

DEMON-POSSESSED MAN HEALED AT GERASA

Matthew 8:28-34; Mark 5:1-20; Luke 8:26-39

STRUCTURE

Key-persons: Jesus and the demon-possessed man

Key-location: Gerasa, on the other side of the lake from Capernaum

Key-repetitions:

- Evil spirits: man controlled by evil spirits met Jesus (Mk 5:2); Jesus ordered evil spirits out of man (Mk 5:8); demons begged Jesus to send them into the pigs, and the evil spirits entered the pigs (Mk 5:10-13).
- Actions of demon-possessed man: broke chains and leg irons (Mk 5:4); wandered about screaming and cutting himself (Mk 5:5); fell on his knees in front of Jesus (Mk 5:6); begged Jesus not to send evil spirits out of the region (Mk 5:10-11); sat, dressed, and in his right mind (Mk 5:15); begged to go with Jesus (Mk 5:18); told what Jesus did for him (Mk 5:20).
- Pigs: feeding on hillside (Mk 5:11); evil spirits entered pigs (Mk 5:11–12); pigs stampeded over a cliff into the lake (Mk 5:13).
- Reactions to demon-possessed man's cure: those tending the pigs ran off and reported what happened (Mk 5:14, 16); people were afraid (Mk 5:15); people begged Jesus to leave (Mk 5:17); healed demon-possessed man wanted to go with Jesus (Mk 5:18); people amazed at former demon-possessed man's testimony (Mk 5:20).

Key-attitudes:

- People's fear of demon-possessed man.
- Demon-possessed man's fear of Jesus.
- People's fear of Jesus.
- Cured demon-possessed man's desire to accompany Jesus.
- People's amazement upon hearing the demon-possessed man's testimony.

Initial-situation:

Jesus entered a boat at Lake Galilee and told parables to people standing on the shore. Jesus finished speaking and the disciples got into the boat where Jesus was sitting and launched away. A squall threatened to sink the boat while Jesus was sleeping. The disciples woke him and asked if he cared if they drowned. Jesus commanded the wind to become calm. Jesus asked his disciples why they were afraid. Then the disciples were afraid because the wind and waves obeyed him.

Initial-problem:

Jesus and the disciples crossed Lake Capernaum and arrived in Gerasa. A man with an evil spirit met Jesus.

Final-situation:

The former demon-possessed man begged to go with Jesus. However, Jesus ordered him to go home and tell what the Lord did for him.

BIBLE STORY

Jesus and the disciples crossed Lake Galilee and arrived on the other side of the lake from Capernaum, in the territory of Gerasa. Jesus got out of the boat.

A man controlled by an evil spirit came from the cemetery to meet Jesus. The man lived in the tombs. No one could restrain him, not even with chains. Many times people restrained the man with chains to his hands and feet, but he broke the chains off his hands and smashed the irons on his feet. The man was so strong, no one could control him. He wandered night and day through the tombs and through the hills, screaming out and cutting himself with stones (Mk 5:1-5).

The man saw Jesus at a distance and ran and fell on his knees in front of Jesus. Jesus commanded the tormenting evil spirit, "Come out of this man, you evil spirit!"

The man shouted at the top of his voice, "What do you want with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? Swear to God that you won't torture me!"

Jesus asked the man, "What is your name?"

The man replied, "My name is Legion because there are so many of us." (A legion was the largest unit of the Roman army, consisting of 3,000 to 6,000 soldiers.) The man begged Jesus again and again not to send the evil spirits out of that region.

A large herd of pigs was feeding on the nearby hillside. The demons begged Jesus, "Send us to the pigs; allow us to go into them." Jesus gave them permission, and the evil spirits came out of the man and entered the pigs. The whole herd, about two thousand in number, stampeded over a cliff into the lake and drowned (Mk 5:6-13).

Those tending the pigs ran off and reported to the town and nearby farms what happened to the man and the pigs. People went out to see what happened. They came to Jesus and they saw the man who had been possessed by the legion of demons. The man was sitting, dressed, and in his right mind. The people were afraid. Those who tended the pigs told the people what happened to the demon-possessed man and the pigs. Then the people begged Jesus to leave their region.

Jesus stepped into the boat, and the man who had been demon-possessed begged Jesus, "Let me go with you!"

Jesus denied the request. Instead, Jesus ordered the man, "Go home to your family and tell them what the Lord did for you, and how kind he was to you." So the man went away and began to tell in the ten nearby towns what Jesus had done for him. All who heard the man were amazed (Mk 5:14-20).

GENERIC DIALOGUE QUESTIONS

1. What catches your attention in the story?
2. Is there anything in the story that is hard to understand?
3. Who are the main characters in the story?
4. What problems did the characters face?
5. How did the characters face their problems?
6. How have you faced similar problems?
7. Is there someone in the story who is similar to you or who is different from you?
8. What does the story tell about God?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What do the actions of the demon-possessed man teach us about demons?
2. What happened when the demon-possessed man encountered Jesus in the territory of Gerasa?
3. How did the healing take place?
4. What was the demon-possessed man like after his healing?
5. How did the people react to the demon-possessed man's healing?
6. In our culture today, which is more important, people or possessions?
7. Why did the people of Gerasa ask Jesus to leave their region?
8. Today, why do some people want Jesus out of their lives?
9. Jesus ordered the former demon-possessed man to tell his family what the Lord had done for him. What can you tell your family about what God has done for you?

LIFE-LESSONS

1. **Jesus has power over the natural as well as the supernatural.** Jesus was in the boat with his disciples and he brought calm to a raging storm (Mk 4:37-41). They landed on shore and Jesus brought calm to a raging demon-possessed man (Mk 5:1-15).
2. **Evil spirits are dangerous, powerful, and destructive.** Evil spirits can destroy people's relationship with God and their likeness to him. Evil spirits gained control over the demon-possessed man (Mk 5:2-4). People should avoid curiosity about or involvement with demonic forces or the occult (Deut 18:10-12). If Christians resist the devil and his influences, he will flee from them (Ja 4:7).
3. **Jesus has power over evil spirits.** Evil spirits can use human bodies to distort and destroy people's relationship with God. Jesus freed a demon-possessed man and sent the demons into a herd of pigs (Mk 5:1-13). The demons' goal was to control the man they possessed. Jesus' goal was to free the man from sin and Satan's control. The demons knew that Jesus was more powerful than they, and they begged Jesus not to send them out of the region. If Jesus had sent them out of the region, they would have entered the abyss, or hell. Jesus granted their request to enter the pigs (Mk 5:13), but Jesus ended their destructive work in people. When

Jesus returns, he will judge Satan and all his demons and will send them into eternal fire (Mat 25:41).

4. **Many people would rather give up Jesus than to lose their possessions.** Jesus cast the demons out of a man and allowed them to enter the pigs, which were then destroyed. That was a financial loss to the pigs' owners. The people pleaded with Jesus to leave their region (Mk 5:11-17).
5. **Jesus has the right to determine who leaves homes and who stays at home.** Jesus commanded the four fishermen to leave their homes and professions to follow him (Mat 4:18-22); however, Jesus commanded the former demon-possessed man to go home to his family (Mk 5:18-20).
6. **The person who has experienced Jesus is a living example of Jesus' power, and should share the Good News with those around him.** Jesus told the demon-possessed man who had been healed to go home and share his story (Mk 5:18-20). The man had been isolated from people and unable to speak. Telling others about Jesus would prove that he had been healed.

LEARNING ACTIVITIES

Role-playing Drama:

Tell the Bible story. Pick volunteers to tell the story from the viewpoint of characters in the story. Retell the story. Then volunteers tell the story from the viewpoint of their designated character:

- The pigs' owner.
- One of the disciples.
- One of the demon-possessed man's relatives, talking about the man's behavior before and after his encounter with Jesus.