

AM Luke 8:26-39

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Preacher: Rev Trevor Kane

[0 : 00] Good morning friends, it's good to be gathered together again virtually. We of course long for the day when we can gather together again physically, when we can see each other, when we can sing God's praise together.

But for the moment this is the season that God has placed us in, for the moment this is the season that God has us going through and we're trying to make the best use of the time. We're continuing our studies this morning in Luke's Gospel, Luke chapter 8 is where we've come to this account of Jesus meeting the demon-possessed man.

We're going to turn to that in just a little moment or two, but let's pray together now just as we come this morning. Let's pray. Our gracious God and heavenly Father, we thank you this morning that you are indeed the God who is sovereign, the God who is in control of all things.

We thank you Father that we can rest on you this morning, that these may not be the times that we would choose, that these may not be the situations and circumstances that we would put ourselves in.

But we thank you Father that you have put us in them for your glory. As you have put us in them, Father, to advance the Gospel as best we can. We thank you Father that we have that great good news to share with people that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners.

[1 : 20] We pray that as we go about our daily business, that you would indeed enable us to speak those words of life, that you would indeed enable us to tell those that we meet of the goodness and the grace and the mercy of Jesus Christ.

As we come this morning, Father, we want to pray for all of those in our fellowship who are struggling. We perhaps, especially this morning, think of David Bennett in Charnwood.

Praying, Father, that you would continue to keep your hand of goodness and blessing upon him.

May he continue to know good health in the days that lie ahead. Remember all of those in the congregation who are shielding, all of those in the congregation who are isolating or who perhaps are feeling isolated.

May you be near to them. May you be their comfort and their joy. May you keep them close to yourself. May they know a double portion of your blessing from your word.

Remember our governments before you this morning. Praying again, Father, that you would give them wisdom and guidance as they seek to take steps to ease the lockdown, as they seek to take wise decisions in the days that lie ahead.

[2 : 27] May you go before them. Remember all of the churches who are meeting together this morning virtually. We pray for your word as it goes forward, as perhaps it goes forward in ways that we may not have anticipated, in ways that we may not have understood.

We thank you, Father, that your word never returns unto you void, but yet always achieves the purpose for which you sent it. And so may your word do us work mightily in our towns.

May it do us work mightily in our cities and villages, we ask. Remember all of the health staff before you, all of those who are helping to keep us safe.

In the days that have gone by, remember all of those key workers who are perhaps helping to keep us fed. Pray that as they go about their essential business, that you would keep them safe, that you would keep them in good health.

And we pray for ourselves now, Father, that as we come to your word, we pray that you would give us insight and understanding. We pray that we might know your blessing through it. For we ask it in Jesus' name.

[3 : 36] Amen. Let's turn in our Bibles then, please, to Luke chapter 8. Luke chapter 8 is where we've got to. We're going to think this morning about verses 26 through 39.

We're going to read it together now. Luke chapter 8 and verses 26 through 39. This is the word of God. Then they sailed to the country of the Gerasenes, which is opposite Galilee.

When Jesus had stepped out on land, there met him a man from the city who had demons. For a long time he had worn no clothes, and he had not lived in a house but among the tombs. When he saw Jesus, he cried out and fell down before him and said with a loud voice, What have you to do with me, 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 many a time it had seized him. He was kept under guard and bound with chains and shackles, but he would break the bonds and be driven by the demon into the desert.

Jesus then asked him, What is your name? And he said, Legion, for many demons had entered him. And they begged him not to command them to depart into the abyss.

[4 : 47] Now a large herd of pigs was feeding there on the hillside, and they begged him to let them enter those. So he gave them permission. Then the demons came out of the man and entered the pigs, and the herd rushed down the steep bank into the lake and were drowned.

When the herdsmen saw what had happened, they fled and told it in the city and in the country. Then people went out to see what had happened, and they came to Jesus and found the man from whom the demons had gone, sitting at the feet of Jesus, clothed and in his right mind.

And they were afraid. And those who had seen it told him how the demon-possessed man had been healed. Then all the people of the surrounding country of the Gerasenes asked him to depart from them, for they were seized with great fear.

So he got into the boat and returned. The man from whom the demons had gone begged that he might be with him. But Jesus sent him away, saying, Return to your home, and declare how much God has done for you.

And he went away, proclaiming throughout the whole city how much Jesus had done for him. Amen. That's the reading of God's inspired and inerrant word.

[5 : 58] It will be helpful for us if you keep God's word open in front of you, so that we can see what God is saying to us together through his word. Now, as we come to Luke chapter 8 and these verses 26 through 39.

Luke chapter 8 and verses 26 through 39. One of the hardest aspects of the coronavirus for me to deal with, to come to terms with, hasn't been so much the social isolation.

I can cope with that. I mean, I'm pretty happy in my own company, to be entirely honest with you. It hasn't been the increased hand-washing that we've been told to do, although it has left my hands feeling somewhat chapped.

It hasn't even been the increased snacking that we've all been doing. One of the things for me that's been hardest to come to terms with is the fact that you're not allowed to take your kids to the shops anymore.

The fact that you have to say no to the children a lot of the time. You know, you're heading out to get a prescription, you're heading out to get those essential groceries that you need to get for the week that lies ahead, and suddenly one of the children will pipe up, well, can we come with you, Dad?

[7 : 05] I used to take the kids to the shops all the time. It was just a little fun trip out. But now you can't. Now you have to say no to them.

And why do you have to say no to them? Well, primarily, of course, it's for their own good, isn't it?

It's to help them, to keep them safe, so that they don't get the coronavirus. But it's also to keep others safe, so that the children who may be asymptomatic don't transmit the virus onto others.

When the question comes, can we come with you, Daddy? The answer, sadly, now has to be no.

And as we come to Luke chapter 8 this morning, as we come to the end of this section, as we come to the end of this section of the healing of the demon-possessed man, we see him asking much the same question to Jesus, don't we?

Can I come with you, Jesus? Jesus is departing. Jesus is leaving the region, having been begged by the others to leave. And the man comes and says, Look, Jesus, can I come with you? And Jesus says to him, No.

No, you can't. You stay here. But notice again, just the way that we give a reason to our kids as to why they can't come now, Jesus gives a reason to this man. Can I come with you, Jesus? No. But rather stay here and declare all that God has done for you.

[8 : 26] Stay here and tell everyone about the goodness and mercy and grace of God towards you. That's what you need to do. We want to think about three things this morning.

Ask three questions from this section this morning. Firstly, we want to ask the question, Well, what do you want? We see that as Jesus gets off the boat, we see that that's the question the demons ask him.

What do you want, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? Secondly then, we see Jesus asking the question, Well, what is your name? We see the extent of the man's demon possession, if you like. We are legion, for we are many. And then thirdly, we see the man asking the question, Well, can I come with you? To which the answer is no. What do you want?

What is your name? Can I come with you? So first at the end this morning, we think about this question, Well, what do you want? What do you want? And we see that in verses 26 through 28.

[9 : 24] Verses 26 through 28, What do you want? So remember where we are in Luke's Gospel. Remember where we are in the life story of Jesus that Luke records for us.

Remember the things that we thought about last week. We saw the great instruction that Jesus gave that we need to be people who do the Word, not only hear the Word. That the people who are considered part of Jesus' family are those who do the Word of God, who put into practice the things that Jesus teaches.

Then we saw Jesus calm the storm at sea. The storm that arose that the disciples were so terrified of. This storm that Jesus calmed that caused the disciples to ask the question, Well, who is this? Who is this? That even the wind and the waves obey Him. And in some senses that sets the scene for us as we come to verse 26 this morning.

That sets the background for us as we come to verse 26 this morning. Because we read there verse 26, Then they sailed to the country of the Gerasenes. This was the end of the journey that began in verse 22.

[10 : 30] This was the end of the journey that was punctuated by the storm at sea. Remember verse 22 that they set out to go to the other side. Verse 22 of Luke chapter 8. Then verse 26, Now they've arrived.

The storm at sea has happened in the middle. The disciples have asked themselves in the middle, Well, who is this? That even the wind and the waves obey Him? Yes. But this ultimately is the end of the journey that started in verse 22. Verse 26, As they arrive at the country of the Gerasenes. And notice that as soon as Jesus sets foot on land, verse 27, When Jesus had stepped out on land, there was a man met Him from the city. Now this is no ordinary man.

This isn't the mayor of the city come out to greet the latest celebrity visitor to the town that might happen today. Now this man has a demon. This man is a demon-possessed man, and he's come to see Jesus.

And we see the completely dilapidated state of his existence, don't we? We see the completely decrepit state of his existence, don't we, in verse 27. What are we told? For a long time he had worn no clothes, and he'd not lived in a house, but among the tombs.

[11 : 45] I think it shows us how far this man has gone. It shows us how destructive the demon possession of his life had been. It shows us how far he had fallen, if you like, how utterly dehumanized that this demon possession had made him.

I suppose what I'm getting at is probably Genesis 3. Think about that occasion. Think about that incident we're told in Genesis 3, when the man and woman eat the fruit in the Garden of Eden. What's one of the first things that they realize? That they're naked. The result of the fall was to feel that awkwardness around being naked.

And yet here is this man who for a long time has worn no clothes, and feels, in a sense, no shame about it. What's one of the other things? What's the first thing that's described as not good in Genesis chapter 1?

It's the fact that man is alone. And here is a man who doesn't live in community. Here is a man who doesn't live in houses, but rather lives in a tomb. He lives amongst a tomb, sorry. He lives amongst the dead.

[12 : 55] It shows us how far this man has fallen, how utterly gone he is, how perhaps utterly dehumanized he is by this demon possession. You know, there are a lot of people in the world today who are eccentric.

There's one man who comes into the drop-in, and he is properly eccentric. He'll ask for the lights to be turned off. He'll ask for green tea rather than black tea.

This man's behavior, though, isn't eccentric, is it? This man's behavior goes far beyond eccentric. This man is demon-possessed.

And it's a reminder to us, and it's perhaps a warning to us. I don't know who you are tuned in this morning. I don't know if you have any real connection with church at all.

But it's a warning to us about those who dabble in the occult. There are people out there who will dabble in Ouija boards. There are people out there who will dabble in horoscopes, that kind of thing. [13:58] And the temptation's there to dismiss it as, well, it's just a, it's a little rubbish, isn't it? But this passage reminds us of the danger of dabbling with the occult.

This passage reminds us of the destructive power of the demonic. The devil isn't some beast that we can tame.

The devil isn't some beast that we can summon and dismiss at will. The devil, as Peter tells us, reminds us, the devil is like a roaring lion looking for people to devour. The devil ultimately is defeated, of course, in Christ, yes.

But the devil still has power today. It's not something that we simply dabble with. Because here we see its destructive power.

When he saw Jesus, verse 28, when he comes to see Jesus, he falls down before him, verse 28, and says with a loud voice, What have you to do with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God?

[15:09] Don't torment me. Please don't torment me. You see, the demon-possessed man knows where power lies here. The demons know who Jesus is.

The demons know the power and authority that Jesus has. We see it time and time again in the Gospels, don't we? We see it time and time again in the biographies of Jesus that different people record for us.

As soon as the demonic sees Jesus, they know who he is. As soon as the demonic encounter Jesus, they know who he is. They know that he is the Son of God. They know that he is the one who has power and authority over them.

They know where real power lies in that relationship and it's not with them. This demon-possessed man knows that Jesus has power over him.

This demon-possessed man knows that Jesus has authority over him. This demon-possessed man knows that Jesus has the ability to cast the demons out of him.

[16:07] And of course it reminds us of who Jesus really is, doesn't it? Because we have this image of Jesus as perhaps reinforced for us by Christmas carols, as perhaps reinforced for us by Christmas cards, as perhaps reinforced for us by images that we might see in popular children's Bibles.

We have that image of gentle Jesus, meek and mild. We have that image of Jesus in a sort of radiant white gown. We have that image of Jesus as soft and gentle, as meek.

A sort of highly effeminized Jesus. But yet Jesus was rugged. His hands probably would have been calloused from the work that he did as a carpenter.

When the demonic met him and saw him, they realized this was a man who had power and authority. This wasn't some sort of weakling. This was a man who had power and authority.

Jesus is the powerful one this morning. Jesus is the one this morning in whom the fullness of God was pleased to dwell. Jesus is the one this morning who ultimately would go to the cross and defeat sin and death forever.

[17:25] Remember, you want to see power? You want to see authority? Then look at Jesus. You want to see real strength this morning?

Then look at Jesus. So that's the first question then. What do you want? Secondly then, we see the question, well, what is your name? What is your name? And we see that in verses 29 through 33.

Initially, we've seen, of course, that the demon knows his place. Initially, the demon knows that Jesus is the one who has power and authority in this relationship. And this confrontation continues then in verse 29.

We see verse 28. The demon says, look, please don't torment us. Please don't torment us. And that's explained for us in verse 29. Why? For he had commanded the unclean spirit to come out of the man.

That's led to the comment of verse 28. The fact that Jesus has commanded them, the fact that Jesus has told the demon to come out of the man has led to them in verse 28, saying, well, look, please torment us. And notice again, as we see the thing in brackets in verse 29, notice again that it shows us how powerful the demon is.

[18 : 32] It shows us how far gone this man is. For many a time it had seized him. He was kept under guard and bound with chains and shackles, but he would break the bonds and be driven by the demon into the desert.

Presumably he's kept locked up for the damage that he would do when the demon took him. Presumably he's kept locked up for the safety of the people around him when the demon would take him.

We're going to find out in a few moments, of course, that there's a herd of pigs with some herdsmen who are nearby. So presumably they've told people about the damage this man can do, the damage that can be done when this man is taken by the demon.

One of the reasons I love reading local papers is for the courts section. It might seem a bit sort of voyeuristic, if you like. It might seem a bit perverse, but there it is.

There's a couple of reasons for that. I think the first reason is that you always look at it to see, well, is anyone I know in trouble? Has anyone I know done something that they shouldn't have done? But the other reason that you read it is to keep on top of the crime that's happening in your local area to see what's happening in the area around you.

[19 : 43] But it's always interesting to read when someone's in court, when someone comes before the judge, what their defence is, what reason they give for the behaviour that they have. You know, some of them will stand up and say, well, sorry, Your Honour, I can't remember anything that happened.

I'd had a drink or two. Or their lawyer who's appealing for Beal might stand up and say, well, look, this man, this woman is a fine, a good, an upstanding member of society.

They're productive members of society until they take a drink. And the obvious implication is that it's fine until the drink takes them.

It's fine until they lose control. So this man here, while it's not normal, probably isn't too bad until the demon really takes them, until the demon really gets hold of them, and then this destruction, this power is unleashed that he can't control.

The shackles can't hold him. He can't be bound. He can't be held. And then Jesus turns to him and says, verse 30, well, what is your name?

[20 : 55] Some people say that this is the key to the healing, that this is the key to the freeing, that Jesus gets a power, Jesus gets a mastery over the demon because he knows his name.

But I don't think that's right at all, is it? Because it's clear from the interactions that we've had so far that Jesus already has power. Jesus already has authority over this demon. The demon himself recognizes that.

The demon himself says, well, don't torment me. So it's not knowing his name as some kind of magical good luck charm that Jesus has authority over them.

He already has authority over them. But rather it highlights for us how far the man has fallen, how demon possessed he is. Well, our name is Legion, for we are many.

And we notice again, verse 31, they begged him, they begged him, they begged him not to send them away into the abyss. They realize where the power lies. They realize where the authority lies in this relationship.

[21 : 56] It's not with them, but it's with Jesus. Please don't torment us, verse 28. Please don't send us into the abyss, verse 31. They realize that Jesus is the one who has power and authority over them.

They know and recognize their place. They know and recognize power and authority when they see it. So this large herd of pigs is feeding on a nearby hillside.

And they begged Jesus and said, look, please send us into them instead. Please let us enter them instead. And there's a wonderful, I don't know if poetry is the right term, but there's a wonderful connection there, isn't there?

Here are these unclean demons. And they see these unclean animals feeding on the hillside and they say to Jesus, please let us enter them. The unclean demons go in to the unclean animals.

Jesus gives them permission and they come out of the man and they enter the pigs. And the pigs rush down the hill. The pigs rush down the bank into the lake and are drowned, verse 33.

[23 : 11] I think it gives us some insight into the mental anguish, the mental turmoil that this man must have been suffering. That the demons driven out from him, the demons leaving him disperse in a sense and go into this herd of pigs.

And such is the possession of it, such is the power of it, that the pigs rush down the bank and effectively kill themselves.

What about the pigs though? I remember preaching on this passage a few years ago. It's a good few years ago now. It's probably eight, nine years ago now. And a woman came up to me at the end of the service and said, well, what about the pigs?

It doesn't seem very fair that Jesus would allow the demons to go out from the man and enter the pigs and that the pigs would ultimately kill themselves. It doesn't seem right, does it? Why did the pigs have to die?

What would you say to her? Why did the pigs have to die here? Why did Jesus allow such a thing to happen? I gave it some thought and then I responded ultimately to her by saying, well, look, it reinforces for us that man is the height, that man is the apex of God's creation.

[24 : 31] that man is the one who is made in the image of God, that man is the one into whom the breath of life is breathed. That it's man and man alone that God desires right relationship with.

This incident with the pigs might look bad, it might be difficult to justify from our modern animal welfare standards, but ultimately it reminds us that man is the one whom God desires relationship with.

That man has been made for image, for relationship with God. That man has been made in the image of God. But secondly, this section reminds us the power of Jesus to free us, doesn't it? Whatever our enslavement this morning, whatever our enslavement this morning, Jesus is the one who has power to free us.

To all intents and purposes, this demon-possessed man was enslaved. He couldn't help doing the things that he did. He couldn't help the way that he acted. To all intents and purposes, this demon-possessed man looked lost.

[25 : 46] And yet Jesus was able to set him free. Maybe you're tuning in this morning, maybe you're listening this morning and you're addicted to drink.

Maybe you're tuning in this morning and you're addicted to drugs, either prescription or otherwise. Whatever your addiction this morning, Jesus Christ is the one who can set you free.

But of course, the problem for all of us is that we're all addicted to something. we're all addicted to sin. We can't help it. We can't not sin. And Jesus Christ is the one who came this morning so that we might be free.

Jesus Christ is the one who came this morning so that we could be freed from sin. So that we could be let go of that bondage. Faith is the only thing.

Faith in Christ is the only thing that will set you free this morning. You can get on all the rehab programs you want but you'll still be a sinner. We can engage in all the respectable sins that we want but we'll still be sinners.

[26 : 54] Jesus Christ is the only one who can help us. He's the only one who can set us free from a helpless situation. Thirdly, finally this morning we want to think about this question well can I come with you?

Can I come with you? And we see that in verses 34 through 39. The herdsmen see what's happened. They see that this herd of pigs is gone and they rush into the city to tell everyone what's happened.

There's probably an element here of covering their own backs isn't there? Because of course they're going to have to explain to the owners of the pigs where the pigs have gone. They're going to have to explain to them what happened. So they rush in and they tell everyone what Jesus has done.

They tell everyone what has just happened. The people come out and they find the man verse 35 remember the man who was demon possessed remember the man who was naked remember the man who lived amongst the tombs remember the man who was out of his mind they come and they find him verse 35 clothed and in his right mind and sitting at the feet of Jesus they find him with the demons gone they find him with the madness gone sitting at the feet of Jesus in short what do they

find?

They find one whose life had been turned around they find one whose life had been completely changed by meeting Jesus but how do the people respond?

[28 : 19] Look at the very end of verse 35 how do the people of the town respond when they see this? Well they are afraid and they come to Jesus verse 37 and they say to him look can you leave please?

can you get out of here please? We can't cope with this we can't process this we can't deal with having one with such power and authority in our midst so can you go away please?

And the man verse 38 the man from whom the demons has been driven the man from whom who has been set free verse 38 comes to Jesus and begs him begs that he might go with him let me come with you verse 38 yet but Jesus says no verse 39 return to your home go back to your house and tell how much God has done for you and he went away telling the whole city he went away telling anyone who would listen about what Jesus had done for him in the years to come you could imagine the children telling tales as children do you could imagine them sitting around telling tales of a man who used to live amongst the tombs telling tales of a man who used to be naked living amongst the tombs and the children would probably scarcely believe it they'd say no that never happened and the man could come along and say well it did because I'm that man

I'm the one who had been set free and friends this morning that's what each of us is called to do as we go about our daily business each of us is called to tell of all that God has done for us to tell of all that Jesus Christ has done for us to the people that we meet our conversion story may not be as dramatic our conversion story may not have as many twists and turns as this man does this morning but each and every conversion story each and every testimony as we call it is a story of the grace of God it's a story of the mercy of God it's a story of how much God has done for us in his son the Lord Jesus Christ it's a story of how we have been freed from bondage to sin and set free in the Lord Jesus Christ and as we go about our towns as we go about our cities and our villages that's what we're called to share with people how much God has done for us every story needs to be told the man was left behind and that's so significant the man was left behind why because he was the man that everyone in the village knew he was the man who everyone in the town knew this man used to live amongst the tombs this man used to be the one who went about naked this man used to be the one who was out of his mind and yet here he is showcasing displaying the grace of God to all who he would meet they could see the difference that Christ had made to him they could see the change in his life brought about by knowing

Christ friends we need to be showing people in the community we need to be showing the people we work with the people we live with the people we live beside the difference that knowing Christ makes the change in our lives if we're not being changed day by day if we're not being renewed by the spirit day by day if we can't testify to all that God has done for us the question is are we really saved at all have we really met Christ at all if our life is not changed then chances are we don't know him truly because any meeting with Christ any true meeting with the son of God will be utterly transformative in our lives it will change us but always for the better amen

[32 : 39] Amen You