

Reading: Matthew 8:18-34

Theme: Asking Jesus to leave us alone!

We have seen some amazing things recorded for us in this chapter that Jesus did. It must have been incredible to have lived, seen and heard all these things. Yet it is unbelievable that many of those who saw, heard and were eyewitnesses to such amazing things were not always convinced as to who He was and even His own disciples couldn't really take it in. We may easily say and think if we had been there, we would have recognised Jesus was God in human body; recognised and owned Him as our Saviour; we would have followed Him wholeheartedly... Well, we like to think we would have!

I suspect, even know that we would have been like those who first saw and heard Him. As we look at this final part of Chapter 8, I want to ask us all an important question "*What would cause you to say to the Lord Jesus Christ 'Leave me alone and get away from my life'?*" Perhaps we all think we would never say that, but it has been said before! The people from Gadarene, as a city, prayed, begged Jesus to get away from them and leave them alone! As we look at this passage we have to ask "*Why?*" In seeing the answer, it may then cause us to examine our lives and to question whether or not we would do the same as the Gadarenes and for the same reasons. See 3 things:

1. The Good Jesus Did.

Jesus arrived in their land, in their region of Gadarene and immediately He did good. Here were these Jews living in the south, south-east side of the Sea of Galilee and Jesus went to them. He had no doubt gone to teach and to preach their and so bring them God's word and light. The disciples had been terrified in the storm and had seen of Jesus' power over Creation

and that even the winds and the waves obeyed Him. Now they are going to learn even more about Jesus on this leg of the journey as they would learn that He had power and authority over demonic forces.

It would seem they hadn't been on the land a short time, when they are met by 2 demon possessed men. This incident is recorded by Mark and Luke and they record for us only one man! People say here is a contradiction. It is not the case. Mark and Luke do not say it was only one man, but their attention is only on the one who is the worst case. Matthew furnishes us with other additional information. Both these men were in a real sorry state. They were possessed, controlled, governed and dominated by these demons. At least one had a legion of demons in him - many, many demons in him. People had tried to control this one by chains, but these had been snapped apart very easily as the demonic forces raged in him. We do not know of the other man, except that he also was possessed, but it would seem to lesser extent, yet he was still possessed by demons. Both of them were helpless and hopeless in the grip of these demonic powers.

Let's make a brief aside at this point, as people may mock such sentiments and ideas today. We can be thankful that the demonic forces have been very much curtailed since Jesus' death and resurrection, but do not imagine demonic forces have ceased. When people dabble with the supernatural, they open themselves up to demonic influence and as they may move on into the occult, they may very well find themselves coming under the influence, the control and possession of such demonic forces.

Beware of and avoid that which opens us up to such demonic influences e.g. such things as tarot cards, Ouija boards, seances - such things are to be avoided. There are more subtle things that prepare us for such demonic influences - horoscopes, games such as Dungeons & Dragons which was said by one leading occultist as being the best introduction to the occult that He knows! Be cautious with many role-play, fantasy games which involve the supernatural and are best avoided. There are many books, online sites and articles on the paranormal and supernatural and these are to be wisely avoided. Many New-Age teachings have their roots in eastern mysticism, occult practices and ideas - spirit guides, earth power and even ecstatic experiences.

Back to the text - the demons in these men, recognise who Jesus is - "*Son of God*". It is amazing that they recognise Him and yet are not saved. Demons can speak as angels and still remain hell bound, are still against Christ and His work. These demons recognise Christ, but don't want anything to do with Him. Do we realise that we can know much about Jesus Christ, but unless we love Him as our Saviour, then hell is our final destination - no matter how much we know of Jesus! We can be like these demons - knowing of and about Jesus and wanting nothing to do with Him!

Mark and Luke tell us Jesus had told the demons to leave the men and so they asked for permission to go into the herd of pigs nearby. This permission is given and they do so. It's interesting to note that the demons could not go into the pigs unless it was by Jesus' permission. They hated Jesus and His work, but He is King, was Ruler of them. The demons asked if Jesus had He come to torture them before the time - the appointed time (v29b)

- this is important for us to note. The appointed time they spoke of was referring to the day of their being cast into hell forever, where they would be tortured, and tormented there i.e. they spoke of the Judgement Day. They feared this occurring. Jesus is Saviour, is King, but He is also the Judge and these demons feared His approach and His word of authority and command. They also knew that this day is fixed and certain. Indirectly, they warn us all that there is a day of judgement, it is coming and it is certain. Have we ever considered that? It is an awful thought and yet even more so because it is true!

The demons are cast out of the 2 men and the men are healed and we see them in Luke and Mark clothed, dressed and in their right mind - especially in their right mind as they wanted to follow and serve Jesus. Jesus did these men good. They seemed so helpless and hopeless, but they were not beyond the reach and help of the Lord Jesus. What amazing good He did for them, so surely the Gadarenes wouldn't want Him to go away because He did good? I doubt if any of us would want Jesus to go away from us because He does good to us and all those around us! But see:

2. Jesus Exposed Wrong.

Here was Jesus and His disciples and they were in a part of Judaea, therefore lived in by Jews; Jews who probably said they loved God and would serve Him and keep His word. If that is the case, then what were they doing keeping pigs - at the least they were tolerating pig farming in their area, for the pig was an unclean animal. Jews should not go near them, let alone keep them and trade them. I suspect the Jews here knew there was money to be made as the Romans enjoyed a bit of pork and so they conveniently excuse their actions and had these pigs there.

Yes, they also bordered on areas that were inhabited by non-Jews, Gentiles and so they had a larger market, or maybe these Gentiles conveniently rented land and pastured the pig herds in the area. We do not know precisely. Jesus, in allowing the demons to go into the pigs, effectively wiped out the pig trade in the area, but also put His finger on the wrong in their lives!

Jesus showed in a stark, graphic, practical and pictorial way, the wrong, the error, the sin of these Jews. Yes, they may have had their doubts, their concerns, but well really, it was only in animal and the Romans paid so well and even part of the money was sent or taken to the temple... Perhaps they felt that God wasn't really bothered about such a little thing - was He?

Here is where the rub is so often for us. We may have our precious darling sins, secret sins that no one knows about, but they are so pleasurable, so much part of us and we so easily excuse our wrong words, deeds, thoughts and desires as being but a weakness, or an indulgence... I've come across people excusing many things, even as professing believers, the treatment of others, their mall treating their marriage partner or their children, excusing their almost addiction to pornography, why they will have an extramarital affair, why they have sex outside marriage because they're in a loving relationship, why it's ok to cook the books, their tax returns, their expense claims and so I could go on.

The trouble with Jesus is that He expects and demands absolute purity and cleanness in our lives. He doesn't want us to play fast and loose with that which is wrong and dangerous, i.e. sin. *[Story of women visiting Mexico & taking home a rabid rat thinking it was sick Chihuahua puppy - dangerous and foolish!]*

When Jesus comes to our lives, He puts His finger on the wrong in them - our attitudes to other people, or possessions, our lusts, our desires, thoughts or our deeds. He comes to us and He expects them dealt with, or He will deal with them and that can hurt and cost us dearly. It does cost us to give up things, to change our lives, attitudes etc. when we become Christians, but we gain infinitely more than we would ever lose.

I feel this is why the people didn't want Jesus around, for He was not comfortable to have around, to have staying in the area, for He exposed wrong and it would cost them too much to give it up. From this we see:

3. The Values of The People.

The Gadarenes were told of all that happened by the pig herders, no doubt they were told of the pigs, the death of the pigs and therefore the loss of earnings. All these things are all attributed to Jesus and what He did and they felt that they did not want Him about. No doubt other pig farmers wanted Him out as the area would face economic ruin and so Jesus had to be got rid of ASAP. In fact, we are told the whole town went out to meet Him. They realised He had great power and authority and they did not try to throw Him out of the area, so the whole town pleaded, begged, prayed Him to go away!

These people had wrong values they valued pigs more than people, their money more than men, their disobedience more than the divine presence, they cash more than Christ. They had sick, diseased, dying ones in their town and area, yet they threw out the One who could heal them. They were in their sin, darkness and ignorance and yet here was the Sin Bearer, the

Light, the Truth and yet they drove Him away, asked, prayed He would leave them!

Someone here may be considering Christianity, Christ and His claims on your life. Perhaps you feel that this is wrong or that is wrong in your life. Some things may be easy to give up, but other things you want to hang onto them as you value these so highly, they are so precious to you and you may resent Christ's teaching, resent Christ for threatening to remove them from you. Their value to you is at this moment more than Christ and so you will not give up your life to Him, to His control and you will not have Him to be your Saviour because...

I ask you to wake up, to realise your values are wrong and because of it, you will ask Jesus to leave you alone and not to bother you. We are to be warned for Jesus left the Gadarenes... Yet, thankfully He did not abandon them, as we read in Luke 8:38-39 *"The man from whom the demons had gone out begged to go with Him, but Jesus sent Him away, saying, "Return home and tell how much God has done for you." So the man went away and **told all over the town** how much Jesus had done for him."* Jesus may have been sent away, but there was a missionary, a witness who would tell of the goodness of what Jesus had done for him, probably the 2 men were involved in this missionary work! If you are seeking to know more about knowing Jesus, then around you in the church are those who are able to tell of the goodness of what Jesus has done for them. We are people from different nations and different backgrounds who have been brought to know the Lord Jesus as our Saviour in a variety of ways and so it's worth chatting to us to ask about how we were converted.

What then is your value of Christ and the things that this life and will can offer you? Please do not let this life and all it offers dazzle and blind you and move you to get rid of Christ. The Lord Jesus is saying to you that He can do amazing things for you and change your life in ways you have never imagined and you will know His love, care and help in everything you do.

For those of us who are Christians, we too can ask Jesus to keep away from us and our lives. His coming into our life and church in power will expose our wrong concerning things we cherish too much and therefore fear too much to lose them. Are we willing for Jesus to do us good, even if it exposes our sins? Do we really want the Holy One in power in our midst? Yet, that is where revival begins - as God deals with us His people, cleans us and makes us fit for His use and service.

I pray that none of us will never ever want Jesus to stay away from us, or for Him to keep at a safe distance from us, but I pray that He may rule in all our clean lives as Lord, as King and that we would all be freed from the Devil's rule, but be captives, willing and delighted captives to the Lord Jesus and then we will be freer than we have ever been - when we know the Son, He shall make us free indeed (John 8:36).