



Big Idea: We miss the Master when we want the world.

1.) Like the Gerasenes we have a big problem.

As we read through our verses for today, it quickly becomes obvious that the people in the region of the Gerasenes had a serious problem with this demon possessed man. Just think about his condition and his history for a moment. First, it appears from this passage that he had been running around their region in his birthday suit for quite awhile. Notice in verse 27, Luke tells us that, *“for a long time this man had not worn clothes or lived in a house, but had lived in the tombs.”* Thus, not only was this fellow a streaker, but, worse yet, he was a homeless streaker, and not only was he homeless, but he dwelt among the tombs buck naked, and as he did, he had been desecrating their venerated burial sites by constantly touching them with his nakedness.

And, as if being plagued by a naked, homeless, tomb desecrator wasn't bad enough, this situation was made worse by the fact that there was nothing the people could do about it because his demon possession had made him freakishly strong. Look with me at verse 29, where Luke writes, *“Many times [the evil spirit] had seized him, and though he was chained hand and foot and kept under guard, he had broken his chains and had been driven by the demon into solitary places.”* He was like a combination of J.R.R Tolkien's Gollum and the Incredible Hulk.

Clearly, this man was a menace to the Gerasenes, and although I have described his condition in somewhat comical terms, we ought to realize that, in reality, there really was nothing funny about it at all. Indeed, it is difficult to imagine anyone in a more pitiful condition than this aggressively demon-possessed man, for he seems

to have been under the complete dominion of Satan, both in his body and in His spirit. And because his body and mind were under the influence of a whole host of demons, his every word, his every action, and the entire course of his life was only ever used to injure, shame, and destroy himself and everything around him.

Yet, as menacing and miserable as this destructive, demon-possessed man surely was, the problem of the Gerasenes was much greater than him alone. Rather, their chief problem is also our chief problem, and it was this: The ugliness that the demons brought forth from this poor man was a picture of human depravity. You see, his wretched condition was, in reality, an amplified image of the dreadful spiritual condition that is true of all people who are separated from Christ.

Please understand, by this I certainly do not mean to suggest that all unbelievers are possessed by demons. By no means. What I do mean, however, is that the devastating depravity that the demons made extremely obvious in this man provides an illustration of the same fallen nature that rules in the hearts of all people who have not trusted in Jesus. In other words, his demon-inspired insanity is an image of the dreadful corruption that rules over all unbelievers—the same corruption that once ruled our hearts as well before Jesus Christ drove it away by His mercy and grace.

The Holy Spirit says as much through Paul, who, in Ephesians 2:1-3, writes:

“As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient. All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our sinful nature and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature objects of wrath.”

You see, although we may not be naked because of demon-possession, we were at one time naked nonetheless. We stood completely naked in unrighteousness before our perfectly righteous God, for the only garment we can don in His holy presence is the robe of Christ’s perfection, and it is given only through true faith in Him.

Although we may not have been homeless because a legion of demons had driven us into solitude, we were homeless just the same. Apart from Christ, we were eternal beings without an eternal home, for the only dwelling safe from eternal destruction is the place that Christ has prepared for believers in heaven.

Although we may not have demonic strength to shatter chains and throw off shackles, God has given us the freedom to recklessly reject the Holy Spirit and to throw off the call of Christ, if we so desire.

And although we may not be driven by demons to dwell all alone in graveyards and tombs, Satan would love nothing more than to see us separate ourselves from God and dwell among the spiritually dead who reject Jesus Christ.

Although the desperate and universal need to be healed by Christ was greatly magnified in this man because of his terrible demon possession, his condition nonetheless paints a powerful picture of the ultimate terror that will meet all people who reject Jesus. His demon-dominated description provides a glimpse of the hell that awaits those who die without the forgiveness of sin.

Do you realize what is at stake today? Are you rejecting Jesus Christ? If you are, let me ask you: Do you not see a picture of your desperate need in the awful condition of this beleaguered man. Do you not see in his nakedness your guilt before Almighty God? Do you not see in his homelessness an eternity without the hope of heaven? Do you not see in his recklessness the sinful stubbornness that rejects humanity's only hope, the Lord, Jesus Christ? Do you see it today, or are you hiding from God among the tombs of the spiritually dead?

Like the Gerasenes, we have a big problem, and that problem is not out there... It is in here. The problem is our sin in the face of our loving Father in heaven who hates sin with all that He is. And without His help, our sinful condition will leave us naked and homeless and recklessly living among the dead. If we would be rescued from this disastrous destiny, then we must understand that...

2.) Like the Gerasenes, Jesus Christ is our only solution.

In light of these truths, how could we fail to rejoice in the fact that the story does not end right here? How could we not delight in the fact that it doesn't stop with the nakedness of sin, nor does it halt at the homelessness of hell or rest in recklessness of rejection? Let us, then, praise God that the story does not end there! Let us praise God that there is hope and glory and power for new life! Let us praise God for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, because the very same power of evil that completely overpowered, overwhelmed, and overcame the Gerasene people—that very same power—cowered and whimpered and begged for mercy simply because Jesus Christ came on the scene. The very same legion of demons that had terrorized this man is found terrified of Christ.

With that in mind, please look with me at verses 28-32, where we read:

“When [demon-possessed man] saw Jesus, he cried out and fell at his feet, shouting at the top of his voice, “What do you want with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I beg you, don't torture me!” For Jesus had commanded the evil spirit to come out of the man. Many times it had seized him, and though he was chained hand and foot and kept under guard, he had broken his chains and had been driven by the demon into solitary places. Jesus asked him, “What is your name?” “Legion,” he replied, because many demons had gone into him. And they begged him repeatedly not to order them to go into the Abyss. A large herd of pigs was feeding there on the hillside. The demons begged Jesus to let them go into them, and he gave them permission.

Last week, we studied the previous passage in Luke 8, and in it we were blessed to witness the magnificent manner in which the simple sound of Jesus' voice was more than sufficient to still even the most severe of storms. And in that revelation, we learn that our Lord has complete mastery over the natural, for all that He created is all His to command. Well, from this morning's text, we learn that, not only is Jesus Christ the Master of all things natural, but He is the divine Master of all things supernatural as well. In other words, as Acts 10:36 makes clear, Jesus Christ is the Lord of all.

We see His mastery over the supernatural in several undeniable ways in our passage this morning. We see it first of all in the title with which the demon fearfully greets Jesus, saying *“What do you want with me, Jesus, Son of the Most*

High God.” The demon knows who Jesus is and calls out His true identity. Second, we see it in the fact that this legion of demons, which had so thoroughly dominated the human power of the Gerasenes, was now completely cowering and clamoring and cringing in the awesome presence of our Almighty Lord.

Third, the mastery of Christ over the supernatural is obvious in His obvious authority over these demons. Notice that the ultimate fate of these demons was entirely the prerogative of Christ. In verse 28, we see that Jesus could have tortured them if He had desired, and verse 31 demonstrates His authority to throw them into an abyss of such terror that they repeatedly beg Him not to do so. But in this case, in verse 32, Jesus gives them permission to enter into a nearby herd of pigs. And, having entered the pigs, the passage gives the impression that these demons were so desperate to get away from Christ as quickly as possible that they hurry down a cliff and drown the entire herd in the lake.

Why? Well, very simply put: Because He is Jesus Christ, and this is His power... At the very mention of His great and glorious name, even the most foul, the most frightening, and the most ferocious forces on earth all falter, and flinch, and fall. Why? Because He is Jesus Christ, and this is His dominion... Upon the authority of His will, all wickedness wanes, all malevolence melts, and every evil thing will evaporates to nothing at all... Why? Because He is Jesus Christ, and this is His righteous rule.

In the presence of His power, terror is terrified... vice is vanquished... and horror is left helpless. Why? Because He is Jesus Christ, and this is His magnificent might. At the voice of His command... every injustice is eradicated... every corruption corrected... and every perversity will be impartially punished. Why? Because He is Jesus Christ, and this is His power. This is His supremacy. This is His glory. This is His identity.

He is the One around whom countless angels gather throughout the ages to sing, *“Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and praise!”* (Revelation 5:12). He is the One to whom every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and on the sea, and all that is in them, will be found forever singing: *“To him who sits on the*

throne and to the Lamb be praise and honor and glory and power, for ever and ever!” (Revelation 5:13).

This is Jesus Christ, and He is the only solution to the supreme problem that all of us share. He was the only hope for this demon-possessed man. He was the only hope for the Gerasenes. He remains our only hope both now and forevermore. He who has all authority on heaven and on earth is the only one who possesses the power to save us from sin and deliver us unblemished in heaven! In verse 35, we see the matchless power of our Lord on display as the people come and witness the glory of a life completely and radically transformed by Christ. It says, *“The people went out to see what had happened. When they came to Jesus, they found the man from whom the demons had gone out, sitting at Jesus' feet, dressed and in his right mind; and they were afraid.”*

This was the exact same man, but, yet, it wasn't the same man at all. The old had gone; the new had come. The demoniac had become the disciple. The naked, homeless, reprobate was dressed, peacefully seated, and in his right mind. The utterly lost mad had been found in Christ. The sinner had become a saint. And this miraculous transformation had nothing to do with what he did, but rather who Christ is. He is the Son of God made man. He is God in the flesh. He is the Master of all things in all places at all times. He is Jesus Christ, and He alone has power to save.

With that in mind, let me ask you: What are we trusting in today? Where is our hope? Is it in the One who has proven His masterful power over every single power? Or, is our hope in a lesser god? That, you see, was the demise of the Gerasenes. Although they had been eye witnesses to the power of God alive and at work in Jesus Christ, remarkably, in verse 36-37 we their seemingly tragic to Him. There we read:

“Those who had seen it told the people how the demon-possessed man had been cured. Then all the people of the region of the Gerasenes asked Jesus to leave them, because they were overcome with fear. So he got into the boat and left.”

How could this be? In light of the miraculous healing they had observed, how could they possibly come to Christ and ask Him to leave? Well, hear this, we

ought to pay careful attention to the answer to this question because just like the Gerasenes...

3.) We will miss the Master if we want the world.

To understand what is going on here with these blinded Gerasenes, please look with me first at how the passage describes their response to Christ in verse 37. It says, *“Then all the people of the region of the Gerasenes asked Jesus to leave them, because they were overcome with fear.”* The pertinent question here is this: Why were the people *“overcome with fear?”*

What were they afraid of? It certainly could not have been because of this formerly demon-possessed man. No, this once naked and violent demoniac was now dressed, and peaceful, and in his right mind.

Perhaps, then, they were afraid because this episode had awakened them to the stark reality that there are terrible demons in the world that have power to possess people and that will try to destroy them. However, if that were the case, then why on earth would they ask Jesus to leave? Anyone who was overcome with fear because they had become aware of the reality of demon possession would surely want to keep Jesus around, not get rid of Him. As we have seen, Jesus clearly had absolute power over every supernatural force. Indeed, we see that this was the certainly the perspective of the man from whom the demons had been driven. He had more intimate knowledge of the danger of demons than any of them, and it seems clear from verse 38 that he had a strong desire to stay as near to Jesus as possible.

No, the Gerasenes were not afraid of the man who had been healed, nor did their chief fear really have anything to do with demon possession at all. Rather, the fear with which they were so overcome came with dollar signs attached to it. It was a financial fear. It was a worldly fear. The chief reason why they asked Jesus to leave was because they saw an obvious cost to keeping Him around. Although He might be able to save them in a supernatural sense, He came with a natural cost that was far greater than they wanted to pay.

Their problem, you see, wasn't in the fact that he drove out the demons and healed the man who had been a menace to them for so long. Indeed, as we pointed out at the beginning, this man's demon possession had been causing them big problems. Surely, they were glad to see the troublesome demons go.

No, the Gerasenes problem was not so much in the fact that Jesus healed the man, but rather they were terrified by the way in which He healed him, because His solution to their problem came at great financial cost. In driving out the demons, these people lost an entire herd of valuable pigs. They were, in essence, saying, "Go ahead and solve our problems, but, while you're at it, be sure to save our pigs." Spiritual healing was no problem for them so long as it didn't cost them anything.

But the healing Christ came to bring did cost them something, and so they asked Him to go away. Sure, their souls might have benefitted if He had stayed around, but they were overcome with fear that the blessing to their souls would cause them to give up too much of the world. For them, salvation in Christ was simply too expensive, and they missed the Master because they wanted the world. They bartered their salvation for their swine.

Sadly, 2000 years later, not much has changed. For just as it was then, so it remains today, and, the lesser gods that captured the hearts of the Gerasenes still captivate lost hearts today. The world is filled with people whose desires for this world drive out true devotion to Christ.

Think about it: In spite of the picture of Christ's power proclaimed in this passage... in spite of all that God has revealed about our sin... in spite of our clear and desperate need for the redemption that can only come through Jesus Christ... in spite of His clear and supreme command over everything natural... in spite of His dominion over everything supernatural... in spite of the great glory, perfect power, magnificent majesty, and abiding love that are so obviously evident in Jesus Christ...

...In spite of the scars... in spite of the thorns... in spite of the cross... in spite of His sacrificial death... in spite of the grave... in spite of the glory... in spite of the radiant resurrection of the very Son of God Himself...

In spite of all of this, people everywhere at every moment are still rejecting Jesus Christ because they are afraid of what it might cost. They fear the worldly price that comes with a life given wholly to Jesus Christ. They reject Him because they love this life more than they love their Lord... They cherish amusements more than the Almighty... They want a pen full of pigs more than they want the Prince of Peace. Still today, people everywhere are forfeiting in their salvation for swine.

Are you? Are you and I really sold out for Christ, or do we ask Him to leave whenever His plans interfere with our love of the world. Listen, Jesus Christ absolutely comes at a cost. Jesus puts it this way in Matthew 16:24-25, saying, *“If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will find it.”* You cannot love Jesus Christ and love the world too, for 1 John 2:15 says, *“Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.”*

The Gerasenes wanted the world, and they tragically missed the Master. // Which will we choose today? To which one will we give our trust and devotion, for we cannot choose both?