

MISSION TO GADARA

Luke 8:26-40

Matthew 8:28-34; Mark 5:1-20

Intro: In our Sunday night services as we have been looking at some of the events in the life of our Lord, we have seen something of the busy-ness and variety of experiences which our Lord had here on earth. We have seen that the Lord taught in parables, and why He used parables. After a long day of teaching, He departed in the boat from which He had been teaching, and went to the other side of the Sea of Galilee. On the way, He and His disciples were caught in a dreadful storm. The disciples, several of whom were seasoned fishermen and acquainted with the Sea of Galilee, were terrified, and thought they were all going to die. The Lord had gone to sleep, and not even the storm had awakened Him. But His disciples did awaken Him, and He by just speaking to the Sea, stopped the storm.

We come tonight to the story of what happened after they had safely arrived at their destination. Mark and Luke call it "the country of the Gadarenes" (Mark 5:1; Luke 8:26). Matthew called it, "the country of the Gergesenes" (Matt. 8:28). Although there is some difference as to what the name was then (it probably was known by both names), and even some discussion as to where it was, the Scriptures indicate that it was on the eastern side of the Sea of Galilee. The three Gospels which relate this story speak of it as being on the other side of the Sea from where the Lord did His teaching. However, since its correct name and location are not important for us understand what happened there, I am going to leave those problems for others to try to figure out. What I am concerned about tonight is the miracle which took place on that occasion.

Perhaps I should mention one other difference in the three records of this miracle. Matthew said that there were two demon-possessed men; Mark and Luke referred to only one. The solution to this is fairly simple. There undoubtedly were two, but Mark and Luke have chosen to tell us about only one, the one who was told to go home to tell his friends what the Lord had done for him. Matthew did not include that part. Mark is the only one who said that the man was from Decapolis. See Mark 5:20. Since Decapolis was an area including, as its name suggest, ten cities, it would imply that the effect of this miracles (or, miracles), went far beyond the immediate location called Gadara. One thing that does seem important about this story is that Gadara was occupied by Gentiles more than by Jews. And yet we cannot be dogmatic and say that the people in this story, including the demoniac, were not Jews. Later details in the story seems to

point to the fact that they might have been Jews. We cannot be sure of these details. The demoniac may have been a Gentile. If so, his deliverance anticipated the ministry of the Gospel to the Gentiles. We cannot be specific on details which are not revealed in the text. We have enough to explain by dealing with what has been revealed. Beyond that, let me say that it is easy to get involved in some of the details of the story which are not necessary for our understanding of what happened. We need to spend our time on that which will be spiritually profitable for us.

In speaking of the Lord's ministry, we all should know that nothing was left to chance. Nothing is left to chance in our lives either. But it is important to realize that the storm which the Lord and His disciples passed through, and this meeting with the demoniacs, were not things that just happened. They were all a part of the Father's plan for the ministry of His Son. If you remember the story of the Lord meeting with the woman of Samaria which is recorded in John 4, the Apostle John recorded this which obviously he had been told by the Lord: **"And he must needs go through Samaria"** (John 4:4). The disciples probably did not understand why the Lord said that He **"must"** go through Samaria until they saw what happened there. The same was undoubtedly true of the Lord's visit, as brief as it was, to Gadara. It was a mission. That is why I have given my message the subject, MISSION TO GADARA. Just how extensive the Lord's work was in the lives of the demoniacs, we cannot tell. I am of the impression that for the one it meant salvation. And then when you multiply what happened to him with all that happened to those who heard his testimony, it is very likely that a great work was done among the Gentiles. We will have the full story when we get to heaven. And so I want you to see that the Lord was not on a pleasure cruise; this was all a part of His ministry.

This ought to encourage us to believe that the Lord has purposes in those events in our lives which seem to us to have no meaning, at least when they are things which we may not have planned on.

But let us get to the story.

The first thing we are told by Luke is:

I. A DESCRIPTION OF THE DEMONIAIC (Luke 8:26-30).

Our Authorized Version uses the words "devil" and "devils" throughout this passage. Unless I forget to do so, I am going to change the reading to demon and demons. There is only one Devil, but many demons. This man was not devil-

possessed, but demon-possessed.

I doubt very much if any of us have ever seen anything like this. There are many cases which have been called cases of demon-possession, but I am skeptical as to whether or not that is the right term. It seems that, when the Lord was here on earth, there was an all-out attempt on the part of the Devil to do all that he could to destroy the Lord and to keep Him from doing the work that He had come to do. You really don't read in the Bible of anything like the conditions which existed while our Lord was here on earth. There was some of it in the early history of the Church, but not much. There certainly is such a thing as demon-possession, and it may be more widespread than I believe that it is, but much that is called demon-possession today is just an attempt on the part of some to create something spectacular. I have been in the ministry over forty years, and have seen some weird situations, but nothing that I would call demon-possession.

Be that as it may, we have a real case of demon-possession before us in our text tonight.

He had been in this condition a long time. It seems that there were times when he was controllable, so that he could be chained. But there were other times when he could break the chains. And you can be sure that those who bound him used chains which they were sure he would not be able to break. But then he did. When the Lord saw him, he was naked. He didn't live in a house like normal people would, but in the graveyard. And when the Lord saw him, He commanded "the unclean spirit" (v. 29) to come out of the man, but instead, the demon caused the man to fall down before the Lord, and the demon, not the man, said the words which are recorded for us in verse 28. He knew who the Lord was. He was afraid in the Lord's presence. He knew that the Lord had the power to send him to hell. And he plead with the Lord for mercy.

The demon, or demons, had so completely taken over the man they possessed that they took over his vocals cords, and you would hear the demon's voice, not the man's. The demon would sometimes drive the man out into the desert, but then he would come back.

This was a situation that would have terrorized any community, and it had been going on for a long time. See v. 27. What this demon-possessed man had done, we are not told. But we can be sure that it was a curse on the whole area.

And then we learn from verse 30 that the demon who was doing

the talking represented more demons than were numbered, and which together were named, "Legion." This word was a word common in the Roman army. A legion in the army was made up of 6100 foot soldiers, and 726 cavalymen -- for a total of 6,826 men. Cf. Thayer, p. 373. The very term, Legion, suggests that they were an army! They were a Legion in the Devil's army. And they were so united in what they were doing that they all went under the same name, one name: Legion!

I don't know how this affects you, but it is staggering to my mind. Men used to discuss how many angels could sit on the point of a pin. Maybe this passage gave them fuel for their discussion. Demons are fallen angels. It makes us realize that we don't know as much about the demonic world as we think that we do. Needless to say, this case of the demoniac was, and always had been, completely beyond human help. How he got where he was, we do not know. However, it is clear that he was under the control of a Satanic Legion.

But now let us look at:

II. THE DEMON-POSSESSED MAN'S DELIVERANCE (Luke 8:31-33).

Notice the change in verse 31 from the singular to the plural, from "he" to "they." Now all of the demons began to beseech the Lord that they not be cast into the sea. This was a case of demons praying! They were pleading with the Lord, imploring Him not to cast them into the deep. They knew that they were going to leave the man. They recognized the greatness of the Lord. They had no trouble with our Lord's true humanity because they called Him, "Jesus." Nor did they have any trouble recognizing His Deity because they called Him, "Thou Son of God Most High." They knew that they had lost this battle.

Their plea was twofold:

- 1) They did not want to be sent into the deep.
- 2) They did want to enter the herd of swine, or pigs. This was probably because they knew that the Lord would not let them indwell any of the other people who were around there.

When we read about "the deep," remembering that this took place near the Sea of Galilee, it seems that they were talking about that "deep." However, this is the Greek word for an abyss. It is the same word which is translated nine times as "the bottomless pit" in the book of the Revelation. Cf. Rev. 9:1, 2, 11; 11:7; 17:8; 20:1, 3.

Therefore, it seems that they were pleading with the Lord not

to be sent to Hell, the place of eternal judgment. In Matthew 25:41 the Lord described Hell as the place that was "prepared for the Devil and his angels." The demons did not want to go there ever, but certainly not "before the time" (Matt. 8:29).

Their request to be sent into the herd of pigs showed among others things, their desire to cause trouble. But the Lord had another purpose. If those who owned the herd of swine were Jews, they were involved in a business which was forbidden by the Law of Moses. Pigs were unclean animals. The Jews were not allowed to eat pork, and to engage in a business which was unclean to the Lord, was sin. Lev. 11:7 says,

But the swine, though he divide the hoof,
and be clovenfooted, yet he cheweth not the cud;
he is unclean to you.

Deut. 14:8 repeats the law regarding the swine, and adds, "Ye shall not eat of their flesh, nor touch their dead carcase." Therefore, they were not to eat pork, and it was not, under any circumstances, suitable as a sacrifice to the Lord. And so what the Lord did about the swine was an act of judgment against those who were raising them.

However, let us remember that although the demons were defeated, they were not truly humbled, nor were they repentant. And so their final act in this situation was to drown the swine.

So the Lord sent the demons into the swine, the swine ran down into the Sea of Galilee, and were drowned.

This brings us to:

III. THE RESULTS OF THE MIRACLE (Luke 8:34-40).

Let me deal with the Gadarenes first.

A. The Gadarenes (vv. 34-37).

You would have thought that the people would have been overjoyed because the threat to their community was gone. But that was not the case. Evidently those who kept the sheep were not the owners, and so to avoid being charged with the loss of the sheep, they hurried into the nearby city and told what had happened. It seems like people came to the place of the miracle from everywhere. They saw Jesus. They saw the man who had been delivered, "sitting at the feet of Jesus, and in his right mind." They were told how the demoniac was healed.

The whole thing made them afraid (as is stated twice: vv.

35b and 37m). And they "besought him to depart from them" (v. 37).

This word "besought" is different from the word used in 31. The word used in verse 37 is a Greek verb which was used among those who considered themselves equals. This means that the people who wanted to get rid of the Lord did not recognize Him as any more than a man like they were, and, while they were fearful, they were also angry and actually told the Lord to leave their country.

It showed their spiritual blindness. It showed how hard of heart they were. Monetary prophet meant more to them than the deliverance of the demoniac. They gave no thought to what such a miracle might mean as to the Person Who had performed it.

What a picture this is of people everywhere! Even the evidence that the demoniac had been changed, did not phase them. Bishop Ryle said that there was one main reason that the people of Gadara wanted the Lord to go: They loved the world, and the things of the world. They were of the class who would gladly gain the whole world even if it meant the loss of their souls.

How different it is to turn to the former demoniac.

B. The former demoniac (vv. 35b, 38-40).

The first thing of importance that is recorded is that he was "sitting at the feet of Jesus." The second thing is that he was "clothed." The third, that he was "in his right mind." He was no longer troubled by the demons.

We must recognize that it took a little while for the men who went into the city to go and come back. Therefore, we can be sure that the time in between was a time in which the Lord ministered the truth to the former demoniac. How wonderful it would be if we had a record of their discussion together! The only clue we have is that verse 38 tells us that the man wanted to go with the Lord, and be with Him. This sounds like more than a healing of the mind and body. It speaks of an inner change that had taken place, that his soul was changed as well.

The word that Luke used in verse 38, translated "besought," indicates the expression of a person need. The same word was used by the demons in Verse 28. But how different the prayers were. This man had not been able to hear enough from the Lord, and he wanted to hear more. He had been so blessed by his brief time with the Savior that he wanted more time.

But his request was not granted. The Lord had something else for him to do. (Read v. 39.)

A work of God had started in the heart of just one man in that community. Most of the people didn't want to have anything to do with the Lord, but the Lord left him there as a witness, nevertheless. And he was to "shew" the great things that God had done for him. He was to give a full account, to tell from beginning to end, what the Lord had done for him.

Why did the Lord not grant his request? There are several reasons.

One, the Lord was exalting the ministry of those who were not to be disciples, or apostles. That man could accomplish more in his community than even the apostles could.

Two, the Lord was extending grace to Gadara. The first response is not necessarily any indication of how the work of the Lord will go. There will doubtless be countless numbers of people in heaven who will be thankful that the Lord did not hold them to their initial rejection of the Savior.

Three, this was the best for the former demoniac. Although the ministry that the Lord gave him was not to be easy, yet it was most important. As far as we know there was no other testimony in Gadara. And although he would not be in the physical presence of the Lord, yet the Lord would be with Him, and he would be forever under the care of "God most high."

Concl: We have here a picture of the two ways that people feel about the Lord even today. There are those of us who love Him, and want to be with Him, and are looking forward to seeing Him when He comes. But it seems that there are far more in the world who want to have nothing to do with the Lord Jesus Christ. They would like for Him to go away and never come back. However, the testimony of the Lord will never die, and we can be encouraged to believe that He has His own in the most unlikely places, quietly, but faithfully, bearing testimony to salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ. There are many who could never preach a sermon, but everyone can tell, and tell thoroughly, what the Lord has done in saving them from their sins.