Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

Jesus' Power over the Supernatural
Scripture: Matthew 8:28-34
Code: 2261

I know you're anxious this morning again to examine the word of God with us, and so take your Bible and let's look at the 8th chapter of Matthew. Matthew, chapter 8. This is one of those marvelous stories, somewhat familiar and yet so filled with undiscovered reality that we can't exhaust it in one session. But we'll do our best to cover the things that are perhaps most significant to us.

Matthew chapter 8 this morning, and I want to read verses 28 to the end of the chapter. "And when He was come to the other side into the country of the Gergesenes, there met Him two possessed with demons, coming out of the tombs, exceedingly fierce, so that no man might pass by that way. And, behold, they cried out, saying, 'What have we to do with Thee, Jesus, Thou Son of God? Art thou come hither to torment us before the time?' And there was a good way off from them a herd of many swine feeding. So the demons besought Him, saying, 'If Thou cast us out, permit us to go away into the herd of swine.' And He said unto them, 'Go.' And when they were come out, they went into the herd of swine: and behold, the whole herd of swine ran violently down a steep place into the sea, and perished in the waters. And they that kept them fled, and went their ways into the city, and told everything, and what was befallen to those possessed with the demons. And, behold, the whole city came out to meet Jesus, and when they saw Him, they besought Him that He would depart from their borders."

I think, by now, if you've been following along in our study of Matthew, it is obvious to you that the Holy Spirit is presenting the credentials of Jesus Christ as the Messiah. God had determined to redeem the earth, to redeem men, to redeem the universe from the curse of sin. In order to do that He would come into the world in the form of the Messiah and He would take back man to Himself in the redemption of man. He would take back the earth and the universe to Himself, as well. When Jesus Christ came, He was, in fact, God doing just that. The first time He came to redeem man; the second time He comes He will redeem the earth and the universe around it. So it is Matthew's concern, as he writes this marvelous gospel, that we understand that Jesus Christ is the King, the Messiah, the rightful ruler of the world, the king of the earth, the monarch of all monarchs, the Son of God, God in human flesh, God incarnate, the second member of the Trinity. In other words, it is deity that we must see in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now one of the major factors in proving beyond doubt that Christ is in fact the Messiah is to show that He has power over the unseen forces of the supernatural world, the demon hosts. If the Lord Jesus Christ is, in fact, to redeem the earth; if He is to reverse the curse; if He is to take possession of fallen

humanity, it must be that He can overpower that which holds all of this in its control right now; and that, of course, is Satan and his demons. So one who would take back all of this would be one who would have to break the power of the supernatural world. Therefore, repeatedly throughout the gospel record, we find occasions where the writer gives us examples of Jesus' ability to cast out demons. He can do it instantaneously, He does it authoritatively, He does it with a word, He does it with ease, and gives to us clear proof that He can handle the kingdom of darkness.

Now, it's interesting to me that we have already seen that Jesus Christ can resist Satan, where in Matthew, chapter 4 Satan came to tempt the Lord and we have already studied that. Satan tempted him basically in three specific temptations and in each case the Lord was victorious. We know now then that Christ has the power to resist Satan. He has the power to thwart Satan. We might say we already know that He confronted Satan and never gave in. But His power is even beyond that. It is not only a matter of Him being able to thwart Satan, or to prevent Satan from doing something or accomplishing an end. It is not only that He never gave in, it is that He also causes Satan and his hosts to give in to Him. It is not just what Satan cannot do; it is what He can do to Satan. And that's what we see here.

We have seen the perfection of Christ in His temptation. He never gave in. Now we see the power of Christ; he makes the demons give in to Him. So there is the resistant power and there is the overcoming power of Christ, showing us both dimensions of His ability to deal with the kingdom of darkness. And by the way, I don't know if you know how important this is. Perhaps you've forgotten I John 3:8, which says, "For this purpose the Son of Man was manifest." Now if you hear that as an introduction to a verse you ought to take note. This is the reason the Son of God was manifest. Here it is: “that He might destroy the works of the devil.” In other words, our Lord came into the world to destroy the works of the devil. And ultimately when He establishes His kingdom that is exactly what will happen. He will incarcerate Satan and all his demon hosts for a thousand-year millennium, at the end of which He will gather them up to be eternally tormented. He has come to destroy permanently the works of the devil. And in casting out demons throughout His ministry He was giving samples of that great power.

In fact, on one occasion he said this: "If I truly cast out demons, then the kingdom of God is come." Said that in Luke 11. Why? Because one of the marks of the kingdom would be the overthrow of Satan, and He is saying, “If you see Me doing it you know the kingdom is come.” So Christ came into the world to destroy the works of the devil. And Matthew wants us to see the power that He has to do that, and thus, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, records this tremendous work of Christ in the 8th chapter of Matthew.

Now let me add just a couple of other thoughts before we look specifically at the text. The disciples themselves were aware that this was not easy. In fact, in Matthew 17:19, even though the Lord had commissioned them to do this, they came back and said, "We can't do it. We can't get the demons to

respond to us." So they knew that they had trouble in themselves doing it, even though they had been commissioned by the Lord. This is not an easy thing to do, and we shouldn't assume that because the Lord did it with such ease that it's easy for us. There are people today who think they can run around with little formulas and cast out demons. They're deluded. In the first place they have not such apostolic gift. It is not an easy thing.

Further, the Jews were involved in exorcisms. The Jews themselves were involved in efforts to cast out demons. They had formulas and things they went through, rituals, and rigmaroles. According to the 11th chapter of Luke, Jesus even said to them, "By whom do your sons cast out demons?" We meet some such in the book of Acts who went around trying to cast out demons. Now they did it with fear; they did it with a sense of dread; they did it with a sense of apprehension; they did it with frequent, almost total failure; and so when Jesus came along and began to heal, the Bible says that they literally marveled that He could cast out demons in such a fashion. For example, in Mark 1:27, "They were all amazed, insomuch that they questioned among themselves, saying, 'What thing is this? What new doctrine is this? [What formula?] For with authority commandeth He even the unclean spirits, and they do obey Him.'" You see it wasn't just that He cast them out—they may have had success with that at some point if they were really genuine godly people—it wasn't that He just did it, it was the ease with which He did it. It was the absolute authority with which He did it. It was the power with which He did it that shocked them. In fact it was so easy and He did it with such power that they concluded that He really was in collusion with the demons and the whole thing was a ruse. You remember in Luke 11, they said He cast out demons by the power of the prince of demons: “This is a phony deal, folks; don't be kidded. This man is of the devil himself; only if He were in collusion could He get such cooperation.” So it wasn't just that He did it, it was that He did it instantaneously with absolute and total authority that was far beyond anything they had ever seen in their own human experience, and it amazed them, and startled them, and astonished them.

Now remember, Matthew wants us to see that Christ is the one who can reverse the curse and set up the kingdom, and so Matthew shows us examples of His power. One who is going to bring the kingdom of God must be able to do away with sickness, and Jesus can do that. He must be able to handle the forces of nature, and Jesus did that when he calmed the sea, the last miracle Matthew recorded. He must be able to deal with sin, and that would be the issue in the miracle in chapter 9. He must be able to overrule death, and that also will be illustrated in chapter 9. And here, He must be able to conquer demons. So Matthew is giving us these nine miracles in chapters 8 and 9 to show all the facets of Christ's great, glorious power.

Now let's look at the passage in particular. Three key words: possession, power, and perspective unlock the passage for us; possession by the demons, power by Christ, and the perspective of the people. These are the three things we see. Now as we approach the story, Jesus has crossed the Lake of Galilee in a little boat with some disciples. There have been some other boats trailing along as they have come from Capernaum. They left Capernaum after a busy day, the Sabbath day, a day

of healing. By the time they were out in the middle of the Lake of Galilee, night had set in and a storm arose and Jesus calmed the storm. In the placid calm of that water after He had said hush to the storm, they had finished their journey to the eastern shore. And perhaps it is the dawning of the new day, and it dawns so very early in that part of the world that it could be 4:45 in the morning and be dawn. In the dawn of the new day the little boats come to shore and immediately are confronted by an incredible situation.

Let's look at verse 28, the reception by the demons, the reception by the demons. "And when He was come to the other side into the country of the Gadarenes, there met him two possessed with demons, coming out of the tombs, exceedingly fierce, so that no man might pass by that way." Now you'll notice it says, "He came to the other side." The other side is the other side of the Lake of Galilee, "to the country of the Gadarenes." Now this has caused some people confusion because it says here Gadarenes; Mark says Gerasenes; and Luke says Gergesenes. Now is it the Gadarenes, the Gerasenes, or the Gergesenes? You say, "I don't really care," and maybe not, but we want to make sure the Scripture is accurate, right? The best way to understand it is simply this: on the northeastern shore of the Lake of Galilee is a little village named Gergesa. That village would be just about six miles from Capernaum, just across the northern tip, just a little insignificant village, but the topography of the land and the geographical setting there fits the story here. There are cliffs that plunge down to the sea where a herd of pigs could come and fall to their death. It fits the geography. The city of Gadara, which seems to be the indication of Matthew, is much further south and inland, away from the sea, and does not really fit the setting. And so some have said: Mark saying Gerasa and Luke saying Gergesa probably refer to Gergesa, and they're right; but Matthew is wrong because he says Gadara, and that's a different place. The best solution is simply this: Mark and Luke note the village; Matthew notes the whole area, and that's why it says “into the country of the Gadarenes.” Gadara was the major city. And its suburbs, although the main city was inland, the suburbs came all the way to the shore and may have well given its name to the whole area. So, in the country of the Gadarenes near the village of Geresa or Gergesa, either way you want to pronounce it, they arrived. And by the way, they didn't just land any old place. This was by divine appointment.

And so the little boats came up to the shore, "And there met him two possessed with demons." Mark and Luke only introduce us to one of the two because they, for their purposes, focus in on that one. However, neither of them say there was only one. It is obvious there was two, one being the main figure with whom the dialogue of Mark 5 is carried on. But Matthew tells us there were two; the other writers focusing in on the one who was the spokesman and the main point of attention.

Now what does it mean to be possessed with demons? The Greek word is just one word. It means to be demonized, demonized, *daimonizomenous*, to be demonized. What does it mean to be demonized? When we say that today someone is demon-possessed, what do we mean by that? Well some people say, well if you're obsessed it's one thing; if you're oppressed it's something, if you're possessed it’s something. If you're this—but the Bible never makes those clear distinctions. To be

demonized means to be under the control of demons, whether they're inside here, inside here, or outside your ear, or moving through and back and forth, I don't know, but you can get real picky about that stuff and not get very definitive. To be demonized means to be under the control of demons.

Now demons can do a lot of things to people. We know this. They can tempt, and this is what they do to people, they tempt. Now in a sense, in order to tempt they've got to get into our minds to lure our thoughts. They can bring about disease. Paul called the disorder he had, the thorn in the flesh, “a messenger of Satan sent to buffet me.” So demons can attack the physical, they can attack the spiritual, they can attack the mental, because the Bible tells us that doctrines of demons are sent out, perversions of the truth, to distract away into idolatry and error. The Bible—delineating those areas of the physical, the mental, and the spiritual--tells us, for example, in the physical: we have illustrations in the New Testament of demons bringing dumbness, Matthew 9, a person can't speak; bringing blindness, Matthew 12; bringing physical deformity, Luke 13; bringing epilepsy, Matthew 17. They can attack the physical. They can also attack, as I said, the mental, the mind. They can bring insanity, as they do in this case; they can bring a suicidal mania, as in Mark, chapter 9, where the individual who was demon-possessed continually attempts to kill himself. They can bring about masochism, as in this case, where in Mark 5 it says, "The demoniac kept slashing himself, tearing and hacking at his flesh with sharp stones." And they can even cause murder, as they do in the 9th and 18th chapter of Revelation. So they can disable the body and they can derange the mind.

Further, they can attack the spiritual dimension. They corrupt the truth, bring about false religion, occult practices, all kinds of immoral behaviors. They always produce evil, vile consequences. Now let me see if I can give you a definition of demon-possession that will help. And by the way, if you ever try to understand this completely you're going to be wasting your time, folks, because you have to realize this is a supernatural reality and we're not able to go any further than the Bible takes us in comprehending it. But a definition that might help: Demon-possession is a condition in which one or more demons inhabits the body of a human being, and they can at will control that being. That's demon-possession. Now there may be all different degrees, all different manifestations, but that's basically what it means. And by the way, the word *daimonizomenous* is used 12 times in the New Testament. It means to be demonized, and our Lord acknowledges it. The Bible acknowledges it as a reality. In fact, in the early church the gift of miracles, or the gifts of *dunamis* powers, was the ability to cast out demons. It was a major problem in human life. A footnote that always fascinates me, in all of the incidents of demonizing in the New Testament, none of them ever occurred, or none is ever recorded to have occurred in the city of Jerusalem. And I don't know exactly if that's a major issue. But it seems to be, as you look at it, with none occurring in Jerusalem and all of the rest of them occurring in rural settings, that Satan sort of adapts himself to the sophistication of any given element of society. Missionaries, for example, will come home and tell about these very common cases of demon-possession, which seem to us rather uncommon. For example, in my own life only one time have I really been involved in a demon-possessed individual's life, to the point where I actually talked with seven different demons speaking through this individual. That's the only time it has ever

happened. Now if I chased around and tried to find it, it'd be perhaps more frequent than that, but it's not the common thing in sophisticated society. Satan works in other ways, but out in a less sophisticated, more earthy society, this seems to be much more common. For example, where there is pagan religion there is fear, because all the gods of the heathen are gods who have evil elements to their nature; therefore, they have to be appeased. And when those gods manifest themselves in evil ways they put fear into the people and they accomplish their ends. When people in our society act like that we lock them in a little box and shove them away from society. We put them out, we incarcerate them, we hide them somewhere, and we want to ignore them. So they don't have the impact in our society that they would have if they were just a little more subtle, a little more gray flannel, if you will. But in this very rural setting here these maniacs were wreaking havoc.

Now look further at these two poor souls. Let me just add this one thought. In demon-possession the personality of the demon eclipses the personality of the one possessed. In the Mark account, when Jesus says to this person, "What's your name?" the demon answers, "My name is legion." In other words, “There are many of us.” The person can't even speak. I had that occasion happen when I was talking to this woman who had all these demons, and when I would ask a question I got at least seven different voices and the seven each had different names and she couldn't even speak in her own voice. And that's essentially what you have in this case. Demon possession means the automatic projection of a new personality, intensely evil, that eclipses the personality of the individual. Now it may come and go; it may be constant. I'm sure there are a lot of people in our society who are diagnosed as mentally ill who really are possessed. And may I say that the solution for them is the same as it was then. The only one who can have power over the demons is the Lord Jesus Christ.

Look where they were living, in verse 28, these poor souls; "Coming out of the tombs." Can you imagine? I mean if I get near a graveyard at night walking down the street I get the willies, but living in tombs? To the Jew the number one defilement of all defilements is to touch a dead body. How far have these poor souls been driven that they should live in the tombs? And by the way, in that area where the cliffs are high on the eastern shore of the Sea of Galilee, they would, they were naturally hewn out, in manmade chambers hewn out of the rocks for use as tombs, and there they were living in the tombs. And it says, "They were exceedingly fierce." That means violent. They were wild maniacs and if you study the other accounts it tells you more about them.

In Luke 8:27 it says, they wore no clothes, stark naked. Now listen, I know people come up and say, "Oh there's nothing wrong with that. I belong to the sunshine club." Well in the Bible the only people who went around naked were raving maniacs, if that's any help. They had no sense of social balance. They had no sense of modesty. They were wild maniacs. In Mark 5 it says, they tried to bind them with chains and no matter how strong the chains were they broke the chains. They had a tremendous amount of strength.

I'll never forget the girl we were dealing with, with two fingers flipped the steel desk right over in the office on top of one of the men there. Tremendous strength! In Mark 5, it says, they were screaming and shrieking and cutting themselves all over, gashing themselves and hacking away at their flesh with sharp stones. And they were shrieking all with loud screams. It says *krazo*, which is an inarticulate shriek. Now you get kind of a picture, don't you? Stark naked, hacking themselves with stones, shrieking, racing down the hillside with incredible strength, and as a result, it says that no one might pass by that way. Well I hope no one would ever go down there, no one go down that road. As soon as they did, out of the tombs they'd come, screaming down the hillside. And you know what happened? The reception of the demons; they saw the little boats and they were ready to do their number. Out of the caves they came, screaming down the hill, and all of a sudden something happened.

And we find not only the reception by the demons, but the recognition by the demons. Verse 29: "Behold, they cried out saying, 'What have we to do with Thee, Jesus, Thou Son of God?'" Stop right there. What that really means in the Greek is, “Why are you bothering us? Why are you here?” You know what it says in Mark? In Mark 5:6, it says, "When they saw Jesus they worshipped Him." *P roskuneo*; they prostrated themselves, they fell down, they worshipped. Incredible that they should worship Jesus! They did! *Proskuneo* means to kiss the hand, to reverence on the knees with the head to the ground. It is a word of profound awe, reverence, respect, and worship. You say, "What are they doing that for?" Because they know exactly who He is. Listen, demons are fallen angels. Once they were holy angels before they went into Satan's rebellion, and they were involved with God, and they know the second person of the Trinity. Nobody needs to help them with their Christology. They know and they knew He was their antagonist and he was their judge, and He was their destroyer. And they said, “Why are you here to bother us? Are you come to torment us [Watch this.] before the time?" They even had the right eschatology. They said, "You're here too soon." They were pre-tribulation, pre-millennium demons: “This is not the time. You're out of sync. Are you here to torment us before the time?” Think of it, these beings are damned for all eternity and they know it, and they despise Jesus, they loathe Him, they hate Him, and yet they worship Him because they are forced to, by His power. They can't resist it. You see, they know Philippians 2:10: that He is to be worshipped, and every knee is to bow, not only of things above the earth and on the earth, but things under the earth. They knew intuitively that they were standing in the presence of the second member of the Trinity. They knew intuitively that they were there with the Holy One of God who had the power to destroy them, and they said, "This can't be. The timing is wrong.” They even know the redemptive plan. Listen, they're better theologians than most people. They know this is Christ, the Son of the living God. I know some cults who don't even know what the demons know. And they knew what the eschatological plan was, and they knew that they were to be doomed and damned forever.

And so they bow the knee to Christ, their judge. How fascinating that is to me. It may also account for the fact that sometimes demons, through mediums and others, seem to be able to predict the future. It may be that somehow they've already been made aware of the divine plan, and at some points they

can anticipate what's going to happen. They are way ahead of even the Lord's disciples. The book of Revelation hasn't been written—the disciples weren't too sure when all this stuff was going to come to pass—but they knew. It's interesting to me—look at verse 29 again—that they address Him as “Jesus, Thou Son of God.” Oh my, what an important statement! Do you know that the Son of God is a term that's a synonym to Messiah? In Matthew 16:16, "Thou art," said Peter, "the Messiah, the Son of the living God." And, said the Father, through Peter. That was God's revelation that the Messiah is the Son of the living God. And so when they said, "Thou art the Son of God,” they were saying, “You're the king, you're the Messiah, you're the Anointed One, you're the Christ.” You shouldn't be surprised. James 2:19 says, "The devils believe [And what?], and they tremble," because they know the result. They know what's going to happen.

In Luke 4:41, just let me read you a verse there. It says this: "And demons also came out of many, crying out, [and here's what the demons said] ‘Thou art Messiah, Son of God,’ for they knew that He was Christ." Great, they knew, they knew, and they knew they were doomed to the torment of eternal hell. How were they going to escape? I don't think they ever thought they could escape. They knew the power of God. You say, "Why did they attack Christ? Why did they tempt Christ?" You know what I think in my own stupidity? They probably thought they could drag Christ maybe with them into the abyss, if they could just get Him to sin. They hated Him so much maybe they could drag Him into the abyss. They couldn't touch Him in His divinity, maybe they could get Him in His humanity. But they couldn't.

Following their reception and recognition, we come to their requisition in verse 30. They make a request and it's bizarre. "There was a good way off from them a herd of many pigs feeding. So the demons besought him saying, 'If Thou cast us out,'" and they knew it was inevitable because they knew His tenderness and His love and compassion for one who was a captive. "If you're going to do it then let us go into the pigs." Now, what a strange request! I mean what good does that do? A demon-possessed pig? A pig is a pig is a pig right? How do you tell a demon-possessed pig from any pig? What's the point? Well, you say, maybe demons need to be in something. Well that's probably true. Maybe they do. But then again we don't really know why they requested that. Maybe they like to have a home somewhere. Maybe they thought that was a nice concession: “If you don't want us harming people we'll just be content to go into pigs, but please don't send us to the pit.” They fear Christ. They're in awe of Him. They didn't want to go to the abyss: “Just put us somewhere less precious.” And about the least precious thing that they could think of would be pigs, because frankly folks, they aren't kosher, and they shouldn't have been keeping pigs in that part of the country anyway.

Now that's part of the Jewish standard up until this time. It had not been abrogated, and it's very likely or possible that some Jewish people owned those pigs, and that was in disobedience to the law of God. By the way Mark 5:13 said there was two thousand of them in the herd, so it was a large herd of pigs. So there must have been a lot of demons: “Say, we'll go into the herd of pigs.” And really that's all we know. We can only speculate about what they were thinking. Maybe they thought they'd go into

the pigs and they'd sort of evade the pit. Maybe they thought—I'm sure they thought that—but maybe they thought they'd kill the pigs and get everybody mad at Jesus and they'd kill Jesus for killing their pigs. But whatever, they had their little plan. But what's interesting is Jesus' response, and we move from the possession of the demons to the power of Christ in verse 32.

Now we take our focus off the demons and onto Christ. "And He said unto them, 'Go.'" You want to know something? When men try to cast out demons they got to work hard to get the demons to cooperate. When Christ comes they want to go. All they want to know is where they're allowed to go and He said, "Go. And when they were [gone out or] come out, they went into the herd of swine: and, behold, the whole herd of swine ran violently down a steep place and into the sea, and perished in the waters." They all went right off the cliff, right down to the sea, and all drowned, two thousand pigs. Now some people get upset about this miracle because they think that Jesus has been cruel to animals. I don't know if they have thoughts like that while they're having a ham sandwich or not, but animals are basically created for consumption sooner or later. It may well have been that there were a lot of busy people getting those waterlogged pigs back out of the water so they could cook them, I don't know. But anyway the whole herd committed mass suicide.

Now let me just have you think about this for a minute. How did He cast out all these demons? He said, "Go," that's all. He said, "Go." When He appeared they wanted to leave and He commanded them to leave. "Be gone." One word. Now that is the thing that shocked everybody. It wasn't that He did it. It was how He did it. Instantaneously and totally! And you have to understand, people, that these demons are powerful, powerful beings. Men cannot deal with them. We can't deal on the supernatural level. It's so silly for people to run around thinking they can cast out demons by their cleverness. The demons are way ahead of you on that. In II Peter 2:11 it says, "Angels are greater in power and might than men." In Psalm 103, that I read this morning, it says, "The angels excel in strength." You say, "Well the demons: are they as powerful as the holy angels?" Well they must be in one sense because in Daniel, we've seen in chapter 10 that a holy angel came with a dispatched message from God to Daniel, but a demon held him up for three weeks and God had to send Michael to let him go. They're powerful. In fact, in Ephesians 6, it says if we're going to handle them we have to put on the armor of God. We have to be strong in His might. Demons are powerful.

One holy angel, in II Kings 19:35, it says, slew 185,000 Assyrians in one shot, so they far surpass men. They have superior intelligence, that's obvious from Ezekiel 28; they have superior strength, you can see that right with this maniac in Mark 5 that kept breaking the chains; you can see it in Acts 19, Matthew 17. They have superior power. They can do signs and wonders according to Thessalonians, chapter 2; they have a superior scope, that is, they range across the heavens, according to Daniel 10. They have superior experience; they have lived before the creation of man. They have been living through all the annals of human history. They have been around a long time and they know what they're about and they understand how men function and think. They have superior nature. They are spirit beings, they are not bound by any form, and so these are incredible creatures. Only the Lord

Christ could bruise the serpent's head, only the Lord Christ can cast them into the pit, in Revelation 20, and only He can deal with them here. And so, He gives them their request; but not for their sake, but for His. He sends them right into that herd of pigs. Now people say, "Why did He do that?" Why did he? Some people say, "Well because they shouldn't have been raising those pigs and it was a good lesson." Well, I don't think that's the lesson here. I don't think the lesson here is about whether should you or shouldn't you raise pigs. I don't think that's the lesson. The lesson here is that Christ can cast out demons.

Now if He says, "Be gone," how are they going to know they went anywhere? How are they going to know they went anywhere? Send them into somebody else you've got the problem all over again. You got another demon-possessed guy. How you going to demonstrate they left? Look at a normally peaceful herd of pigs. Pigs don't usually swim and they're not sheep; they don't all go somewhere together. Now, watch two thousand of them race toward a cliff, go off the edge, and all dive in the water and drown, and the conclusion is something supernatural just happened. And at the same split second you turn around and the two demonized individuals are sitting, and as Mark says, clothed, and in their right minds, having a wonderful conversation with Jesus. The connection is readily, easily made.

You see, what He did was give a living demonstration of the deliverance of those two men that no one would ever forget. At the same time it did demonstrate the destructive nature of demons, for when demons hit those pigs, instantly they were all destroyed. And I believe it gave to the demons a preview of their own coming destruction. And if you're concerned about the pigs you've missed the point. There's lots more pigs for folks. We can sacrifice a few thousand pigs for Jesus to maintain this demonstration of incredible power. I believe that He wanted a living proof that those demons came out of those men and He sent them into those animals that those animals might put on a demonstration that nobody would ever forget.

That leads us to the final point, the perspective of the people. How did they react? How did they react? By the way, it says in verse 32, interesting footnote: "They ran violently down a steep place." Same thought as in verse 28, that the demon-possessed people were exceedingly fierce. The fierceness and the violence were transferred to the pigs and there must have been as much maniacal behavior in those pigs as there had been in those men; so that the link was clear in the minds of the people as to what had happened. Verse 33: "And they that kept them fled." Now they aren't the owners. They're just the swineherds, the people who cared for the pigs out on the hills. And man, when they saw that their pigs had all committed mass suicide and they'd run down that hill like maniacs into the water, they went their ways into the city. They fled, they sped, they flew, they blew out of there as fast as they could go, and they told everything, and what was befallen to their pigs. Is that what it says? Oh no, what was befallen to those—What?—possessed with demons. In other words, they got the message. The pigs weren't the issue; the issue was the men were delivered from the demons. The pigs were only the proof, that's all.

So they went in and said, "This is what happened." They told everything, and what happened? Verse 34: "Behold, the whole city came out to meet Jesus." Isn't that great? Real revival. They all, and there were the guys sitting there clothed and in their right minds having a conversation with the Lord. How did they react? The whole city came. Well when they saw Him they worshipped him. No, they're frankly one step behind the demons. "They besought Him that he would depart from their borders." Get out! Get out! Why did they say that? Every commentary I read said: "Because they were more concerned about their pigs than Jesus, because they were consummate materialists—'We want our pigs; how dare you do this.'—rather than being concerned, as spiritualists, about the souls of these two demonized men. But those aren't the right answers. Want to know something? It doesn't say a word about the owners of the pigs. None of the three records says anything about the reaction of the owners of the pigs. These are not the owners of the pigs. This is the whole city and the whole city came out, and when they saw Him they said, "Get out of here." Why? Mark 15, "They were afraid." They were not mad, they were not angry, they were scared to death.

In Luke 8:37, same account: "They were overcome with panic." Now if you've been with us the last few weeks, people, you know what this is saying. It's saying the same thing over again. When unholy men face a holy God they are in terror. We're right back to Isaiah 6. "Woe is me." Woe, that's the word of a curse. Isaiah, the best man in the land, pronounced a curse on himself when he saw God because his unholiness was exposed. Peter, when He saw Jesus Christ and the majesty of His power, said, "Depart from me for I'm a sinful man, O Lord." And last week I told you, when the storm came they were afraid, and when Jesus stilled the storm they were exceedingly afraid. They were more afraid of the calm than they were of the storm because they knew God was in their boat and they were in awe of God. They saw the supernatural and it panicked them. They saw One who could control the demons. They saw One who could control animals. They saw One who could take the soul of a man and give it back to him as white and pure as the driven snow, and they were scared to death. They saw God, is what they saw. I don't know if they all understood that, but they knew it was supernatural, and men don't like that. It makes them uncomfortable: "Give us back our pigs and go away." Men can handle pigs; they can't handle God. The mystery of the supernatural they can't handle.

By the way, this is the first recorded instance of open opposition to the Messiah and it all just mounts from here on. He exposed them. They despised him. He was better than they, greater than they, purer than they, more powerful than they, more holy than they, and they resented that. And they felt dirty and inadequate in His presence because He was so holy, and they felt impotent. In a simplistic, human sense R. C. Sproul makes an interesting comparison in this kind of thinking. He says, "It's like the book *The Peter Principle*. You remember the book *The Peter Principle*? It says, in industry basically everyone reaches the level of their incompetence. In other words, you do good at level A so they promote you to B, and you do good at B so they promote you to C, and pretty soon you're at the level where you can't function at all. And so everybody just rises to the level of incompetence so that

basically all industry and all hierarchies are run by a bunch of incompetent people. But he also illustrates in that same book another dimension. He talks about the people who are incompetent and he says there are some people who are just incompetent. They don't rise to the level of incompetence because they're incompetent to start with. And he says they just fit into organizations and they last a long time because they threaten nobody. They're just basically incompetent anyway. So then the first principle, he says, of the hierarchy is the hierarchy must stand, and if everybody in the hierarchy says the hierarchy must stand then it's wonderful to have incompetence because it's no threat to the hierarchy. But then, he says, you get the guy who is the super competent guy. The guy who is super competent nobody likes because everybody is threatened, and he can't rise in industry management because he threatens everybody above him. The only way he rises is latterly. He has to go from one organization to another because he can't rise in his own organization because he's a threat to everybody. People don't like super competence.

Like the kid, when everybody in the class got thirty-two and below, and one little girl got a hundred and you knew the test was fair, you were all just dumb. She messed up the curve and you resented it. Well if you want to put it that way, Jesus ruined the curve. They couldn't tolerate Jesus because of His perfection. They couldn't tolerate Him because of His absolute holiness. He was so far beyond them that He unmasked them, that He showed the stupidity of their own lives. That's why they had to kill Him. And here it all just begins to build. They saw Him, they saw the power, they were absolutely panicked in awe of God. Instead of falling at His feet in worship, they said, "Get out. Go away. We don't want you." People say, “Oh, if you could just see the miracles you'd believe.” Listen, the people who saw the miracles didn't believe. They nailed Him to a cross and they'd seen miracle after miracle after miracle after miracle. They still didn't believe. That just made them hate Him more and more and more and more. People think today that if they can just show everybody a pile of miracles everybody will believe. No, because some people, when exposed in the presence of the awesomeness of holy God, will literally run because they love their darkness. Have you ever picked up a rock and found a whole lot of little bugs under it that have been there for a long time, and as soon as you expose them to the light they just split, try to find a hole? That's the way men are. You expose them to the light of God and they love their darkness. They'll go right back into the earth to find it again. That's where these were.

But God was very gracious to them. The story ends in Mark 5:19, the parallel account, and you have to listen to these two verses. It says this: The demon-possessed wanted to go with Jesus. He wanted to travel with Jesus. He wanted to get back in the boat and go with Him. But “Jesus allowed him not,” Mark 5:19 says. He wouldn't let him go. Said to him this: “’Go home to your friends, tell them what great things the Lord has done for you and hath had compassion on you.’ And he departed and began to publish in Decapolis [and that was the territory there] what great things Jesus had done for him: and all men did marvel." You know what he did? Those hating people who wanted Jesus out of their country never did break Jesus' compassion or mercy for them, so He left them this one lone missionary and his friend, as living proof, in their midst, of His mighty power. A missionary. How

wonderful that the grace of Christ is extended to those who don't even want it. Let's pray.

Father, we don't know any more about the story so we don't know how effective the man's testimony was. We have to believe that he was the instrument, though, in the redemption of some other souls. We thank you for this great record of the proof of your power over Satan. We know that it means that You have power over sin and death, the tools that Satan uses, that someday You'll set this earth right, this universe. You create a new heaven and a new earth to give us glorified bodies where there will be no more sickness, sorrow, tears, crying, pain, or death. Father, we see the majesty of Jesus Christ beyond question. The demons give us testimony that He is the Son of God, that He is coming as judge, that He will damn to the pit the ungodly. That's the testimony of the demons and they know. May we be wise to know as well, beyond doubt, this is the Christ of God. He is the judge, but may we know too what demons can never know, the saving grace that He gives. He didn't tell the man to tell the demons, to give testimony to them—they are beyond redemption—but to tell his friends, for the plan of salvation extends to men. God, may we hear the message of Christ the deliverer and come to know Him and the glory of His kingdom. We pray in His name. Amen.

Whenever I preach a message like this, again I am overawed by the majesty of Christ and something in me makes a new commitment to proclaim Him and to obey Him. I hope that's true in your life. Now, may the grace of God and the love of the Lord Jesus Christ and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us until we meet again. Amen.

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