



A Grace that Heals – Hloni Lepele – 9.7.2023



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Luke 8:26-38

Open your mind and heart as you read the passage of Scripture aloud and then again quietly to yourself. Listen for God's word to you.

Spend some time in worship.

Observation

It has been calculated that the country of the Gadarenes was on the eastern side of the Sea of Galilee in the area known as the Decapolis – the ten Gentile cities. Luke, the doctor gives the most detailed description of a demon-possessed man that exists in Scripture. He had been possessed for a long time; he was naked; he lived more like an animal than a person amongst the tombs – something that was forbidden by Jewish law; he was very strong as he broke the chains that held him; and he was disturbed and would practice self-hurt. No one was able to control him.



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At some time he probably lived with the other villagers, but his irrational and violent behaviour forced them to drive him away so he lived in the cemetery outside the city. It seems to be a chance meeting that took place, as if the man was drawn to Jesus. There is no indication how the man became possessed by this spirit but when Jesus commanded it to leave the man, the spirit was reluctant to obey.

It was believed at that time that if one knew the name of another they possessed a certain power over them. The demon addressed Jesus by name in an attempt to exercise such authority. Jesus responded by asking the demon what his/their name was. Jesus took no notice of any superstitions. He knew that there was more than one demon involved in this situation. The demons evaded the question by responding that they were Legion – many – in an attempt to intimidate Jesus.

They begged Jesus not to send them to the Abyss which is the bottomless pit where demons were imprisoned (see Revelation 9:11). The demons needed permission even to inhabit the pigs (non-kosher animals which the Jews considered unclean). In the same way they had tried to destroy the man (who was made in the image of God). Once given permission to enter the herd of pigs, they wasted no time in destroying them.

The men who had been caring for the pigs were terrified when they saw what had happened and ran back to the city, where they told all they met about the incident. As the crowd returned to the scene they were all afraid. They did not know what to make of the sight of the man sitting at the feet of Jesus. Their immediate reaction was to ask Jesus to leave. It was more important for them that He left the area than that the man had been healed. And Jesus did as they asked.

Only the man who had been healed wanted to remain close to Jesus. But Jesus refused to let him travel with them, knowing that he would do more good for the Kingdom of God if he stayed where he was and told everyone what had happened to him, rather than joining the disciples who physically followed Jesus everywhere. Perhaps Jesus understood the man's fear that the healing may leave him when Jesus left the area. But the man did not need to be near Jesus for his healing to endure. Jesus' power to heal was greater than any need for Him to be physically present.

As soon as the healing had taken place and the man had been commissioned to share his story with his own people, Jesus left the area. This healing seemed to be the only reason Jesus had crossed the Sea of Galilee.

Icebreaker:

When you were a child in a group where teams were being picked, how did you feel if you were the first name called – or the last name called? Did being

somewhere in the middle bother you? What did any popularity (or unpopularity) do for your self-esteem? Have things changed now? How? What would you say to that small 'you' now?

Application.

- Who do you know who is marginalized because of their state of health, or a change in their financial situation? How has this change altered their lives?
- Who do you know who is not well physically or mentally? How do you think they would benefit from the healing of God? What sort of healing would you expect Him to offer that person? How would you feel if God answered your prayers for healing in a completely different way to what you imagine would be 'right'?
- The man amongst the tombs was met by Grace. How can you offer Grace to those around you who are physically, mentally, socially or financially challenged? Could including someone you know who is marginalized change their lives for them?
- Briefly share any health issue you are struggling with at the moment. (Remember to let everyone have a chance to share their own story – and allow time to answer the rest of the questions.) Does your health affect how society interacts with you? How? How would you like Jesus to heal you? What difference would it make if you were completely healed?
- How do you feel about the suggestion that it may be you who need healing – in accepting those around you who are not the same as you are? Are you willing to open yourself up to such healing? Why/why not? What may hold you back?
- How can the group help you with the struggles you have mentioned during this session?

Prayer

Pray for those people you have mentioned in your discussion. Ask God for whatever healing He deems fit for them – and praise Him for the answers He gives to them. Pray also for one another in regard to the issues that have been raised during your discussion time, and in regard to other needs of the group.

Service

Make an effort this week to set aside any aspects of marginalization you may notice towards people and seek to include them in whatever you are doing. Ask Jesus to show you how to do this. Be ready to report back to the group what happened.

Bibliography

<https://enduringword.com/bible-commentary/luke-8/>