

April 17, 2016
A Sound Mind
Luke 8:26-36

²⁶ They sailed to the region of the Gerasenes, which is across the lake from Galilee.

²⁷ When Jesus stepped ashore, he was met by a demon-possessed man from the town. For a long time this man had not worn clothes or lived in a house, but had lived in the tombs.

²⁸ When he 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!"

²⁹ For Jesus had commanded the impure 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.

³⁰ Jesus asked him, "What is your name?"

"Legion," he replied, because many demons had gone into him.

³¹ And they begged Jesus repeatedly not to order them to go into the Abyss.

³² A large herd of pigs was feeding there on the hillside. The demons begged Jesus to let them go into the pigs, and he gave them permission.

³³ When the demons came out of the man, they went into the pigs, and the herd rushed down the steep bank into the lake and was drowned.

³⁴ When those tending the pigs saw what had happened, they ran off and reported this in the town and countryside,

³⁵ and 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.

³⁶ Those who had seen it told the people how the demon-possessed man had been cured.

Good Morning Members and Friends of First Baptist Church of Park Forest! I don't know about you but I have had a good time in the Lord already. The praise was good, the music was good, and the prayers were good. All of these things were good because they were done to worship a true and living God. In order for things to be good **to and for** the people of God, you must come to God with the right attitude – a praying, praising, worshipping attitude.

But now it is time for the preaching!

When I was a little girl I judged if a sermon was good but how much noise the preacher made at the end (I did not know that noise had a name – whoop). If the preacher worked up a sweat and the members were running the aisles it was a good sermon.

As a teen and young adult it was, for me, a good sermon if I could remember it until Wednesday without checking my notes. In other words, it was a good sermon because it stayed with me beyond the whoop. As I moved into my mature and seasoned years I wanted to hear a sermon that gave me some application for the scripture. I wanted to understand how that particular passage was to be applied in **my life**.

Now don't get me wrong I still enjoy a good whoop; I can get as excited as anybody else when I hear a holy moan that comes from the very depths of a preacher's soul but I have come to consider the whoop gravy and gravy without meat leaves you hungry by midweek.

So this morning I want to look at the passage before us and attempt to serve some meat – something that will feed you and sustain you and lead to your personal transformation.

Stay with me; pray with me **and** for me as I raise this question.

ARE YOU IN LOVE WITH JESUS OR JUST HAVING AN AFFAIR?

SHALL WE PRAY!

Father God I love you. I love you because you first loved me. I love you because when I would do wrong you make me do right. I love you Lord because I can call you when I need you. And you always show up on time.

Abba, we are asking you to send the Word we each need at this point on our journey. Melt me, make me, and mold me into the preacher, teacher, and pastor you would have me to be. In the precious name of Jesus we pray. Amen and Amen.

ARE YOU IN LOVE WITH JESUS OR JUST HAVING AN AFFAIR?

Matthew, Mark, and Luke each record the casting out of the demons and sending the demons into a herd of pigs who then fall over a cliff and drown. The only significant difference in the three accounts is that Matthew records there were two men while Mark and Luke each report one man. But the harmony of the gospels allows us to learn a bit more about this man.

He was naked

He lived in the caves in the cemetery

He was possessed by demons

Chains could not contain him
Men were assigned to guard him
The demons within him made him dangerous

He had no control of the demons within him
They even spoke for him
Because he was dangerous people avoided him

Scripture does not tell us why the man was on the beach when the boat docked, nor does it tell us if the man knew Jesus, or if the man went to Jesus on his own accord. What scripture does say is:

*“What do you want with me,
Jesus, Son of the Most High God?
I beg you, don't torture me!”*

We know it is the demons speaking because when Jesus asked their name they responded:

*“Legion,” he replied, because
many demons had gone into him.
³¹ And they begged Jesus repeatedly
not to order them to go into the Abyss.*

Put a pin right there for there are **three things** you need to notice before we move on:

Demons are for real
Demons can take control of your whole life
Demons know and fear the Lord

So if you find yourself **doing** and **saying** and **thinking** things that you ought not to be doing and saying and thinking **you need to do what Jesus did during His 40 days in the wilderness:**

***Jesus said to him, "Away from me, Satan!
For it is written:***

**'Worship the Lord your God, and
serve him only.'**" (Matthew 4:10)

Next, I want to draw to your attention the concept of **fear** within the passage. When the man was demon-possessed people (they) stayed to guard him. But when he was healed and sitting at the feet of Jesus they **feared** the formerly demon possessed man. I don't want you to miss this!

³⁵...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.

Stay with me, I am trying to get somewhere. When you were demon possessed, (and we all were before we found Jesus) you/we had some friends that stayed with us.

Stayed as we promised to leave him alone.

Stayed as we promised to move on from that woman.

Stayed as we vowed to go to our weekly meetings.

Stayed as we made decisions while we were lying down
and not standing up.

Stayed while we were naked and bound and living in the world and being a part of the world. Stayed...

But after we found Jesus and Jesus saved us, freed us, and clothed us in our right mind, some of our friends cut us loose. They probably would not admit they were afraid of us or even afraid of the Jesus we had met - they were just busy!

When we begin to **do** better our old friends will avoid us
When we begin to **think** better our old friends will talk about us
When we begin to **speak** better our old friends will say we think
we are better than them

But not only were they – the people - afraid of this New Creation in Christ – they were afraid of the Christ who had created the New Creation.

37 Then all the people of the region of the Gerasenes asked Jesus to leave them, because they were overcome with fear.

Some of these friends that avoid us, talk about us and falsely accuse us are people we meet at church. These are the people who **I say** are having an affair with Jesus. They are not in church or following Jesus because they have made a commitment to Christ, rather they are having an affair – a moment – a time filler – it feels good, so okay. That is why when things change and God the Father does not allow things to go their way they break-up with Jesus the Son, and go home to their TV evangelist; St Mattress of the Springs; or church hop looking for a place that has no tension or turmoil. It is easy to end an affair because by its very nature it has a beginning and an end.

Let's return to the passage one more time for there is another serving of meat. I want to show you the difference of having an affair with Jesus and being in love with Jesus. Let me go to a wedding for a moment. When the vows are spoken they talk about loving and honoring and obeying **until death**.

Our relationship with Jesus ought to be like that. We ought to be promising to love, honor and obey until our death. But what we do sometimes **is mix up our commitment to Jesus** with how we feel about the people we find in the church. Let me repeat that:

What we do sometimes **is mix up our commitment to Jesus** with how we feel about the people we find in the church.

We let the people influence our praise and our testimony and dim our light.

When the people in the community heard what Jesus had done for the demon possessed man they came to check it out for themselves and when they saw the truth they were afraid. Scripture does not say why. **But maybe they were afraid Jesus would cast out some of their demons.**

Yet the man who was now free of the demons was not afraid. He sat at the feet of Jesus to hear, to learn, to be in the presence of the Almighty. He was so excited that when Jesus prepared to leave he wanted to go with Jesus. (You don't follow an affair) This freed, clean, and dressed man was not preparing for a brief relationship **he was falling in love with Jesus.**

Jesus knew this and so Jesus told the man:

***39 "Return home and tell how much God has done for you."
So the man went away and told all over town how much
Jesus had done for him.***

I want you to know that some of you may just be having an affair with Jesus. It is a temporary relationship – you are just waiting for

something better to come along – for the next High Mountain Road. Because it is not a **whole-hearted give yourself away commitment** any strong wind, turbulence in the universe or stupid action of another can upset the relationship. But...

When we fall in love with Jesus we are
Able to overlook,
Pray our way through and
Move beyond the people that cared more about us
when we were demon possessed.

When we fall in love with Jesus we are
Able to look to the hills from whence cometh our help,
knowing that our help comes from the Lord.

When we fall in love with Jesus we are able to forgive ourselves
so that Jesus can heal our broken hearts.

When we fall in love with Jesus we are able to say

¹⁷Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!

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