

## **Luke 8:26-39**

### **Intro**

Have you ever watched a movie, or TV show and were so impressed that every chance you had, you talked about it?

Many of us have done that.

Have you ever read an article or a book or meme and you were so affected that you almost immediately had to tell your family, friends, and maybe even your co-workers?

There are quite a few of us who have done that, especially in our social media world.

Have you ever spoken with someone about how you have experienced God moving in your life?

All of a sudden, the answer isn't as quick.

This morning's passage is one of those that revolves around the healing of a man who was possessed, as the scripture says, by demons. He is freed from this state that he had lived in for who knows how long. His first inclination is to stay close to the man who healed him: I think that's totally understandable.

But that isn't what Jesus wants from this newly healed man.

Instead, Jesus tells him to go home, 'and declare how much God has done for you'.

Think about your own life,...and then recognize that this message to 'go and declare' did not stop with this one man, o so long ago. The scripture reads this way.

## **Luke 8:26-39**

<sup>26</sup> Then they arrived at the country of the Gerasenes, which is opposite Galilee. <sup>27</sup> As he stepped out on land, a man of the city who had demons met him. For a long time he had worn no clothes, and he did not live in a house but in the tombs. <sup>28</sup> When he saw Jesus, he fell down before him and shouted at the top of his voice, “What have you to do with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I beg you, do not torment me”— <sup>29</sup> for Jesus had commanded the unclean spirit to come out of the man. (For many times 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 wilds.) <sup>30</sup> Jesus then asked him, “What is your name?” He said, “Legion”; for many demons had entered him. <sup>31</sup> They begged him not to order them to go back into the abyss.

<sup>32</sup> Now there on the hillside a large herd of swine was feeding; and the demons begged Jesus to let them enter these. So he gave them permission. <sup>33</sup> Then the demons came out of the man and entered the swine, and the herd rushed down the steep bank into the lake and was drowned.

<sup>34</sup> When the swineherds saw what had happened, they ran off and told it in the city and in the country. <sup>35</sup> Then people came out to see what had happened, and when they came to Jesus, they 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. <sup>36</sup> Those who had seen it told them how the one who had been possessed by demons had been healed. <sup>37</sup> Then all the people of the surrounding country of the Gerasenes asked Jesus to leave them; for they were seized with great fear. So he got into the boat and returned. <sup>38</sup> The man from whom the demons had gone begged that he might be with him; but Jesus sent him away, saying,

<sup>39</sup> “Return to your home, and declare how much God has done for you.” So he went away, proclaiming throughout the city how much Jesus had done for him.

### **Galatians 3:23-29**

#### **Intro**

Our second passage talks about the imagery of being confined, trapped, and imprisoned.

However, this state no longer exists.

Instead, we are now freed. We are freed because of the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross for our sakes. We are freed because the chains of death could not contain one who was without sin. We are free!

The question is, what will we do with this freedom? Will we live for ourselves, looking to satisfy our own desires? Or will we instead live so that all might know the God who freed us? The scripture reads this way.

### **Galatians 3:23-29**

<sup>23</sup> Now before faith came, we were imprisoned and guarded under the law until faith would be revealed. <sup>24</sup> Therefore the law was our disciplinarian until Christ came, so that we might be justified by faith. <sup>25</sup> But now that faith has come, we are no longer subject to a disciplinarian, <sup>26</sup> for in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith. <sup>27</sup> As many of you as were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. <sup>28</sup> There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus. <sup>29</sup> And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham’s offspring, heirs according to the promise.

## **'Declare!'**

One of the great things about kids (which, I have no problem admitting, also has a tendency of driving their parents just a little crazy), is that if they're comfortable with you, then they will tell you whatever is on their mind.

For example, I can so remember Jim and Austin just talking and talking and talking about something that had them all excited. Even today, when something has Jim excited it's like the proverbial dollar burning a hole in the pocket feel where he's just waiting for the opening to be able to share his story, share his picture, share his video.

But no matter what it is, he has to get it out.

Here's why I bring this up: too often, we have bought into the mentality that we need to keep stuff to ourselves. We've bought into a societal mentality that says, 'we are the masters of our own domain; that others can think whatever they want, just don't bother me with it.'

The reality of this position shows up in just how resistant we tend to be in regard to speaking about (sometimes even using words) what we say is extremely important to us: God, and our faith in the Creator of all.

That is why a passage such as the one we have heard in Luke is so vitally important, not only to hear, but to respond to. The man who was possessed with demons was healed. We hear that statement and we tend to get hung up on the demon part. Some of us wonder what the pigs did wrong that they were the recipients of the demons.

But too often we forget how Jesus ultimately directed the newly freed man: go and declare.

Because here's the thing, there is not a person who is walking this earth who is not in need of the healing power of Jesus Christ. All of us, to using the language from Galatians, 'Jew or Greek, ... slave or free, ... male and female; ... all of [us] are one in Christ Jesus'. We are one in Christ Jesus because each of us need the healing power of Christ so as to be freed, freed from whatever burden of sin that we might carry, freed so as to be welcomed by God in faith, freed so that we might be able to step out in that faith and declare, declare what is at (or at the very least should be) at the heart of our lives. We have been freed, not to go out and do whatever pleases us, but freed so that we might be able to shine the glory where it should have been all along: upon the Almighty.

Yes, it's real easy to think that the person in our Gospel story was more in need of God than we are. After all, look at all of his problems: they were so numerous that they called themselves Legion (he really must have been separated from God). Our problems are nowhere near that great.

What we need to remember though, is that there is not some gradation of separation from the Divine. It's not like someone sits in heaven going, 'well, so and so hasn't sinned all that much so they're only this separated from God. But that guy, oh, that guy has messed up so badly that there's no way that he will ever get back to God'.

That isn't how it works!

What we are able to recognize through Jesus' sacrifice on the cross (and then subsequent theological revelation) is that all of us are in the same boat; all of us needed God to reach out to us; all of us need God to forgive us so that we might be whole.

That's all of us!

We may all be different from the man in our story, but our similarities far outweigh the differences.

And what did Jesus tell the newly healed man?

‘Return to your home, and declare how much God has done for you’.

That is for us as well.

‘You, you who have been healed; you, you who have been brought into a closer relationship with Your Father; You, you who have been freed, go and declare’. We should be like our kids; we should be like Jim and be excited to share what has happened in our life.

If what we have been given means the world to us... no, if what we have been given means eternity to us, then shouldn't we be taking every opportunity that we have to declare the freedom that we have received through Jesus Christ?

If the only way that someone knows you're a Christian is because they see you pull into a church driveway once and awhile, then something is amiss. We have been freed, and being freed, we have been called to declare.

So, this may seem like a bit of a sideways illustration, but it stuck with me since I heard it.

On Tuesday, I called and chatted with Ron Hall to hear how he and Helen were doing. At the end of our conversation he described the following. He said, ‘I went into Walmart and picked up my prescription and when I came back out, guess what? I had a flat tire!!

So as I walk up to the car a younger guy says, ‘you know you have a flat tire?’ And I say, ‘no way!’, because I’ve had this car for all these years and I have never had a single issue...ever.’

Now, here’s where the story got me.

The younger guy asks Ron, ‘do you have someone to change the tire?’, at which point I can totally see Ron’s face as he says something along the lines of, ‘ummm...no.’ Without skipping a beat, the young man says, ‘I’ll help you with it.’

Very quickly, a second helper person gets involved and, in a little bit, Ron has got the flat tire off the car and the save-a-spare on. Ron finished with the following line, ‘so you know, there are still good people out there.’

Here’s why I bring this up, those two people who helped Ron, they were sharing God’s love. I have no idea who they are or if they have ever been to a church, temple, or synagogue, and I am still confident in saying that they were sharing God’s love. Because where love is (in any form!)...God is there as well.

Here’s my mirror moment: if that’s two unknown people helping Ron, what about each and every one of us (and that is regardless of what our lives may look like in the here and now)?

Think about it: we have been blessed with the gift of faith: we has been freed. Shouldn’t every time we have the opportunity to declare that truth, shouldn’t we take it? Seriously, when the opportunity presents itself, step out and declare.

All of us have been separated from God. All of us have been freed of that burden, whatever it may be, and welcomed back into relationship with God; all of us now have

the opportunity to declare to our worlds how important that freedom is. What will we be saying to the world?

**After Sermon Prayer**

Holy God, we thank You for all of Your blessings, and especially this day we thank You for the freedom that You have granted us through Jesus Christ. We pray that Your Spirit might empower us so that we are able to use this freedom to declare the truth of Your life changing and healing forgiveness. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.