Jesus Healed Two Demon-Possessed Men

Matthew 8:28-34

Key Verse:8:32 “He said to them, “Go!” So they came out and went into the pigs, and the whole herd rushed down the steep bank into the lake and died in the water.”

Today’s story is also written in other gospel books such as Mark 5:1-20 and Luke 8:26-39. When we compare Matthew’ story with two other books, there are some differences. Matthew talked about the appearance of two demon-possessed men, while Mark and Luke mentioned only one. Unlike Matthew, Mark and Luke describe the man’ situation and Jesus’ healing in more detail. So, with the help of Mark and Luke’s gospel we will study today’s passage richer and deeper.

Look at verse 28. “***When he arrived at the other side in the region of the Gadarenes, two demon-possessed men coming from the tombs met him. They were so violent that no one could pass that way.”***  After the midnight storm training, Jesus and his disciples arrived at the other side of the lake, which was known as the district of Gadarenes. Mark and Luke called that region, “*Garasenes*” (Mk 5:1, Lk 8:26) The meaning of the word ‘*Gadarenes*’ in Greek is ‘reward at the end’, and ‘*Garasenes*’ means ‘stranger coming near’. Two different names but the same place, as we call Hwy 64 while others call Hwy 40, but the same highway.

Two demon-possessed men came from the tombs to meet Jesus. Matthew, Mark, and Luke all said that the demon-possessed men lived in the tombs. The tombs in Israel were not underground, but natural or rock-cut caves. The Jews put their dead bodies into the cave and blocked it with a tombstone. Still such caves were used as shelter for strangers or for those who were possessed with impure spirits like the men in today’s passage. Even today haunted houses or abandoned buildings are used for homeless or drug addicts. It is not normal for anyone who lived in the tomb in the past and at present. They might be mentally illed or they were cast out from their society. They might have wanted to live freely without any social restriction. Matthew, Mark, Luke all these three said they were demon-possessed or possessed with impure spirits.

These days people would not admit the existence of demons. They treat demon-possessed people as psychologically or mentally ill-ed people. But, Dr. M Scott Peck, a prominent psychiatrist, said in his book “The People of Lie”, we must admit the evilness of men and approach mental patients with a spiritual viewpoint. Do you believe in the existence of the Holy Spirit? Do you believe in the angels in the Bible? If yes, you must believe in the existence of demons and evil spirits who influence people negatively and work behind them destructively.

How was the life of these demon-possessed men? Mark and Luke describe it in detail. Mark 5:3-5 says, “*This man lived in the tombs, and no one could bind him anymore, not even with a chain. For he had often been chained hand and foot, but he tore the chains apart and broke the irons on his feet. No one was strong enough to subdue him. Night and day among the tombs and in the hills he would cry out and cut himself with stones.*” He was so violent that no one could control him. He even tore iron chains from his hands and feet. Who could tear iron chains in this world but a demon-possessed man? This is because demons have supernatural powers.

This demon-possessed man had multiple personalities. Night and day he cried out and cut himself with stones. The symptom of demon-possession is the absence or loss of self-awareness. They do not know what they are doing. They don’t feel any guilt or pain, either. They are just doing whatever demon or evil spirits command. Even today there are some people who do not know what they are doing. They don’t realize why they keep doing evil. They don’t feel any guilt or pain because they are beside themselves. They are extremely selfish and some are violent. Psychologists call such people ‘narcissists’. They cut all relationships with others and live by themselves as the men in today’s passage who lived in the tombs. Paul called them, ‘people of darkness.’

Look at verse 29. “***What do you want with us, Son of God?” they shouted. “Have you come here to torture us before the appointed time***?” We are not surprised to hear demons calling Jesus ‘Son of God’ because demons are spiritual beings, agents of fallen angels, who recognize Jesus as the Son of God. Demons knew that in the appointed time Jesus would judge them. Demons thought that Jesus came to torture them earlier than they expected.

Mark and Luke describe Jesus’ healing the demon-possessed men in detail. They added Jesus’ conversation with demons. I quote Mark 5:6-9. “*When he saw Jesus from a distance, he ran and fell on his knees in front of him. He shouted at the top of his voice, “What do you want with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? In God’s name don’t torture me!” For Jesus had said to him, “Come out of this man, you impure spirit!” Then Jesus asked him, “What is your name?” “My name is Legion.” he replied, “for we are many.*” Jesus captured the identity of demons in this man. So he commanded demons to come out of him. And he asked his name. “*What is your name*?” Why did Jesus ask his name? This is because Jesus wanted to restore his identity as an ordinary man, not a demon-possessed man. This man lost his identity as a child of God because of demons. When Jesus asked him, not he, but the demons instead answered. The demons answered, “*My name is Legion, for we are many*.” Legion is a unit of 6,000 soldiers. This means that this man was possessed by not one demon, but 6,000 demons. We cannot bear even one demon, but this man was possessed by 6,000 demons.

Look at verses 30-31. “***Some distance from them a large herd of pigs was feeding. The demons begged Jesus, “If you drive us out, send us into the herd of pigs***.” Here we learn that demons demanded ransom in the place of these two men. Demons did not want to release the two possessed men free of charge. So they asked a large herd of pigs as the price for these two men. How did Jesus answer demons? Jesus said to them, **“Go!” So they came out and went into the pigs, and the whole herd rushed down the steep bank into the lake and died in the water**. (32) Mark and Luke said that the number of the pigs was 2,000. Pigs are not spiritual animals. So, when the demons went into the pigs, they responded suicidal right away. They all rushed down into the lake and drowned.

What happened to this man from whom the demons had gone out? According to Mark and Luke’s gospel, he was dressed, sitting at Jesus’ feet in his right mind. (Mk 5:15, Lk 8:35) By Jesus’ healing power this man came back to normal. He was completely free from the demons. Soon, he wanted to follow Jesus, but Jesus sent him home as a witness of God’s mercy to his own people. (Mk 5:19, Lk 8:39) This man obeyed Jesus and became the first evangelist in the region of Gadarenes.

In today’s passage we learn several things. First, we must prepare a spiritual environment to protect us from evil spirits. The region of Gadarenes is one of ten decapolis where the Roman army used to camp and reside. The pagan culture was rampant over that area. People who lived with that atmosphere were exposed to pagan culture and ungodly lifestyle. Slowly young people in that area were possessed by demons. It is very important for us to provide a spiritual and godly environment for our children and young people. As demons cannot play in the temple, our children cannot sin in their godly home. Make your home as a house of prayer for all nations, not a den of demons. Please turn on hymns and Christian music or sermons at home so that your children can grow under spiritual protection.

 Second, we must have a strong faith in the name of Jesus.  We have learned the power of Jesus’ name. Jesus healed all kinds of sickness. Jesus calmed the storm. Jesus drove out demons. So, we must believe that nothing is impossible with Jesus. The name of Jesus has the power to perform miracles when we call his name. Jesus is bigger than 6,000 demons. Third, we must put on the full armor of God for our spiritual battle.  In Ephesians 6:10-20 Paul said that our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the power of this dark world and evil spirits. (Eph 6:12) In today’s passage, townspeople bound this man with an iron chain because of his violence. But they did not realize the power of the demon in him. We often make mistakes in helping sick people because of our misjudgment. Man consists of three parts, body, soul, and spirit. Spirit controls the other two. When this man was possessed by impure spirits, he became beside himself. Therefore, we must fight a spiritual battle. In order to fight a spiritual battle, we must put on the full armor of God as Paul said. We need the belt of truth, breastpiece of righteousness, feet of readiness which comes from the gospel of peace, the shield of faith, the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. Above all, we must pray. Paul said in Ephesians 6:18, *“And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests*.” The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective. (Jas 5:16) Jesus also said to his disciples after he had driven out a demon-possessed boy, “*This kind can come out only by prayer.*” (Mk 9:29)

C S Lewis said in his book “The Screwtape Letters”, people whom Demons hate most are those who consistently pray in the time of difficulties. Demons are not afraid of those who read the Bible 1,000 times. Demons do not mind those who preach the gospel. But demons are frustrated with those who do not give up, but persistently pray in the name of Jesus Christ.

In conclusion the townspeople chose money more than Jesus. When they heard the report of the pig carer and saw Jesus healing the demon-possessed man, they pleaded with Jesus to leave their region. They wanted to protect their pig business and their money. Jesus was different from these materialistic people. He valued one lost soul more worth than the whole world. Jesus said in the Parable of the Lost Sheep that when a shepherd loses one of a hundred sheep, he leaves ninety-nine sheep in the open country and goes after the lost sheep until he finds it. (Lk 15:3-4) Jesus said in John 6:39, “*And this is the will of him who sent me, that I shall lose none of all those he has given me, but raise them up at the last day*.” In order to do so, Jesus gave his life. Jesus said, “*For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many.*” (Mk 10:45) As he sacrificed 2,000 pigs for this one lost soul, he sacrificed his life on the cross for the whole world. Praise Jesus!