**TELL HOW MUCH JESUS HAS DONE FOR YOU**

October 19, 2014

Luke 8:26-39

Key Verse 8:39a “Return home and tell how much God has done for you.”

In this passage Jesus heals a man possessed by demons. In our times, many people deny the existence of demons. Many want to claim that science explains everything. They think that demons belong to the ancient world of myths and fairy tales and dragon tales. Other people are overly enthusiastic about the existence of demons. They think demons are cute or cool, and they name their mascot the “Blue Demons” or the “Sun Devils.” C.S Lewis wrote about the confusion about demon possession: “There are two equal and opposite errors into which our race can fall about demons. One is to disbelieve in their existence. The other is to believe, and feel an excessive and unhealthy interest in them. The demons themselves are equally pleased with both errors …with the same delight.” In today’s passage, the demons tortured a man terribly and drove him to debasing and destructive behavior. No one could help this man. But Jesus set him free. Jesus has power over the demons, and he can drive out the demons through us in his name.

After Jesus had calmed the storm, he and his disciples sailed to the region of the Gerasenes, which is across the lake from Galilee (26). This region was known as the Decapolis, the “ten cities.” Dominated by Greek and Roman culture, it was a Gentile territory. In chapter 2, Simeon called Jesus “a light for revelation to the Gentiles” (2:32). In this event, Jesus landed on Gentile territory to plant the gospel among the Gentiles. When Jesus stepped ashore, the first person he met was not a cute Gentile freshman boy at Gerasa University. Luke says it was “a demon-possessed man from the town” (27a).

Today many people play with spiritual forces rather than taking them seriously. Every day we see psychics advertisements on Television, and the daily newspaper carries daily horoscope. We tend to see these things as harmless but they are not. We need to be careful not to allow the forces of spiritual darkness to get a foot in the door of our minds through occult books, movies or even games such as “Dungeons and Dragons”. This is serious business. Ephesians 6:12 says that there is a very real spiritual battle being waged between God and Satan over the lives and souls of men and women. It was going on during the ministry of Jesus, and it will continue in every generation until the Lord comes again, and Satan and all of his demons are forever thrown into the lake of burning sulfur (Rev. 20:10). The power of the devil is real.

Here we should note that demon possession is to be distinguished from demonic influence and demonic activity in relation to a person. Demon possession means a demon residing in a person, exerting direct control and influence over that person, with certain derangement of mind and body. So a Christian cannot be possessed by a demon since he is indwelt by the Holy Spirit. When we believe in Jesus, God redeemed us with the precious blood of Jesus Christ, and we belong to God. However, a Christian can be the target of demonic activity to such an extent that he may give the appearance of demon possession. Christians can place themselves in a position to vulnerable to the forces of evil any time they surrender to either fleshly desires such as anger, lust, and passion. We should not open the door to demons. Judas Iscariot opened his heart to evil—in his case by his greed (John 12:6). He betrayed Jesus with 20 pieces of silver coins. We should not open our lives to demons through our habitual sins such as immorality, drug/alcohol abuse, rebelliousness, bitterness, and idol worship. Confession and repentance of sin are necessary to restore fellowship with God, who can then break the power of demonic oppression. 1 John 5:18 says, “We know that anyone born of God does not continue to sin; the one who was born of God keeps him safe, and the evil one cannot harm him.”

The man in this passage was fully demon possessed. Once the demons had control of this man, they began to defile the image of God in him. Verse 27b says, “For a long time this man had not worn clothes or lived in a house, but had lived in the tombs.” This man did not wear clothes; he had no sense of shame. He did whatever the demons drove him to do, without any consideration for the consequences. So no one could stand to be around him. His rude and destructive behavior led to the breach of all of his relationships. Finally, he left home and went to live in the tombs. The demons cut him off from other human beings. He prowled around in the isolated, dark and gruesome graveyard by himself. Normal people feared him, and wanted to protect society from him. So they tried to bind him with chains and keep him under guard. Modern people would use tasers, electric shock, or strong drugs. However, the man broke the chains with the power of demons and escaped. No one could control the demons in him.

This story seems to be too extreme and may not seem to apply to any of us. But biblically speaking, anyone who is not led by the Holy Spirit is under the influence of the evil spirit. Ephesians 2:1-2 say, “As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient.” Many young people have left home, cut relationships with their families, and are sitting alone in dark and dirty rooms, interacting only with their computers. They feel depressed, isolated, and sorrowful. Some are so miserable that they commit suicide. When they hear about Christ or Bible study, they become extremely irritated for no reason. They are under the influence of the evil spirit, even though they may not realize it. Even though they may look good outwardly, there is brokenness inside. There is so much inner struggle going on. They are unable to control what is going on within them. As a matter of fact, the person sitting in front of you, or beside you may have struggles that you know nothing about. They need Jesus, and only Jesus, even though they may react strangely to his word.

What did Jesus do when he saw this man? Look at verse 29. “For Jesus had commanded the evil spirit to come out of the man.” Jesus did not waste any time, but immediately commanded the evil spirit to come out of the man. Jesus did not ask the man if he wanted to be healed. Jesus initiated this healing by his one-sided grace. Usually, Jesus healed those who came to him by faith. However, Jesus treated this man differently. Knowing that this man could not help himself, Jesus took the initiative. Jesus is the God of mercy who sets men free from demons. Jesus said in Luke 4:19, “He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners...to release the oppressed....”

Though Jesus had commanded the evil spirit to come out, the demons did not come out. There were just too many of them. The demons tried to intimidate Jesus. Verse 28 says, “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!’” In verse 30b, he said, “Legion.” Legion” refers to a regiment of 6,000 Roman soldiers. Perhaps he had 6,000 demons. The demons are saying, “We are many. We are united, and we are mighty.” But Jesus was not intimidated. In order to understand what he is dealing with, Jesus asked him a question, “What is your name?” We can think of this question in two ways.

First, before the demons could be driven out, this man had to differentiate himself from the demons. This question helped him to disengage him from the confusion between him and the demons. It reminded him that he had his own identity apart from the demons, and he had once a human nature, and human fellowship.

Second, Jesus wanted to help this man restore his true identity. In the Bible, a person's name represents his true identity or being. God made each person in his own image with a unique personality. God knows each person and can name each person accordingly. Jesus is the good shepherd, who knows his sheep by name (Jn 10:3b). In Genesis, there is Jacob. His name means “deceiver.” At Peniel, God asked him, “What is your name?” When he answered, “Jacob,” it was a true confession of his inner self. Then God changed his name to “Israel,” which means “struggles with God.” “Israel” is the person God made him to be. The man in this passage had a God-given identity and a proper name. However, when he lived according to his sinful nature, demons channeled into him one by one, until he was filled with 6,000 demons. They had driven and tormented him to the point that he lost his true identity and became a mere tool of the demons. People also did not regard him as a human being. They called him a demon-possessed guy or monster on the hill. We are often identified with our handicap such as 38 year old paralytic. People around us tell us who they think we are. Voices from our past failures try to define our identity. We should not let our handicap or failures define who we are. We should firmly believe in our identity: holy children of God, whom God bought with the precious blood of Jesus. God is protecting us with 12 legions of angels.

Look at verse 31. The demons begged Jesus repeatedly not to order them to go into the Abyss. “Abyss” literally means a bottomless pit. It refers to the place of eternal condemnation. To avoid this, the demons begged Jesus to send them into a herd of pigs feeding on the nearby hillside. Jesus gave them permission. Why? It was not because Jesus was merciful to demons. It was not because Jesus needed to negotiate a compromise. When the demons entered the pigs, the whole herd rushed down the steep bank into the lake and were drowned. If Jesus cast out the demons invisibly, people, especially, the demon-possessed man, would not know for sure whether the demons were gone. Pigs running off the cliff and drowned was a dramatic illustration of the demons coming out of the man, setting him free.

According to Mark’s gospel, there were about 2,000 pigs. If the market value of each pig was a conservative $500, that would mean that $1,000,000 was lost. That would be devastating, not only to the owners of the pigs, but to the entire economy of the region. Jesus was willing to sacrifice this much to save one seemingly useless man from demon possession. Jesus teaches us that human life, made in the image of God, is more valuable than material things. No matter how terrible a person becomes, he is still a human being, created in God’s image. Jesus can set him free and restore him to be a child of God. The man needed to realize his value. The townspeople needed to realize his value. Jesus' disciples needed to realize his value. We need to realize the value of human life made in the image of God. One person’s life has great value to God. That is why, when we struggle to help one person to be healed and restored in Jesus, it is very precious to God. In order to save and restore us as his children, Jesus went to the cross and shed his precious blood. What are you willing to sacrifice for the sake of one soul?

When those tending the pigs saw what had happened, they ran off and reported this in the town and countryside, 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 (34-35). When people saw him, they should have praised God. But they were afraid. They did not understand what had happened. They were overcome with fear of some supernatural phenomenon. They were afraid of more material loss. Fear made them foolish, and they asked Jesus to leave them. Jesus simply got into the boat and left.

The man who had been freed from the demons begged Jesus to go with Jesus. But Jesus did not let him. Jesus sent him away, saying, “Return home and tell how much God has done for you.” In the past, this man was rebellious. He only did what he wanted to do. But here, when Jesus refused his request and gave him a different direction, he accepted it from his heart. He went away and told all over town how much Jesus had done for him. Out of love for Jesus he obeyed Jesus’ words. In fact, Jesus commissioned him as an evangelist to his town. It began with his home. He went to his mother and father and shared how Jesus had healed him. His parent’s broken hearts were healed and they had a joyful reunion with many tears. The man did not stop there. He told all over town how much Jesus had done for him. When people heard his testimony, they could understand the spiritual reality. They realized that demons are the real enemies of mankind, and that Jesus is the Savior of the world. This man who had been a source of trouble to many, had now become an instrument of God’s grace to the whole region. Later when Jesus went into this region again, many people came to him for healing (Mk 7). It was the fruit of the changed life of the former demon-possessed man. Jesus’ light began to shine among the Gentiles.

Let’s pray for the young souls of this campus who are helpless in the grip of demons. Let’s share the word of God with them and help them come to Jesus, who can heal them.