



## SoulShare

Saturday, November 10, 2018, 9:00—10:30 am Breakfast & Discussion:

**The Demoniacs** Matthew 8:28 – 9:1, Mark 5:1 – 20, Luke 8:26 – 39

It is especially difficult to tell my story, partly because of the painful memories but even more so because of the inevitable questions of, “Why?” If I had been healed of a crippled hand or leprosy, it would have been easier, because those are things you are either born with or contract by contagion. But despite the shame and remorse I feel in the recollection, I cannot help telling, because of the wonderful liberation, completely undeserved and unexpected, and even more because it is a message of hope to many.

I have been told that in your day demons are not recognized by many people. In my day they were known but underestimated. They gain authority over those who submit to them. Why would someone do that, you ask? For the benefits, of course. You see, I came from a very religious family. My parents regularly gave sacrifices at the pagan temple to ensure the success of their business. The results they got seemed trivial and unreliable to me. So I made a diligent study of more powerful practices, namely the religions of the ancient Canaanites. What was the source of real power? Ritual sex and human sacrifice. I’d rather not go into the details but leave it at that.

My associate and I found that we could control other people and certain events and outcomes, at no cost to ourselves – so we thought. We did not see the bondage as it tightened around us until, like the coils of a giant serpent, the evil spirits had trapped us with no escape. What did we do at that point? The conflict between what was left of my own will and the power of the unclean beings controlling me led me to separate from society and harm myself out of remorse and a desire to die.

When Jesus suddenly appeared, the demons knew Him instantly and called out, pleading that He not torture them. I had never perceived them to be afraid of anything before and sensed that something big was about to happen. They bargained with Him for permission to enter a herd of pigs. I later learned that He allowed this to reveal the hearts of my neighbors. The pigs apparently got the death wish that I had felt and stampeded into the lake and died.

Suddenly I was free, by the grace of God and the power of Jesus. He began to teach me and the lights came on in my head, I repented of my many sins and He forgave me. I learned things that had been hidden from me. There were many “Aha!” moments. I wanted to stay with Him and learn more forever. But He asked me to go and tell my story. And I found out quick enough why it was so crucial that I do so. I also realized that although I had made a complete mess of my life and the lives of many others, He had a job for me, for which I was uniquely suited – this was REAL power, the power to speak truth in love and bring others to the source of life and meaning.

If a person in your community, seemingly hopeless and dangerous, were suddenly transformed into a rational, gentle, caring human being, would you not be glad? Why not at least for the sake of community safety if not the well-being of that individual? What was their reaction? The economy! The loss of the pigs was the only thing they cared about! And perhaps, looking a little further down the road, there would be concern on the part of buyers of pork that meat offered to idols might be toxic!

I learned that the God Who made heaven and earth, Who chose the descendants of Abraham to produce a Savior, intended the salvation He would bring for all people. Do you obey Him, loving Him with all your heart, all your soul, all your mind and all your strength? If not, you are obeying the enemy, who is the deceiver and the accuser, and so doing you are allowing his servants authority in your life. Once trapped, there is nothing that can liberate you but the power of God Himself. Call out to Him, He will answer.

*Matthew describes 2 men, Mark and Luke mention one. Is this a contradiction?*

*Does it surprise you that his neighbors did not seem happy about his healing?*

*Does the Scripture give any support to those who say that demons were an explanation for mental illness?*

*Look at a few other examples of demon possession for clues to the cause:*

*Acts 16:16-22 "Once when we were going to the place of prayer, we were met by a slave girl who had a spirit by which she predicted the future. She earned a great deal of money for her owners by fortune-telling...."*

*Ephesians 4:26,27 "In your anger do not sin": Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry and do not give the devil a foothold."*

*John 14:30b Jesus said, "I will not speak with you much longer, for the prince of this world is coming. He has no hold on me..." Why? Because Jesus had no sin.*

*Ephesians 2:1,2 "As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient."*

*Could demon possession be an extreme case of the condition of all those who are not redeemed?*

*Could it be said that every conversion is an exorcism?*

*Acts 26:17b,18a Paul states that Christ told him, "I am sending you to them to open their eyes and turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God...."*

*Compare the attitude towards spirits in "primitive cultures" with the modern "developed" societies.*

*Since demons exist, how would they operate in each situation?*

*What sorts of involvement in the occult do we see in our society?*

*How can a person disbelieve in the supernatural and yet attempt to use "powers"?*

*Has this sort of thing invaded the church?*

*How does the "angel of light" disguise work for demons?*

*Understanding these things, how should our lives be different?*

*How was the demoniac in this account uniquely qualified for his ministry as an evangelist?*

*Does God often use our failings for His Kingdom and glory?*

*How do you think he was received by different people?*

*Was he likely to be discouraged by rejection?*

*"Satan and Demons: A Biblical Perspective" [http://www.rossolson.org/new\\_age/satan.pdf](http://www.rossolson.org/new_age/satan.pdf)*