see what Jesus did, they are afraid. All they see is power and are quite upset that he would do such a thing to their herds of pigs and economy. They want him to get out and to do so quickly. Sadly, many react this way when it comes to Jesus' work in their lives. They want nothing to do with it. They are more focused on their work, success, experiences, themselves, even others but they refuse to see who Jesus is for them.

Then there's the formerly demon-possessed man now dressed and in his right mind. He recognizes what Jesus has done for him. He knows this incredible grace that Satan no longer has this hold on his life. What else could he do but want to follow Jesus? But Jesus has other plans: "Nope. Go back home and tell how much God had done for you."

Now here we might want to correct Jesus a little bit: "What are you doing? Here's a guy who wants to follow you. You could bet he would follow you the entire way and be one of your greatest supporters!" Good thing Jesus doesn't need our advice! Instead, through this man, we see more of Jesus' grace. Even though the townspeople told him to go, Jesus doesn't completely abandon them. No, again we see a personal Savior who wants all to be saved. He sends this man back armed with His Word to preach the Good News! And look at what he does.

Now there's you and me dressed and ready to go. See what Jesus has done for you. Your sins are forgiven. You are free from sin. You are baptized. Satan no longer has a hold of you and your life. Though he is still very powerful and mighty, one little word can fell him. Evil itself is crushed with Jesus' mighty Word. Therefore, let's go. Jesus doesn't send you off to a far-away country. He sends you home equipped with His Word to fight back the threats of Satan and temptation in your life. He sends you home with His Word to love, forgive, to serve your wife, your children, you husband, your parents. He sends you to serve him where you are at—single or married, child or parent, employed or not, young or old, whatever place he has set you, you have an opportunity to share Jesus. We see the evil all around us. We see the suffering and struggling, how things just always aren't the best or even that good. And you have Jesus' Word to give peace this world cannot give. You have Jesus' powerful Word that drives out demons and changes hearts. Look what it did with the demon-possessed man. Look what Jesus has done for you. You have been freed from sin and the devil's power, in Jesus you are dressed and ready to go. Get after it. Amen.