



Unit .24

Session .01

Jesus Casts Out a Demon

Scripture



Luke 8:26-39

26 Then they sailed to the region of the Gerasenes, which is opposite Galilee. **27** When he got out on land, a demon-possessed man from the town met him. For a long time he had worn no clothes and did not stay in a house but in the tombs. **28** When he saw Jesus, he cried out, fell down before him, and said in a loud voice, “What do you have to do with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I beg you, don’t torment me!” **29** For he had commanded the unclean spirit to come out of the man. Many times it had seized him, and though he was guarded, bound by chains and shackles, he would snap the restraints and be driven by the demon into deserted places. **30** “What is your name?” Jesus asked him. “Legion,” he said, because many demons had entered him. **31** And they begged him not to banish them to the abyss. **32** A large herd of pigs was there, feeding on the hillside. The demons begged him to permit them to enter the pigs, and he gave them permission. **33** The demons came out of the

man and entered the pigs, and the herd rushed down the steep bank into the lake and drowned. **34** When the men who tended them saw what had happened, they ran off and reported it in the town and in the countryside. **35** Then people went out to see what had happened. They came to Jesus and found the man the demons had departed from, sitting at Jesus’s feet, dressed and in his right mind. And they were afraid. **36** Meanwhile, the eyewitnesses reported to them how the demon-possessed man was delivered. **37** Then all the people of the Gerasene region asked him to leave them, because they were gripped by great fear. So getting into the boat, he returned. **38** The man from whom the demons had departed begged him earnestly to be with him. But he sent him away and said, **39** “Go back to your home, and tell all that God has done for you.” And off he went, proclaiming throughout the town how much Jesus had done for him.

Intro Options



Main Point:
Jesus has power
and authority
over evil spirits.

Option 1

The concept of superheroes has intrigued storytellers, comic-book readers, and moviegoers throughout the ages. In ancient Greek myths, Hercules and Achilles captivated the imagination with their strength and near-invincibility. Today we have an explosion of interest in superheroes thanks, in large part, to the popularity of movies that depict special people and teams taking on the greatest foes of the earth and the universe. You don't have to go far to find a child dressed up and pretending to have superpowers to fight the evils of the world. You might even find an adult wishing for superpowers to break up the monotony of the workday or to secure justice for the oppressed.

- **What superpower would you like to have, and what would you do with it?**

It is fun to imagine having superpowers, as every child and inner-child knows, but we must come back to reality—superheroes aren't real. But that doesn't mean there aren't powers in the world that affect and work in and through human beings. Evil forces beyond our control do operate in the world, but they are never beyond God's control.

In this session we will read about Jesus' divine power over demonic forces. As the Son of God, Jesus has ultimate authority over all things physical and spiritual. So how should we respond to Him? Like demons, we can one day be forced to submit to His rule. Or like a man who was freed from his demonic oppression, we can look to Jesus in faith and joyfully obey what He commands as we tell others of the freedom from sin that we too have experienced in Him.

Option 2

At home, our parents are the main authority we obey. At school, our teachers are the main authority. After school, maybe a band director or coach is the authority. During youth or small group, your youth pastor is your authority. What this means is that these people set the standard to keep us safe—they have the authority to make sure we obey those standards or face consequences. The rules they set aren't to harm us, but are for our good. They keep us safe, teach us how to respond or play the right note, and so on.

- **Who are some of the authorities in your life?**

Maybe it seems strange to say these people have power or authority over you, but that's actually a good thing. Their power and authority helps and protects you. Unlike your parents, teachers, coaches, and youth pastor, Jesus has unlimited authority—over everything. His power and authority aren't limited to the physical either; He has power and authority over the spiritual as well. Even evil spirits have to obey.

TEACHING PLAN

Read Luke 8:26-33.



Demonic possession in the Bible strikes most of us as weird and confusing. Most of us don't have a category for it outside of fictitious depictions in horror films. But the Bible is true, so demonic possession and oppression are real and possible in our world.

- **What do you think causes us to be afraid of things we don't understand? Why do you think we fear evil despite God's command not to?**

Based on this wild man's experience, demonic possession torments, wounds, endangers, and isolates its victims. To see this man in action would cause fear and revulsion in us; to witness him running toward us and screaming would send us running away in terror. But as much as we would have been afraid of the demon-possessed man, the man-possessing demon was even more afraid of Jesus.

Why was the demon—or demons, as it turned out—afraid of Jesus and groveling at His feet? Because the “Legion” of demons inhabiting the man recognized Jesus' identity and authority. Jesus is the Son of the Most High God, and He Himself will cast all demons, including Satan, into hell for all eternity, once the time has come.

So get the picture here: One Jesus versus a legion of demons with super strength, having snapped shackles and chains—but the demons are the ones begging for their lives. Jesus commanded them to come out of the man, and they had to obey the Son of the Most High God. They asked Jesus' permission to enter a herd of pigs, which again reveals Jesus' authority because the demons needed His permission, which He granted. The large herd went crazy, ran into the sea, and drowned. Such is the destructive and deadly intent of demons. Imagine the suffering and torment inside the man, who was now free.

- **What does a faith response to the authority of Jesus look like, as opposed to the forced submission displayed by the demons?**

99 Essential Doctrines (p. 80, DDG)

Demons

Demons are angelic beings who sinned against God and now continually work evil in the world today (Job 1:6; Zech. 3:1; Luke 10:18). Demons oppose God and seek to destroy His work, as seen in the Bible's description of Satan, the head of demons, who seeks to “steal, kill, and destroy.” Though demons have power, they are limited by God's control and can only act within the constraints of what God permits. In the end, all of the demons will be cast into the lake of fire, for which it was originally created.

COMMENTARY

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Luke 8

26-27. Can you imagine running into this guy? Scary! He was a man alive among the dead. Although people tried to bind him with chains, he broke out of them. He was what many today would label a “crazy person,” which is one of the reasons he was isolated from society.

People were fearful of this man for obvious reasons. First, they were afraid because he had incredible strength. They tried everything they could to restrain him from harming others. They put chains around his hands and feet, but nothing they tried could overcome him. The shackles were no match for his strength.

Second, they were afraid because of his behavior. He was an outcast. He didn't fit in. And, since they couldn't control him, they banished him. He was completely ostracized from culture and society.

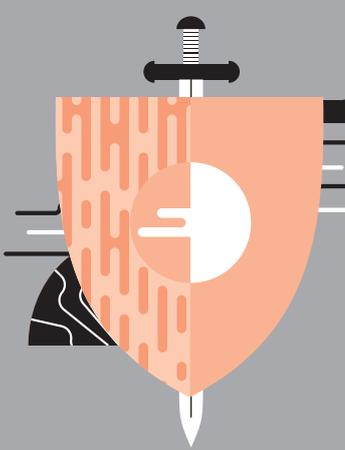
Unlike those who bound the man and cast him out to live among the dead, Jesus met this man on the shore and engaged him. Jesus didn't turn His back on this needy sinner. In fact, it was for people like this that Jesus came in the first place. Jesus cared about this demoniac because he saw a sick man, not just the demonic spirit that ravaged him. No amount of medicine could help this man. No self-help book could revive him. Jesus knew what we know now—that He alone had the power and authority to change this man's life forever.

28-30. “Legion” was afraid because Jesus has the power and authority to punish His enemies, both physical and spiritual. One day He will exercise that authority, but not yet, not until the Father says the time is right (Mark 13:32). For now, the demons would simply be displaced at the word of the Lord.

Jesus' Identity: The demons knew that Jesus is the Son of the Most High God, the Second Person of the Trinity. As James 2:19 says, even the demons believe in God, and they shudder. They believe in God and His Son, but they refuse to honor and obey Him; therefore, they know they are awaiting His eternal wrath.

Jesus' Authority: The demons begged not to be tormented by Jesus, implying Jesus has the power to do so, and He does. They feared banishment to the abyss, which is hell, the place of eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels (Matt. 25:41), and which also will be the eternal punishment for all those who do not believe and follow Jesus.

In Defense (p. 82, DDG)



The demons identifying themselves as “Legion” indicated the strength of the demons. A Roman military legion consisted of about 2,000 soldiers. The name Legion thus serves to indicate a large number (because we are many), explains the supernatural strength of the man, and magnifies the fact that Jesus was the more powerful One (Mark 1:7; 3:27). Furthermore, pigs were unclean to Jews, and herding them was forbidden (Lev. 11:7; Deut. 14:8). The large herd reminds us that this event took place in a Gentile area (Mark 5:11). The unclean spirits begged Jesus not to send them out of the region (Mark 5:10), and then, they begged to be sent into unclean animals (Mark 5:12).

TEACHING PLAN

Read Luke 8:34-37.



The demons left the man, entered the pigs, and destroyed the whole herd, around two thousand pigs, according to Mark's Gospel (Mark 5:13). Later, everyone in the region came out to see what had happened, and what they saw blew their minds and scared them to their core. They saw pig corpses bobbing in the sea of Galilee, but that's not what scared them. They heard about the herd going crazy and rushing into the sea, but that's not what scared them. They saw a formerly wild and naked man sitting still and in clothes—this was the display of the power and authority of Jesus, which was too much for them to comprehend.

The people in this Gentile region had tried to restrain the man yet failed every time. Chains and shackles were insufficient to restrain this man who was out of his mind. No doubt they had written him off and hoped he remained secluded in the graveyard. They could do nothing for him.

Jesus, however, succeeded with mere words in freeing the man from his spiritual shackles. No longer wild, the man was sitting still beside Jesus. No longer naked, the man was dressed. No longer out of his mind, the man was in his right mind. His sanity had been returned to him through the intervention of the supernatural Savior of humanity.

- **How might the authority and power of Jesus cause fear in people today?**
- **What are some radical changes you've seen in the lives of people who trust in Jesus?**

Read Luke 8:38-39.



As Jesus got back in the boat with His disciples to leave, He had a brief conversation with the man whom He had freed. Naturally, the man wanted to go with Jesus. He wanted to be with his Savior and learn from Him. He begged Jesus for this. This begs the question for us: How eager are we to be in the presence of our Savior? Do we seek Him out through the Scriptures and prayer? Do we join regularly with His body, the church? Or do we only seek Him when we think we need Him? Or worse, are we content merely to claim salvation and then move on with our lives independent of Jesus?

- **What is your level of desire to walk daily with the Savior, Jesus Christ?**

no desire



eager desire

Our level of desire to commune with Jesus is a reflection of the sin in our lives, but it is directly proportional to our desire to repent of our sin. When we recognize the depths of our depravity and the amazing grace of our freedom through faith in Jesus, sin begins to lose its appeal and we find greater satisfaction in the Son of the Most High God. This is the process of sanctification borne out in the new identity of the believer.

COMMENTARY

Main Point:
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Luke 8

34-37. In response to the people's fear, Jesus conceded to their request for Him to leave. He chose not to force the issue. While Jesus is the Son of the Most High God and worthy of all glory, honor, and praise, He is also patient for people to come to Him in their right mind with a heart of faith. He does not take disciples by force but softly and tenderly calls them to His side. Through the Holy Spirit, Jesus works in the hearts of people so they no longer see Him through eyes of fear but through eyes of faith. This work is accomplished often through the witness of Jesus' followers, whom He has commissioned to share His good news of salvation.

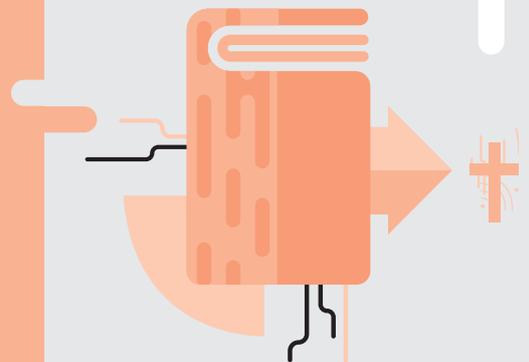
38-39. Though the man begged, Jesus did not allow the man to join Him in the boat and go with Him. Again we wonder why? How could Jesus make that choice, to deny someone's desire to be with Him in the flesh? We don't know all the considerations Jesus had at that moment, but we do know He is faithful and true, so we can trust that His decision was good and right. At least one major consideration was His mission on earth: to seek and save the lost (Luke 19:10). So while the man could not join Him on the road to the cross, Jesus sent the man home as an extension of His mission—"tell all that God has done for you"—and the man joyfully obeyed.

The man didn't need more training; he didn't need coaxing. He knew what he had experienced, and that he could share—"I was possessed by a legion of demons, and no one could help me. But Jesus came and broke their hold and influence over my life. Now I'm free to live for God and Jesus, His Son. Praise the Lord!"

Just as this man was commissioned to share his good news, so we are commissioned to share the good news of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Jesus died on the cross and rose from the dead to free us from our sin and its consequences, including death. Our testimony may not sound as dramatic as the testimony of the man who had been demon-possessed, but it is. Before faith in Jesus, we were enslaved to sin, spiritually shackled with no way to break free, if we even wanted to. But the light of God's glory in Jesus, His Son, has shone in our hearts, and by faith in Him, our chains have fallen away—we are free forever!

(p. 81, DDG) Christ Connection

When Jesus approached the man who was possessed by demons, even the demons recognized His authority. Jesus drove the demons out of the man, but when the people saw His authority, they were afraid and drove Him off. Jesus would later demonstrate His authority over sin and evil in a greater way through His crucifixion and resurrection. While many continue to reject Him, one day every knee will bow and every tongue will confess Jesus is Lord (Phil. 2:9-11).



Our Mission

God's Story has always been designed to connect with our story. It is because of His Story that our stories make sense, have meaning, and carry on into eternity. Use the questions below to help think through how His Story connects with your own. Suggested answers to these questions can be found on the right-hand side of the page for leaders.

Head



What does this account teach about the difference between fear and faith?

How does faith lead us into a deeper and richer relationship with Jesus?

Heart



What are some examples of demonic activity today?

What have you found helpful in your own spiritual journey to resist the schemes of the devil?

Hands



How does Jesus' instructions to the man to go and spread the good news apply to us?

How does this account challenge us to be bold and not shy away from people who may be labeled as "difficult" or on the fringes of society?

Main Point: Jesus has power and authority over evil spirits.



Head

The Gentiles saw the peaceful fruit of a great miracle sitting at Jesus' feet, so they asked Him to leave! What would have possessed them to make that choice? Jesus had just liberated a demon-possessed man; what more could He have done for them had they only believed? But since they had fear without faith, they rejected the miracle-worker in their midst. It seems they preferred their slavery to sin and Satan over submission to the Savior.

Fear can either drive us toward Jesus or away from Him; it can drive us to a deeper holiness or to abandon the reason and wisdom that comes from God in Jesus Christ. The difference, of course, is faith. The fear of the Lord is a good thing for the believer, marked by humility, reverence, and holiness. But without faith, one can only be afraid of the Lord, marked by distance from God and distrust of His ways.



Heart

We don't seem to see demon-possession in our day, at least in the Western world. This may be because Satan and his demons are being subtle—why bring up the reality of spiritual things when our culture already believes and lives as if God is dead? We may not see overt spiritual oppression, but it is all around us. Any idol of the heart finds its root in sin and the work of demons. So whether subtle or overt, from this true Gospel story, we can know that Jesus has the power to break the chains of sin, to bring dead hearts to life, to calm wild spirits, and to save sinners. Because of this good news purchased for us on the cross, we repent of our sin and believe in Jesus and follow Him, and we go wherever He sends us to proclaim all that God has done for us in Jesus.



Hands

All followers of Christ have a mandate—to tell those who don't know God about what He has done for them. Jesus told him to go home to his own people and tell them what happened to him. This is the power of a personal testimony. While God does sometimes use seminary-trained preachers who proclaim the Word of God to lead people to faith in Christ, the Great Commission is not reserved for preachers alone. Rather, the Great Commission is for ordinary Christians to take the good news of Jesus to new people and places.

Our mission is local, but at the same time it is also global. Jesus wanted this man share what the Savior had done for him at home. So, wherever you live, in whatever city or area God has placed you, there are people like this demoniac—men and women who are created to be in a relationship with God, but who suffer under the power and reign of sin. They are in desperate need of the healing power found only in the gospel. The demoniac serves as the embodiment of the damaging effects sin can cause, and causes us to ask: How can we who have experienced the gospel share it with those on the fringes of society?