"The Man Formerly Known as Legion"

(Luke 8:26-39)

Introduction

- In our text this morning, we read again that Jesus and His disciples came face-to-face with the demonic forces of evil (see 4:31-37). As Luke has arranged this Gospel, this is the second narrative story in a series of four consecutive miracles which prove that Jesus is the Son of God. These miracles showcase Jesus' divine authority and power over 1] nature (8:22-25), 2] demons (8:26-39), 3] disease (8:40-48), and 4] death (8:49-56).
  - ✓Illust: "At the outset of His ministry, when He was tempted by the devil in the wilderness, Jesus decisively defeated His archenemy (cf. Mk.1:13; Lk.4:1-13). The Lord subsequently went on the offensive against the powers of darkness (cf. Mk.1:32; Lk.10:19). His earthly ministry sparked an outburst of demonic activity unlike anything before or since, as fallen angels shrieked out in terror whenever they were in His presence (cf. Mk.3:11). Jesus dominated them wherever He found them. They did not attack Him; He attacked them, directly and forcefully, and compelled them to succumb to His commands. The power He exercised over them was absolute, so that in spite of their resistant hatred for Him, they were immediately bound to succumb to His demands" (John MacArthur; *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary: Mark*; 5:1-20).
- When thinking about demons, or the demonic realm, it is relatively easy to land on one of two extremes: 1) To be obsessed with demons and demonic activity, or 2) To be indifferent toward demons and demonic activity. While some people are overly preoccupied with the demonic realm (looking for Satan under every rock, and attributing everything to demonic activity), others are oblivious to it. While some people live in daily fear of demonic presence and power, others find it phony or funny.
  - ✓Illust: C.S. Lewis wrote, "There are two equal and opposite errors into which our race can fall about the devils. One is to disbelieve in their existence. The other is to believe, and to feel an excessive and unhealthy interest in them. They themselves are equally pleased by both errors, and hail a materialist or magician with the same delight" (*The Screwtape Letters* [New York: Macmillan, 1961], p. 3).
- As we will see in this sermon, demons are real and the demonic realm is powerful. We (humans) are no match for Satan or his minions, who are "unclean spirits" (or "fallen angels"; i.e., the one-third of angels who fell with Satan (see Is.14; Rev.12)]. On our own – that is, in our own strength apart from God – we cannot defend against Satan's attacks nor defeat Satan's power.

  But Satan is no match for God. We must not make Satan to be God's (equal but opposite) counterpart. The opposite of Satan would be an arch angel like Gabriel or Michael. God has no opposite. God is the Creator, Satan is creation; God is infinite, Satan in finite. Satan is real, but only God is sovereign. God is God, and Satan is not.
- The sovereign authority of God in Jesus Christ (the incarnate Son of God) is dramatically and clearly on display in the passage before us this morning.

Luke 8:26-39 ~ "Then they sailed to the country of the Gerasenes, which is opposite Galilee. [27]When Jesus had stepped out on land, there met him a man from the city who had demons. For a long time he had worn no clothes, and he had not lived in a house but among the tombs. [28]When he saw Jesus, he cried out and fell down before him and said with a loud voice, 'What have you to do with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I beg you, do not torment me.' [29]For he had commanded the unclean spirit to come out of the man. (For many a time it had seized him. He was kept under guard and bound with chains and shackles, but he would break the bonds and be driven by the demon into the desert.)

[30]Jesus then asked him, 'What is your name?' And he said, 'Legion,' for many demons had entered him. [31]And they begged him not to command them to depart into the abyss. [32]Now a large herd of pigs was feeding there on the hillside, and they begged him to let them enter these. So he gave them permission. [33]Then 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 herdsmen saw what had happened, they fled and told it in the city and in the country. [35]Then people went out to see what had happened, and they came to Jesus and found the man from whom the demons had gone, sitting at the feet of Jesus, clothed and in his right mind, and they were afraid. [36]And those who had seen it told them how the demon-possessed man had been healed. [37]Then all the people of the surrounding country of the Gerasenes asked him to depart from them, for they were seized with great fear. So he got into the boat and returned. [38]The man from whom the demons had gone begged that he might be with him, but Jesus sent him away, saying, [39]'Return to your home, and declare how much God has done for you.' And he went away, proclaiming throughout the whole city how much Jesus had done for him."

➢This biblical narrative is easily outlined with three major headings.

1. The Possession (vs.26-29)

➢Jesus and His disciples sailed from the northwestern part of the Sea of Galilee (near Capernaum) *"to the country of the Gerasenes"* (vs.26). It was during this trip that they experienced the life-threatening storm, which Jesus calmed with His divine authority (Lk.8:22-25). With the disciples were still reeling from that experience, they arrive on the eastern shore of the Sea of Galilee only to be met by a violent and deranged demoniac.

The moment Jesus stepped out of the boat and *"out on land"* (vs.27; *"immediately"* [Mk.5:2]) a demon possessed man approached Him. Notice that Luke wrote that this man had *"demons"* not a demon (vs.27; see vs.30). Demon possession is when a demon enters a living body in order to influence that person from within. For example, we read that *"Satan entered into Judas"* (Lk.22:3; see Jn.13:2, 27).

Personally, since they are filled with the indwelling power and presence of the Holy Spirit of God, I do not believe that true Christians can be (internally) demon possessed (1Cor.3:16; 2Cor.6:15; 1Jn.4:4; 5:18). They can, however, be (externally) influenced and attacked (tempted, deceived, seduced) by demons (Jn.17:15; Eph.6:16; 1Thess.2:18; 1Pet.5:8). The difference between demon possession (from within) and demon oppression (from without) is sometimes subtle but always significant.

Luke 22:31 ~ "Simon, Simon, behold, Satan demanded to have you, that he might sift you like wheat"

➢The man that Jesus encountered in Luke eight was definitely demon possessed. And he had been *"For a long time"* (vs.27). Not only was he helpless to do anything about it, but no one else could help him either. And they seemingly tried everything. The narrative is nerve-wracking and heart-breaking, as the evil cruelty of Satan is on full display: *"... For a long time he had worn no clothes, and he had not lived in a house but among the tombs"* (vs.27), and *"... (For many a time it had seized him. He was kept under guard and bound with chains and shackles, but he would break the bonds and be driven by the demon into the desert)"* (vs.29). In the Gospel of Mark, we find even more gruesome details concerning this man's life and behavior:

Mark 5:3-5 ~ "He lived among the tombs. And no one could bind him anymore, not even with a chain, [4]for he had often been bound with shackles and chains, but he wrenched the chains apart, and he broke the shackles in pieces. No one had the strength to subdue him. [5]Night and day among the tombs and on the mountains he was always crying out and cutting himself with stones."

➢This demoniac was relegated to live (naked) on the outskirts of the city, essentially in a cemetery, as a deranged social outcast who was beyond help. It is quite heartbreaking to think of all this man endured and for how long he suffered – all day and all night. So ravaged and tormented by demons that he was forced to live among the dead. The evil cruelty of Satan is clearly on display in this man. In him we see the devastating, depraved and destructive effects of demonic possession. Apart from the power and presence of Christ, this man is certainly a hopelessly and helplessly in the grip of the devil.

➢Perhaps surprisingly, we read that *"When he saw Jesus, he cried out and fell down before him and said with a loud voice, 'What have you to do with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? …'"* (vs.28). This man – controlled by the demons within him – did not run away from Jesus, but *"he ran"* (Mk.5:6) to Him. Not to harass or attack Jesus. Not to tempt or blaspheme Jesus. The demons compelled this man to run toward Jesus – crying out to Jesus and falling down before Jesus – desperately begging Him to be merciful to them! This alone showcased the divine power and authority of Jesus Christ – the incarnate Son of God.

The demons knew that Jesus had the power to destroy them, and they knew that Jesus would ultimately destroy them. *"I beg you, do not torment me"* (vs.28; *"torment"* [*basanizō*; or torture] see Rev.20:10).

Matt 8:29 ~ "And behold, they cried out, 'What have you to do with us, O Son of God? Have you come here to torment [*basanizō*] us before the time?'"

Mark 5:6-7 ~ "And when he saw Jesus from afar, he ran and fell down before him. [7]And crying out with a loud voice, he said, 'What have you to do with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I adjure [*horkizō*] you by God, do not torment [*basanizō*] me.'"

➢Equally important, if not principally important, the demons knew (know) exactly who Jesus was (is). They specifically and repeatedly proclaimed His divine nature and character.

Luke 4:31-37 ~ "And he went down to Capernaum, a city of Galilee. And he was teaching them on the Sabbath, [32]and they were astonished at his teaching, for his word possessed authority. [33]And in the synagogue there was a man who had the spirit of an unclean demon, and he cried out with a loud voice, [34]'Ha! What have you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are – the Holy One of God.' [35]But Jesus rebuked him, saying, 'Be silent and come out of him!' And when the demon had thrown him down in their midst, he came out of him, having done him no harm. [36]And they were all amazed and said to one another, 'What is this word? For with authority and power he commands the unclean spirits, and they come out!' [37]And reports about him went out into every place in the surrounding region." (Mk.1:21-28)

Luke 4:40-41 ~ "Now when the sun was setting, all those who had any who were sick with various diseases brought them to him, and he laid his hands on every one of them and healed them. [41]And demons also came out of many, crying, 'You are the Son of God!' But he rebuked them and would not allow them to speak, because they knew that he was the Christ." (see Lk.4:3, 9)

Mark 3:11-12 ~ "And whenever the unclean spirits saw him, they fell down before him and cried out, 'You are the Son of God.' [12]And he strictly ordered them not to make him known."

➢Unfortunately, demons have better theology than most people today – including professing Christians (who deny the deity of Jesus). Though they deceive others, demons are not themselves deceived into thinking that Jesus was merely a moral man or a good teacher. The demons were never duped into thinking that Jesus "never claimed to be God." Demons hate God, and hate the Son of God, but demons know exactly who Jesus is!

James 2:19 ~ "You believe that God is one; you do well. Even the demons believe – and shudder [*phrissō*]!"

Luke 10:17 ~ "The seventy-two returned with joy, saying, 'Lord, even the demons are subject to us in your name!'" (see Acts 19:11-20)

➢The demons knew that day of their eternal torment was inevitable, they just did not think it was to begin this day. While they are resolute in their rebellion against God, they are under no illusion that they can have any victory over Christ – whether temporal or eternal.

2. The Dispossession (vs.30-33)

➢At this point, the story is even more terrifying and tragic. When Jesus asked, *"What is your name?"* (vs.30), the demoniac answered: *"Legion"* (*legiōn*; vs.30). This was not a proper name, but a description of how many demons possessed this man – *"for many demons had entered him"* (vs.30). In ancient Roman times, "legion" represented a large division of soldiers. Typically, in Jesus' day, a "legion" consisted of 6,000 Roman soldiers. While not necessarily an exact number, in the Bible the term "Legion" conservatively refers to thousands.

This word is used only four times in the New Testament, with three of them being used in the synoptic Gospels . The only other occurrence is found when, before He was arrested in the Garden, Jesus rebuked Peter for trying to defend Him with a sword (Matt.26:50-56; Lk.22:49-53; Jn.18:10-11)

Matt 26:53 ~ "Do you think that I cannot appeal to my Father, and he will at once send me more than twelve legions of angels?" [i.e., approximatley 72,000 angels]

➢This poor man was occupied by thousands of demons (enough to inhabit and destroy *"about two thousand"* pigs according to Mk.5:13). He was helplessly under their demonic/satanic authority and power. But the demons were helplessly and hopelessly under the authority of Jesus Christ!

➢The demons *"begged"* (*parakaleō*; vs.31 [see *"beg"* (*deomai*) vs.28]) Jesus with a two-fold plea. First, they asked Him *"not to command them to depart into the abyss"* (vs.31). The start of Jesus' earthly (public) ministry represented a head-on collision between heaven and hell. From the beginning, the activity and intensity within the dominion of darkness escalated as the coming of the Messiah signified the beginning of the end for Satan and all his demons. While this conflict was demonstrated in Jesus' encounter with demons, it began long before Jesus was born.

Gen 3:15 ~ "I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel."

Heb 2:14-15 ~ "Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same things, that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil, [15]and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery."

1 John 3:8 ~ "… The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil." (see Jn.12:31; 16:11; Col.1:13; Rev.20:1-10)

Second, if He agreed to their first request, they *"begged"* (vs.32) Jesus to send them into the herd of pigs nearby. *"Now a large herd of pigs was feeding there on the hillside, and they begged him to let them enter these. So he gave them permission"* (vs.32). In Mark's account, we read that there were *"about two thousand"* (Mk.5:13) in this *"large heard of pigs"* (vs.32).

Again, notice the language. The demons are absolutely under the sovereign authority of Jesus Christ. Once they had permission from Jesus, *"Then the demons came out of the man and entered the pigs, and the herd rushed down the steep bank into the lake and drowned"* (vs.33). This is the first occurrence of "deviled ham" (I am contractually obligated to say that).

➢At the authority of Jesus, these powerful demons were reduced to cowering beggars. The legion of demons who had their way with this man, were no match of the Son of Man. The demons who terrorized and overpowered the people, could not do anything without Christ's permission. The devil is indeed *"a roaring lion"* (1Pet.5:8), but he has a chain around his neck that is held by God. God has Satan on a leash. The devil, and all his demons, cannot operate outside of the sovereignty of God. Again, we are no match for Satan. And Satan is no match for God!

Job 1:10 ~ "Have you not put a hedge around him and his house and all that he has, on every side? You have blessed the work of his hands, and his possessions have increased in the land."

Eph 6:10-11 ~ "Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. [11]Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil."

3. The Reaction (vs.34-39)

➢The reaction from those who witnessed (and heard about) this is miracle is, in one way, surprising. Jesus' encounter with this demon possessed may clearly, undeniably, shows His divine authority and power over the demonic realm. Would they worship Him as God? Would they fall on their faces before Him in fear and reverence? Did they rejoice at the deliverance of the man possessed by a legion of demons? No.

John 4:28-30, 39-42 ~ "So the woman left her water jar and went away into town and said to the people, [29]'Come, see a man who told me all that I ever did. Can this be the Christ?' [30]They went out of the town and were coming to him. …

[39]Many Samaritans from that town believed in him because of the woman's testimony, 'He told me all that I ever did.' [40]So when the Samaritans came to him, they asked him to stay with them, and he stayed there two days. [41]And many more believed because of his word. [42]They said to the woman, 'It is no longer because of what you said that we believe, for we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this is indeed the Savior of the world.'"

➢With arguably a much greater (more dramatic) miracle, when the people heard – and saw for themselves – what Jesus did, they asked Him to leave. *"When the herdsmen saw what had happened, they fled and told it in the city and in the country. [35]Then people went out to see what had happened, and they came to Jesus and found the man from whom the demons had gone, sitting at the feet of Jesus, clothed and in his right mind, and they were afraid. [36]And those who had seen it told them how the demon-possessed man had been healed. [37]Then all the people of the surrounding country of the Gerasenes asked him to depart from them, for they were seized with great fear. So he got into the boat and returned"* (vs.33-37).

➢Many commentators suggest that the reason they wanted Jesus to leave is because they were mad that His actions destroyed their pigs – their livelihood. While that may have been a factor, I think there was something much more sinister in their reaction. There was no denying the miracle. Jesus had quickly and effortlessly done what no of them could ever do. Without any physical force, or even verbal altercation, Jesus instantly exorcised this man of thousands of demons!

In response, the people *"were afraid"* (vs.35; *phobeomai*) and *"seized with great fear"* (vs.37; *synechō megas phobos*). But why were they so afraid? The demon-possessed man was no longer a threat, no longer a terror. All the demons were gone, and he was calmly *"sitting at the feet of Jesus, clothed and in his right mind"* (vs.35). One would have expected to read: "And all the people were in awe of Jesus, rejoicing and declaring Him to be the Son of God, and they worshipped Him there!" No, they wanted Him to leave. They wanted to hear and see no more of Jesus Christ.

➢Luke rightly recorded that they *"asked"* (*erōtaō*) Jesus to leave, and Matthew (8:34) and Mark (5:17) inform us that this asking was in the form of "begging" (*parakaleō*). They had to know they were in the presence of God, the evidence was overwhelming, but rather than repent of their sins they rejected the Savior. Like the scribes and Pharisees, who witnessed countless miracles of Jesus – both directly and indirectly – the people loved their sin more than they loved God (see Jn.3:2, 19; 12:9-11; Matt.22:16; 27:18; Rom.1:21). They were awe-struck, but unconverted (unrepentant).

✓Illust: "Knowing that they were in the presence of God, loving their sin (Jn.3:19) and blinded by Satan (2Cor.4:4), they wanted only to be rid of the one whose presence intimidated and terrified them. There was not a word of thanks for delivering them from the danger the man had posed; astonishingly, they saw Jesus as an even greater threat to their sinful lifestyle. Thus they preferred a maniac to the Son of God; to be terrified by Satan rather than offer reverence to God; to endure the presence of demonic danger rather than the presence of divine deliverance; the unholy to the holy; a tomb dweller to the Lord of life. David Gooding writes,

> 'What a sad comment on man's fallen and unregenerate state it is, that man should feel more at home with demons, than with the Christ who has power to cast out demons. Yet it is often so. Men who would try to help a criminal or a drunkard, or, if they should prove incorrigible, would want the one imprisoned and the other put into hospital, find it embarrassing and somewhat frightening if the criminal is saved by Christ and turned into a sane, wholesome, regenerate disciple'" (John MacArthur; *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary: Luke*; 8:36-39).

- And there was still more begging. The demons begged Jesus not to torment them (vs.28). The demons begged Jesus not to command them into the abyss (vs.31). The demons begged Jesus to allow them to enter the pigs (vs.32). The people begged Jesus to get out of town (vs.37; Matt.8:34; Mk.5:17). And now, we read that the man formerly known as Legion was also begging Jesus: *"The man from whom the demons had gone begged that he might be with him"* (vs.38).

  It is perhaps surprising to read that Jesus denied his request: *"... but Jesus sent him away, saying, [39] 'Return to your home, and declare how much God has done for you'* (vs.38-39). Thankfully, we read that this man was obedient to the Lord: *"... he went away, proclaiming throughout the whole city how much Jesus had done for him"* (vs.39). Like the woman at the well (Jn.4), this man did not remain silent – neither had formal evangelistic training. He obeyed Christ's commission on his life and told everyone about Jesus.
- Christ has given this same command (commission) to every Christian.

Matt 28:18-20 ~ "And Jesus came and said to them, 'All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. [19]Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, [20]teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.'" (Mk.16:15; Lk.24:47-48; Jn.20:21; Acts 1:8)

- Unfortunately, unlike this man, many Christians today refuse to tell others about Jesus. And there are several reasons and excuses for this disobedience. Some professing Christians are simply ashamed of being a Christian and ashamed of the Gospel (Rom.1:16). Some professing Chrisitans are simply not willing to suffer for Christ (2Tim.4:10). Some have convinced themselves (or try to convince others) that they do not know enough to evangelize (but the fact is, if you know enough to be saved you know enough to proclaim that salvation). Simply put, evangelism is simply *"[declaring] how much God has done for you"* (vs.39). Some, as vain attempt to portray their disobedience as goodness, say they do not evangelize because they do not want to mess it up (we are merely the messengers, only God can save the sinner). And some wrongly believe that evangelism is simply not their responsibility (they believe it is the job of pastors, missionaries, and "gifted" evangelists).

Conclusion

- Let me conclude this message with two main points. First, this story vividly depicts the divine power and authority of Jesus Christ. This theme is repeated all throughout the Gospels – and the Bible. It is repeated for a reason. Salvation hinges on believing in Jesus Christ as the one and only Son of God and one and only Savior from God.

John 3:18 ~ "Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God."

1 John 4:15 ~ "Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God."

1 John 5:10-12 ~ "Whoever believes in the Son of God has the testimony in himself. Whoever does not believe God has made him a liar, because he has not believed in the testimony that God has borne concerning his Son. [11]And this is the testimony, that God gave us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. [12]Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life."

Second, this story explicitly illustrates various responses to Jesus as the Christ. Those who truly believe in Jesus as the Christ will follow Him as their Lord and Savior. And those who do not truly believe, will reject Him as Lord and Savior.

Luke 6:46-49 ~ "Why do you call me 'Lord, Lord,' and not do what I tell you? [47]Everyone who comes to me and hears my words and does them, I will show you what he is like: [48]he is like a man building a house, who dug deep and laid the foundation on the rock. And when a flood arose, the stream broke against that house and could not shake it, because it had been well built. [49]But the one who hears and does not do them is like a man who built a house on the ground without a foundation. When the stream broke against it, immediately it fell, and the ruin of that house was great."

John 3:19-21 ~ "And this is the judgment: the light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the light because their works were evil. [20]For everyone who does wicked things hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his works should be exposed. [21]But whoever does what is true comes to the light, so that it may be clearly seen that his works have been carried out in God."

Rom 1:18-23 ~ "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth. [19]For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. [20]For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse. [21]For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened. [22]Claiming to be wise, they became fools, [23]and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things."