

Luke 8:26-39

Peace With Demons

**With George
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As part of my previous job in the police, I had to go to many different people's houses around the Birmingham area. I visited hundreds of houses and flats. One of the few I remember was a man who I went to speak with took me into the lounge and, there was a footstool completely covered in faeces. I was appalled. Yet he, for some reason had made peace with having something so filthy his home.

In today's passage, we read of a village who had made peace with something even more filthy in their

midst, a legion of demons. Now a legion of troops is over 5000, men so there were 5000 plus demons, all hell-bent on afflicting one poor man. This is horrendous, this is appalling, this is shocking! And yet, it seems as though these villagers had made peace with it. A legion of demons is far, far worse than a faeces-covered footstool, but the principle is the same. They'd got used to it. The people of this village weren't trying to bring this man to Jesus. They weren't imploring Jesus to come to them. They didn't care. They'd numbed themselves to the seriousness of the situation. They'd made their peace with demons.

We can be guilty of the same. There are areas of our life and society where there is spiritual darkness and rather than being appalled and on our knees, interceding, repenting and asking Jesus to bring deliverance and healing, we've made peace. We're tolerating it. We've got used to evil in our midst. In our passage Jesus comes right into that darkness and restores order and life where there are chaos and death. Only Jesus has the power and the authority to do what he does. Only Jesus cares about the poor man in his affliction. What a great God He is!

Jesus had just calmed the storm on the lake as he and his disciples crossed to the other side where another storm is waiting for them. They crossed over the lake from Galilee, across cultural boundaries into gentile territory. Jesus was on a mission restoring order and life where there were chaos and death. "For a long time this man had not worn clothes or lived in a house, but had lived in the tombs." (v27) What a picture of shame and a loss of identity. Not living like a well man, but as a shadow of humanity, like one of the dead, naked and in the tombs. This was evil that was afflicting him. The demons recognised Jesus and they knew his complete authority. We see this because the demons declare Jesus to be "Son of the most high God," There was a massive power dynamic here and the demons knew it. The evil spirits had reduced this man to nakedness, and solitude. The people of the town had reduced him to a wild animal, chained and guarded. This man was suffering greatly, afflicted and unloved until Jesus came. This horde of evil was reduced to grovelling before the King of Kings and Lord of Lords. There was no close competition. They begged Jesus repeatedly not to order them to go into the abyss, a place of punishment for evil spirits where there are only sorrow, destruction and punishment. We hear people joke about partying in hell with Satan. There is the famous quote by Mark Twain, "Go to heaven for the climate, hell for the company." Hell is a place where no one wants to be not even Satan and his demons. Clearly they would rather be free to wreak havoc. Jesus did what the demons asked, yet by doing so, sentenced them because when the pigs drown the demons would be sent to the abyss.

It is strange to see and think about Jesus interacting and agreeing with the begging of the demons. But from it we see four things: 1) The great and almighty authority of Jesus. Above earth and on earth and under earth, all creation and creatures are under the authority of Jesus and will one day bow the knee, by force or in joyful worship. 2) The demons fear of the abyss. They know their fate. 3) We can see the sheer power and destructive intent of this legion of demons. 4) There is always a price to be paid: the death of the pigs and the vast wealth that was lost. The evil of our hearts does not go away quietly either, You will bear it by joining the demons in the abyss. That is the cost we all ought to bear because we were born into sin and we delight in it. The cost can either

be borne by you or by Jesus who took the evil of all who will believe in him into himself. He bore it. He died to atone for it, nailed to the cross, shouldering the wrath of our sin. There is always a price

to bear for the deliverance from evil. Jesus can bear it or we can bear it. Eternal life or eternal death.

After this man's deliverance, after the cost is witnessed, there were two responses: fear that leads to worship and fear that leads to flight. These are ultimately the only two ways to respond to Jesus. Running to Jesus or running from Jesus. Worship or flight. Love or hate. There is a difference between knowing Jesus and loving Jesus. And we know that here in this room. "When those tending the pigs saw what had happened, they ran off and reported this in the town and countryside, 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 of, sitting at Jesus' feet, dressed and in his right mind; and they were afraid. Those who had seen it told the people how the demon-possessed man had been cured. Then all the people of the region of the Gerasene's asked Jesus to leave them, because they were overcome with fear." (v34-36) Evil was in their midst but as long as the money was coming in from the pigs and their comfortable life didn't change, they were happy. They'd made their peace with demons! They had settled into that situation. But when Jesus came in all his authority, they'd lost their pigs and life was no longer as comfortable. They'd valued their comfort and money more highly than a person. Change had come and they didn't like it. They'd settled into their life of tolerating evil, they didn't want to settle into the situation of having God, the one who has authority over demons, in their area. They'd made their peace with demons; they didn't want that to change. They didn't want to make their peace with God.

Where have you made peace with sin? is it with grumbling and gossip? A little murmur and grumble with a few close mates. You grumble about the world; you grumble about church, the way it is run, the people in it. Maybe a bit of gossip and backbiting. Little digs and down-talking about someone who isn't there. Maybe it is self-control. A bit of comfort eating, a few more beers than you should, a bit of porn. Stop making peace with demons! Stop tolerating evil in your heart! The people of the town had gotten used to evil and when Jesus came and brought deliverance, when Jesus came and brought life and order, they wanted nothing to do with it. They were happy as they were!! They wanted it the way it was. Wrong, sure, but it was comfortable. The demons knew the power of Jesus and they had no love for Jesus. The townspeople knew the power of Jesus and they had no love for Jesus. The restored man knew the power of Jesus and, "begged to go with Jesus, but Jesus sent him away, saying, "Return home and tell how much God has done for you." (v38-9) So the man went away and told all over town how much Jesus had done for him." The man knew the power of Jesus and the of love Jesus. Knowledge and love are two very different things. We can't love Jesus without knowing him, that is for sure. How can we love someone we don't know? But we can know Jesus without loving him. The demons did and the townspeople did. The restored man was free. He was a recipient of Jesus's love, of His mercy and grace. When you have tasted and seen the goodness of God, you praise and you tell. You can't keep it to yourself, it bubbles out in praise, in worship. It leaks out in testimony and truth. Taste and see. Come and know Jesus. He has crossed the lake to know you, He has come from heaven into our region of darkness. Into our lives where we have made peace with demons. He has come into our haunts where we are unable to save ourselves and he has born the cost for our evil. He has paid the price for our sin. He is our Saviour, our Redeemer. You may know this Jesus. But do you love Him? Get to know what He has done for you. Taste the freedom that he alone offers. Enjoy the order and life he brings where once there were chaos and death. And as you do, ask him to turn your knowledge into love. That love will spring into praise and it will lead to testimony. So you too will "tell how much God has done for you."

Will we go and tell how much Jesus has done? Will we go to those who are cast off from society into the dark haunts where lost and desperate people gather? Where those who suffer from abuse from others and abuse from themselves are crippled in suffering and sin? Will we go to them and tell them about Jesus?

Let us go and tell how much God has done for us.

