

Unrivaled But Rejected — Delivery Transcript

****Matthew 8:28–34 (CSB) · Wes Terry · Sunday, September 6, 2026 · *What Man Is This?*****

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If you've got a Bible, you can turn it to Matthew chapter 8. If you don't have a Bible, that's all right — there should be one on the chair in the seat in front of you. We're going to be in Matthew chapter 8 this morning.

If you're new to Broadview, we're going through the book of Matthew line by line, verse by verse, chapter by chapter, as we try to answer the question: who is Jesus? There's a growing interest in our culture about the identity of Jesus, and Christianity seems to be making somewhat of a comeback. But if that's going to happen, we want it to be the Christianity of the Bible. Amen. And to know what that Christianity looks like, we've got to look at it from that source. And so that's what we've been doing.

As you turn to Matthew chapter 8, one of the things I've noticed as a pastor — and just as a human being — is that people have a tendency to adjust when problems crop up in their life, or if something happens to disrupt your normal way of doing things. Human beings typically are really resilient, and they just find another way to do what they were going to do.

The easiest example is probably road construction. I remember when South 27th was under construction, and it took them like twenty times longer than it should have taken them. But I just found a new way to get to where I was going. Instead of going down 27th, I'd hop down to 14th and then do my Walmart runs and stuff like that. But you probably have done something similar — you just do something so long that even though it's not what you wanted, and it wasn't the ideal, and in some ways it's a problem, you just kind of adjust to a new normal. Has that happened for anybody else?

And it's not just true of road construction. It's true of any kind of problem in life, because humans are resilient. It's kind of a human superpower. We can gradually kind of make peace with the problem, and we can almost kind of treat it like it's a new normal. And as a result, when people come along who have the ability and the power to treat the problem and to solve the problem, what you can also tend to do is to push them away and to say, "I don't want you fixing my problem. I've made peace with this problem. I'm good with this problem. Get out of my business." Has that ever happened to you before as well?

It can happen in relationship issues where there's a relational dysfunction and you've gotten so used to it — it's just kind of the new normal. And then when things get so bad you recognize, "Hey, we need some kind of help," there's an unwillingness to do that work, because that's going to be uncomfortable, and that's going to be more painful than the problem that I'm living with right now. And so you reject it.

Or maybe it's not a relationship. Maybe it's some kind of financial issue. You've gotten used to living a certain way financially, and you know it's not right. It's probably not what's best. So somebody comes along and says, "Hey, let's fix that. Let's do something different." You tend to reject that advice. You say, "That's not what I'm going to do," because the pain of disruption to make it better is too great for me to bear. I'm at peace. I'm comfortable. I just want you to leave me alone.

Certainly you see this dynamic with addiction. If you've ever had addiction, if you've ever loved someone who's been addicted to anything of any kind, there is usually a recognition in the addict that this is not good, this is not what I want — I don't want this thing to have power over me. But when there's a real attempt to fix it or to bring solutions to bear, those people can often react violently or strongly and hostilely and say, "Hey, just leave me alone. I've kind of gotten used to this new normal, and I'm good with it. I'm at peace with it, and so you just need to stop."

That's true for so many things in life, because humans are resilient. The problem is: there are some things in life you just cannot make peace with. **There are some things that if you make peace with them in your life, those very things will destroy you.**

And what we're going to see today is a group of people who had made peace with something that was ultimately going to ruin them. And there is no peace with what would ruin you. And that's true in your marriage. That's true with your children. That's true in how you spend your money. That's true in your relationship with God. **You can't make peace with what would ruin you.**

And what I've seen as a pastor is when people are in that place, they will push back to outside help and say, "I've got this under control." A lot of times they'll be under this mistaken notion that this is just really going to impact me — it's not

going to hurt the people that I love. And I've kind of seen that blindness be the illusion of control. They think they have it controlled, but it's not really the control that they think. And because they think they have it under control, they're actually distracted from the actual damage that it's doing — not just to them, but to the people that they love.

And that's the nature of evil spirits. That's the nature of what we're looking at today. There are some things that if left unchecked don't just wreck you — they wreck everything around you. They don't just wreck individuals. They wreck societies and cultures. And our passage today doesn't only give us an example of that dynamic. It actually shows us the authority and power of Jesus to fix it and to deliver people from that kind of bondage. But as we'll see, there are many people who know that and still reject him.

Set the table

So let's pick it up. Matthew chapter 8. If you're new to the book of Matthew, Jesus has essentially just preached this banger sermon called the Sermon on the Mount. Matthew has him coming down the mountain, and he performs all of these miracles. Matthew puts them back to back, even though they weren't that way in chronological order when they happened. He puts them back to back to make a point. And the theological point Matthew wants to make is that Jesus has all authority. Jesus has all power. And Jesus is the Christ.

We hear "Christ" as people today and think it's his last name. It was really a messianic title — that Jesus is God's anointed king. He's going to bring in God's kingdom. God's kingdom is going to fix the world. And so essentially, Matthew is saying Jesus is that guy. Jesus is God's anointed. He's going to fix the world. But even though that's true, he doesn't look like what everybody expected.

And so what you see in chapter 8 is Jesus do things other people wouldn't. He touches a leper. He blesses a Roman. He heals — he touches someone's mother-in-law, which I don't recommend if you're touching your mother-in-law. I don't mean touching in a weird way. She had a fever. He touched her and the fever left her. And then he healed every sick, crazy person in Capernaum. And so what Jesus was doing is healing people that other people wouldn't have anything to do with. And Jesus was doing things that they didn't expect a religious person to do.

And then it climaxes in chapter 8 when Jesus goes to the other side of the sea. He gets in a boat, travels the Sea of Galilee to go to a region called the Gadarenes. It was a Gentile region. Again, Jewish people were kind of hostile. And when Jesus gets on the way there, a big storm happens and the disciples fear for their life. And what Jesus does is he gets up and he stills the storm. And when he stills the storm, the disciples are like, "What just happened?" They literally say, "What kind

of man is this?" Because in Jewish theology, the only person powerful enough to still the wind and waves was God himself. Only God could calm a sea like that.

And so these disciples are trying to reconcile: How can Jesus be a man and God? How can he be Yahweh, the covenant God of Israel? How can he have flesh and blood and be right here in our boat? And so that's the tension that we're going into our text with. And what we're going to see is that some demon-possessed men actually see that truth and confess it.

Reading the text

So Jesus is getting out of the boat, and when he had come to the other side, verse 28, it was the region of the Gadarenes, and there were two demon-possessed men who met him. They met Jesus as they came out of the tombs, and they were so violent that no one could pass that way. Suddenly they shouted, "What do you have to do with us, Son of God? Have you come here to torment us before the time?"

And then a long way off from them, a large herd of pigs was feeding. And the demons beg Jesus: "If you drive us out, send us into the herd of pigs." "Go," Jesus told them. And so when they had come out, they entered the pigs, and the whole herd rushed down the steep bank into the sea, and they perished in the water. And then the men who tended them fled. They went into the city and reported everything, especially what happened to those who were demon-possessed. And then at that, the whole town went out to meet Jesus. And when they saw Jesus, they begged him to leave their region.

Now, this is a popular story that gets told in all three Gospels. There are four Gospels. Three of them are called synoptics because they're the same — they are similar. But again, just like we saw in the other two miracles, Matthew tells this story very differently than the rest. It's much, much shorter, and it's much more focused. And Matthew's focus is on this theme that we've seen him have: that Jesus is the Christ. He's the Messiah who has all authority. And so Matthew takes out a ton of stuff so that he can focus our attention on that.

And the basic story, if I can just give you from a bird's-eye view, is that Jesus is God in the flesh. He has all authority. And yet, even though demons recognize that, they reject him and say, "Go away." And not only do demons — a whole town who had been oppressed by demons do the same. And so it's not enough just to see or recognize Jesus for who he is. **You can recognize Jesus and yet still choose to reject him.** And that tendency in our hearts is a demonic tendency that Jesus came to correct.

And so it is demonic when you as a person know the truth, and even though you know what's true and you know what's right, you still choose to suppress it. You

choose to reject it. That is a tool, a lie from the pit of hell. And you see it modeled by these demons, and then Jesus responds in kind.

Demons are real

So what I want us to do with the time that we have is to look at how these demons operate. Because typically when people hear a guy like me talk about demons, they dismiss it right out of hand. The other tendency I've noticed is for people to just get obsessed, and they get so obsessed about demons that they start listening to people on YouTube instead of reading the Bible, and they go off into Cuckoo for Cocoa Puffs crazy land and miss the main point of the Bible. And so I don't want to make either one of those mistakes. Those are both ditches that serve the enemy.

Demons are very real, and the Bible treats them with sobriety. In other words, when the Bible talks about demons, it distinguishes between that and physical illness, mental health issues, things in that realm. There's a lot of people who look at the Bible, the way that it talks about demons, and say, "Well, we know better today. That's just mental health problems. That's just physical affliction." But even in Matthew — like in chapter 4, we see it again in chapter 8 — he distinguishes between physical illness, mental illness, and demon possession. So they were very careful to distinguish: this is a very narrow lane, and it is a very real danger that has very real consequences.

Even the way that Matthew talks about this in setting it up — you notice that he gives a geographical marker. He gives a description of these two men. He says it's in the region of the Gadarenes. Some translations say Gerasenes. That would have been this region right here. Some say it's all the way down here, but we know from the story that the pigs run off into the sea, so it's probably in this region right here. Jesus was in Capernaum. He gets in the boat. He sails all the way across to the other side. And so he's in this area.

All of that is a clue if you're like a historian or a New Testament critic that this is not a legend. This is not a story. This is not kind of like the boogeyman that you tell your kids at night so they'll be good. This is a real thing that really happened — which I think is for us to be reminded that demons are a real threat. Evil spirits are a real threat. They exist in the world today. And so whatever you think about demons, you don't want to be reductive. You don't want to dismiss them outright. You also don't want to think everything is a demon. Not just because your husband's on your nerves doesn't mean he's possessed by a demon. Or guys, just because your wife is being eccentric doesn't mean she's possessed by a demon. There's a tendency — I've noticed this as a pastor — like, "I think they're demon-possessed." I'm like, I don't think they are, but I get the frustration. It is a real danger, but not everything in the world is demon possession.

When that does surface in your life, it operates a certain way. And Matthew wants us to see that blueprint and then the authority of Jesus over it. And so let's start with the blueprint: what demons do to the individuals and the societies that they torment — because it's always both. The Bible always demonstrates both. The goal of an evil spirit is not just to ruin a person. They start with ruining the person so that they can leverage the person to do more. They leverage the person that they rule so that they can destroy the relationships that they have and destroy the society and the culture in which they live.

And you see Matthew demonstrate both of those dynamics when he talks about what these demons were doing when they come and confront Jesus. He says right out of the gate that they met him out of the graves.

They ravage those they rule

And so the first point is that at the level of the individual, **demons try to ravage those that they rule**. And I use the word "ravage" because it conveys this idea of utter destruction of your humanity at every level. And the fact that they come out of the tombs, I think, is more than just a literal description. It's symbolic of what these demons had done to these men.

Now, Matthew has two men. Mark has one, and his name is Legion, which means "we are many." Either case — two or one — Matthew's focus is on the multiple. And what had happened to these guys is they had gone from being pretty reasonable, well-respected, upstanding members of the community to people who hung out in the graveyard, violently attacking anyone who came near.

And that's the way that evil spirits operate on the human soul. The language I'm going to use is that they rot your soul gradually over a long period of time. The best way to see this, I think, is with an evil spirit like addiction. If you've ever had an addiction, or if you've ever loved someone who did, you've seen how this dynamic plays itself out. The evil spirit gets in the person by offering them something that they want. Could be pleasure. In this case, it was strength. It was power. That's why they were violent. They come as like an angel of light saying, "This is going to give you what you want. This is going to make you feel better. This is going to help you escape your pain."

And so they bring that spirit into their life in whatever way that looks. And then gradually, the longer that it stays, the less friendly the spirit becomes. And it can begin to eat away at your conscience and your soul so that the things you thought you would never do, you do without even a little conviction. You steal from people who love you, who've given you everything. You push people away who love you and are just trying to help. You take every relationship that matters to you and you burn every bridge. And the person you used to be would never have done those things, but that spirit in you has deadened your soul.

And that's the way that evil works in every case, not just with addiction. And I'm not saying every addiction is a demonic — you know, a demon in your heart — but I think it's a helpful metaphor, a helpful illustration of how evil spirits go to work in the world today. They capture the person and they begin to desensitize them to God's goodness, to God's design, to the damage that they're causing to themselves and to the people around them.

You can see this dynamic in Mark's gospel even a little bit greater, because Mark says that it began with them being strapped with like leather straps and shackles, and then when they would break through the leather straps, they would go to chains. But now they had gotten so strong and so violent that even the chains could not contain them. And that's the way it works. That's the way evil spirits work in your life. It will start subtle — maybe even, "I've got this under control." But then you wake up one day and you realize: I'm not in control. And whatever control I thought I had, whatever protections I thought I was giving, I have ruined not only myself — I've ruined my family and everyone around me.

And that's this dynamic. It ruins the individual. But then once the individual has been captured, it spreads from that.

They restrict communion

And that's the next point. They don't just ravage the soul of who they rule. They don't just rot your soul. **They restrict communion in your life.** And Matthew indicates that by saying they were so violent that no one could travel that way.

Now I take this road to mean that it's a main thoroughfare in that city, because Jesus is walking into the city and they meet him on the way. So I take that to mean that this is a main thoroughfare, which would have created big disruption. Not only could people not travel to and fro, but these demon-possessed men could not leave. And so the basic idea is not just that that's annoying and I've got to like go a different way around. Back in the day, there was one road, one gate, one way. That's all there is. So basically, the people who could have helped them, maybe had a desire to do so formerly, are now unable to get even near them without being attacked — and done so violently. And then the possessed men who are possessed by this evil — they're not able to leave, because their souls have become so deadened and rotted that they've lost all hope of any kind of outside help.

And so that's the way I think demons operate in our culture today. And you can see it at the broader level, not just at the level of the individual. So much of the polarization in American culture, the political divisions — and that's almost inevitable in some ways — but the hatred that goes behind it, where you can't even watch football games anymore without getting mad about this or that. The things that used to bond us together culturally are disappearing. All of that is

demonic. It is trying to eat away at communion — not just communion between you and God, but communion with you and the people that love you. And that's how evil operates.

They cut you off from outside help

And then finally, the way that it finishes a person is by cutting them off from outside help. Usually this is inflicted selfishly. You burn every bridge that matters. The people who tried to help you — you rejected them so many times, you've rejected them with such hostility and violence, that they basically washed their hands. Or maybe they didn't wash their hands, but they just kind of said, "I can't. I can't help you." And so not only do you not have outside help, the despair hits you: "It'll never come. I'll never get free. I'll always be enslaved." And you just kind of give up and die to yourself.

So you're not dead. There are people who commit suicide. But the goal of a demon is not to cause you to commit suicide. It's to cause you to become a tool of its will. It enslaves you to its will so that then they can use your life to destroy as many things as they can. And so it cuts you off from outside help. It restrains you, restricts communion, and it will ravage your soul by rotting. It will rot your soul and ravage every single thing that makes you human.

Good theology in service of rebellion

And the craziest part about it from Matthew's perspective is the way that this whole thing happens under the guise of good doctrine. That's the most ironic thing about this story: the demons confess Jesus as the Son of God. The struggling disciples who were struggling to say, "What man is this?" — they were having a hard time bridging the gap that Jesus could be both God and man. And I don't blame them. That was their entire life. That was: God is spirit. God is one. So how could Yahweh, God of the Old Testament, the covenant God of Israel — how could he be in the boat with flesh and blood? They were struggling to believe that Jesus could be the Son of God. And yet these demons show up and they immediately see the truth for what it is. And they confess Jesus as the Son of God. But then right after that they say, "What do you have to do with us?"

And so they're using good theology, which demons often have. The Bible says, "You believe in God? Good. So do the demons — and they shudder." So demons often have good theology, but they use it for rebellion. And so the problem with the demons was not that their theology was wrong. It is that they were in rebellion against the God to whom it pointed.

And that's how demons operate in our culture. They will often use good-sounding language. They will use even cultural religion, cultural Christianity, to resist what Jesus is actually trying to do. They resist who Jesus really is, what he represents

in the world. And you see this in our culture as well with various different kinds of expressions. The Bible says that Satan masquerades as an angel of light. The way that demons come to you is usually very, very subtly. That will sound religious. It will sound truthful. That would sound good on the surface. But ultimately that religion is in service to camouflage rebellion and justifies rebellion in the name of worshipping God. It justifies rebellion against Jesus in the name of Jesus. It's an antichrist counterfeit spirit. And that's how demons work.

And you see this in every pop-culture reference to Satan and demons in the world still, because intuitively we know this. My favorite example is *Stranger Things*, which again, I'm not recommending it from the pulpit, but it is awesome. I love that show on Netflix. It got kind of wonky near the end because everybody's trying to brainwash you and your kids, but if you can know that and deal with it — Vecna. Vecna is this demon essentially who — he's not a spirit. He's actually a real boy who was tormented and given telekinetic powers through experimentation when they were young. And he was a sociopath. He was a sick individual. And so he used his powers for evil. And Eleven kind of sends him to hell, which is the Upside Down. And he's down there and he's sucking the life force from Hawkins. And he's doing demonic things. He's possessing people and he's doing exactly what we described.

But when Vecna comes to the children to kind of snooker them to come onto his team, he never appears first as Vecna. Who does he appear as? You guys need to watch this show. He appears as Henry. And Henry's like this little blonde, skinny, non-scary guy. And that's the way that evil works. It is disarming. Essentially it's like Ursula in *The Little Mermaid*. You know, she looks really, really pretty and she's going to give you everything that you want — that nice pretty singing voice. She's not pretty. She is ugly and she is going to destroy you.

And that's what Matthew wants us to see about the way that evil operates in the world. That's not his main point, but that is something we need to hear, because these things are at work today in our culture. And it is not a laughing matter. It's not something to play around with. I hate to sound like the fuddy-duddy fundamentalist, but don't play games. Don't toy around with the evil spirits. Don't toy around with the dark realm — like the whole Ouija boards and even, I can't believe I'm saying this, even Halloween: be careful in how you participate. This is a very real dynamic. It is a very dangerous dynamic. And it is very disarming in its early stages. But once it enslaves you into its power, it is a ruthless destruction that will not only ruin you, but ruin every person that you love.

And it's not just true of Halloween. It's true of every thing in this world that evil spirits leverage for the sake of enslaving you to their will — from illicit drugs to legal drugs to pornography and on and on we could go. And the point is: it has no business in your life and it will ruin you.

Jesus has no rival

The main point of this passage is not how they operate. **The main point of this passage is Jesus's power over this realm.** And so when these spirits come up to Jesus, they come big and bad, but as soon as they get into the presence of Jesus, they immediately cower and bow.

And it's hard to see it in the CSB, but in the ESV, it's a little easier. There is this little phrase that gets repeated three times. It's translated "and behold." So it's there in verse 29 as they come up to Jesus: "What do you have to do with us, Son of God? Have you come here to torment us before the time?" And then it happens again a little later — the herd was feeding at a distance. The demons begged Jesus, saying, "If you're going to cast us out, send us away into the herd." And then Jesus said, "Go." And so they came out. They came out and went into the pigs. And there it is again: and behold, the whole herd rushed down the steep bank into the sea and drowned in the waters.

This word, this phrase "and behold," shows up three times. It shows up here. It shows up here. And it shows up again in verse 34. And the CSB kind of tucks it away. It kind of hides it. That's unfortunate. This is what Matthew wants us to pay attention to about his main point. His main point is that even though these demons are destructive and powerful, in the presence of Jesus they bow and they beg. They beg, "Would you please send us into the herd of the pigs?" And not only that, when Jesus speaks one word, all of the demons do what he says. Not some — the whole herd. He wants us to notice that fact.

So what's he doing? He's saying: you guys need to understand — **Jesus has no rival.** And these demons are going to rage. They're going to ravage your life. They're going to destroy you. They're going to try and enslave you and then ruin everything that you love. But even as these evil spirits wreck the world in which we inhabit, there is a sense in which they are no rival to Jesus and his power.

And that tension that we have already experienced with suffering — that Jesus is sovereign over suffering and yet he is submitted to God's will, and because he's submitted to God's will, he brings suffering into his life — Jesus is completely sovereign over evil, and yet there's a sense in which evil works in the world today. What I think Matthew would have us understand is the way that his authority operates. And you can see it in what the demons say and then what Jesus says in response.

There are many scholars I read that believe their invocation of the name of God is their attempt to do a reverse exorcism on Jesus so that he would leave. They rightly confessed Jesus as the Son of God. But notice it says that they shouted it, because they wanted other people to hear. And we know from other passages that Jesus was trying to keep his identity on the down-low. He didn't want it getting out. The reason is because he had an appointed hour, an appointed time on which

he would die. And if the news got out too soon, too fast, it was going to disrupt God's redemptive plans. And so these demons are invoking the true identity of Jesus, but they're shouting it out so that they would basically say, "Jesus, you need to leave or we're going to expose you."

The other thing is that in this culture, invoking the name of a spirit was a way to demonstrate that you had power over the spirit. This is really interesting. I spent way too much time going down this rabbit hole, but most Jewish people in the Old Testament — there was no category for exorcisms and things like that. There was an evil spirit that afflicted Saul that David played the guitar and made him happy, but other than that, there wasn't a whole lot of exorcisms and demon stuff. But in the first century, huge escalation. And the theory is because of the coming of Jesus — that when Jesus came into the world there was an all-out offensive from the dark world. And so you have this abundance of demonic exorcisms and oppression and things like that.

And what had developed in Jewish culture was almost like a manual for how to get it done. And so there were rules of engagement — like you need to invoke the name of God, or you need to invoke the name of Solomon, and then you need to do this or that. And they would have like special roots that were really hard to find. And there's a story that Josephus tells about a guy named Eleazar who exorcised a big bad demon by getting this really smelly root, tying it to a ring, and holding the ring and root under the nose of the infected person and sucked the demon out through the nose by quoting, "In the name of Solomon," this and that, rigamarole. They had a whole book of Psalms — the Dead Sea Scrolls — there's a whole book of Psalms dedicated to the incantations and whatnot.

And all of that I think is kind of interesting, and all of that is rejected by Matthew. You notice he removes everything that is even in the Gospel of Mark. Mark talks about how they were invoking the name of God. Mark talks about how "we are Legion and we are many." Mark talks about like, "What is your name?" Jesus says, "What is your name?" Mark brings all of that. Matthew says that's not what I want you to think. I don't want you to think that Jesus is using some special power. I don't want you to think that Jesus is invoking the name of God. I don't want you to think that Jesus is using some kind of root and special ring. All that Jesus does in Matthew's gospel is say, "Go." And they go.

And the point Matthew is saying is: Jesus has no rival. He doesn't have to use a special name. He doesn't have to use special roots. He doesn't have to go through the incantations, because he is the Son of God. And when he says the word, the demons do what he says. They're required to do what he says.

Restrained by what Jesus permits

And you see that also not just in them responding to what Jesus says, but in them admitting they are restrained by his will. And so the two things as you're taking notes that you need to know about evil spirits in the world today is that, number one, **they are restrained by whatever Jesus permits.**

And this is just like you see in the book of Job, where Satan comes to Job. He's in the councils of the sons of God — some very interesting thing. And Satan says, "He worships you for nothing. And if you let me torment him, then he'll recant." And God says, "Okay, you may, but only to this degree." There's a limit on the devil. And Martin Luther says, "He's the devil, but he's God's devil. He's a devil on a leash." And Jesus is saying, "That's true for me, too." They are restrained by what I permit.

And that's — you see it in their language. They are begging Jesus: "If you cast us out" — meaning I know you can — "should you decide to, would you please let us go into the pigs?" And so all of that is magnifying in Matthew's telling of this story that Jesus has authority and that he has no rival, and when he restrains them, they will be restrained.

And so in your life, if you're battling evil spirits like what we're describing, there is a sense in which your submission to Jesus, your willingness to be beneath his authority, can help to restrain their power in your life.

Required to do what Jesus says

And not only that, but that when Jesus speaks a word, **they are required to respond.** And Jesus says, "Go," and go they went. And they entered into the pigs. The point is that the whole herd entered the pigs — two thousand of them, according to Mark's gospel — had to do as they were instructed. And in your life and in my life, the same is true today.

What's so unfortunate is that people who are enslaved to evil spirits — so many of those people will do all sorts of things other than go to Jesus for help. They will read books. They will pay money to charlatans who are scams. They will do incantations. They'll basically do what the first-century people were doing. They will wear funny clothes. They will wave crystals in the air. All of that because they rightly recognize there is this evil in the world. And yet in their pursuit of trying to rid evil through a means other than the Lord Jesus, they're actually becoming more deeply enslaved, and these evil spirits are having greater control over their well-being — where the reality is: if you would just merely submit to the word of Jesus, if you would bow your knee to the authority of Jesus and do what Jesus says to do, then the deliverance of whatever is tormenting you can finally be experienced.

And that's what Matthew wants us to see. They are restrained by what Jesus permits. They are required to do whatever Jesus says. And if you would but receive it, you could be delivered just like these two men were delivered.

The town rejects him

He ends, however, with a really tragic response. The two men were delivered, but the town responds with utter rejection. And so the men who were taking care of the pigs — they saw what happened. And so the men who tended them fled. They went into the city and reported everything, especially what had happened to those who were demon-possessed.

Now, you've got to understand: these guys are in charge of watching the pigs. If you owned two thousand pigs, you're probably not watching them yourself, okay? You've hired it out. And these guys are responsible for what happens. And so if you have two thousand pigs that run into the ocean and drown and die, that is a massive economic disruption. And so these guys are going into town to basically tell their boss, "It wasn't me. It wasn't me. I didn't do it. Jesus showed up. You remember those guys in the graveyard? They're all crazy and whacking people that come near them. So Jesus shows up and they do this thing, and then he just says, 'Go.' And then they went into the pigs and the pigs ran off into the ocean. And I swear to God, if you don't believe me, just come up here. They're sitting there. They're not naked anymore" — that's what Mark says — "they're not naked anymore. They're in their right mind. Something miraculous has taken place."

So on the one hand they're trying to save their own hides. On the other hand they are like, "This is insane. This guy shows up and he's got incredible power over the evil realm." And so the whole town comes out, and you would think that they would respond with submission, but instead — behold, in the ESV, "and behold" — the whole town went out to meet Jesus. But when they saw him, they begged him to leave their region.

The same language that's used of the demons — this phrase translated "begged" — is what the town does. The demons begged: "If you're going to cast us out, throw us into the pigs." And now the town is begging Jesus: "If that's who you are, would you please leave?"

Now, there's been a lot of conjecture about why pigs. There's actually, I found out, a Babylonian exorcism manual that talks about sending demons into pigs, and that the way you could prove that a demon was exorcised is that they would have some kind of commotion as they did their exit. And that's what you see here. I would be careful to realize: Jesus doesn't send them into the ocean. Jesus sends them into the pigs. The demons send them into the ocean, because the goal of a demon is to inflict as much damage as they possibly can. And so within the permitted structure of Jesus, they try to have one final salvo — and essentially it

was effective, because the town sees the cost. They see the power of Jesus and essentially say, "We don't want it. We don't want the disruption that you are going to bring into our city" — even though that disruption is our deliverance from evil.

The irony is that the people went out to meet Jesus on the road. This was the same road that was previously inaccessible because of their demonic oppression. So the road that they used to could not travel, they can now travel freely. And as they freely travel on that road, they say to Jesus, "We want you gone."

And this is exactly how people treat the Lord today. There is abundant mercy, abundant grace. There is common grace extended to so many of us. There are times in which even the Lord Jesus on a Sunday morning like this would say, "I'm real. I can deliver you. You can kind of taste the power. I would deliver you fully and freely if you would just receive." And even then, with all of that grace and that mercy and that kindness, you would say, "No, I don't want it. I'm comfortable. I've made my peace. I'm managing this, Jesus. I don't need you coming in and blowing this up. I'm managing this addiction. I'm managing my family. I'm managing what I know is destroying me."

And the thing about Jesus is he does not force his will on you. He will leave — but when he leaves, so does his redemption. And so when you resist the grace and the mercy of Jesus, what you're really rejecting is God's redemption in your life. And you can do that for a time, but there comes a time when that'll be the last time. And on that day, it will be too late.

Jesus gets in the boat. He goes back to his town. He does several of the miracles. And then eventually he goes to Jerusalem. I think what Matthew has in his mind as he's telling the story is a prophecy in Isaiah — in Isaiah 65. It's talking about a Gentile country that the Lord is trying to save, and they respond to the grace of God with rejection and hostility. And so the Lord says of these people: "They continually anger me to my face, sacrificing in gardens, burning incense on bricks, sitting among the graves, spending nights in secret places, eating the meat of pigs" — unclean animals — "and putting polluted broth into their bowls."

And this is the description of so many people in our culture. The Lord in his grace condescends. He draws near and says, "I would deliver. I would save. I would heal. I would make all of this better." And they say, "No, I'd rather sit right here in the grave. I'd rather be comfortable in a culture of death than have to submit to a culture of life." And they say, "Keep to yourself. Don't come near me, for I'm too holy for you." These practices are smoke in my nostrils, a fire that burns all the day long.

But it's not just those people that Matthew's trying to expose. It's also the religious people that rejected Jesus for a different reason. These people were rejecting Jesus — we don't really know; Matthew doesn't explain it — they were just more comfortable with the status quo. And a lot of people today reject Jesus

for the same reason. There are other people who rejected Jesus because they saw the truth. They saw that he really was the Son of God. They saw that he believed himself to be the Son of God. And because they couldn't swallow that pill, they had him crucified.

And so the next time that this phrase shows up, it's at the arrest and crucifixion of Jesus. And in Matthew 26, the high priest says to Jesus, "I charge you under oath by the living God." What's he doing? He's invoking the name of God. "I charge you by the living God. Tell us, are you the Messiah? Are you the Son of God?" And Jesus says, "You said it." Yeah. Yeah. That's what you say. Sure. That's what you are. That's what I am. If that's what you say, that's who I am. Jesus told him, "But I tell you, in the future, you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of power. The Son of Man will be coming on the clouds of heaven."

Remember: Son of Man is an appeal to Daniel 7. So you see this juxtaposition. He's the Son of God and the Son of Man. He is sovereign over sin, death, and suffering. And yet he's submitted to the Father's will. He is God in the flesh. He's Yahweh in the boat. He's the covenant God of Israel. And yet he's the Son of Man who submits himself to die for sinners on a Roman cross.

And that was not something that they could get into their brains. That didn't fit what they thought the Messiah was supposed to do. He's supposed to come in here and kill all the Romans. He's supposed to establish his kingdom. He's supposed to make my life comfortable and easy. He's supposed to give me everything that I want. And Jesus is saying, "I've got a different mission. My mission is to save you from sin. And the only way that I can save you from sin is to die in your place."

And it was this moment where they, in rejecting because they saw the truth and they hated it, said, "You've heard it. He's blasphemed. What is your decision? What's the verdict? He's the Son of Man. He's the Son of God. What is your decision?" They say, "He deserves death. He deserves to die." And so they crucified him and they tortured him and they beat him within an inch of his life. And it was actually his willingness to submit to that torture that brought about God's redemptive purposes. And as he died and the earth shook, a Roman centurion looked up and said, "Surely this guy is the Son of God."

Invitation

And so Matthew is helping us to understand that Jesus is the Christ. He has authority over everything. Does he have authority over your heart? He has the power to deliver you from evil, sin, and death and bondage and demonic oppression. But his requirement for you to experience that deliverance is to see him for who he is and receive him — to confess that he is the Son of God, to confess that he is Lord, that he's not a teacher, he's not an adviser, he's not

someone you can kind of keep at bay. He is God, and he deserves all authority and loyalty and allegiance. And that if you'll give him your total allegiance, he will save your soul. And not only after you die and you go to heaven and you don't go to hell — even right now, the flourishing life, the blessed life can be yours in Jesus. But you've got to receive him. You cannot reject him. **To reject him after you see him is demonic.** And it's a sign that that spirit is at work not only in you, but if it's at work in you, it's probably at work around you.

And so as we respond this morning, I want to ask you a couple of questions. Number one: what is that thing in your life that you're trying to manage? You've been managing it instead of letting Jesus heal it, address it, deliver. You've made peace with a sin in your life that is going to ruin you and everyone you love. And whatever that thing is this morning, there's an invitation from the Holy Spirit to lay that before him and to say of Jesus, "I'm going to do what you say. I'm going to submit myself to your word. I'm going to give myself over to your lordship. I'm going to give you my full allegiance."

And I would tell you with confidence that if you'll do that, this darkness, this evil in your life can be freed. You can be delivered from whatever this is. I'm not saying it won't be hard. I'm not saying it's not going to be costly. I'm not saying you won't need help. Those things are all available. But Jesus can and will deliver you because he has all authority. He has no rival. The question is: are you right with him? **It's not enough to be right about Jesus. Demons are right about him, but they rebel. You need to be right with him by submitting to his authority.**

And so as we enter into this time of response, there's different ways that you can choose to respond. The altar will be open if you want to pray, or maybe you have someone in your life that you know you want to pray with or pray for. Maybe you need to give your life to Jesus. You know you're not a Christian, and you can use that connect card on the back of the chair in the seat in front of you. You can fill that out and say, "I want to give my life to Jesus. I'm tired of living like this." Maybe there's a bondage, a dark spirit — maybe addiction, maybe adultery — something that you know you are controlled by and you are tired of it and you want freedom and deliverance. Fill out that card and we will connect you with one of our counselors and we will start working with you to let the Lord Jesus break you free from whatever it is. But this is the time to respond. Don't hear the word and reject it. Hear the word and respond however the Lord may lead.

So let's pray together.

Father in heaven, we thank you for this time. Jesus, we thank you that even the darkest nights, you are sovereign still. Even the greatest evil that we foolishly give ourselves to — if we're still breathing, there's still time for you to deliver us from that thing. And so for the people here this morning who've kind of given up hope, there's no more outside help for them because they've just gone too far,

they're too far gone — would you not just comfort them with the knowledge that Jesus is greater, but would you challenge them with the decision to give their full allegiance? That they would not leave this room without deciding here and now, from this point forward: Jesus, you have authority over my life.

For the people who are caught in the middle — someone that they love is caught up in this darkness — would you help them with the faith that they have to intercede, to stand in the gap? Just like these men who had been delivered from demonic spirits went around telling everybody — would you give them a testimony, a message that there is freedom and healing in Jesus' name? And Lord, where there has been opposition before, I pray that you would break down that stubbornness, that arrogance, that idea that "I've got this under control." Would you help them not only to see the truth of their sin and their situation, but the truth of the mercy and the grace of Jesus and his eagerness to set them free? And we pray all of these things in Jesus' name. Amen.

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