

Next to Jesus’ resurrection from the dead, his healing of the demon-possessed man might be one of the most powerful and dramatic miracles in the Bible. I mean, look at this man’s situation. It’s not just one evil spirit who is making his life absolutely miserable. And, it’s not even a handful of evil spirits. It’s thousands of demons! “Legion” is what this evil spirit called himself when Jesus asked his name. A “legion” was a group of Roman soldiers numbering 6,000.

No wonder he had super-human strength and couldn't control himself or be controlled. No wonder he was so violent to others and to himself – scraping himself bloody with stones.

But then, along comes Jesus, and ... the demons beg him not to torture them, and with his permission, they rush into a herd of pigs, jump off the cliff and drown in the water below. The man possessed with a legion of demons is completely healed.

As shocking as this may sound, this man's story is your story. You were wicked when you were born. You were under Satan’s control. You were a child of hell.

But then, along comes Jesus and your personal demons rush into the water. God drowned your demons as you were baptized *in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit*.

- You're not under Satan’s control anymore. You belong to Jesus.
- You’re not a child of hell anymore. You’re a child of God.
- You’re not a home for an evil spirit anymore. The Holy Spirit calls your body his temple and your heart his home.

In other words: “**Jesus Drowned Your Demons in Baptism!**” And so, in the aftermath of this powerful and dramatic miracle we pose a question: *How are you going to react to this?*

The final verses of our lesson report two completely opposite reactions to this miracle. Either, “**Jesus, leave us alone,**” like the Gerasenes did. Or, “**Jesus, we don’t want you to leave,**” like the demon-possessed man did. *How will you react?*

Jesus and his disciples had safely crossed to the other side of the lake (aka, the Sea of Galilee). But that’s only because Jesus had calmed the storm. The “*other side*” is where Jesus met and then healed this demon-possessed man.

The Gerasenes, the people from town, first heard what had happened from the owners of the pigs. Here's their reaction: **When (*the people from town*) came to Jesus, they saw the man who had been possessed by the legion of demons, sitting there, dressed and in his right mind; they were afraid. Those who had seen it told the people (*from town*) what had happened to the demon-possessed man—and told about the pigs as well. Then the people (*from town*) began to plead with Jesus to leave their region.**

Up till now the Gerasenes had kept their distance from this man. Not anymore. They were so fascinated by what they heard they had to come and see him themselves. They noticed the demon-possessed man was sitting calmly. Before this, he was agitated and prowled around. They noticed he had clothes on. Before this, he didn’t wear any. They noticed he was in his right mind. Before this, he was terrifying.

And yet, something stilled scared them even more than the power of a demon possessed man. Jesus! His power was greater. Their reaction? “**Jesus, leave us alone.**”

That's understandable, even today. It's still a huge mistake, but it’s understandable. If Jesus is God himself and our Savior, he can be scary. That means we’re small and weak. That means

we are flawed by sin, condemned to hell, and in need of saving. That means we're like this demon-possessed man.

There's more. If Jesus is God himself and our Savior, he can also love us. He loves us enough to come and seek us out. He loves us enough to confront our enemy at great personal cost to himself. He loves us enough to accept us, though we are sinners, into his gracious presence.

There's still more. If Jesus is God himself and our Savior, he changes our world! We belong to Jesus. We're not in charge. We can't live our own way.

- We can't go on being dishonest, or even want to do that.
- We can't hop into bed with someone who's not our husband or wife, or even want to do that.
- We can't hurt others physically or emotionally, or even want to do that.

It might cost us, because neither our pigs (our things) nor our piggy banks (our money) belong to us. Everything belongs to Jesus. We can't say: *"This is my stuff, my money. I worked hard for it. I earned it."* It all belongs to Jesus and he gives it to us to use for our family, our church, our taxes, our enjoyment.

We may be tempted to react, ***"Jesus, leave us alone,"*** like the Gerasenes. But we need to make sure our reaction is: ***"Jesus, we don't want you to leave,"*** like the demon-possessed man.

Everything for Jesus? Is it worth it? That's a big change from the selfish sinful nature inside us. It is worth it when we realize that Jesus means everything to us. Without him, we're in trouble and under Satan's control. With him, we are blessed with his presence, along with his forgiveness, peace and hope.

The man who used to be demon-possessed knew that. No wonder ... **as Jesus was getting into the boat, the man who had been demon-possessed begged to go with him.** Who wouldn't want to go with him after what his life had been up to this point? Who wouldn't want to be with Jesus, with a heart, mind and soul set right, with a new lease on life?

Jesus wouldn't let the man accompany him, but he gave him an assignment ... **"Go home to your own people and tell them how much the Lord has done for you, and how he has had mercy on you."** He may not have accompanied Jesus, but he sure got the word about what the Lord, the true God, has done for him. Besides his own family, **the man went and began to tell in the Decapolis.** That's a grouping of 10-cities nearby.

When he told them how much Jesus had done for him he correctly identified Jesus as the **Son of the Most High God.** All the people were amazed. That's exactly what we are ... amazed. And that's exactly what we should be doing as well ... telling our family and friends how much Jesus had done for us.

This is not an over-simplification for us as Christians, but we have two tasks left in your lives:

- 1) To keep accessing God's Word, so the Holy Spirit can keep depositing more and more of Jesus into your heart, so you can say, ***"Jesus, we don't want you to leave."***
- 2) And, to urge others to access God's Word, so the Holy Spirit can deposit Jesus into the hearts of your spouse, your children, your grandchildren, your parents, your siblings and your friends.

You can do that. You know how. Read the Bible with them, if you can. Invite them and bring them to church with you, if you can. Pray that the good news reaches them so they too can say, ***"Jesus, we don't want you to leave."***