

“Transformation: Before and After”

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The gospel lesson for today is taken from Luke’s gospel, chapter 8, verses 26 through 39. I’ll be reading from the New Revised Standard Version. Then Jesus and his disciples arrived at the country of the Gerasenes, which is opposite Galilee. 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.

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”— 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.)

Jesus then asked him, “What is your name?” He said, “Legion”; for many demons had entered him. They begged him not to order them to go back into the abyss. 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. 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.

When the swineherds saw what had happened, they ran off and told it in the city and in the country. 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. Those who had seen it told them how the one who had been possessed by demons had been healed. 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.

The man from whom the demons had gone begged that he might be with him; but Jesus sent him away, saying, “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. This is God’s word for God’s people. Thanks be to God.

Let’s pray. God we thank you and praise your name for your presence in our lives. We pray for your blessing on this word and that it would take root in our hearts and produce much fruit. Let the words of my mouth and the meditations of our hearts be acceptable in your sight, O Lord, our rock and our redeemer. Amen.

Peace be with you! Luke 8 centers on the authority of Christ and that God’s word will reveal a way to God—no matter how unlikely or impossible it appears. But that requires a responsibility and a response on the one who hears the word. We’re all accountable sitting here today. At the beginning of chapter 8 the word shows us that our real family are those who obey God. Then we go through a series of miracles. We see that nature must obey and demons. Nothing is outside of Christ’s authority.

Jesus tells his disciples to get into a boat and go to the other side of the lake. About the moment they pushed off, a huge storm swept down on the lake. Jesus is fast asleep, and the disciples are screaming, “Master, Master, we’re going to drown!” Jesus woke up, rebuked the wind and waves, and there was peace. Even the disciples who were right in the presence of Christ needed peace, and when their boat glided up to the shore on the other side of the lake, no doubt, they breathed a deep sigh of relief that they had found some peace.

But, when they stepped off the boat a demonic was immediately in front of them. When he saw Jesus, he cried out, fell at his feet, and shouted at the top of his

voice, Son of the Most High God don't torture me! He was naked and lived in the tombs. A little higher above the shore was a cliff; this was where the pigs were and the herders who witnessed everything.

The community knew all about the demonic too. The people made sure he was kept in chains and a guard watched him, but often he broke loose. Surely the herders expected Jesus and the disciples to be killed, but instead, the next thing they saw was their herd of pigs jumping into the water. The pigs were their livelihood and now they were all gone. The day was going along *just fine* until this guy Jesus showed up. Jesus had no trouble casting out the demons, but the challenge was now the people.

After the pig herders raced back to town to tell everyone they came and saw the man *who used to be crazy clothed and in his right mind and sitting at the feet of Jesus*—and they were afraid. Who knows what Jesus might do next! He'd just commanded hundreds of pigs to jump off the cliff! Now let's think about what the demoniac's lifestyle may have been like.

The demoniac's life had been dehumanized and destroyed by Satan—Satan comes to steal, kill, and destroy. In this story, the demons destroyed the pig's lives and eventually their own lives. Before Jesus showed up, the demoniac wandered in the desert aimlessly. He's screaming all the time and has no purpose or direction, and he's continually bruising himself with stones.

Looking at the town folk, I don't think they wanted anything to upset their day. After all, before Jesus came on the scene, the demoniac was contained and chained—at least some of the time. They may have asked themselves, “Why change what's already working?”

Fact is, most of us don't want to be taken to a place in our lives that's different. It makes us uncomfortable. We don't feel in control, and we want what's predictable in life, but when Jesus comes into your life things don't stay the same.

Now you can resist God if you choose; this is what the townsfolk did. They asked Jesus to leave. Jesus healed and saved the man, but there was one major difference now, he was sitting at the feet of Jesus listening intently. The man was so excited about his new life he wanted to follow Jesus, but Jesus said no, go home and proclaim what's been done for you.

So I guess you're wondering what's the message of hope, and why am I preaching this on Father's Day? My point is this; when we sit at the feet of Christ in prayer, our perspective changes, and we find peace. Jesus may not always calm the storm as he did for the disciples, but we find peace. We're changed and strengthened for the journey ahead.

The presence of Christ gives hope. When we listen and pray our fears are silenced, our relationships become closer, and our families and homes become a place where Christ's name is lifted up. Fathers who are here today, if Jesus exorcised this man who had 40 demons, he can surely make a profound difference in your family. In the story, the winds and the waves obey Jesus, thousands of demons obey Jesus, but *people* resist Jesus.

The townsfolk wanted Jesus to hit the road. In order for Jesus to help us we have to respond. The man who was a demoniac was healed, and he listened and obeyed. Sitting at the feet of Jesus the man was restored and told to go home and declare what God had done for him; this is the most wonderful thing an earthly father can model to his children. Sit with your family and tell them how God blessed you today, how God gave you insight, and what you prayed about. Tell them how God had you meet someone to speak a positive word of encouragement to.

This is the most precious gift a father can offer his family. Allow your family to see how your relationship with Jesus gives you hope. Talk with your family about how the presence of Christ in your life makes all the difference—

anxieties are silenced, and courage and reason are imparted. Some of you men may not have children, but you might have sisters, or brothers, or friends. You're a father figure whether you know it or not.

Seek to be a strong father figure by sitting at the feet of Jesus. It's there we're told and feel how special we are and how much we're loved. We're told Jesus keeps his promises, and when we stand on his promises we're given hope and encouragement.

Let's pray. Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, you are the model of perfect love and nurture. We look to you for guidance and direction. We ask you to bless our fathers here today to sit at your feet and to learn about your perfect love. Teach us the power of loving interaction and how to care for those who need encouragement and a positive word. Send us out to our community to declare the wonderful things you've done in our lives. Amen.