

Jesus and the Legion of Demons

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[0 : 0 0] Father, we confess before you that sometimes we don't want to act like Christians because we are a bit embarrassed about how the world would view us, how average Canadians would view us or our friends.

And we confess to that temptation even now. But Father, in the name of Jesus, not in our strength, but definitely not in our strength, but only in the name of Jesus, and washed by him and sealed by the Holy Spirit.

In the name of Jesus, Father, we ask that every demon or evil spirit that is present or arrayed against us, whether it is in this place or those who are entering into our worship online, that, Father, in the name of Jesus, every evil spirit will be bound, that in the name of Jesus, every demon and evil spirit will be silenced, that in the name of Jesus, these foul spirits will be taken away, not to return.

And Father, in the name of Jesus, we ask that you do not leave us empty, but that the Holy Spirit would come with might and power and deep conviction into each of our hearts, that you, Jesus, might rule in our hearts.

We invite, with no qualifications, with no conditions, we invite, Lord Jesus, you to speak into our hearts and rule in our hearts, today and always.

[1 : 2 3] And we ask this in the precious name of Jesus, your Son and our Savior. Amen. Please be seated. So now that I've weirded some of you out by that prayer, although some of you have heard me pray like this before, Jesus and the Legion of Demons.

That's the sermon today. Jesus and the Legion of Demons were evil spirits. So let's turn and look at this text.

It's Mark chapter 5, beginning at verse 1. It goes from 1 to 20. And just before, as you're maybe turning to look at it in your Bibles, just a couple of things.

First of all, I've written a blog about the fact that there are apparent significant contradictions between Mark and Matthew and Luke.

Matthew, Mark, and Luke are three ancient biographies of Jesus, either written by eyewitnesses or dependent upon eyewitness testimony. And all three of these ancient biographies were written when many eyewitnesses were still alive, to contradict it.

[2 : 3 2] And if you look at the three accounts, you'll see that there are some... I say that there's, in particular, three often pointed out contradictions. And I'm not going to talk about that in the sermon.

I've written a blog. And as I've said before, if I get my blog written before 4.30 on Friday, you get it on Saturday. If I get it written after that, you get it on Monday. So on Monday, I've written a blog, and I'll talk about those apparent contradictions and why there aren't, in fact, any contradictions and you can trust the Bible.

But what I'm going to do in this text... And by the way, this is actually just any... Those of you who do Bible studies yourselves, there's sort of two fundamentally different ways that you can do a Bible study on Matthew, Mark, or Luke.

And because there's quite a few times when all three of these biographies will talk about the same event. And so one way to do it is to try to look at all three of them at the same time.

The other way to do it is to sort of fundamentally just look at one of them and, in a sense, ignore the other two. Because in every case, they tell the story in such a way to make points that are significant for the story, the bigger story that they're telling, like in Matthew or Mark or Luke.

[3 : 43] So other than one little time where I'm going to mention something, fundamentally what I've been doing every week when we preach on Mark is just looking at Mark and not trying to bring in pieces of information from the other stories.

We just sort of look. So I'm not prejudging how I answer the challenges in my blog. I'm going to preach this. We're going to look at the story as Mark has written it.

And so here, let's go. What's just happened is Jesus has just calmed the storm. He is now in this area, which we'll hear about in a moment, which is a primarily pagan area.

And at the end of the story, those of you who remember it, it mentions the Decapolis. And 67 BC, the area was subdued by the Imperial Roman forces.

And when the area was subdued by the Imperial Roman forces, they picked this area and had picked 10 cities to be showcases of pagan, cultural, and religious life.

[4 : 52] And so that's the area that Jesus is coming into, where the 10 principal cities have been set aside by the Roman Empire now for quite a few years, almost 100 years, to be a showcase for pagan culture, power, understanding.

And that's the area, a majority pagan area that Jesus has come into. And here's how it goes. Verse 1. They came to the other side. That's Jesus and the disciples.

They've gotten out. Jesus has calmed the storm. They arrive on the other side. Sorry. So they came to the other side of the sea, to the country of the Gerasenes. And when Jesus had stepped out of the boat, immediately there met him out of the tombs, a man with an unclean spirit.

And just those of you who are a bit familiar with the Bible, but some of you aren't, the Bible sometimes will say unclean spirit, sometimes an evil spirit, and sometimes demon.

It's just three different ways of referring to the same type of entity. They're not different types. They're all the same thing. So this man has come, and he has an evil spirit or evil spirits.

[6 : 00] And now Mark is going to, in a sense, take a bit of an aside. I guess if they were doing a movie of this, what you would see now is there'd be a bit of a flashback where you get different images of what the man is, sort of introducing the man before it gets back to what's going to happen between the man and Jesus.

So it sort of all of a sudden switches, goes a little bit in time to make you familiar with this particular man who's never named. So that begins in verse 3. The man with the evil spirit lived among the tombs, and no one could bind him anymore, not even with a chain.

For he had often been bound with shackles and chains, but he wrenched the chains apart, and he broke the shackles in pieces. No one had the strength to subdue him.

Night and day among the tombs and on the mountains, he was always crying out and cutting himself with stones. And in the original language, the language is quite harsh and brutal.

You sort of get a bit of a feel of it in the English, right? Where, you know, with chain, bound, shackles, chains, wrenched, chains, broke the shackles, the calling out.

[7 : 18] You get this sense of a very brutal type of a language. Now, in this description, it's very interesting if you think about it for a second. And, you see, the Bible provides to us a mirror of who we are really in our heart.

And in a sense, constantly the challenge of reading the Bible is, will you see it as a mirror, or will you stand and looking at the Bible sort of as a critic and a judge? And, obviously, I'm not saying you shouldn't have questions and all of that.

And if you're, wouldn't say that you're a Christian and you're watching this, it's completely valid to have, like, questions. I'm going to raise some questions about this in a moment. But, fundamentally, it's an opportunity.

This is what Christians believe. It's a bit of a mirror. I mean, it's both a window to see into what the world is really like, but it's also a mirror to reveal to us who we are, what we really are like at the level of our heart.

Now, if you think about it for a second, this description of what we've just read is what the average Canadian longs for. You go, what? If you think about it, what I've just read is what the average Canadian longs for.

[8 : 35] This man is very strong. He can break chains and shackles. I mean, that's what superheroes movies are about. That's what gyms are about.

But he's very, very, very strong. He's feared. He takes no guff. There was a little feature the other day about Bruce Willis movies, which are still quite remarkably possible.

And one of the things that characterizes Bruce Willis and other movies like that is he's a guy who takes no guff. Now, why is it that we would like a movie like that? Because in and of ourselves, I'd like to be the type of person who takes no guff.

I'd like to be able to go into a meeting and I'm not going to take any of this type of stuff. And on one level, most of us would like to be a little bit feared. Maybe even sometimes a lot feared.

This guy is independent. He doesn't care what people think. I mean, on one level, it's not what we sort of value in our society, that we wish that we were the sort of person who doesn't really care what people think.

[9 : 43] And he doesn't care for social conventions. And on one level, that speaks very powerfully of North American culture. We'd like to be the type of person who doesn't care for social conventions. Why?

Well, because we want to be true to our inner life. And we want to be authentic and autonomous. And this man is true to his inner life and he is authentic and autonomous.

He doesn't care about social conventions. He doesn't take any guff. He's very, very strong. And on one level, to our great horror, to meet a man who's autonomous and authentic and self-actualized.

But to our horror, when we see a character like this in the Bible, we recoil from him in horror. Now, this is where you see the Bible starts to become a bit of a mirror.

What does it say about the way that Canadians casually talk about the ideal type of life if we actually see an example of it and we would recoil from it in horror? I mean, most of us would.

[10 : 43] In fact, actually, if we came across somebody in a Bible study, that said, whoa, I'd like to be like that guy, you'd all go like this. You'd take a bit of a step back and say, what, you'd like to be like this?

If it's your boss, you'd say to yourself, well, that explains a lot if your boss or your boss's boss thinks like that. But we would automatically just say, this person is not a model.

They're alone. They're unloved. They're in agony. They are brutal individuals who are brutal to others and they brutalize themselves.

They brutalize themselves. They brutalize others. He is a brutal man. You see, one of the things that the gospel constantly does is it subverts what we think we want.

But it subverts what we think we really want and what our culture tells us we really want to fulfill at a deeper level what we truly want. Because the fact of the matter is we do want to be free.

[12 : 00] Don't we? We want to be free. We want to be free. But we also want to be loved and we don't want to be alone and we don't want to brutalize others and be brutalized ourselves.

So the story now is setting up how is Jesus going to handle this? How is he going to deal with it? What's going to be revealed about the man and what's going to be revealed about Jesus? So look what happens in verse 6.

And here, the original language gives a bit of a stronger sense because you have this man who lives where death, where there is just death and lives alone.

And the one thing that they will bring in, if you look at the other accounts, he's also naked. That's what I meant by I didn't care about social conventions and stuff like that. That's the one thing I'm going to bring in from the other accounts.

This fearsome, brutal, yelling, cut man who's very, he's cut both in the sense he's very strong and he's cut because he cuts himself with stones.

[13 : 00] And he sees Jesus. And in verse 6, when he saw Jesus from afar, he ran and fell down before him. In the original language, there's this sense that he's hurling himself at Jesus.

Hurling himself across the distance to hurling himself at Jesus. But rather than falling on Jesus, he falls down. Jesus doesn't have to defend himself.

The guy just falls down. Almost like an early example of being slain in the spirit for my charismatic friends. He just falls down.

Before Jesus. And not only does he fall down in the original language, he's prostrate before him. You know, if you've seen Roman Catholic ordinations, the priest through the deacon getting prostrate on the floor.

That's the guy's prostrate. He hurls himself at the Jesus. But before that happens, he's now prostrate.

[13 : 58] Verse 7, Now, one of the things which is interesting here, and actually there's two cases in this text where, to our Muslim friends who might be watching this, there's two cases in Mark's gospel where the text very clearly says that Jesus is God.

This is one of them. And it's very interesting because it says that Jesus is a God in the context, in the strongest possible sense that a pagan would understand it because it's a primarily pagan expression that for the pagans who believed that there were many gods, you know, that there was, you know, Hercules and Zeus and all these different gods, but they had this sense that higher than all of the gods and goddesses that they were aware of, that higher than all of those and however high you go, there is eventually an ultimately most high God.

And the demon-possessed man is saying, Jesus, you are the son of the most high God. And what that is meaning is, of course, it means that Jesus is of the same nature as the most high God because that's, you know, I have, God has blessed me with nine children and all of the babies have human nature.

Right? That's just how it is. Cats have kittens. They share the same nature. So this is a very high claim of God. Remember, they're in a primarily pagan area. He uses pagan categories, but he says that Jesus is fundamentally God.

He says, what do you have to do with me, Jesus, son of the most high God? In the original language as well, it's even a stronger thing. What do you have to do with me? In the original language, it's expressing, the demon-possessed man is expressing that normally somebody like Jesus doesn't have anything to do with somebody like him.

[15 : 59] It would be a little bit as if on the drive home or when I get home today, I get a call and it's Justin Trudeau. And I would say, now maybe you guys get, some of you guys get called by Justin Trudeau all the time, right?

But for me, I would view it as a prank. And after I did a couple of tests, et cetera, eventually became clear and Justin Trudeau called me, in a sense, I'm thinking, what does Justin Trudeau want with me?

Like, we inhabit completely different spheres that have nothing to do with each other. So what on earth would somebody like him, like Justin Trudeau, want to have to talk with somebody like me?

And that's the same type of idea here. The demon-possessed man is saying, son of the most high God, Jesus, you and I are in completely, and it's completely true, right? They are in completely and utterly different spheres.

And now, demons lie. Of course, in a sense, he would know that ultimately God is sovereign, but he tries to talk as if it's not something that generally speaking the most high God would want.

[17 : 06] But that's what's happening. And the other thing about it is it's both a type of bravado, you know, I tell you, you have to swear by God, you're not going to hurt me.

It's a type of bravado and whining, all interspersed at the same time. Like a type of groveling, whining with bravado intermingled, all in this short type of thing as if they're big and tough and you can tell Jesus what to do at the same time you're cringing and saying, don't hurt me and acknowledging that you're about to get your butt kicked, so to speak, and there's nothing you can do to stop it.

That's the Greek, getting your butt kicked. Sorry, never mind, that's not what the Greek says. Anyway, so, now one of the things which is really interesting about this text and it's a, it's a real challenge to those who go to the church and those who might call themselves Christians is that this demon-possessed man, he knows Jesus, he passed the theology test way better than any of the disciples, but it doesn't have any type of a carryover into repentance or openness to Jesus.

So there's two types of things that are going on here. Just because you can have very, very clear knowledge about certain types of things doesn't mean that it necessarily has affected your heart. Now, by heart, I don't just mean emotions, I mean the very center of who you are where your emotions, your imagination, your aesthetic sense, your intellect, your will, that sort of central place in the human being where all of these things flow out of that is so involved in a personal relationship with like a friend or if it's love, romantic love, where there's a sense of a turning of that whole self towards the other person and openness of that self to the other person.

And so what you see here is you see both very, very accurate knowledge of Jesus but at the same time absolutely no desire for a relationship and no interest whatsoever in anything like repentance.

[19 : 21] And there's going to be an asking for mercy but it's not really the type of mercy that's connected to knowing and being known. So how does Jesus respond to this request don't torment me?

you know, you're the son of the most high God and the fact that this demon-possessed man clearly knows Jesus but shows no, the demons show no hesitation.

They're in a sense convicted, convinced demons. You don't want to change terms. How's Jesus going to respond to it? Well, let's see what happens in verse 9.

And Jesus asked him so there's a bit of a pause from the casting out. Jesus asked him what is your name? The man replied my name is Legion for we are many.

And he begged him earnestly not to send them out of the country. I'm going to read that text again. It's a very, very interesting text.

[20 : 31] Now, yeah, I'm going to say it. All week I sort of batted my mind back and forth whether I'm going to say anything about this.

I understand that we live in a time when many, many people are, they wouldn't say that they're confused at all about their identity but that it's a very common thing for people to want to change their pronouns to reflect the fact that they believe that their internal identity is significantly different than their biology.

And I understand that that's very prevalent. I understand that for some people it's a welcome thing and for others it's not a welcome thing. and I understand that for some to move towards their chosen identity is a, for them that's how they understand liberation.

And I understand that many, many people want to be able to try to say that there's no such thing of, all this dualism and all is a bad thing and I understand all of that.

I really do and I think I understand a tiny little bit about the emotional and imaginative longing for these types of things and to see it increase that they see it as a bit of a sense of liberation.

[21 : 49] And I'm definitely not saying that people who think this are demon-possessed, I'm not saying this at all. But for those here or those who might be online watching this, the very, very first time, this is quite a few years ago, the very first time I met somebody who wanted me to call them they as their pronoun, I have to confess the first thing that came to my mind was this story.

It's the very first thing that came to my mind. And I think, amongst others, if those of you who are watching and you sense that your Christian friend might not want to use a word like they as your pronoun, I mean, I guess it just really depends on whether you'd like to have a relationship with them or whether you think Christians just have to automatically agree with you, but I don't think my reaction is completely, like I think for Christians who are well-instructed, this story and the pronoun, there's just something that doesn't fit with it very well.

Now, whether we can have a conversation about that, I don't know if anybody will contact me about it or whatever, that's a whole other thing. Part of the thing we need to pray about in our society is that we can start to have civil conversations again, because that's being lost.

We can't have civil conversations. People yell, and sometimes we Christians yell, and when we Christians yell, we need to repent of it. We should not be the best yellers.

We should be yellers in repentance and recovery from yelling. So, that's just a bit of an aside note. I struggle but that's really true.

[23 : 27] The very first time I heard that pronoun, the very first time I ever heard of it, that's the first thing that popped into my mind. Do you realize if I was to say that, the background for that? Anyway, it's very, look again at the pronouns.

It's very interesting, right? And Jesus asked him, what is your name? The man. And in a sense, whether it's the man, but it's not really the man who replies. He replied, that's singular, but then says, my name is Legion, for we are many.

And he begged him earnestly. That is, the demons beg Jesus earnestly not to send them out of the country. whether the Legion, the demons are telling the truth and there really are close to 6,000 demons inside of the man or not, it doesn't really matter.

It's obviously to speak to a Jewish person who's been conquered by the Roman legions, a militaristic, imperialistic, and threatening name.

And it is revelatory in this text that Christians, the Bible teaches that it is possible to be so demonized that you can be possessed by an evil spirit and you can be so demonized that in fact you can have more than one evil spirit dwell within you.

[24 : 52] Now some of you are going to say, oh, George, time out, time out. George, what are you? Some medieval monk craves because you haven't had enough sex?

Reading stupid, fanciful things and being scared of people in the dark? Like George, this guy is just mentally ill. There's a few other things maybe some people are thinking.

And all I'll say about the mentally ill claim is this. If you, I think it was the last sermon I did just before in December, but it's in Mark chapter 3 and what you see in Mark chapter 3 is very interesting is that the Bible understands the distinction between mental illness and demon possession.

The Bible itself makes that distinction and it's a distinction that's been lost and so what's being claimed here is not that the man is mentally ill but the man is demon possessed and we're going to see that very clearly in a few verses as the Bible brings it home that it's talking about demonization to the point of possession not mental illness.

And then the other thing you might say Jojojojo well I didn't know they understood the difference between those things but George what this text is talking about is just completely impossible. It's just completely impossible.

[26 : 13] And often in my sermons I try to have a bit of an apologetics element to it but at this time I'm not. Amongst other things there's the time reason but all I'm going to say is this this text as I said is an ancient biography story of Jesus.

It was written by a man who might have been a direct eyewitness but it's very clearly based on eyewitness testimony and that's what it's claiming and it's written while many eyewitnesses were alive and if you read the whole thing the language as I've said before is never like once upon a time or anything like that it's always talking of the language of history that's the way it is at the level of the original language and the book understands the difference between like parables and metaphors and stories like that because we've just seen a whole pile of them and we'll see more in a moment.

We just saw a little while ago two sermons ago there were a combination of parables slash aphorisms slash metaphors slash and then some parables so that Mark understands the distinction between these things just because he didn't know never heard of TikTok or Instagram doesn't mean he's stupid and he understands these things and this is written and the claim is that this actually happened that's the claim like you might say well it was just a lie or something like that you know and then we can have a discussion about it but you have to understand the claim is that this actually happened and in a sense what I'm going to show you in a moment is that Mark doubles down on the historical nature of this that it actually happened he's going to double down on it in a couple of moments and so the claim of the text is that this is actually what happened and obviously if it happened then you and I live in a world that is very different than is described by CBC and Instagram and Ottawa U and the Supreme Court of Canada and the Parliament of Canada we live in a very very different world and it's talked about by the elites in this country and I don't want to ever encourage you to live in a fantasy world

I would like you as a Christian to live in the true world the real world as it really is and Mark is claiming that this is what the real world is like that there are in fact beings like evil spirits and they can affect human beings and they can in a sense demonize human beings even to the point of possession and there's another thing to pause about here before we see what Jesus is going to do remember I said at the beginning or close to the beginning some of you haven't maybe you've already fallen asleep but in some ways if you think about it what this man is described as is what most Canadians would like to be like except that's not what they'd like to be like but he embodies what they like it's just frightening potentially for Canadians to realize that's what I sort of like I'd like to be strong take no guff not be controlled by social conventions be true to my inner self be autonomous be authentic all of those things but when you see this you say no no no no okay obviously something's missing in my list of desires and fulfillments the other thing that this text is showing is that this man perfectly expresses the average Canadian sphere of Christianity

I mean how is it that the average Canadian or many Canadians think of Christianity they think of things like the handmaid's tale that if you come close to Jesus you're going to lose your individuality you're going to be brutalized you're going to turn into a person who brutalizes others in fact I don't know if anybody who's involved deeply in the trans movement has watched this but they might think that what I said earlier was brutalizing to trans people and so in some ways what you see in this man is how the average Canadian thinks like that the Christianity that there's actually something many many Canadians think there's something evil about it that it will destroy your individuality that it will flatten you it will hollow you out it will brutalize you it will make you the type of person who brutalizes others but one of the things that this text is doing is saying you were right to not want to go like that and if you come across an ideology or a religion or a spirituality that leads you in the direction run as fast as you can from it but what is going to be shown in this text is this is not what Christianity is

[31 : 17] Christianity is the antidote to this and it's going to be shown throughout the entire rest of the gospel Jesus is going to deal with this guy and as the story goes on what you actually see is that Jesus is going to be everything the complete opposite of everything that a demon does and that when you respond to Christianity and you respond not respond to Christianity when you respond to the gospel when you ask Jesus to be your savior and your lord you see that there is a this is a man who is the perfect penitent that is the perfect sacrifice that embodies perfect love and he does an act of perfect love setting aside his power and prerogatives and all of those things the opposite of what religion does and the opposite of he does all of that so by the end of the story you're in your right mind that you're self-possessed that your uniqueness can finally start to come out and to flower and to flourish that you can have a re-establishment of community and all in the context of being rightly related to the true and living God the triune God so see what happens so they've asked that Jesus the demons have revealed that whether there's just five pretending to be a legion or whether there really is close to six thousand whatever it is we never know that this man is controlled by many demons so what happens verse 11 now a great herd of pigs was feeding there on the hillside and they that's the demons begged Jesus saying send us to the pigs notice this let us enter them let us enter them they sort of acknowledge they don't actually have power so Jesus gave them permission and the unclean spirits came out and entered the pigs and the herd numbering about two thousand rushed down the steep bank into the sea and drowned in the sea you have a very very powerful graphic image of the tremendous chaotic evil life denying power that was inside this one man inside this one man was such rage and hatred of creation and hatred of life and hatred of God that whether it was two or six thousand it flows into the pigs and it hurls them hurls them to their death and destruction and doom mental illness isn't contagious this is the part of the story that shows that it's not mental illness if you didn't know that you can sit beside a man or a woman who has mental illness and it's not contagious you won't get it and we should minister to people and love people who are mentally ill and our congregation has people who suffer from mental illness and there are my brother and sister in

Christ now how do the people respond and how did the man what's the man like afterwards well that's what goes on in the story next the herdsmen have seen all of this it wasn't just that there was this man and Jesus and his twelve disciples but there's herdsmen there with the pigs in verse 14 all of a sudden we realize that this encounter between Jesus and the demoniac has been witnessed by the locals and in verse 14 the herdsmen flee they flee pigs go this way to their death herdsmen go this way the herdsmen fled and told it in the city and in the country and people came to see what it was that had happened in other words they didn't just believe these herdsmen because the herdsmen said it these people you know once again just because they don't have instagram doesn't mean they're stupid doesn't mean they're gullible they go probably nah that didn't happen come on really that's impossible like what let's go check it out you know these guys have been drinking too much cheap wine or whatever they all got drunk they don't know what they're talking about they go to look in verse 15 and they came to

Jesus and saw the demon possessed man and the one who had had the legion sitting there clothed and in his right mind and they were afraid and those who had seen it described to them what had happened to the demon possessed man and to the pigs and they began to beg Jesus to depart from their region now remember I said that Jesus Mark has written this gospel to emphasize that this in fact really happened and here's how we can see part of that that's what he's doing you see he's written this gospel this biography at a time when there were so many eyewitnesses around and what he's saying here is listen if you don't believe me the early readers of this obviously we can't go back in time like if you just picture what it was like you go there and what they're going to see is they're going to see 2,000 dead pigs floating in the water or maybe washed up on the beach 2,000 and they would have been there rotting for weeks the birds of prey

I mean the birds the vultures and others that would have come there this would have been something that was there for weeks and people came and so this is the part of the story here you see that Mark is in a sense saying this did happen this happened like you don't believe me go travel to this area I've given you enough descriptions that you can figure out where it is and go talk to the locals and they'll say I don't know what it was I don't think it's I would have said it was impossible but there's no question the guy was in his right mind this guy that was like a main like a evil guy he's in his right mind and there's the whole the water just all these pigs it's like just I don't know 100 meters 300 meters 400 meters into the water these dead pigs they ended up floating around they it's a very very public miracle and the man look again at how the man is described it's in verse 15 they came to Jesus and saw the demon possessed man the one who had had the legion sitting there clothed and in his right mind he was sitting there he's calm he had his clothes on he was in his right mind you see deeper than wanting to be true to your inner self you want to be in your right mind and you want to be unique and you want to be an individual and that's the way God designed you and me but we want to be unique and an individual in such a way that it doesn't brutalize other people where love is possible and community is possible and that's what we see here this man it's a very powerful image just drawn in a couple of short words and it's very very interesting that the people wanted Jesus to flee you see the pagan gods of those days they raped they lied they murdered and people were to be their slaves and you would try to navigate the distance and the issues of the different gods and the different demands to try to sort of get out from under their notice or to somehow or another trick or coerce them into doing something for you that you wanted and it's a very fundamental principle of religion and spirituality that the god or the goddesses or the all wants you to lose your identity and to die for its glory but here we see that Jesus with all the power in the world uses his power to die he in a sense goes the exact opposite of what the demons and what religious wants and what our self and our society wants which is to accrue power and it's as if you know we're pulling back and pulling back and pulling like that and he knows that the only way that we can be free is in a sense that he does what we cannot do which is to take this power and go all the way back and go even deeper to the full extent of the problem that the power causes and he goes and empties himself and empties himself and empties himself even to the point of dying on the cross you can't be more powerless than dead you can't be poorer than dead and the mystery of the bible tells us that Jesus goes and takes within death all of the things all of the punishments all of the horrors of death with nothing left out whatever that means because we don't know what that means but whatever it means he experiences all of that out of love for you and me that when we put our faith and trust in him we begin a journey

of becoming in our right mind and being properly clothed and being loved by almighty God and being able to sit in peace with almighty God and with others in peace and freedom and uniqueness and love and safety and security and affection and delight and that is why he died for you the complete opposite of a demon now some of you might say George that's a very wonderful story but I think I'm like that guy because you see that guy he didn't I remember what you said when you read it earlier he doesn't get to he doesn't get to stay with Jesus and I think that's my worry you know I've tried different religions I've tried different spiritualities and you know they just don't stick and at the end of the day I just think there's something maybe broken or wrong about me that this could never be possibly true about me and that's sort of George what the story shows but that's not what the story shows at all let me show how it finishes and I'll tell you about something that's going to happen in two chapters look at verse 18 as Jesus was getting into the boat the man who had been possessed with demons begged Jesus that he might be with him and here's our fear and Jesus did not permit him and I've run out of time but this doesn't mean that the man is rejected by Jesus this man becomes the first evangelist he becomes the first evangelist he is given a mission and a purpose and a commission and with great affection

[43 : 05] Jesus says to him go home to your friends and tell them how much the Lord has done for you and how he has had mercy on you and since that's every one of us probably nobody here has been delivered from demons but maybe one of you have I don't know somebody watching maybe you have been had an exorcism performed on you and have been delivered from demonic oppression at a very deep level but all of us can bear witness about how much the Lord has done for us and even if we can't think of how much he's done for us we can tell how he has had mercy on us how he has had mercy on me verse 20 and he went away and began to proclaim in the Decapolis how much Jesus had done for him and everyone marveled now it's very very interesting because in the Bible one of the things that the Bible wants to make clear is that there's only one hero and that is Jesus one of the things

I regularly pray with the people up front I didn't do it today but it's a very regular thing I pray that at the end of the service people won't want to know more about me but know about more but want to know more about Jesus and I obviously have an ego and a flesh and obviously I like being admired and obviously I like all of those things but really my deepest desire is that nobody wants to talk to me afterwards they want to spend time with Jesus and I confess in my flesh because I'm a fallen human being that people I might sort of be bothered if somebody says about this wonderful thing they heard a couple of months ago and it's what I said and they don't remember that it came from me but at the end of the day what I really really really really do want and I want to grow in wanting even more is that they just they just love Jesus more and they haven't realized that I had anything to do with their love and that would be a good thing that would be a good thing and so one of the ways that the gospel models this is this story ends this is so cool this story ends that Jesus in the Decapolis he does the miracle he the people all say get away from us

Jesus and and they and Jesus leaves and there's only one guy left who likes Jesus and in chapter 7 Jesus comes to the region again and he speaks and there's 4,000 people there to hear him and Jesus performs the miracle of feeding 4,000 right where this guy had gone Jesus did not reject the guy there are no little people in Jesus' life if you come to know Jesus as your Savior and Lord you are special you are unique you are deeply loved and you will be deeply loved for all eternity and part of sanctification is beginning to know and experience that now on this side of the grave Jesus took this one guy and he started to tell people about what Jesus had done for him and how mercy had been shown to him and whether it was months or a year later the Bible doesn't give chronology 4,000 people came more than 4,000 people came to hear Jesus the next time let's stand bow our heads in prayer

Father we give you thanks and praise for Jesus we thank and praise you that he did what we could not he disentangled himself from power and prestige he did those things not have a hold of him those things that we wish that we could do but can't he did for us and that he did the complete he used all of his power to do the opposite of what we expect power to be used for he used his power to resist temptation to live a sinless life and to die upon the cross as a sacrifice for sin so that I can be made right with God that anyone who puts their trust and faith in Jesus can be made right with you and we give you thanks and praise Father that when we receive the Jesus into our lives that he will begin to work within us to put us in our right mind to put us in our right mind to heal us that we might be free as you intended us to be and so Father we ask that you deliver us from whatever fear we have of drawing close to Christ or surrendering to him that you would deliver us

Father from these fears we confess that we're not really fearing you we're fearing demons and help us to have a great love for Jesus and trust and know that as he becomes more precious and real and as his work and his promises become more precious and real and deep to our hearts that you will help us to be in our right mind and in community with others and in community with you so Father please do this wonderful work of grace in our lives and we ask this in the name of Jesus your son and our savior amen