

Jesus Defeats Darkness

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Preacher: Rev Kenneth I Macleod

[0 : 00] I want us to consider this section from verses 1 to 20 about Jesus healing this demon-possessed man. We see this man who lived among the tombs tells us in verse 2, When Jesus had stepped out of the boat immediately, they met him out of the tombs.

A man with an unclean spirit, he lived among the tombs, and no one could bind him anymore, not even with a chain, and so on. And evil is something that is very real.

We're all too aware that there are many, many dark forces at work in this world, and every week we read of horrors, awful things happening throughout this world, of murders and tortures and rapes and some of the most cruel, unimaginable things that are happening.

We are living here in the 21st century. And there has been no end of money spent, no end of, not just in our own country, but throughout this world, of think tanks and conventions and conferences, and probably even billions of pounds spent, trying to eradicate and deal with evil and the consequences of evil and its impact upon society.

And it doesn't work. It's not that the efforts aren't good. It's just it cannot work. Because that is where we're at. And actually the world we're living in, rather than getting better, the world, although there are many wonderful things in this world, this world is becoming more and more unsafe.

[1 : 47] This world is, I think we would all agree, a lot less safer than it was, say, 20 years ago. Because evil is on the rampage. And you don't need me to tell you that.

Just watch any news bulletin. Watch any, and all over the world we're seeing terrorism. We're seeing meaningless violence. We're seeing it not just in places of war, but in very civilized countries.

And we're seeing shootings, mass shootings. You just say to yourself, this is just, you can't understand it. People walking into schools and killing loads and then turning the gun on themselves. People going to supermarkets, into hotels, blowing up, blowing themselves up, blowing up. And you say, why? What? It's so painful.

It's so horrendous. And you see the madness of sin. Because that's what it is. You know, the Bible tells us, and this is the one thing that probably people just don't face up to.

[2 : 54] That the heart, the human heart, we're not talking about the physical, but our inner being. That the human heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked.

Who can know it? Who can know it? None of us. None of us know the depth of depravity that exists within the human heart. And what people are capable of is sometimes utterly and altogether shocking.

And this is one of the things that this world that we're living in, that we're facing up to more and more. Because I suppose with media coverage and the world being so small from the point of technology and media and such like, we're beginning to see and hear things from sometimes the most remote parts of this world.

But we see often a very angry world. A very unsafe world. And while the human heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked, there is another power behind it all.

And that is the power of darkness. Which is a very real and terrifying force that exists in this world. There are two kingdoms. The kingdom of God and the kingdom of darkness.

[4 : 09] And these two kingdoms are in conflict. Have been since the moment that man fell. And they have continued to be in conflict. And we find here in this particular incident before us an amazing picture of the Lord Jesus Christ confronting the power of darkness.

There are Jesus meets three different enemies in this chapter. And I want us tonight to look at the first of them. Because he meets and confronts the great enemy of darkness.

Next he meets and confronts the enemy of disease. And finally he meets and confronts the enemy of death. There are these three incidents in this chapter.

But tonight I want us to look at the first one. Which is confronting the powers of darkness. And we find here in this particular chapter that Jesus comes ashore to this place.

The Gazerines or Gadarenes. Sometimes it's translated. And there's this man who is completely out of control. This man Legion. That's what he terms himself because of the many demons.

[5 : 25] Unclean spirits that had taken possession of him. And he was a man who had no structure and no order to his life. He was a man who was completely out of control.

He wasn't the kind of person who got up in the morning and thought, Now what will I do today? What's best for me and what's best for other people? How would I order my life so that I might benefit other people?

What would I do today that will enlarge my understanding? He never structured a day or planned a day or thought he existed for that moment.

And often it was an out of control chaotic existence that he had. He was mad, utterly deranged because of the demons that had taken possession of him.

And the community had tried on occasions to control him. They couldn't. They had tried tying him. They had even tried chaining him. But they couldn't. There was nothing.

[6 : 26] He just broke them. He was a man who was completely out of all control. Total anarchy. He was a person who was delusional. He was a person who was dangerous.

He was a person who probably frightened the whole community. He lived completely for himself.

And you know, to a certain extent, there are people today in society, and I'm not saying that they're like this man, but there are a lot of people who live a life, and they say, it's my life, and I will do exactly what I want.

I don't care for authority. I have no respect for anyone. I don't care about anybody in control of anybody. I will live exactly as I want. I don't care who I hurt.

It's my life. It's not as extreme as Legion. But to a certain extent, that spirit is a spirit that is from hell. Because it is a spirit that has no respect for God or for any of God's creatures in this world. Only thought for themselves.

[7 : 35] And that is part of what the whole, in a sense, of hell is about. It's the selfishness, the isolation, and this whole sense of anarchy and rebellion.

It's all part of what hell is. And that's a reflection in the spirit and the attitude of people that just have a defiance against everybody and everything, and will live only for themselves.

And God is out of the picture, everything. But this man, Legion, is certainly a very, very, very extreme example of that. But the thing about this man is he was all alone.

He had a family. He had friends once upon a time. But he was now living on his own because he was completely uncontrollable. And I'm sure there were times that, well, we know there were times that he, I'm sure he was suicidal because he certainly, he was self-harming himself no end.

It tells that he was bruised. He was battering himself with stones. He was cutting himself. He was somebody, basically, a lot of the time didn't know what he was doing until he met Jesus.

[8 : 46] And just as we mentioned the Apostle Paul this morning, who looked the most unlikely candidate to find salvation. Here, if you had said, in this country, who's the least likely person to find salvation in Jesus Christ?

You would say, what? See the bad man there. See Legion, that man who's out of control. Nobody can control him. You can't even chain him. He's completely untamable.

That's the one person that will never be a Christian. Yet, we find that God's grace is so amazing.

And God's grace is so amazing because we've got to remember that the power and the authority of God is over everything.

In the previous chapter, we find that Jesus displays his authority over nature. Because it is there that he calmed, that he controlled the raging sea.

He brought it into a calm. And now again, he's displaying his authority, his control, his power, even over the kingdom of darkness.

[9 : 56] And so we find that here's this man, Legion. And it's interesting what we find that he does. He runs to Jesus. And it tells us in verse 6, And when he saw Jesus from afar, he ran and fell down before him.

And crying out with a loud voice, he said, What have I to do with you, Jesus, Son of God? And you see, he's coming and he's yelling. Now, if you have somebody in front of you, screaming at you, at the very pitch of his voice, I would imagine that's quite a terrifying thing.

It's part of, I suppose, any of you here have been in the army. It's one of the things, if you've drilled and so on, there's always this yelling, everything is done. There's this sense of power, of force.

And it's very intimidating. And if somebody is yelling into your face, it's very, very intimidating. Well, no doubt this is part of what this man was about, the shock tactic of scaring people, yelling at people.

He was used to doing it. And he comes to Jesus and he's yelling at the pitch of his voice. What have I to do with you? But shock tactics didn't work with Jesus.

[11 : 09] And this man was soon to find out, in the possession of the demons, that there was an authority and there was a power far greater than the power that ruled his life.

But we also notice that it says here that there's a really strange tension. And when he saw Jesus from afar off, he ran and fell down before him.

And it's strange. There's almost a sense of fear in him. What have you to do with me, Jesus, son of the most high God? I adjure you by God, do not torment me.

So there's this strange tension within this man. But first he sees Jesus from afar off. And the response is, when he sees Jesus from afar off, he runs to him.

Now at that particular moment when he's running to him, what his initial thoughts were, I don't know. The way that he's yelling at him, and the way that he's saying, what have I to do with you?

[12 : 11] It's almost like initially his idea was, I'm going to run out of him, and I'm going to scare him off. I don't want anything to do with Jesus. And yet despite that, he finds himself falling down before Jesus.

But he saw him from afar off. And that is often the way that people begin their spiritual journey, is seeing Jesus afar off. Maybe there's somebody here tonight like that, and you're seeing Jesus from afar off.

That's the way it is. There was a day you just didn't see Jesus at all. Jesus didn't really mean anything to you, but that's changed. You're beginning to think about Jesus.

The impact of Jesus on other people's lives has begun to touch you a wee bit. You've seen other people's lives being changed by Jesus, and you're wondering, I wonder what would happen to me. And there's maybe questions beginning to arise in your heart about Jesus. Might even be some desires for Jesus. But it's all a bit of a blur.

[13 : 20] He's out there, and you know, you understand that God is the Father in heaven, and sometimes you may be not able to figure out just what it's all about. How does it all fit into place?

It's like a jigsaw that's been thrown out, and it's just jumbled up pieces all together. And there's maybe a few bits that have been put together, but it's still, it's all just a kind of a fog.

But there's something there. Something that didn't used to be there. And the thing is that maybe as the week's going on, you're beginning to see a little more, and a little more.

And that is often the way it is with people as they come to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. They begin by seeing Jesus afar off. There's a lot they don't know. There's a lot they don't understand.

There's a lot going on that they don't even understand themselves. Sometimes they're saying, what's happening to me? How is it that I'm not enjoying life the way I used to?

[14 : 18] The things that used to satisfy me all the time, they don't anymore. Don't know what exactly is happening. And at the same time, you're beginning to see Jesus far off.

Well, that's quite a common experience. But the important thing was that legion that he ran to Jesus. And may I say this, if you're seeing tonight Jesus far off, make sure you do.

I'm not saying to follow the example of legion except here. Run to Jesus. The worst thing that you can do is say, oh, right, I'm going to get a wee bit worried about this.

I'm out of here. I'm going to stop coming to church. I'm going to stop reading my Bible. I'm getting worried. No. You know, the worst thing anybody could ever do is to be afraid of the Lord.

Afraid of becoming a Christian. Afraid of what it might mean to you. Because the thing is, a lot of people are afraid of becoming Christians because they feel they're going to be trapped.

[15 : 21] They're going to become slaves. They're going to be put in a straitjacket. They feel they're going to be tied down. No, it's actually, that's the very reverse. Outside Christ, that's how we are.

We're in a straitjacket. We're chained. Legion is an extreme example. But outside Jesus Christ, we're not free.

We may think we're free. But we're slaves to sin and to Satan. That's the way he operates. And he operates so subtly. But anyway, Jesus begins to deal with this man.

And it's also very interesting that straight away, all the unclean spirits in this man recognize Jesus instantly.

I find this quite extraordinary. Here's the Son of God, the second person of the Godhead, the Lord Jesus Christ, and he's come to his own people. He's come into this world and he's come to the Jewish people who were told that the Messiah was coming.

[16:26] They were studying all the Old Testament and all the law and the prophets spoke of Jesus. And he came. And he came to his own and his own received him not. They didn't believe in him.

The religious leaders, by and large, they refused to believe. And yet, here's the devils. Here's the demons. And they believe. They are instantly persuaded.

This is the Son of God. There's this falling down. And here's this recognition. Here's this submission. Not the submission of service, but the submission of fear.

Because, you know, the Bible tells us that the devils, the demons, that they believe. It's not an extraordinary thing. Not believe savingly.

But believe in the knowledge of the reality of. They are absolutely persuaded. In the same way that I believe that that clock, I don't know, is telling me just now, it's quarter past seven.

[17:25] I believe it because I can see it. It's in that way. In that sort of realization of the truth of what it is. They know. They know the reality of God.

They know the reality of the Lord Jesus Christ. And the reality and the knowledge that they have causes them to tremble. Remember, there is no atheist in hell.

There is no agnostic in hell. Every single individual of hell is a firm believer in the sense of the reality of the triune God.

So this man, legion, possessed by the unclean spirits, recognizes this. However dangerous and dark and awful the kingdom of darkness is, the wonderful, beautiful thing is that there is a greater authority and power.

And that is the power of God. And it is only the power of God that can save us. You know, this is again showing something of the awfulness of who Satan and all the demons are.

[18:38] They know the reality of hell, the awfulness of it. And what is their aim in this world? It's to take everybody there. That shows, that gives you a picture of what hell is like, where hell wants the worst for others.

Isn't that a thought? Hell wants the worst for others. That's what Satan and all the demons are about. They want the worst for people.

And that's, you see that, that's what's happening. That's why, as I say, all these shootings, all these awful things, it's hell burning in people's heart. They want the worst for others. Why is there so much cruelty?

So much hatred? How can people go in and cause that carnage? Because of hell burning in their heart. They want the worst for others. They want to inflict as much damage and pain and hurt.

And Satan wants to take us here. He wants to lull us to sleep. He wants to take us there. It's a frightening, frightening prospect. And that's why the Lord, Jesus Christ, came into this world.

[19:41] That's what we're considering this morning. It's a rescue mission. Just as you see the helicopter going out, the Coast Guard, a search and rescue mission. So Jesus is involved in a search and rescue mission.

The helicopter, the Coast Guard, they do a wonderful job. But sometimes, sadly, unfortunately, it's not a successful mission.

With the Lord Jesus, every mission is successful. He never, has never, ever failed in a search and rescue mission. Every single one he has gone out seeking for, he finds and he saves.

Isn't that wonderful? And if tonight you're here and you say, I'm not saved, well, you go and ask the great rescuer, Lord, rescue me. Will you come and save me?

I need saving. I'm lost. And that's who Jesus has come for. He didn't come for the goody goodies. He didn't come for the people who feel good in themselves.

[20 : 42] He came for the lost. He came to seek and to save that which was lost. That's what he said. That's what I'm about. And so Jesus is displaying this in the most profound, amazing way as he's dealing with this man legion.

And then we find that the demons are, oh, they're scared, they're terrified and they beg that the Lord, and notice the authority that Jesus has.

As Jesus is casting them out from this man legion, they begged that they might remain in the country and there was this herd of pigs, 2,000 of them, over on the hillside and they begged permission that they might enter into the pigs.

It's a strange request. And we find here that Jesus is in control even here. And so they go into the pigs. And there are many scenes in the Bible because there are some of the most incredible experiences and incidents and scenes in the Bible.

And, you know, that's why it's so important that we, from the time that children are able to understand is to read through the Bible stories. They're absolutely wonderful. Wonderful stories about wonderful characters that lived for God and served God.

[22 : 07] But this was one and always caught my imagination as a young boy is picturing 2,000 pigs who are just, I don't know what pigs do, but just doing around as pigs do and they're burrowing around into the ground looking for looking for something to eat.

2,000 of them and then all of a sudden they go absolutely berserk. And they go hurtling down the hillside plunging one after another into the water and they're drowned.

You can hear the stampede and you can almost imagine the herdsmen who are there. They'd be rubbing their eyes, they'd be saying, what is happening here?

You know, sometimes something happens and you're saying, is this real? Well, I'm sure all of them were saying, is this real? And then there's just this thundering splash and then nothing.

A hillside with 2,000 pigs, it's now empty. It's quite an extraordinary scene. And Legion saw this. I don't know what the impact upon Legion must have been, but he's saying to himself, that was me.

[23 : 22] That's what was going to happen to me. I was as out of control as these pigs. And I would have been taken away. My end was, it wasn't a matter of if, but when.

So the impact on Legion must have been quite extraordinary. But of course the herdsmen go back and they tell the community what's happened and of course the community come out to see and they must have been amazed.

That's where the 2,000 pigs were all. There's nobody, not a pig in sight. And yet, however incredible that sight was, there was an even greater shock because there was Legion sitting.

Here's the madman, the man who was out of control. And he's, the change couldn't have been greater. Instead of chaos, there's peace.

Instead of rampaging around the place, he's sitting. Instead of being naked, he's clothed. Instead of madness, there's sanity.

[24 : 30] Instead of Satan, there's Christ. Christ, this man is sitting just like any other man. That was what blew their minds more than anything else.

They couldn't cope with that. And it's at that very moment when they came and those who had seen had described to them what had happened to the demon possessed man and to the pigs.

And they came to Jesus and saw the demon possessed man, the one who had the Legion sitting there clothed in his right mind. And they were afraid. And they began to beg Jesus to depart from the region.

An awful prayer. Praying for Jesus to leave. That's what they asked. They couldn't cope with this. But you know, it's here you see the amazing grace of the Lord Jesus.

He answered their prayer. But he did something wonderful as well. He did leave. But he left them a missionary as well. That's where you see the marvelous grace of God.

[25 : 41] Because Legion, this man, he wanted to go with Jesus. That's what we find in verse 18. And Jesus, and as he was getting into the, and they began to beg Jesus to depart from the region.

And as he was getting into the boat, the man who had been possessed with demons, begged him that he might be with him, which is understandable. Because here's this man, and I could well imagine him thinking, oh, this Jesus, see what he's done for me.

He's delivered me. He's saved me. I want to be with him forever. That's a natural response. That's why Christians follow Jesus.

Because he has saved you. And there's that love in your heart. You want to follow Jesus. And that's what you look forward to in heaven, isn't it?

That you'll be with Jesus, with your Savior. And it's understandable that this man, he didn't want to part from Jesus. And I'm sure he felt, if I go with Jesus, I'll be saved from these returning demons. [26 : 46] What if they do return when Jesus goes? But of course, Jesus had to teach this man that even although he might not be with him, physically, he was still with him spiritually everywhere he went, Jesus was going to be with him.

So Jesus didn't permit him, but Jesus said to him something amazing. He said, go home to your friends and tell them how much the Lord has done for you and how he has had mercy on you. Jesus sent him to the hardest place possible. He sent him home. that's the hardest place to witness. It's harder to tell people where everybody knows you how it is to be a Christian because people will see all your inconsistencies, warts and all.

That's why it says in the Bible a prophet is not without honor except in his own country. And there's a truth in that. And so he was sending him back home, back to his family, back to his friends, to go home.

I think in Luke's gospel it talks about going to his friends. These were friends that he used to have. Go back home, tell them, tell them how the Lord has had mercy on your soul. And that man's witness was quite extraordinary because it tells us he went away and began to proclaim in the Decapolis how much Jesus had done for him.

[28 : 17] And everyone marveled. It's a huge response to the witness, to the testimony of this man. No wonder. This man who everybody knew about and now he's coming and he's telling them, I'm a change, they could see it.

His face would have looked different. The anger, the fear that distorted his face. It would now be a face of peace and calm. You know, sometimes people through the particular lifestyle they've lived for many, many years.

It's kind of etched in their face. And even people who've come to faith later on in life, even although the life story can be a hard story that's written all over their face, yet even that has softened.

The face can remain, there's a hardness that even grace cannot change, and yet grace does change it. Because there is something that softness has come in, even to the very features.

And that would have been true of this man. It would have been obvious to everybody of the marvelous work that the Lord did. And everybody marveled. You know, tonight you might be as a Christian and you're saying to yourself, you know, I wish I had a greater service.

[29 : 36] I wish I could do something else for the Lord. I feel that I'm not serving the Lord properly. But the thing is, the Lord has something for us all to do.

And there's loads and loads of different things. And we've all got different abilities and different gifts. Just live for the Lord where you are.

Whether it's in school or at work. In your own home, you might be the only Christian at home. It might be very, very hard for you. You might have been somebody, there might have been no Christian in your home, and then you came to faith.

you began to witness. You can understand a wee bit of what the Lord said to lead you. You've got to go home, and you've got to tell people what the Lord has done for you.

And so, this is one of the most important ministries that we can have, but sometimes the most difficult. But may we all be encouraged by this amazing incident in the life of Jesus, of where the most, where you would say the most hell-bound sinner is turned round and is now made into an heir of salvation.

[30 : 53] And what the Lord did for Legion, he most certainly can do for you. Let us pray. Oh, Lord our God, we pray to bless us, and we give thanks for this gospel, for its amazing grace, for the fact that you are able to turn people round.

The power of the gospel is a power that transcends all other power. We pray to be with us and to take us to our home safely, and grant us grace for all that lies ahead of us, all the duties that are in front of us.

And we pray that you will help us, that you will be with us all through the night and all through the days that are ahead of us. Grant us your grace in everything and for everything.

And forgive us all our sin in Jesus' name. Amen. Our concluding singing is Psalm 22 from the Scottish Psalter.

Psalm 22, and we're going to sing from verse 22 to verse 25. Psalm 22 and verse 22, and the tune is Gainsborough.

[32 : 11] I will show forth thy name unto those that my brethren are, amidst the congregation thy praise I will declare. Praise ye the Lord, who do him fear him glorify all ye, the seed of Jacob.

Fear him all that Israel's children be. For he despised not nor abhorred the afflicted's misery, nor from him hid his face, but heard when he to him did cry.

Within the congregation great, my praise shall be of thee, my vows before them that in fear shall be performed by me. Psalm 22, 22 to 25, and the tune is Gainsborough.

I will show forth thy name unto those that my brethren are, amidst the congregation thy praise I will defend.

Praise ye the Lord to him fear and glorify O thee the seed of Jacob fear him all that Israel's children be.

[34 : 05] For we despise sun beyond the earth do h o'er Yaested his misery Voila Him the wind proof ■■ the snow cold Can his Within the congregation great, my praise shall be only.

My mouth before the fountain field shall be performed by me.

Now may the grace, mercy, and peace of God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit rest and abide upon each one of you now and forevermore. Amen. Amen.