

LESSON FIVE

CHRIST'S AUTHORITY

A large herd of pigs was feeding there on the hillside. The demons begged Jesus to let them go into the pigs, and he gave them permission.

LUKE 8:32



REFLECTION

Members of a society live under the authority of those in power, whether that is a boss, a police officer, a government official, or even a parent. How do you typically respond to those who are in authority over you? How do act toward those over whom you have authority?

SITUATION

During his time on earth, Jesus showed compassion those who were suffering and brought healing into their lives. Many times this took the form of physical healings, in which Jesus restored a blind person's sight, or made a paralyzed person walk again, or even raised someone from the dead. But at other times, the healing took the form of freeing a person from the stronghold of the enemy. In one such encounter in the region of the Gerasenes, Jesus displayed his ultimate authority over the forces of darkness by freeing a man from demons.

OBSERVATION

Read Luke 8:26–39 from the New International Version or the New King James Version.

NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION

²⁶ They sailed to the region of the Gerasenes, which is across the lake from Galilee. ²⁷ When Jesus stepped ashore, he was met by a demon-possessed man from the town. For a long time this man had not worn clothes or lived in a house, but had lived in the tombs. ²⁸ When he saw

Jesus, he cried out and fell at his feet, shouting at the top of his voice, "What do you want with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I beg you, don't torture me!" ²⁹ For Jesus had commanded the impure spirit to come out of the man. Many times it had seized him, and though he was chained hand and foot and kept under guard, he had broken his chains and had been driven by the demon into solitary places.

³⁰ Jesus asked him, "What is your name?"

"Legion," he replied, because many demons had gone into him. ³¹ And they begged Jesus repeatedly not to order them to go into the Abyss.

³² A large herd of pigs was feeding there on the hillside. The demons begged Jesus to let them go into the pigs, and he gave them permission. ³³ When the demons came out of the man, they went into the pigs, and the herd rushed down the steep bank into the lake and was drowned.

³⁴ When those tending the pigs saw what had happened, they ran off and reported this in the town and countryside, ³⁵ and the people went out to see what had happened. When they came to Jesus, they found the man from whom the demons had gone out, sitting at Jesus' feet, dressed and in his right mind; and they were afraid. ³⁶ Those who had seen it told the people how the demon-possessed man had been cured. ³⁷ Then all the people of the region of the Gerasenes asked Jesus to leave them, because they were overcome with fear. So he got into the boat and left.

³⁸ The man from whom the demons had gone out begged to go with him, but Jesus sent him away, saying, ³⁹ "Return home and tell how much God has done for you." So the man went away and told all over town how much Jesus had done for him.

NEW KING JAMES VERSION

²⁶ Then they sailed to the country of the Gadarenes, which is opposite Galilee. ²⁷ And when He stepped out on the land, there met Him a certain man from the city who had demons for a long time. And he wore no clothes, nor did he live in a house but in the tombs. ²⁸ When he saw Jesus, he cried out, fell down before Him, and with a loud voice said, "What have I to do with You, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I beg

You, do not torment me!" ²⁹ For He had commanded the unclean spirit to come out of the man. For it had often seized him, and he was kept under guard, bound with chains and shackles; and he broke the bonds and was driven by the demon into the wilderness.

³⁰ Jesus asked him, saying, "What is your name?"

And he said, "Legion," because many demons had entered him.

³¹ And they begged Him that He would not command them to go out into the abyss.

³² Now a herd of many swine was feeding there on the mountain. So they begged Him that He would permit them to enter them. And He permitted them. ³³ Then the demons went out of the man and entered the swine, and the herd ran violently down the steep place into the lake and drowned.

³⁴ When those who fed them saw what had happened, they fled and told it in the city and in the country. ³⁵ Then they went out to see what had happened, and came to Jesus, and found the man from whom the demons had departed, sitting at the feet of Jesus, clothed and in his right mind. And they were afraid. ³⁶ They also who had seen it told them by what means he who had been demon-possessed was healed. ³⁷ Then the whole multitude of the surrounding region of the Gadarenes asked Him to depart from them, for they were seized with great fear. And He got into the boat and returned.

³⁸ Now the man from whom the demons had departed begged Him that he might be with Him. But Jesus sent him away, saying, ³⁹ "Return to your own house, and tell what great things God has done for you." And he went his way and proclaimed throughout the whole city what great things Jesus had done for him.

EXPLORATION

1. What was the situation in which the demon-possessed man was living?

2. What did the demons in the man say to Jesus? How did Jesus respond?

3. How did Jesus demonstrate his authority over the demons?

4. How did the people in the town react to the news that the man had been delivered?

5. How did the man who had been delivered respond to Jesus?

6. What does this story say about those whom society has deemed "too far gone" to save?

INSPIRATION

Where did Jesus go to find his first missionary? (*You won't believe this.*) A cemetery. Who was the first ambassador he commissioned? (*You're not going to buy this either.*) A lunatic. The man Jesus sent out was a madman turned missionary. . . .

He's the man your mom told you to avoid. He's the fellow the police routinely lock up. He's the deranged man who stalks neighborhoods and murders families. This is the face that fills the screen during the evening news.

And this is the first missionary of the church.

Palestine didn't know what to do with him. They restrained him, but he broke the chains. He ripped off his clothes. He lived in caves. He cut himself with rocks. He was a rabid coyote on the loose, a menace to society. Of absolutely no good to anyone. No one had a place for him—except Jesus.

Even today the best that modern medicine could offer such a man is medication and extensive treatment. Maybe, with much time, expense, and professional help, such destructive behavior could be curtailed. But it would take years.

With Jesus, it takes seconds.

The encounter is explosive. The disciples' boat beaches near a graveyard and a herd of pigs. Both are ritually and culturally unclean for Jews. As Jesus steps out, a crazy man storms out of a cavern. Wild hair. Bloody wrists. Scratched skin. Fury encased in flesh. Naked bedlam. Arms flailing and voice screaming. The apostles gawk and gulp and put a foot back in the boat.

They are horrified. But Jesus isn't. . . .

Jesus wants the man back. The demons muster no challenge. They offer no threat. They've heard this voice before. When God demands, the demons have one response. They plead.

"They begged Jesus repeatedly not to order them to go into the Abyss" (Luke 8:31). Jesus' mere appearance humbles the demons. Though they had dominated this man, they cower before God. Though they had laced a region with fear, they beg for mercy from Jesus. His words reduce them to sniveling, groveling weaklings.

Feeling safer in a herd of pigs than in the presence of God, the demons ask to be sent into the swine. Jesus consents, and 2,000 possessed pigs hurl themselves into the sea.

And all the while the disciples do nothing. While Jesus fights, the followers stare. They don't know anything else to do.

Can you relate? Are you watching a world out of control and don't know what to do? If so, do what the disciples did: when the fighting is fierce, stand back and let the Father fight. (From *He Still Moves Stones* by Max Lucado.)

REACTION

7. What does this story reveal about the people God uses for his service?

8. How does this story give you hope that Jesus can deliver you from anything you face?

9. How does this story compel you to show compassion for the outcasts of society?

10. While Jesus fought the enemy, his followers watched in awe. What are some battles that you need Jesus to take on for you today?

FOR FURTHER READING

To complete the book of Luke during this twelve-part study, read Luke 8:1–56. For more Bible passages on obeying the Bible, read Leviticus 18:4–5; Deuteronomy 13:4; Joshua 22:5; John 14:23; Romans 2:13; 1 John 3:24; 2 John 1:6; Revelation 14:12.