



Luke 8:22-25, 26-39

**“More To Mission
Than Meets the Eye”**

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21st Sunday After Pentecost

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“Following Christ from City Center”

	C' 8:22-25 FIRST ENCOUNTER: ON THE WAY TO GENTILE TURF.	//Acts 27:8-44 On Paul. Many Saved After Shipwreck. Second Nature Miracle, 5:1-11 Not Just The Twelve, Time Signature, 8:1-3 Gentile Territory: Decapolis (10 cities) 682 ft. Below Sea Level
22	1) v.22 Jesus Issue A Command: They Obey. One day he got into a boat with his disciples, <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">and he said to them, "Let us go across to the other side <i>of the lake.</i>"</div> <i>So they set out,</i>	
23	2) v.23 Jesus Sleeps: Storm Arises (3 Descriptions). <i>and as they sailed he fell asleep.</i> a And a storm of wind <i>came down on the lake,</i> b and they were filling <i>with water,</i> c <i>and were in danger.</i>	Ps. 3:5, 4:8, 127:2, 121:4, Humanity: Tired, Exhausted, Fatigued Sudden Storms Common On Sea Of Galilee Sea = Standard Symbol Of Chaos
24	3) v.24a Disciples' Exclamation/ Prayer. <i>And they went</i> and woke him, saying, <i>"Master, Master, we are perishing!"</i>	Jesús Protects Disciples, Has Authority Over Creation Turn To Jesús In Events Beyond Our Control FEAR NO. 1: Personal Safety Jesús Puts Them In A Threatening Situation Accuse Him Of Being <i>Asleep At The Wheel</i>
	2') v.24b Jesus Wakes Up: Storm Rebuked (3 Descriptions). <i>And he awoke</i> a and rebuked (<i>epitimaō</i>) the wind <i>and the raging waves;</i> b and they ceased, c and there was a calm.	Prayer Of Command Eph. 6:12, Immediate Discernment Of Source 8:2, 12, Technical Term In Exorcisms 4:35, 39, 41, What God Does In Ps. 89:9, 107:23-30, Wis. 14:3-5 Someone Did Not Want Them In Gentile Territory! Eph. 1:15-23, Form = Epiphanic Rescue Miracle, Mission Preserved
25	1') v.25 Jesus Asks A Question: They Marvel. <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">He said to them, "<i>Where</i> (is) your faith?"</div> <i>And they were afraid,</i> <i>and they marveled,</i> saying to one another, <i>"Who then is this, that he commands even wind and water, and they obey him?"</i>	Jesús Is Trustworthy 12:28, Why Not Effective? It All Drained Out! Called To A New Level! Felt Alone, But He Was There, 8:21, "Hear and do the word of God." Jesús Overcomes Chaos With Divine Power → Numinous Awe FEAR NO. 2: Divine Awe Question, 5:21, 7:20, 49, 9:9 Disciples Experience His Power Before Mission, 4:36

A FEW THOUGHTS ON THE BIBLICAL CONCEPT OF *POWER ENCOUNTERS*

"Proclamation of a faulty gospel will produce faulty or, at best, weak Christians. Such is the case all too often today. Instead of a call to the lordship of Christ and membership in his kingdom, people are hearing a gospel that emphasizes self: come to Jesus and get this or that personal need met, be personally fulfilled, reach your potential. This, however, is not the costly kingdom gospel that Christ proclaims, 'Whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me and for the gospel will save it' (Mk. 8:35).

Often the kingdom is likened to a Caribbean cruise on a luxury liner. People change into their leisure clothes, grab their suntan lotion, and saunter down to the docks. What a shock it is when they find that entering the kingdom is really more like enlisting in the navy and doing battle with the enemy. The enemy follows no rules of war. Satan considers nothing unfair; he is not a gentleman. The sooner Christians understand this, the more serious they will become about being equipped and properly trained for the kingdom... there are no demilitarized zones. There is never a lull in the fighting. We are born into the fight, and -unless the Day of the Lord comes- we will die in the fight. We should never expect the battle to cease.... Jesus is about the Father's business, which is releasing those held captive by Satan.

Any system or force that must be overcome for the gospel to be believed is cause for a power encounter, which Dr. Peter Wagner defines as 'a visible, practical demonstration that Jesus Christ is more powerful than the false gods or spirits worshiped or feared by a group of people.' When warm and cold fronts collide, violence ensues: thunder and lightning, rain or snow, even tornadoes or hurricanes. There is a conflict and a resulting release of energy. It is disorderly, messy and difficult to control. Power encounters are like that. When the kingdom of God comes into direct contact with the kingdom of the world (when Jesus meets Satan), there is conflict. And usually it too is disorderly, messy, and difficult for us to control.... Often witnessing the presence of the Spirit in a Christian will open non-Christians to the gospel of the kingdom of God" (John Wimber, *Power Evangelism* [New York, NY: Harper and Row, 1986], 8-23).

VA'1, 8:26-33, 34-39 "THE GERASENE DEMONIAIC"

1) vv.26-33 SCENE ONE: EXORCISM OF THE GENTILE DEMONIAIC. Master Over Nature/Demons

Jesus Goes To The Tormented! One Paragraph (RSV)

a) v.26-27 Problem: Man With Demons.

//Acts 16:16ff. for Paul

Then they arrived at the country of the Gerasenes, *which is opposite Galilee.*

Mission: Gentile Territory: Unclean

And as he stepped out *on land*, there met him a man *from the* **CITY** who had **DEMONS**;

Spiritually Infested (1)

for a long time he had worn no clothes

Is. 65:1-5, Loss of Modesty (2)

and he lived not in a **HOUSE** (*oikia* = household) *but among the tombs.*

Isolation/ Death (Unclean) (3)

Geresa, Gadara, Gergesa?

b) vv.28-29 Demons Resist Jesus: Their Power Is Emphasized.

When he saw Jesus, he cried out and *fell down* before him, and said with a loud voice,

Other Voice (4)

"What have you to do with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God?"

1:32-35, 76, 4:3, 9, 34, Insight (5)

I beseech you, do not torment me."

Don't Like Jesus (6)

(For he had commanded the unclean spirit to come out of the man.

Discern/ Command Prayer

For many a time it had seized him;

Flashback No. 1, Periodic Manifestation (7)

he was kept under guard, and bound with chains and fetters,

Inhuman

but he broke the bonds and was driven by the demon into the desert.)

Strength/ Isolation(8)

Utterly Dehumanized

c) v.30 Jesus Extracts The Demon's Name.

One Versus Thousands!

Jesus then asked him, "What is your name?"

T. Sol. 18:23, Confrontation Continued

And he said, "Legion"; for many *demons had entered him.*

Point Of Entry/ Multiples (9)

Major Battle, Legio (Lt.) = 4-6,000 Soldiers

b') vv.31-32 Demons Beg Jesus: Their Defeat Is Emphasized.

Jude 6, Rev. 11:7, 17:8. 20:3

And they begged him not to *command them to depart into the abyss.*

Lev. 11:7, Acknowledge Authority (10)

Now a large herd of swine was feeding there on the hillside;

Unclean Animals For Jews

and they begged him to let them enter these. So he gave them leave.

Desire Embodiment (11)

For abyss, see Rev. 9:1, 11:7, 17:8, 20:3

a') v.33 Solution: Man Without The Demons.

Jesus Has Power Over Demons In Gentile Territory!

Then the **DEMONS** came out of the man and entered the swine,

Massive Destructive Force! Evacuation (12)

and the herd rushed down the steep bank into the *lake* and were drowned.

Unclean Business: Jewish Joke!

Anticipation Of Ultimate Fate

2) vv.34-39 PART TWO: POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE EFFECTS ON THE COMMUNITY.

a) v.34 Herdsmen Tell It In City And Country.

Word Of Mouth

When the herdsmen saw what had happened, they fled, and told it in the **CITY** *and in the country.*

b) v.35 The Demoniac With Jesus In The Posture Of A Disciple.

Then people went out to see what had happened, and they came to Jesus,

Humanity Regained, Full Restoration

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.

Awe At God's Power

Power Leads To Faith, Posture Of A Disciple, 7:38. 10:39

c) v.36 Positive Reaction To Jesus' Mighty Deed.

And those who had seen it told them *how he who had been possessed with demons was healed.*

c') vv.37 Negative Reaction To Jesus' Mighty Deed.

Acts 16:16ff, 19:23ff on \$\$

Then all the people of the surrounding country of the Gerasenes asked him to depart from them;

8:22, Rejection

for they were seized with great fear; so he got into the boat and returned.

More Comfortable With Demons Than With Jesus

b') vv.38-39a The Demoniac Sent Forth As A Gentile Evangelist (Flashback No. 2).

The man from *whom the demons had gone* begged that he might be *with him*;

//8:1-3

but he sent him away, saying,

Second Change For The Area

"Return to your **HOME**, and declare how much God has done for you."

Evangelism By Testimony

Start Nearby, Conversion Involves Responsibility To Evangelize

a') v.39b Man Proclaims It In The City.

Implicit Christological Claim

And he went away, *proclaiming* throughout the whole **CITY** *how much Jesus had done for him.*

Jesus = God

A Brief Treatment Of Luke 8:22-25, 26-39

Luke's fifth essay (V. 7:1-8:56) is dense with seven signs and wonders (7:1-10, 11-17, 18-25; 8:22-25, 26-39, 40-56 (2 miracles). Jesus heals at a distance, pushes back death, heals multiple conditions to fulfill prophecy, calms a storm, casts out a horde of demons from a Gentile man, heals a woman of a chronic bleed, and raises a young girl from the dead. Luke shows how the kingdom triumphs over disease, death, disordered nature, and demons in men and women, younger and older, on Jewish and Gentile turf. Jesus is for all. Woven in are two blocks of teaching (7:18-35, 8:1-21) and two stories that raise the question of Jesus' identity (7:36-50, 8:22-25). God is at work through the Spirit is his unique agent, Jesus the Son.

The technical name for the form of 8:22-25 is an *epiphanic rescue miracle*. The identity of Jesus *shines forth* (the meaning of *epiphany*) as he saves his disciples from death in a freak storm, leading them to ask in awe, "Who then is this?" The surface structure is concentric (1-2-3-2'-1') with the prayer of the disciples at the center (v.24a). On either side Jesus sleeps (v.23a) and wakes (v.24b). Three phrases on the rise of the storm, each beginning with *and* (Gk. *kai*) are balanced by three phrases on Jesus calming the storm, each beginning with *and* (v.23b // v.24c). The address of Jesus (an invitation in v.22b // a rebuke in v.25a) acts as an inclusion. Luke had edited his source, Mark 4:35-41, to place the prayer with its double address *Master, Master* at the center. Jesus hears and answers prayer; he is able and trustworthy.

The time signature *One day* signals a new venture with the larger body of disciples (8:1-3), not just *the twelve*. The *other side of the lake* is Gentile territory, an unclean land where they worship false gods, keep pigs, and practice immorality. Because the lake is far below sea level, and because the steep hills and ravines that surround it acts as funnels for cold winds, tempests quickly arise. While Jesus sleeps, a storm erupts and threatens to swamp the boat. In obedience to the Father's will, Jesus puts his followers in danger to expose their lack of trust, and they wake him with a desperate plea. Jesus then gets up and does the strangest thing; he rebukes the wind and waves as if an alien personal power is behind the attack. It is; someone is trying to kill them! His rebuke, "Where is your faith?" is the equivalent of, "What a bunch of weenies!" That Jesus shares in God's power over chaos raises an acute question, "Who then is this?"

The next story falls into two parts as exorcism (vv.26-33) and response (vv.34-39). The words *city* and *house/home* (vv.26-27 // v.39) function as an inclusion for both scenes, whereas *demons* (v.27 // v.33) is an inclusion for scene one and *city* (v.34 //v.39) for scene two. Scene one is concentric (1-2-3-2'-1') with Jesus' dialog with the demons at its core (v.30). On either side of the center the demons resist (b. vv.28-29) and bargain (b' vv.31-32). As the story opens (a. vv.26-27) the demons are present, and at the end (a' v.33) they are allowed to invade the swine who in panic drown themselves (a good Jewish joke!). Such were the immense hostile forces within the man; Jesus crossed over to give him freedom.

The second scene is also concentric (1-2-3-3'-2'-1') but with a double center: a positive (v.36) and negative (v.37) reaction to the exorcism. On either side of the core the focus is on the former demoniac who is now clothed, sane, and seated at Jesus' feet in the posture of a learner (b. v.35) and who desires to be *with Jesus* as a disciple (b' vv.38-39a). That he is given a mission (vv.38-39a) to which he is obedient (v.39b) demonstrates his regard for his healer. The testimony of personal liberation is a powerful witness. That this territory is more comfortable with a demonized man than with a Jesus who is bad for business is a moral indictment. Jesus is God at ground level (v.39b) and leaves a faithful witness behind.

MORE TO MISSIONS THAN MEETS THE EYE

“Return to your home, and declare how much God had done for you.”

Jesus sends a witness back to the toughest audience of all.

LUKE 8 : 3 9

A single train track runs through Cheraw, my home town. Used to be two, the Seaboard and the Coastline, but they were absorbed into conglomerates long ago so one of tracks is now gone. The main line south to Miami and north to New York was more than a freight route and passenger line; it was also a dividing line, the boundary between *our kind of people*, meaning white, generally middle class or above, and *other kinds* of people, mainly poor whites and African Americans, or *negroes* as polite Christian folk said in those days.

I don't remember the first time I heard the phrase *the other side of the tracks*, but to this day it's part of the geography of my childhood. It was one of the ways our world was segregated, and with the rattle of my mother's station wagon over the rail bed we went on missions to have dresses altered and pants hemmed, or else to pick up or drop off the cook or the yard help. That I don't remember some of their names is a indicator I was early on absorbing one of the deadly sins of privilege which is to reduce people to functions: the cook, the help, the yard man. That we thought it genteel only made it worse in the dying remnants of the Old South.¹

The houses were small, often ill-repaired. Not much green grass on the broom-swept yards with the painted tire planters, white being the preferred color to turn a tractor tire into a flower garden. Children slept two or three to a room, even to a bed. Clothes hung on a wire strung from one corner of the room to another because there was no dresser. I wanted to peep in all the rooms, but I knew it was rude.

¹ Several movies review this world: the earlier *Fried Green Tomatoes*, and recently *The Help*, 42 (the story of Jackie Robinson), and *The Butler*. When I cringe at how they reflect the racial arrangements of my youth, I know they are on target.

The times I remember going with my father across the tracks on house calls I sat in front rooms on vinyl couches patched with colored electrical tape or else stayed in the car hoping he'd soon return. First picture of Martin Luther King I ever saw was over a kitchen table in a home where the plaid linoleum did not go all the way to the walls and the wood floors beneath were unstained. As a seven year old I was full of questions, a naive kid from the other side of the town. I was pained by the differences but did not have the maturity to understand beyond the lump in my throat. Their mothers could never be grade mothers and wear dresses that looked like June Cleaver; they worked at the sewing factory or pushed someone else's children around in strollers. I lived in a bubble and knew it not till I crossed the tracks *to the other side*. My world was not the whole, and since at church we sang *He's Got The Whole World In His Hands*, I had some thinking to do. Why are things the way they are?

The maps that matter are not drawn on drafting tables by cartographers; the maps that matter are invisible and attitudinal, drawn in our minds with markers between *us* and them. These maps are economic and racial and religious and cultural, and if we do not cross them we cannot follow Jesus Christ very far at all, only around in circles inside our little worlds, but Jesus is God's big bang leading to an expanding universe of concern. A comfort zone may be a cozy place to furnish, but it's a spiritually cramped place in which to live. It constricts compassion with its small circle of acquaintances; it suffocates curiosity with its low ceiling of vision; it shrinks this grand expanding gospel down to my needs and prejudices. In an older book titled *A Larger Christian Life*, A.B. Simpson, one of the founders of the Christian and Missionary Alliance Church, wrote to all who would grow in Christ:

"If we would be enlarged, we must accept all God sends us to expand our spiritual life.... It is as though He had to send a tidal wave to flood the lowlands... to compel us to move into the hills beyond. God, like the mother bird, breaks up the comfortable, downy nest, letting us drop into empty space.... We must do or die, fly or fall to our destruction."²

I remember the first time I had to go, after my conversion at age nineteen, to a poor girl we mocked at school and ask forgiveness. It was a crossing over from pride to humility. I remember the first time I entered the county jail in Atlanta and heard the door shut behind me. It was a crossing over from ministry in safe suburbia to service in a danger zone. I remember the first time I held someone's hand as they

² PreachingToday.com search under Mt. 8:18-27.

died. It was a crossing over from studying theology to being a pastor. I remember the first time I preached in a black church; it was an emotional crossing over to an inclusive gospel of ebony and ivory. I remember going out to start a new church from scratch; it was a crossing over from maintenance to mission. I remember the first time I served communion to an AID's patient, the first time I baptized a stillborn baby, the first time I smuggled money through Moscow for missions and the first time a Russian soldier moved me along with a machine gun. I remember the first time I commanded a spirit to leave in the name of Jesus and the first time I talked a man off the big bridge in Charleston. I remember the first time I gave a death notice to a mother whose son was killed in a drug deal. I remember the first hooker whose story I listened to. Every crossing to *the other side* was the leaving of a comfort zone as I sought to be a stumbling follower of the great expander of spiritual frontiers. If Jesus was going into those places ahead of me, I wanted to follow. I would rather be with him in uncertainty than be left behind in the places I knew so well.

I haven't told you of the failures, times I was silent when witness was called for, times I was in fear of the price to be paid and what important people would say, times I was lazy. I have no idea the good I missed. Down one wall of the gallery of my mind is a wall of fame, on the opposing side a wall of shame. And I tell you that the great danger of the maturing years of the Christian life is that you stop crossing barriers; you do not permit Christ to take you any further than you've already gone. It happens to pastors all the time. We *go safe*. We *coast*, and comfort wins.

TURNING TO THE TEXT

An Amphibious Assault Meets Stiff Resistance (vv.22-25)

The Great Commission to go to all the world to tell and show the good news of God's rule is not just found at the end of the Gospels³ but embedded within them. Jesus' primary ministry was to his own people, the lost sheep of the house of Israel. Most of his work was among fellow Jews on the west side of the Sea of Galilee and the Jordan River that flowed south from it. But here he deliberately heads across the lake to Gentile territory. What a surprise to his male and female disciples⁴ when he announced, "Let *us* go across to *the other side* of the lake. Why did he all of a sudden

³ Matthew 28:16-20, Mark 16:15, Luke 24:45-47, John 20:21.

⁴ 8:1-3.

make this announcement? Because the Father by the Spirit told the Son to embark on an amphibious assault on Gentile territory. “Take the kingdom and its powers over there; I love them too, particularly one pitiful man.” Jesus calls his friends to join him in crossing a new frontier, and for Jews it was *the* decisive boundary, a moral and spiritual and historical line that separated clean and unclean, godly from ungodly, the turf dedicated to Yahweh from the lands dedicated to other gods.

Can't you hear the disciples? "But Jesus, charity starts at home. But Jesus, there are still lost people on *this* side of the lake. But Jesus, won't that pollute our purity? But Jesus, can't we wait till later to do foreign missions?" Ever heard those arguments? They were bogus then; they're bogus now because every one of them is about our comfort zones. Jesus wants to take us beyond safe borders into deep waters where we have to trust God and find out how weak and wimpy our faith is. "Come with me," he says, "Let *us* go across to *the other side*." It is to their credit and their growing trust that Jesus gets his directions from above that the disciples say *Yes* and set out across the northeast corner of the Sea of Galilee. If they'd known what was ahead, they might have said No. To follow Jesus means you will be uncomfortable.

Picture the vessel, Jesus seated in the elevated stern normally reserved for the helmsman, sailing away from shore. It was as much an invasion as the ships that left the south of England for Normandy early on June 6, 1944. The kingdom of God represented by Jesus and powered by the Spirit is mounting an amphibious assault on Axis territory. Should it surprise us they met enemy fire? Whenever the church does evangelism in the power of the Spirit,⁵ whenever we follow Jesus beyond our comfort zone, we meet an invisible enemy who does not appreciate the challenge. If we stay in the church, not much happens. But when we get outside the stained-glass bubble and cross to *the other side*, the fire is live because the territory is contested.

The Sea of Galilee is 680 feet below sea level, only 13 miles north to south and 8 miles at the widest, and they cross only the northeast corner. But the lake is at the bottom of a basin surrounded by hills with deep ravines that channel winds down onto the water's surface like a funnel. A French scholar described it vividly:

⁵ The seminal book remains John Wimber, *Power Evangelism* (San Francisco, CA: HarperOne, 1987) who argues that evangelism is more than doctrinal and rational. For a fresh defense, see Rich Nathan and Insoo Kim, *Both-And* (Downer's Grove, ILL: IVP, 2013), Chapters 7 and 8, "Proclamation.... And Demonstration," 113-124, 125-138.

"The winds... from the summit of Mount Hermon are caught and compressed in such a way that, rushing with tremendous force through a narrow space and then being suddenly released, they agitate the little lake... in the most frightful fashion."⁶

It was calm when they left, so Jesus slept. But by the time they heard and saw it, it was already upon them, "And a storm of wind *came down* on the lake (note the precision of the description), and they were filling with water, and were in danger." Blue-green water rose in heaps and washed over the gunnells as the bow rose and fell against the sky, bobbing like a cork. Despite the fact that some were professional fishermen, they wondered if theirs would be a watery grave.

Jesus sleeps for two reasons. He's exhausted. And secondly, he trusts in the One who told him to transport his troops across the lake to take care of some pressing business. Over, under, or through, they *are* going across. There is one reality, a storm, but two responses: the disciples focus on circumstances; Jesus rests in a Word from above. You can tell a lot about people when God tampers with their security: be that status, power, or safety. Living with Jesus means we get exposed!

At the center in verse 24 is a prayer report, "And they went and woke him saying, 'Master, Master, we are perishing!'" Have you ever felt like life was falling apart and Jesus was asleep on the job? I have, still do on occasion. It's not logical since he's in the boat with them, but fear often overwhelms logic. "Good time for a miracle, Lord. You got us out here; now fix it. Master, Master, *we* are perishing!" These are prayers by disciples in terror. My favorite prayer is one word: *Help!*

Most of us talk to ourselves and other people. Some talk to pets. Some even talk to their plants, but Jesus talks to wind and waves. What a strange man! Or else, perhaps, he sees behind appearances to their origin through the gift of discernment. This is not just a freak of nature; this is a strategic attack of the Evil One trying to kill the Savior and his troops in the midst of the lake. And so Jesus uses the language of authority,⁷ the same word he used earlier in his encounter with a demon in the

⁶ A.E.J. Rawlinson, *St. Mark* (London, England: Methuen & Co. Ltd., 1925), 61.

⁷ On spiritual authority, see Charles H. Kraft, *I Give You Authority* (Grand Rapids, MI: Chosen Books, 1997).

Capernaum synagogue.⁸ “And he *rebuked* the wind and the raging waves....” He does not pray. Rather, discerning the problem, he speaks a command. This raises difficult questions. It presumes Satan has certain limited power over creation to disrupt and use it against God's people. It teaches that prayer must at times be supplemented with the willingness to speak with the authority of God to a circumstance.⁹ Sometimes we do not speak *to God* in prayer but *for God*, not a word going *up* but a word coming *down*. It teaches that Christians on the front lines of mission need the power of God in ways those who work in rear areas may not appreciate. Some of our cherished notions of the way the world operates have to be reconfigured. Supernatural experience will alter your worldview; it has mine.

When warm and cold fronts collide, there's the violent exchange of energy we call a thunder storm. So it is when the kingdom of God challenges the rival kingdom by moving off Jewish territory dedicated to Yahweh and onto Gentile territory dedicated to the many gods of the pagan pantheon. It's known as a *power encounter*, a clash of the kingdoms, a living interface of spiritual conflict.¹⁰

What's going on here? A couple of things. God is shaping events to expose the weak faith of the disciples. They're learning something about the necessity of discernment. And, most importantly, God is showing them the authority of his Son which will soon be entrusted to them. We should therefore not be surprised when saying Yes to Jesus puts us in circumstances from which we cannot rescue ourselves. Let's admit it: God the Father is love and so is the Son and the Spirit, but they are not safe! Give God the keys and there's no telling what may happen along the way.

Verse 25 is interesting, “Jesus said to them, ‘Where's your faith?’” They questioned *his* care in the storm; he now questions *their* trust in the debriefing session. What a bunch of weenies! When you're vulnerable, God will correct you in ways that sometimes sting. In following Christ we give up the right to safety, the

⁸ Greek *epitimao* (4:35, 39, 41).

⁹ On the prayer of authority, see Richard Foster, *Prayer: Finding the Heart's True Home* (San Francisco, CA: Harper-Collins, 1992), 229-242.

¹⁰ Wimber, *Power Evangelism*, Chapter 2, "The Power Encounter," 15-31. For a thoughtful treatment by a mission agency, see “Power Encounter: Towards an SIM Position,” www.ijfm.org/PDFs_IJFM/10_4_PDFs/06_Brant.pdf.

right to set our schedule, the right to look good. What we get in return is intimacy with Jesus and some great stories to tell around the campfire. With the sea like glass and their insides trembling at what they've just witnessed, they wonder, "Who then is this, that he commands even wind and water, and they obey him?" Scholars call this a *christological* question; it's raised by the fact that what God does in the Old Testament, which is to control the forces of chaos symbolized in the sea, Jesus now does in plain view, and if he does what only God does, then who is he?¹¹

It's a *good thing* to be out over our heads. It's a *good thing* to go over to the other side. It's a *good thing* to cry to Jesus in fear. It's a *good thing* to have experiences that bypass rationality and leave us in awe. It's a *good thing* to face the evil that's opposed to God and feel the heat. It's a *good thing* to glimpse the cosmic conflicts that rage just beyond sight, and it's a *good thing* to have Jesus in the boat. Now why would the Evil One throw up such a fight? Because there's a POW on the other side he did not want freed. "Let us go across," said Jesus, "to the *other side*."

The Mother Of All Exorcisms (vv.26-33, 34-39)

After skirmish one the freedom ship lands, and immediately there's a second. The mercy of God's kingdom collides with forces of evil bent on human destruction. The disciples are learning that to be with Jesus is to live on a battlefield of spiritual warfare,¹² and that God's love is more than equal to all the forces that conspire to keep human life less than human. Jesus' great delight was to loot the booty of the Evil One, to ransack his kingdom and set captives free.¹³ I don't believe Jesus knew why he was crossing till the man ran towards him. He was obedient and trusted help was there when needed. He walked by faith just as we have to do. Following Jesus often means walking into the unknown with only a sketchy notion of what's ahead.

¹¹ James Edwards, *Is Jesus The Only Savior* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2005), Chapter 5, "Did Jesus Consider Himself God?" 67-99.

¹² Millard Erickson defines spiritual warfare as "the Christians struggle against otherworldly forces" (*Concise Dictionary of Christian Theology* [Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1987], 159).

¹³ 4:16-30. See Sharon Beekman and Dr. Peter Bolt, *Silencing Satan: Handbook of Biblical Demonology* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2012), "Jesus And The Demoniacs," 156-160.

If Jesus is the picture of human wholeness, then this man is the other end of the scale. In him the image of God has been defaced. He lived among the dead, cut off from human community. Others tried to chain him, but the supernatural strength that energized him was too much; the chains and fetters were torn apart. He ran over the hills wailing like a banshee. He was unclothed and naked with no sense of shame or modesty. He was filthy: physically, morally, and mentally. He is exhibit A of what Satan would love to do to every human being, if not in this life, then in the life to come. We have before us a picture of *hell on earth* and the recognition that some already live there. This is where living apart from the Living God leads. This is where fooling around with the occult and idolatry lead. Satan hates God and therefore hates us as the image of God on earth. Life can become barbaric. Driven by powers he did not understand, here was a man in need of a powerful Savior.

A psychiatrist might make a differential diagnosis and prescribe some medicines, but this man's problems went beyond medicine, helpful as it is. It's a good thing to manage the symptoms of mental illness with medication and counseling; I regularly ask people, "Are you taking your meds?" Those of us with mentally ill family members are grateful for our partnership with doctors and therapists, but occasionally there are realities that go beyond medical models.¹⁴ The times I have dealt with people involved in the occult and was able to lead them in confession and repentance to faith in Jesus, the relief was immediate. I had a minor case recently with someone who for decades had a dark fascination with everything scary and spooky which they traced to occult involvement forty years ago: seances, Ouija boards and the like.¹⁵ Ten minutes of teaching, confession and renunciation followed by a brief prayer for freedom was all it took, all rather boring and quiet. The next week they told me the fascination was gone, as was guilt and shame. We all need good spiritual hygiene and a respect for the boundaries God sets for our safety.

To make sense of the next scene requires a bit of logical rearrangement and an understanding that more than one personality is at work.¹⁶ First the man ran up to Jesus and prostrated himself. This was the reaction of what humanity was left under

¹⁴ For an introduction, see "Demon Possession and Mental Illness," Christian Medical Fellowship, www.cmf.org.uk/publications/content.asp?context=article&id=619.

¹⁵ Beekman and Bolt, *Silencing Satan*, "Forbidden Practices," 66-69.

¹⁶ For a literary analysis of 8:26-30 in terms of *real time* and *narrative time*, see Joel B. Green, *The Gospel of Luke* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmanns, 1997), 336-339.

the control of his will. Jesus is attractive and magnetic because he demonstrates the wholeness we hunger for. It was then that Jesus uttered the command mentioned in verse 29, and when Jesus overtly challenged the demonic presence, it responded defensively, "What have you to do with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I beseech you, do not torment me!" Note that it knows Jesus' name and identity as God's Son without being told. Jesus was known in the spirit realm, and for demons to be in his presence is torture. He is holy; they are defiled; his light blinds them and his love is felt as torment. There is no common ground between them.

It is only in verse 30 that we discover the full extent of the problem. To this point Jesus speaks in the singular, as if there was only one present. But when he asks, "What is your name?" he discovers multiples. A Roman Legion could have up to 6000 soldiers and 120 cavalry. Behind the one voice is an entire battalion of Satan's underlings. Layer by layer the truth is uncovered. Those who engage in this ministry in our day find the same to be true. You go with what light the Lord gives through observation and discernment, but always expect to uncover more along the way. It's like flying blind and taking instructions from the tower minute by minute.

I believe from Scripture and experience that while our personalities have boundaries and integrity, they're also permeable. We have no trouble with the idea of inviting the risen Jesus into our hearts or with the experience of being filled with the Spirit. It is also possible for persons to open themselves, or be opened by the sins of others, to having their integrity breached. Most often this comes through direct invitation or occult involvement, but it can also be inherited or brought about by habitual sin.¹⁷ It's called a *stronghold*. This does not mean we lose responsibility for our actions, only that the energy behind our sin and self-destruction increasingly comes from the Evil One through his underlings. It is interesting to note the detail that at times the man had more control than others. Is this not the intent of v.29? "For many a time *it has seized him*," implying there were times it did not.

Christian anthropology, the doctrine of humanity, teaches that because we are made in the image of God we are permeable to spirit, both good and evil. We are a house with many rooms, and it's not uncommon for Christians to have one or more rooms of their abode under alien domination. A noxious habit, a secret sin, a

¹⁷ For a treatment of these issues, see Francis MacNutt, *Deliverance from Evil Spirits: A Practical Manual* (Grand Rapids, MI: Chosen, 1995); Neal Lazano, *Unbound* (Grand Rapids, MI: Chosen, 2010)

compulsion beyond their will, a pocket of shame and fear: all can serve as contact points for demonic influence from mild to severe. Whenever a spirit is present, you can presume it has some right and reason to be there.¹⁸ But nowhere in this story are we given the reason. Perhaps this man had been dedicated as a child to some pagan deity as still happens in many cultures. Perhaps he himself had engaged in occult practices or perversion. However the breach came about, the hole in his soul was large enough for a whole battalion of Satan's troops to march in unhindered. But even in this, the most severe case of demonization in the New Testament, the man retains a margin of self-control so that at least he can run up and fall down before the Lord. Satan has power to smear and distort but not to destroy the image of God in anyone. So to say with Flip Wilson "the devil made me do it" is always a lie. It overestimates his power and underestimates our moral responsibility.

Verse 31, "And they begged him not to command them to depart into *the abyss* understood as a place of confinement and eventual destruction. Whatever you make of this request, the demons resist to the very end. They acknowledge Jesus is superior, but they bargain for all they can and are loathe to give up their host.¹⁹ If on occasion it was not easy for Jesus to eject invaders, how much more can we expect difficulty when seeking to bring people into freedom in Christ.

The final scene is dramatic. Jesus does not command the Legion to enter the swine but only allows it. There ensues a thunderous stampede and a lake full of dead pigs. Jews who heard this story would have cheered since pork was forbidden to them as unclean. "Serves those Gentiles right!" they would have said. At each step along the way our estimation of the power of the invader has been building: one unclean spirit, then a Legion revealed, and now enough evil to slaughter a whole herd through a spiritual transfer. All inside one pitiful man. But this is only a foil for the even greater power of Jesus who crossed the sea and braved the storm to offer healing to this one man. The Father through the Spirit's sent the Son on a mission of mercy. How great is the love of Jesus. He is the hope of the hopeless, even those we have written off. In the 1980 Consultation on World Evangelism the following statement on power encounters was adopted as part of a larger document. It serves as a

¹⁸ On the subject of entry points and legal rights, see Dr. Charles Kraft, *Two Hours To Freedom* (Grand Rapids: MI: Chosen, 2010), Chapter 5, "Demonization," 89-110,

¹⁹ See Charles Kraft, Tom White, Ed Murphy, et. al, *Behind Enemy Lines* (Ann Arbor, MI: Vine Books, 1994) for a review of demonic strategies. A good primer is Tom White, *A Believer's Guide to Spiritual Warfare* (Ventura, CA: Regal, 2011).

commentary on the role of spiritual warfare in evangelism:

"We know that we are engaged in a spiritual battle with demonic forces. Evangelism often involves a power encounter, and in conversion Jesus Christ demonstrates that he is stronger than the strongest principalities and powers of evil by liberating their victims."²⁰

If there was ever a *before* and *after*, this is it. Once the man of the tombs ran wild; now he sits peacefully at the feet of Jesus. Once lewd and naked, now clothed. Once out of his mind; now alert and rational. Once split in pieces, now one whole man who enjoys the company of Jesus and his friends. Once he dwelt in the kingdom of Satan; now he dwells in the kingdom of God. Once he wailed and mourned; he now enjoys a peace beyond understanding. Once he was lost, now found. And why? Because Jesus obeyed the Father's command to cross the lake to *the other side*. This is the proof of Christianity, changed lives, as one man said, "I'm not what I outta' be, and I'm not what I'm gonna' be, but thank God I'm not what I used to be!"

The story could easily have stopped in verse 35 with the disciples in awe after the storm and the Gentiles in awe after the deliverance, but Luke goes on to report that the people *on the other side* begged Jesus to leave. They cared more for swine than a fellow countryman. Which raises a question. The demons *begged* Jesus not to torment them, *begged* him not to send them out of the country, and now the people *beg* Jesus to leave. It is possible these people are under an evil influence of a different kind, not as individuals but corporately? That the texture of their lives, their comprehensive culture, has been programmed to resist Jesus? Our faith is not naive about corporate evil that infects social structures. It explains the abiding influence of racism and poverty. Behind every seeming intractable social ill is a good structure which has been colonized by evil.²¹ If Jesus so revolutionized the man of the tombs, what changes would he make in their lives and habits? It's too much to consider, so for now they turn away from the kingdom he brings. This is the insidious power of social evil for which no individual is fully responsible but in which all participate.

²⁰ Delos Miles, *How Jesus Won Persons* (Nashville, TN: Broadman, 1982), 35.

²¹ On principalities and powers see D. G. Reid, "Principalities and Powers," in *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters*, ed. F.F. Hawthorne, et. al. (Downers Grove: IVP, 1993); "Principalities And Powers," in Robert Banks and R. Paul Stevens, *The Complete Book of Everyday Christianity* (Downers Grove: IVP, 1997): 795-801.

The man of the tombs wanted to be with Jesus. But to put him on the road on the Jewish side of the lake would not be profitable, so this nameless man becomes the first missionary to the Gentiles; Jesus left him behind as a witness. What I like most about new converts is how they gush, how they love to talk about Jesus, how they never tire of praising the one who set them free, how they want everyone to know the Lord. We could use a few of those couldn't we?

I'm not embarrassed my Lord's an exorcist, a demon-buster.²² Why? Because the devil and sin are real, and people need to be purged. Is not this the plain intent of our first baptismal vow which we apply even to infants, "Do you renounce the *spiritual forces of wickedness*, reject *the evil powers of this world*, and repent of *your sin*?"²³ The problem with our world is multi-level; it's *up there in the invisible world* and *out there in the culture* and finally *in here, in my dark little heart of sin*. Ours is not a nice religion. We serve a wild and free Jesus liable to take off across the lake to salvage some hopeless case..

CONCLUSION

Queen Victoria of England once visited a paper mill. Without knowing who she was, the foreman showed her around. She went into shop where workers picked out rags from city garbage. Upon inquiring what was done with the dirty mass of rags, she was told it would eventually make the finest writing paper. After her departure, the foreman was informed who his visitor was. A bit later, Her Majesty received a package of the most delicate, pure white stationery, bearing her likeness as a watermark. A note said the stationery was made from the dirty rags she'd inspected.

This is the mighty healing work of Jesus Christ for all sinners, including me. Out of rags he makes riches. I'm so glad my Savior has power over all that is evil. He can set us free. The question is, Do you want what he has to offer?

²² For summaries, see Craig Evans, "Inaugurating the Kingdom of God and Defeating The kingdom of Satan," *Bulletin for Biblical Research* 15 (2005): 49-75; Clinton Arnold, "The Kingdom, Miracles, Satan and Demons," in Christopher Moran and Robert Peterson, editors, *The Kingdom of God* (Wheaton, ILL: Crossways, 2012), 153-178; the most comprehensive study is Graham Twelftree, *In the Name of Jesus: Exorcism among Early Christians* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2007).

²³ *The U.M. Hymnal*, 34.
