

# Jesus Heals a Demon-Possessed Man

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[ 0 : 0 0 ]      Heavenly Father, we bow in your presence. May your Word be our rule, your Spirit our teacher, and your greater glory our supreme concern, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

There are many ways in which we may measure human progress. We can talk about social, cultural, or moral development. We can talk about artistic, literary, musical, or scientific development. But one way in which we can chart human progress is in terms of how we as a human race have learned how to harness and use power. We first learned how to use fire and water.

When combined, the two produced steam. And from there, we find ourselves where we're at today, unleashing the very power of the atom itself. But of course, because we are sinful human beings, we've learned how to use power to destroy one another, from the simple hand weapons used in antiquity to sophisticated military drones. We can chart human progress in terms of how we've learned to use and harness power, with the caveat, of course, that any power we generate as sinful human beings tends to be turned quickly to destructive purposes. And so, for many of us, the word power has sinister, threatening overtones. In this passage in Luke chapter 8 from verse 26 through 39, Jesus demonstrates His power, both its supremacy and its direction. When I talk about the supremacy of His power,

I'm referring to how much greater His power is to anything or anyone else. And when I talk about the direction of His power, I'm referring to how He uses His power to heal, not to destroy, to do good, not evil. This passage follows the story of how Jesus used His power to calm a great storm on the Sea of Galilee. Now He's confronted not by the power of nature, but by the power of the demonic, a man possessed by a multitude of evil spirits. It's in this grimy mess of the darkest evil, Jesus demonstrates both the supremacy and direction of His power. The message is clear.

He who has ears to hear, let him hear. There is none greater than Jesus, and there is none more loving than Jesus, for He alone can restore our humanity and make us who God created us to be.

[ 3 : 1 1 ]      This morning, let's see four things from our passage. The ultimate power of Jesus, the humanizing power of Jesus, the messianic power of Jesus, and the available power of Jesus.

He who has ears to hear, let him hear this morning. None of us today are possessed by evil spirits, as this man Legion was, but we cannot, and we dare not ignore this Jesus.

First of all then, the ultimate power of Jesus, the ultimate power of Jesus. Many communities were located around the Sea of Galilee. Capernaum was one where Jesus had made His home, but on the other side of the sea was the region of the Gerasenes. It was ethnically mixed, made up of both Jewish and Gentile communities. When Jesus and His disciples made landfall in that region, they were confronted by a man who self-identified as Legion. He called himself Legion because, as we read in verse 30, many demons had entered into him. With the relentless aggression of a Roman Legion, they had overwhelmed him and destroyed his personality and his sanity and his humanity.

It was once said of the English Puritan Richard Sibbes that heaven was in him before he was in heaven. Of Legion, we may say that hell was in him before he was in hell. Look into the mind of this man, and all we see is the vice-like grip of the blackest darkness. Hell was crushing this man. Oh, we trivialize the power of evil by making films about it. Poltergeist, the exorcist. But make no mistake, the power of these demons was greater than anything Legion or any other man could muster.

The devil's power may be a derived inferior power to that of God, but he is still a million times more powerful than any of us. These demons are fallen angels who sinned and were cast out of heaven.

[ 5 : 46 ] They are the dark equivalent of the angels whose power destroyed the Egyptian army in the Red Sea and ripped through the Assyrian army before the walls of Jerusalem. They don't have horns and pitchforks.

They are terrifying creatures before whom we as human beings are powerless. The great British poet Sigrid Sassoon was present at the First World War Battle of the Somme, and later he would describe the carnage as a sunlit vision of hell. Within just a few hours, the British army suffered 60,000 casualties. The power of the military hardware involved, the malice of the armies toward each other, and within a few hours, 60,000 casualties, enough to fill Ibrox and Celtic Park. On this day in Luke chapter 8, Jesus was confronted by a sunlit vision of hell. It was greater and more evil than the storm on the Sea of Galilee.

Accepting God, it was the greatest of all powers, greater than legion, the darkness and sin of hell itself.

What then shall happen in this great encounter between Jesus and the darkness of hell? What then shall happen? At the sight of Him, the demons begged Him not to send them into the abyss, and so He gave them permission to enter into a herd of pigs.

This is no battle between good and evil. They are not equal opponents, for the demons know that Jesus' power is infinitely greater than theirs, and they begged to be released. Demonic power may be greater than any of our powers, but it's nothing compared to the power of Jesus.

[ 7 : 58 ] Here then is our first point, the ultimate power of Jesus. This is something which is vital for us all here to understand. The power of man, our military hardware, our economic structures, is not ultimate.

The power of hell, however much greater it may be than our own, in its ability to create sunlit visions of hell and earth, is not ultimate. Only the power of Jesus is ultimate.

There is no yin and yang where good and evil are equally balanced. Only the ultimate supremacy of the power of Christ.

How important it is for us to understand this. Our church may seem powerless to stand up against all the forces arrayed against us.

But the Jesus whose power was supreme over these demons, in Luke chapter 8, is the same Jesus who said, I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.

[ 9 : 06 ] No weapon forged against him will prevail. No human argument devised against him shall stand. No cultural expression designed against him will stand.

They will all become incidental obscurities of history because the ultimate power rests in the hands of Jesus. The Jesus who is building his church.

Our future is safe in his hands. The question for us today is this. On whose side are we?

The Jesus who holds ultimate power, or that of the failing darkness, which is doomed to be an incidental obscurity of history.

On which side are we? The ultimate power of Jesus. Second in this passage, we have the humanizing power of Jesus.

[ 10 : 09 ] The humanizing power of Jesus. The sunlit vision of hell Jesus encounters that day in the region of the Gerasenes is terrifying. A man confronts him.

We read about him in verse 27, that for a long time he'd worn no clothes, and he had not lived in a house, but among the tombs. Later in verse 30, having learned that he was possessed by evil spirits, we learn that many times it had seized him.

He was kept under guard and bowed with chains and shackles, but he'd break the bonds and be driven by the demon into the desert. This man has been dehumanized.

This man is incapable of rational thought. He's been caught up in a spiral of self-destruction. He was not able to live as a functioning member of society.

He was a danger to himself and to others. He preferred to live in the tombs. He was incapable of appreciating beauty.

[ 11 : 12 ] He was incapable of appreciating beauty. Nearly everything that made him a human being was gone. Even his clothes. He could not be restrained because the demons had given him superhuman strength.

People in nearby villages would tell their children stories about him at bedtime. Behave yourself and go to sleep. Be a good boy, be a good girl, or a legion will get you.

And people treated him like the animal he had become because they knew no other way to control him. They didn't tie up their pigs, but let them roam free in the field.

But legion they bound tightly. This is what the darkness of evil always does. It deceives and dehumanizes.

It removes from us the humanity with which God endowed us when he created us. It makes us more like beasts than men. It removes from us the capacity to think rationally, to appreciate genuine beauty, and to enjoy open relationship with other people.

[ 12 : 27 ] It controls us. It draws us into the darkness of self-destruction. Sin dehumanizes. It always does. It makes us less than that which God created us to be.

We look at our society and wonder whether, because it's drifted so far away from its Christian roots, it's becoming another dehumanized, sunlit vision of hell.

In the name of civilization and freedom, tens of thousands of viable fetuses are aborted in Scotland every year.

The most vulnerable in our society are dehumanized and disposed of as medical waste. Our children are exposed to the dehumanizing teaching of gender fluidity, destroying their self-esteem and God-given dignity.

The ever-growing porn industry transforms the beauty of humanity into chunks of meat for self-gratification. How does Jesus use His power in this passage?

[ 13 : 45 ] Well, we've read about what legion was like before Jesus healed him. He was crazy. He was inhumane. Now in verse 35, we read about what legion was like after Jesus healed him.

There he is. He's sitting at the feet of Jesus. He is clothed and in His right mind, He's in His right mind. He's able to master, control, and marshal His thoughts and feelings and actions.

He is sober-minded. He is at peace. Jesus has used His ultimate power in this direction to restore the man's God-given humanity.

The man's no longer a beast. The man's a man again. He's capable of relationship and family life. He is capable of appreciating beauty and art.

He's capable of creating value in society. This is the direction in which Jesus always uses His power to restore the dignity and humanity that God endowed us with.

[ 14 : 55 ] He restores our freedom of thought and will, our vision of the dignity of other human beings and how life is valuable and to be protected. It's that vision of the restoration of our humanity which led the prominent Christian Dame Cicely Saunders to institute the hospice movement of which now there are many in Glasgow, instituted by Dame Cicely Saunders a Christian to care for the terminally ill and not to put them out of their misery.

We may be afraid of being Christians because it shall restrict my freedom to be who I want to be. If that freedom means that we can act in subhuman ways, then yes, Christianity will restrict us.

But if the freedom we're searching for in life means that we can appreciate true beauty, art, and culture, if it means we can respect the dignity and freedom of other human beings and live in relationships with other people, then becoming a Christian is the key to restoring our God-given humanity.

nearly every human being without exception who has reached a position of unassailable power has used that power to dehumanize his people and turn them into paranoid beasts.

But Jesus uses his ultimate power to restore this man's humanity. So again, we ask the question, with whom shall we be more truly human?

[ 16 : 44 ] With the demons who destroyed this man or with the Jesus who destroyed his humanity? Third, the messianic power of Jesus.

the messianic power of Jesus. In Luke chapter 1, verse 26, verse 32 rather, can't wait for Christmas. Verses we love to do at Christmas and we wouldn't hear this Christmas, looking forward to it.

The angel Gabriel announces the birth of Christ to the blessed Virgin Mary and says of him, he will be great and called Son of the Most High. We read these words and we rejoice at the birth of Jesus.

But little do we realize that as far as I can make out anyway from the writings of Luke in this gospel, Jesus is only ever called Son of the Most High once again.

And that not by his devoted followers, but by these demons. The thing is, they knew only too well who Jesus was. Son of the Most High was a title that devout Jews gave to their Messiah, but here it's not issuing from a Jewish mouth, but from the mouth of evil spirits.

[ 18 : 01 ] Here then is one of the greatest mysteries of this passage, that it takes evil spirits to answer the question set by the disciples of Jesus in the previous passage.

In Luke 8, 25, having witnessed Jesus' miraculous calming of the storm on the Sea of Galilee, the disciples asked each other, who then is this? that he commands even winds and water, and they obey him.

And now from the mouths of the devil's lieutenants they have their answer. Son of the Most High God, the Jesus who raised the dead son of the widow of Nain to life, son of the Most High God, the Jesus who healed the centurion's servant, son of the Most High God, the Jesus who gave the paralyzed man the use of his legs again, son of the Most High God.

The Jewish religious authorities may have hated him, but the one they hate is the Messiah for whom they've been long waiting. Many of these miracles of Jesus are what we call today sign miracles.

They point to something outside themselves. In this case, the messianic identity of Jesus as the Son of the Most High God for who other than God himself can with such ease dismiss and destroy these demons who have so destroyed this man.

[ 19 : 36 ] The great mystery of this passage isn't the existence of demons or the supernatural. The great mystery of this passage is that although the demons knew who they were dealing with and how, as a result, they were already defeated, the disciples still hadn't understood that the Jesus they were following was the Jewish Messiah.

They still hadn't realized who he really was. You see, in the Israel of Jesus' day, most Jews thought that their Messiah would use his power to get rid of the Romans and by military conquest establish a Jewish kingdom stretching across the whole known world.

In that kingdom based on human power and conquest, there's no place for crazy, demented men like Legion. But how much greater the power of Jesus than anything they can imagine for with such authority he exorcises these demons and casts them into a herd of pigs.

Jesus uses his messianic power not to take life, but to give life. Not to subjugate, but to liberate, not to make peace, not to make war, rather, but to make peace.

He who has ears to hear this morning, let him hear. The light of the glory of Jesus shines in our passage in Luke 8. What shall we do with that light?

[ 21 : 10 ] Shall we hide it under a bowl or place it on a lampstand? The seed of the gospel that's been scattered among us this morning are our hearts receptive to what we're being taught in our passage concerning the supremacy and the direction of the great power of Jesus?

And then, then lastly this morning, the available power of Jesus. The available power of Jesus. A couple of weeks ago, my family and I went out for dinner in a city center restaurant, Calabash, on Union Street.

Wonderful, wonderful restaurant. I had the best, best Ethiopian injera ever. This restaurant is positioned beside one of the hotels used to house addicts, homeless addicts.

And some of these addicts were standing outside the door of the hotel and I watched them and I stared at them. Most of them were younger than me but they looked 20 years older than me.

Their teeth were rotten. Their skins were saddled. Their hair was falling out, both men and women. Most of them were carrying bottles of cheap alcohol, smoking dope.

[ 22 : 39 ] Some had soiled themselves but they were unaware of it and cheerful with it. And at that moment the thought came into my head.

Are these people too far gone for even God to redeem? Are they?

You've all seen them in Glasgow, haven't you? Are these people too far gone for even God to redeem? Perhaps it's best to answer this question by asking another question.

Was Legion too far gone for Jesus to redeem? Was Legion too far gone for Legion for Jesus to redeem? This man was no longer a man, he was a beast but with such power and such love and grace Jesus expelled the demons which were destroying him.

we find this man sitting at the feet of Jesus and he's dressed and in his right mind what would it look like to see these poor addicts outside that city sent to the hell at peace dressed respectfully and in their right minds?

[ 24 : 00 ] If Jesus can do the greater expel the demons from Legion then let's be sure he can do the former change the lives of our city's unfortunates.

There's so much we could say from this passage so many aspects of Christ's glory which shine through but for us this is maybe the most inviting namely this the power of Jesus which completely changed the direction of Legion's life that day in the region of the Gerizines is available to his church and to us today.

It was by the power of the Holy Spirit Jesus cast out these demons that same Holy Spirit who dwells in his church and works powerfully through us to bring salvation and hope to a darkened society.

This man who'd been called Legion he begged Jesus to follow him in his travels but Jesus commanded him saying return to your home and declare how much God has done for you.

Go back home and tell your family and your friends. Go back to work. Resume your normal life but with this important difference from now on declare how much God has done for you.

[ 25 : 17 ] Tell your story to all who will listen. Now most everybody would have known his story but it was for him to tell them that it had been this man Jesus who had set him free and changed his world.

Jesus commissioned this man to be a preacher of the word of the gospel to tell his story with a view to inviting others to come and know for themselves the saving power of Jesus because that saving power is available to all the unfortunates outside our city center it tells drunk out of their heads and old before their time in hindsight rather than staring at them awkwardly.

I should have prayed for them and I should have spoken to them. I should have expressed an interest in them. I should perhaps have shared a little of the hope of the gospel with them.

I should have walked them down a few streets to the Glasgow City Mission and to those gifted and dedicated men and women who work there who meet not just the needs of these homeless addicts but treat them as human beings not as parasites and give to them the God-given dignity with which they were endowed on the day of their birth.

The church with its preaching and practice of the gospel is the theater and power of the Holy Spirit that same power which triumphed over these demons and cast them out of this man as the word is declared and the church demonstrates the authenticity of that word by practicing mercy and treating these people not as parasites and problems.

[ 27 : 04 ] The Spirit of Christ works powerfully and changes hearts. The power of Jesus is available to us today here. It makes us bold to proclaim the words of Jesus and practice the works of Jesus.

This is what we pray for every time we meet on a Wednesday afternoon or evening to intercede for our city that God would do an amazing work here even as He did in the region of the Gerasenes.

Well, two things as we close. The first is this. We've already seen the great power of Jesus at work in the life of this man. But with what love He deals with Legion?

everyone else deals with Him as a problem to be solved, a parasite to be got rid of, someone to be chained up, something to be chained up.

But the first thing Jesus does is in verse 30 when we read Jesus asked Him, what's your name? what's your name?

[ 28 : 18 ] With what love and interest Jesus deals with this man. He comes to every one of us here this morning and He treats us not as objects, problems, complications, hassles, or numbers.

He treats us as human beings. Respecting our dignity made in the image of God, He comes to us and He says, what's your name? Because He wants to know us and He wants us to know Him.

He loves us and He wants to give us life and humanity in all its abundance. And then the second thing is this, consider the great power of Jesus over nature as we saw last week.

and the demonic as we see this week. What then is this Jesus doing, being tortured by men and hanging on a Roman cross?

Could He not have used His power to keep Himself from suffering in so much weakness and humiliation, being stripped of all His clothes and hanging on a cross?

[ 29 : 34 ] He could have, but it would have meant no salvation for us because it was to bear the whole weight of the darkness of our sins.

He was dying there. It was to finally triumph over the powers of hell. He was dying there. It was to give us life. He was dying there.

Jesus, our Lord and Master, dying there in weakness to give us life. Look, will we follow Legion in this?

Having arrived in his region, Legion made his way to meet Jesus. Through the preaching of the gospel of His grace, Jesus has made landfall in this building today.

and there are many of us here, myself included, who most desperately need Him to work powerfully in our lives. Having heard of the great power and love of Jesus to save, will we follow Jesus in this?

[ 30 : 43 ] We'll rush to meet Him in the gospel and we'll ask Him to do His work of salvation in us so that we too might be healed and become fully human.

and there are seen His feel the discovery on human Barry and his love of salvation said goodbye to God and there is being there in and a from to the in is to the oke wouldcu umas in there