

From Madman To Missionary In A Day

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 18 April 2021

Preacher: Rev James Maciver

[0 : 0 0] The worship itself, reading first of all from Luke chapter 8, Gospel of Luke chapter 8, and beginning at verse 26.

Luke chapter 8, verse 26.

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.

[1 : 1 2] 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.

Now a large herd of pigs was feeding nearby on the hillside, and they begged him to let them enter these. 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 them 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. And the man from whom the demons had gone begged him 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.

[2 : 2 8] And he went away, proclaiming throughout the whole city how much Jesus had done for him. Amen. We pray God will follow with his blessing our reading of that portion of his word.

Let's now engage in prayer. Let's join together in prayer. Almighty God, our gracious God and Father in heaven, we do come before you today as one who is so worthy to be praised and magnified, because you are God and because you are perfect, and because you have created us in order that we might worship you.

So, Lord, help us to draw near to you today, as we come depending upon your Holy Spirit, and as we come upon the ground of the merits of Christ Jesus, our Lord, we come before you, Lord, with a desire to worship you, and to lift up your name in praise, and to come to benefit from your word as we find it, and our possession as we use it and read it, and learn from its teaching.

We thank you today, O Lord, that you are God, that it is to you that we owe our allegiance entirely, and that you are the one who has shown us your worthiness to be feared and praised and to be served.

We thank you, Lord, that you have planted that desire within us to worship you, to draw near to you at this time. We know, Lord, that it is natural for us as human beings to have our hearts directed to the adoration of things beyond ourselves, and yet we need that that is directed in the right way by your Spirit, and through your own work of bringing us to know you, and through being born again of your Spirit, we come to find, Lord, the inclination of our hearts directed to you exclusively.

[4 : 22] As we come together today, we recognize this. We pray, O Lord God, that as we acknowledge you as our God and as our King, that you would draw near to us and show us that you are our God, and assure us of your presence, of your interest in us, Lord our God.

We pray that you would grant us blessing as we approach you to confess our sins. Lord, we know that each day we live, we need to confess our sin to you, and yet we find ourselves, O Lord, at times so neglectful even of these basic things.

We pray that as we come today to another Lord's Day, another day that reminds us of your own triumph over death, we pray that you would help us to recover our focus once again, as we come to direct our minds to your worship.

We pray that you would grant us, Lord, the assurance that all who have come to trust in you are truly blessed, that you have indeed covered their sins from your sight, and give us, Lord, we pray today, our intense desire to be amongst them, to know that we belong to these blessed people whose God is the Lord.

And, Lord, we pray today as we come in your word to be confronted with your authority and with your power, even over the world of wicked spirits. Enable us, Lord, we pray, to know our own heart directed by you.

[5 : 50] We pray today that you would bless us as a congregation, as we come once again to think about our conditions in the world and about our situation in it. Lord, we ask today that, as we find ourselves in a measure of recovery and progress from this COVID pandemic, we pray, O Lord, that we may have our trust in you, even made stronger and made something that we will increasingly value.

We ask, Lord, that we may recognize our need of you, even though there is much to give thanks for in the way of human ability, in producing vaccines, in medical care and expertise.

Yet, Lord, it is in you that we live and move and have our being. We do pray as a society of human beings, as a nation, that you would deliver us from any sense of self-achievement as we come, Lord, to be delivered from this virus.

You reminded your people of Israel long ago as they stepped onto the borders of the promised land, that when they came into that land and had come to inhabit crops and houses and lands that they had not themselves produced, that they should be careful, they should not say, by the strength of their own hand, that they had done this.

And, Lord, we pray that that may be true of us too as we find ourselves in this situation today. Help us, we pray, to realize that all that we have that is good is from you, that all the ability that we require comes from you as well.

[7 : 34] And we pray that you'd bless those in government over us at this time. Continue to bless them and to guide them, Lord, through these difficult times. And in Scotland, as we approach another time of national election, O Lord, give us to be thankful for the freedom we have to elect a government over us.

And give us wisdom to discern as we cast our votes as to what that vote should be and who it should be for. And we ask, O Lord, that you would direct us by the principles of your word as we do this.

We know that, Lord, we live in difficult times. So many, if not all, of our major political parties are themselves given to commend practices and ways of life that are not in accordance with your word.

And Lord, we pray in such times that you would, by your Spirit, direct us as a people. We ask your blessing today for those who are ill. Remember them, we pray. And those who are recovering from illness, whether it be COVID or other illnesses, bless them, we pray.

Give us those that we know ourselves, that they may know of your own strengthening at this time. We pray for those we know in particular at this time, have had difficulties of health in recent times.

[8 : 52] And we pray that you bless our elder, Dolly Angus, as he recovers from surgery. We pray that you would bless him and Anne and the family and ask, Lord, that you would be pleased to draw near to him and strengthen him and grant him recovery, Lord, in these days ahead.

Bring him onwards, we pray, and to progress in his health. We ask for all others who have been laid aside for some time, Lord, of our office bearers and of the membership of the congregation for homes and families that we know have had such difficulties in recent times.

Bless them, we pray, as well as all those who have in recent times experienced death and bereavement in their midst. Lord, comfort them, we pray, and grant them your own strengthening.

We pray for those in these past days, Lord, who have been involved in road traffic accidents. We pray for Chriselle and Stephen, asking that you would bless them at this time and comfort them.

We give thanks that their injuries are not serious, and we pray that you would bless them with calmness of spirit and with a knowledge of your own strengthening and help for them at this time.

[10 : 01] And so we ask that you would continue with us now here and grant that as we turn to your word that you would bless us and our children and our families and all that we have that we love in this world.

Grant us, Lord, we pray, the blessing of your spirit and all for Jesus' sake. Amen. Now, we're to the children now, as usual, at this point in the service.

We've been looking for the last while at Jesus and some of the things concerned with Jesus. And last time we looked at, began to ask, what did Peter think of Jesus?

And we're going to follow that for a few weeks, God willing, looking at what some of the apostles, especially in disciples, thought about Jesus as they actually tell us in passages in the Bible.

And today I want you to look at Acts chapter 4 and verse 12. Acts chapter 4 and verse 12. Because there Jesus, Peter speaks about Jesus in a very special way.

[11 : 07] Verse 11, we can read from verse 11, where Peter is saying to those that he's preaching to, This Jesus is the stone that was rejected by you, the builders, which has become the cornerstone.

And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved, especially the words of verse 12.

Now I'm sure you've all done the kind of puzzle where you have a page like a maze and there's all these lines and little boxes and lines across the way.

So you have to work your way from different starting points and you need to get to where you come out from that maze because there's only one way out and there's only one way that leads from where you start to the exit point where you come out of the maze.

And you can start by going in a way that you think is going to get you to the exit point, to the place where you leave and all of a sudden you come across a line across your path and you realize, well, that's not the way out so you go back to another starting point and you try and make your way through from there.

[12 : 19] You all know that sort of puzzle, I'm sure. Well, Peter is here actually saying there is only one way that leads us to God and to salvation and that way is the person of Jesus himself.

Jesus, especially in his death and resurrection is what he's been preaching about and he's now saying to those that he's listening to, this is salvation. There is salvation in no one else but in this Jesus there is no other name under heaven given amongst men by which we must be saved.

Peter lived in a world where many people followed all kinds of idols, false gods, different kinds of religions and the world was then full of idolatry as the Bible calls it, people worshipping idols that weren't gods at all but that they thought of as their gods.

that's the kind of world that Peter was preaching in as he spoke these words to these people. There is no way to God, there is no true God but the God that Jesus revealed in his life, the God the Bible speaks about and that's why he's saying here there is only one way to God.

Now, as children and as adults we live in a world today where many people will say to us, you'll come across the view that says it doesn't really matter who or what your God is, it all comes to pretty much the same thing and whether your God is of a religion that's other than Christianity doesn't really matter because at the end of the day all roads, as long as you're sincere, as long as your religion is something that you follow sincerely with your own heart then everything will be okay.

[14 : 11] Well, the Bible is saying to us that is simply not true. That is a lie and Peter is here saying this is the only way of salvation in Jesus Christ the Son of God.

Through him there is no other name given under heaven by which we must be saved. And that's why for you today and for me it's so important that we're following Jesus, that we're convinced of Jesus as God's way to eternal life.

That's why he came into the world. That's why God the Father sent his son Jesus into the world. That's why Jesus died. That's why he gave himself to the death of the cross. That's why he rose again from the dead because that's salvation for us to provide salvation for us.

And really that's why this is exactly the same as Jesus himself taught because you remember in John chapter 14 that he said about himself I am the way the truth and the life no one comes to the Father except by me.

So anyone who suggests to you there are ways to God other than Jesus there are ways to be saved to have your sins forgiven other than Jesus you can say to them well that's not what my Bible is teaching because I believe that this as Peter said as Peter's view of Jesus as Peter thought this about Jesus this remains to be true for all time he is the way the truth and the life and I hope the more you go through your Sunday school classes the more you go through life the more you'll come to experience Jesus as the way the truth and the life a lady called Corrie Ten Boom lived during the time of the second world war and she had to go to a concentration camp under the cruelty of the Nazis and one of the things she said she wrote a lot of very very precious things you'll find a lot of her books still available they're easy to read and one of the things she said was

[16 : 29] I only realized that Christ was all I needed when Christ was all I had I only realized that Christ was all I needed in that concentration camp she had nothing else cruelty starvation and then she said I only it's then I realized because all I had was Christ to depend on that that's really all I needed and that's what Peter is really saying too that Jesus is the way the truth and the life now let's say the Lord's prayer together our father which art in heaven hallowed be thy name thy kingdom come thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven give us this day our daily bread and forgive our debts as we forgive our debtors and lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil for thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever amen now if we turn now to

Luke chapter 8 the passage we read together a short time ago from verse 26 I want to look at this passage as we follow through with another study of the miracles of Jesus we've already looked at 11 of those previously this is the 12th one and again it's quite different in its own way to those we've seen already although there are others like this as well because it has to do with the casting out of demons and most people regard these as miracles that Jesus performed especially when it's obvious that no one else could do this but himself in the way that he did it at least and it was a very important feature of Christ's ministry that he was seen to defeat the devil and to defeat the works of darkness and Jesus demonstrated that a number of times if you turn to chapter 11 for example and verse 14 you find that passage there that Jesus having cast out a demon when he had done that some of those around said he casts out demons this is at verse 15 of chapter 11 he casts out demons by Beelzebul the prince of demons and that's another name for the devil while others to test him kept seeking from him a sign from heaven but he knowing that thought said every kingdom divided against itself is laid waste and a divided household fault if Satan also is divided against himself how will his kingdom stand for you say that I cast out demons by Beelzebul and if I cast out demons by Beelzebul by whom do your sons cast them out therefore they will be your judges but and this is the verse but if it is by the finger of

God that I cast out demons then the kingdom of God has come upon you when a strong man fully armed guards his own palace his goods are safe but when one stronger than he attacks him and overcomes him he takes away his armor in which he trusted and divides his spoil that's a picture there that Jesus is using of himself as it were coming into the devil's house the devil's control of human beings the devil's power to keep people in blindness spiritually and morally and Jesus is saying this is why I've come into the world so that I can actually plunder the devil and his household and what he's doing by casting out demons as we'll see in the passage today is demonstrating that that is really what he's about it's a very important feature of Jesus and his ministry as to what he's come to do and it's by his death and resurrection especially that he comes to actually crush the devil and overcome him and gain victory over him as some other passages in the Bible tell us so we shouldn't be surprised when we come to a passage like this and see the vehemence with which demons in this case the demons as they had been living in this man who was called legion because of that it shouldn't be a surprise to us that there's such a vehement opposition on that part to

Jesus that you find such an intensification it seems of demonic activity in the days when Jesus ministered on earth it stands to reason that the demons as we see from this passage knew Jesus and knew something of what he was about and therefore there's an intensified effort on their part to resist him and to stand in the way of that ministry of Christ as he's bringing salvation into being for sinful people like you and I and you bear that in mind as you come to follow this passage now as we'll look at it very briefly first of all let's look at how Jesus sends out demons from this man called legion now the description of the man is very detailed and that itself is very deliberate on the part of Luke and also the other gospel writers who refer to this it's a very extreme case and it's described in such detail deliberately look at verse 27 there for example where he says that this man had stepped out against

Jesus for a long time he had worn no clothes he went about without clothes he had not lived in the house but among the tombs that area was an area when there were little caves as used to be the case then they were used as tombs or sepulchers this man was living in that area and then verse 29 he had commanded the unclean spirit to come out of this man and 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 and then verse 30 where Jesus asked him his name he said legion for many demons had entered into him and they begged him not to command them to depart into the abyss now that shows you all of these details shows you the extremity of this man's case and this man's condition he had these demons living in him they had come to inhabit him and that had driven him to this madness to this kind of uncontrollable madness by which he went about living his life and bear in mind that this would have been terrifying to this community because this was an area where they'd have to go and bury the remains of loved ones who had passed away and here was this man as soon as anybody went in like

[23 : 39] Jesus and his disciples here into this area he would step out and challenge them just imagine the fear that that would cause in people in that community meeting this man absolutely terrified of this man not only that but he was absolutely uncontrollable as far as human control was concerned because he had been bound with chains and shackles and he had such extreme strength that he would just break these chains or ropes whatever he was bound with and just escaped they found it impossible to control him that's why verse 35 there shows something absolutely remarkable because they came and found when Jesus had dealt with him and cast out the demons they came and found this man sitting at the feet of Jesus clothed and in his right mind what a wonderful contrast to the previous verses describing him in his demon controlled circumstances and again it presents us with the authority and the ability of Jesus the authority to deal with the kingdom of darkness with the powers of darkness with Satan and Satan's devils and with people who have had this kind of problem as they were certainly in his day here's the authority and the ability of Jesus and of course one of

Luke's main concerns is to ask and answer this question who is this man we'll see it in a moment when they come to confess Jesus as to who he is all the way through Luke's gospel I think we've mentioned this a number of times but the question arises at various stages throughout Luke's gospel that's one of the advantages of just reading the gospel of Luke or any other book of the Bible from beginning to end and you'll find that these questions this question arises who is this man it's in the previous part of the chapter here indeed at verse 25 who then is this that he commands even winds and water and they obey him well here is the next passage even the devils obey him even the demons and a man like legion who is uncontrollable in human terms but he's made more than his match in Jesus whatever our human condition is however deeply steeped in sin however unable to release ourselves from the shackles of sin he is the power and the authority that can do that for us and there's an instant recognition by these demons of

Jesus it's very difficult really to sometimes work out who's speaking isn't it in the passage because sometimes it's the man himself the human being that's called legion that's speaking and other times it's actually the devils that answer Jesus the demons that answer Jesus so there's this awful contorted condition of this man where he has because he's got these demons living within him sometimes he speaks himself sometimes it's the demons it just tells you the terrible condition that he was in and here is he meets with Jesus and this is what the confession is when he saw Jesus he cried 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 do do not torment me for he had commanded the unclean spirit to come out of the man see there's the recognition instantly by demons as to who

Jesus is that's one of the sad emphases that you find in the gospels and Luke and other gospels as well and indeed throughout the acts of the apostles as the church makes progress as the gospel makes progress into human society into pagan society that the demons recognize who Jesus is and human beings are not prepared to accept him for who he is they're not prepared to accept this is indeed the son of God the savior of sinners they're not prepared to accept his ministry for what it is that he has come to release people from the shackles of sin from the guilt of sin and yet these demons they know who he is what have you to do with me Jesus son of the most high God and you can see the two requests that he makes or that they make in verse 28 there and also verse 31 where he says I beg you do not torment me and he begs them and they beg him not to command them to depart into the abyss which is really another name for the pit revelation chapter 20 verse 1 the pit the abyss is the eternal prison if you like for demons in which they're held under

God's judgment and here are these demons saying please don't send us into the abyss you see there's the telling thing there's the solemn thing that demons know what's coming to them they know the future they know God's judgment they know what's actually in store for them and yet human beings are not prepared as they hear the gospel to believe there's such a thing as hell to believe there's such a thing as a lost eternity to believe that there's something beyond this present world the very thing the Bible speaks about the heaven for God's people for those who trust in Christ and the hell for those who are not prepared to do that the demons believe that as James puts it in the truth though they don't comply with the truth and what a great privilege you have today and I have today that Jesus has given us the truth and a heart to comply with the truth and a faith to believe in himself as the one who has authority over all things so they actually ask him instead of going into the abyss they want to enter those pigs the herd of pigs that was feeding nearby on the hillside so he gave them permission and they came out of the man and entered the pigs and the herd rushed down the steep bank into the lake and were drowned there are no doubt there are problems in our understanding of how

[30 : 28] Jesus would accommodate such a thing but do remember this that when he gave them permission when the demons asked their sense of Christ's authority over them that he could command what he willed and they say to him please don't send us into the abyss send us into that herd let us go into that herd of pigs so he gave them permission that doesn't mean that Jesus made them do this that doesn't mean that Jesus is to blame for the destruction of that herd of pigs the demons are if somebody gives me permission to drive their car and I take it and I have an accident with it the people whose car it is the person whose car it is has not made me drive it is not responsible for what's happened they've simply given me permission and

Jesus gave them permission permission and having given them permission this is what they said about doing so it's not a matter of Christ being to blame it's simply that he gave permission to them to do this and that's what they did he answered their request and that's what happened and that's the way that Jesus sends out demons from the man called Legion secondly let's look at the way Jesus sends out the man who was Legion as his missionary because this is really a wonderful emphasis in the story in the account that you have here of this incident this man began as Legion the demon possessed man whose name was Legion Jesus asked him his name this is what he actually said my name is Legion and that really is a word that was used for a whole group of Roman soldiers whether it means that as many as that were in him we don't know a thousand soldiers a legion but anyway there were many demons had entered into him as it says and so that's why he said

Legion is my name that's how he began the day he began the day as this man Legion inhabited by all these devils and actually controlled by them he ended the day as Christ's missionary to his own town to his own territory see what a wonderful emphasis that is it doesn't matter how you begin the day that's not what counts it's how you ended that really counts it doesn't matter what sort of condition we've come to church in today as long as Christ has come into our life and changed our life that's really what matters and that's really what's important from the passage is that this man has been changed by Jesus from the state that he was in to one that was so subservient to Jesus and serving Jesus as someone to bring the message of what had happened to the world around him notice his complete restoration because when

Jesus cast these demons out of him the herdsmen saw then what happened to the pigs so they came 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 now as I said at the beginning that's a deliberate contrast a wonderful contrast with the description of the man earlier on in the passage look at these three features of his restored condition as Jesus changed him as Jesus cured him as Jesus healed him he's first of all clothed such a contrast to earlier because he'd been going about without any clothes a sign of his madness he insisted on going about naked among the tombs that's how people knew him as that's and each of these details the clothing being at Jesus feet and being in his right mind has a spiritual as well as a literal meaning undoubtedly because when you find him he had clothed that

Jesus had provided him with clothes wherever the clothes came from it doesn't matter but it's just a contrast to what he was earlier and clothing is always used in the Bible to describe the way that God provides us with righteousness clothing us with that which we don't have of ourselves and of course the most brilliant parable that illustrates that for us is the parable of the prodigal son as we normally refer to it in Luke's gospel and chapter 15 you remember there yourselves how he came back home after a long time having wasted his life and in dire need and he came and he wanted to confess to his father he wasn't worthy of being called a son anymore but he wanted just to be one of the hired servants and his father said bring quickly the best robe and put it on him and put a ring on his hand and shoes on his feet because here is the restoration of dignity the restoration of dignity beyond and above what he had been with this man legion as well he is no longer going about in his shame in a shameful way in the tombs in his nakedness he has now come to be clothed he has dignity he has dignity restored to him that's what

[36 : 26] Jesus is about and sadly until we come to have our eyes open we don't realize that we lack that dignity you know some people will tell you I way of ability that way and in other ways but spiritually we are actually naked before God in our sin and in our lostness we have a shamefulness before God that we are not ashamed of until we come to see our sin for what it is and then when God shows us our sin and we realize our spiritual nakedness and our guilt before God then we come to be ashamed of to realize I am nothing like what I should be in the presence of God I want to be clothed I want to have my nakedness covered I no longer want to be guilty and filthy before God and naked before the one who sees into my heart and so one of your elements in prayer when you come to pray earnestly and sincerely to

God for your sin to be forgiven it and if only the gospel were more widely received in our society today there would be far more of a cry of I am ashamed of myself when all too often sadly it's the very opposite it's pride in sinfulness pride in being arrogant against God pride in pushing God aside pride in doing without the Bible and insisting on our own way and when God comes and shows us what we are that pride goes we fall down like this man before Jesus and we want to be clothed and as we express our shame so we express our need of

Jesus to clothe us to cover us to remove our exposure of the defilement of our sin in his forgiveness and the second thing he's sitting at the feet of Jesus what a contrast to previously you couldn't actually control him even by tying him up with chains or putting him under guard he would break that and escape and he doesn't want to escape he's completely different in his mindset he's sitting at the feet of Jesus what does that tell you it tells you if you go to chapter 10 that that's the position of a disciple someone who wants to learn from Jesus someone who wants to follow Jesus as Mary in chapter 10 is described as sitting at the feet of Jesus when Martha was busy in the kitchen sitting sitting at the feet of Jesus means I'm now in the position of a learner I've become his pupil I want to be controlled by him I want to be directed by him I want him to teach me I want him to feed my mind and direct my heart and my life that's what this man has become that's the powerful emphasis of this account of this miracle of Jesus taking someone who was in that desperate state and here he is in the opposite state clothed and sitting at the feet of

Jesus isn't that what we're doing today isn't that why we're here today isn't that why you're watching online today and participating in the service of worship from wherever you are in the world for which we're thankful but that's what we're about we want to sit at the feet of Jesus we're here to learn from Jesus not just about him but from him through his truth and we've come to realize whatever teaching is out there in the world and however great it may be and however beneficial it may be and of whatever long standing it may be throughout the course of history and however many millions of people may follow it this is the teaching that I need this is the Jesus that I need this is where I as a disciple of Jesus and the more you sit at his feet the more you learn of him the more you realize your need of him the more you realize how useless are those other philosophies that reject

Christ that put Christ aside how empty is our own human wisdom compared to what we get sitting at the feet of Jesus he's clothed he's sitting at the feet of Jesus thirdly he's in his right mind and maybe above all that's really what strikes you as such a contrast to the man legion that he was he is in his right mind he wasn't in his right mind it's obvious from the way he lived but Jesus has restored him so that he's no longer a mad man he's no longer controlled by these demons and beset with madness from day to day he's now in his right mind that's actually what Jesus does spiritually that's what we have restored

[41 : 59] Romans chapter 8 you remember in Romans chapter 8 that Paul often deals with the mind and human life how important the mind is the mind and the condition of the mind that's a spiritual thing of course as it controls your outlook and your way of life in Romans chapter 8 this is what you find Paul writing to the Romans in verse 5 where you find him saying for those who live according to the flesh that's the sinful way of life set their mind on the things of the flesh but those who live according to the flesh is death to set the mind on the spirit is life and peace for the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God for it does not submit to God's law indeed it cannot those who are in the flesh cannot please God and in some ways I prefer the older translation to that passage which speaks about the carnal mind the fleshly mind and the spiritual mind the spirit of

God is life and peace that is what Jesus gives that is what Jesus brings to us when we come to have him at the center of our life when all other controlling factors in our life are rejected by him and he takes their place and sits on the throne of our hearts that's what happens your life is then directed as it should be in the right way and here is a man who is now in his right mind he has come to be transformed by Jesus now the time has gone on and we have to push through there's so much in this that that we need to go through just briefly but there's an unfortunate reaction to what's happened on the part of the people all the people of the surrounding country of the Gerasenes asked Jesus to depart from them for they were seized with great fear there was a great fear as to what had happened now that's understandable and that's really natural in a sense because when human beings come up against something that you call supernatural whether it's in the world of evil or in the divine sense of the supernatural there's obviously going to be a sense of fear when you really come in a realistic way against that and confront that whether it's

God or whether it's something of the evil world there's inevitably a sense of fear there's something there that's bigger than myself something there that I know I can't control and so they were filled with fear because they had come to be confronted by this supernatural by this power bigger than themselves but unfortunately what they made of that was instead of coming to be like legion sitting at the feet of Jesus they came to Jesus and begged him they asked him to depart from them so he got into the boat and returned now just imagine what that's saying the Jesus the person who had done such a remarkable thing as this to this man called legion would you not think that these people would say please don't leave us please deal with us please stay with us it's the opposite they're concerned that he leave them that he go away that they no longer have this supernatural power this power that's bigger than themselves amongst them and you know sometimes people think like that about

God unfortunately people think well I don't really want to go near that I don't want to go near the whole idea of coming to be converted I don't want to really come into that sort of contact with the divine with the supernatural something that makes me afraid I'm really hesitant about I'd rather live without it I'd rather just push it away and I hope you're not like that today anyone here or anyone watching because that's really death that's the way of death and what you find from the passages this emphasis don't push Jesus away from you don't say it's better for you if he keeps himself at a distance don't think that your life is going to be improved if you actually don't have Jesus close to you it's the opposite that's true look at this man look at where he is look at what he's doing he's clothed he's sitting at the feet of

Jesus in his right mind and here are these other people who have seen and experienced this and they're saying please go away from us leave us don't stay here that's the kind of the world we live in isn't it when you try and raise your voice for Jesus sake and to do what this man actually came to do as we'll see to speak about God and what great things God has done and you very often say well that's okay for you but I don't want any of that that just makes me afraid I'd rather do without that take your Jesus away from here take your God away from here take God out of public life take Jesus out of public life take the law of God out of public life doesn't belong there people tell us just leave us to follow what's best in terms of human ability and human wisdom and human ingenuity well here's the Bible telling us that that's a way of disaster that's the way of death that's the way of a downward spiral into further ungodliness and here is the point that's made there please don't send

[48 : 04] Jesus away don't ask him to go to a distance from your life and don't be content even now if you know that there's in a measure something of a relationship between yourself and the Lord don't think that it's best for you just leaving it at that without going any further go to him ask him please bring me nearer to you please bring me to sit at your feet please teach me please lead me please give me a please help me to meet with your people to enjoy worship everything that's associated with being close to Christ that's where we need to be and this is why the final point is this man that was legion and is no longer legion because the devils have gone and he begged him he begged Jesus that he might remain with him and again what a contrast to the people who wanted

Jesus out of the way and Jesus to leave their district this man is saying to Jesus please keep me with you I want to stay with you I want to follow you I want to be where you are and really that's itself something that you recognize when God has changed your life when Christ has come into your life that's exactly what you want you want to be with him you want to actually be where he is you are so taken up with him but then Jesus refused here to have him stay with him physically that is of course to follow him as one of the disciples or people that followed in the crowd of those who followed Jesus that's what this man wanted to do but Jesus sent him away saying return to your home and declare how much God has done for you if Jesus had wanted simply to make a kind of trophy of this man and thereby present himself as a very successful person or a very successful rabbi he would have allowed this man to follow him but that's not what

Jesus is about he's not there for his own reputation he's there for this man and other people's well being and good so what does he do he makes a missionary of him he sends him to his own home to declare how much God had done for him so he went away here is the man who was a legion proclaiming throughout the whole city how much Jesus had done for him you see the contrast to when he started the day he started the day as a madman he ends the day as a missionary that's the remarkable authority and power of Jesus this wonderful person in whom we have the salvation he ends the day no longer as legion but as Christ's missionary and isn't that really just what God is saying of ourselves to or to ourselves all of you today who know

Jesus as your savior this is effectively what he's saying to you doesn't matter if you're young or up in years or middle aged or old doesn't matter this is really what Jesus is saying to us today to me and to you return to your home return to where you live in wherever you are each day as it goes by tell what great thing God has done for you if he's God has done for you and you know whatever we say about this pandemic one thing I'm absolutely sure of is that it has given us as Christians a greater opportunity probably than any other time in our lifetime to present Jesus to the world to say to the world out there let me tell you what this man has done for me and what he can do for you let me tell you how he changed my life

I just picture in mind as you think of what we're told here just this man actually going back home back to his home territory and his own home as well as family I presume there was a family there just imagine what they might have been thinking as they look down the road and there is Legion coming and first of all at a distance they would probably say oh no look who is coming it's the madman what are we going to do let's just lock the door and as it comes nearer they think is it him it looks like him but he doesn't behave like him and and then the nearer he comes and when he comes to be able to speak with them he starts talking about what Jesus has done for him and they realize well it is the same person but he's a changed man altogether so

[53 : 27] I need to really think about what he's saying if this Jesus has done this to this man I need to really listen because there's something remarkable about it that I'd never thought of you know that's the world that's waiting out there and bit by bit as this these restrictions lift this is what we have to have in mind friends to tell what Jesus has done for us and how this is the answer whether it's a pandemic or whatever situation we're in as human beings he is the way the truth and the life he is the answer to our entire human problem let's not keep people in the dark about it let's tell that world plainly honestly humbly this is what he has done for me and what he has done for me he can do for you also let's pray lord our god we give thanks that you are the one who changes lives even beyond what we are able to ask or think and as we come oh lord to pray about ourselves and about the world in which we live help us to fix our eyes upon you and upon the wonder of your own sovereign ability and grace the wonder of your authority the wonder of your own mighty power we bring ourselves to you today lord and ask not only for ourselves that we might increasingly know that change in our lives that you alone bring about we pray that you would make us a means of bringing change to others in the world in which we live grant lord as we have seen a year when the world is so familiar with this pandemic and its destructive power help us to present the

Jesus whose power can change human lives into that which they ought to be receive our thanks for Jesus sake amen now we're going to conclude by singing in psalm 31 we won't be singing again we don't still have permission to sing in terms of congregational singing but I'll just sing psalm 31 these verses 3 to 8 in the psalms version you are my fortress and my rock for your name sake be my sure guide we'll sing to tune head on gate verses 3 to 8 you are my fortress and my rock for your name sake be my sure guide preserve me from the trap that set you are the refuge where

I hide redeem me Lord O God of truth my spirit I commit to you I hate all those who trust false gods I trust the Lord for he is true I will rejoice and take delight in all the love that you have shown for my affliction you have seen to you my soul's distress is known you have not left me to my fall or given me into his hand but you have set my feet within a spacious place where

I may stand after the benediction please if you remain seated until those on duty show you through from the door here to my left if you remember please to remain in your groupings of bubbles and keep the distance of two metres between you and when we go outside please just make your way to your cars or out to the street and if you use the sanitizer please at the top of the shelves as you leave to sanitize your hands as you are leaving let's stand for the benediction now now may the grace of the lord jesus christ the love of god the father and the communion of the holy spirit be with you now and always amen