

Sunday, August 13, 2023, | Everyday Disciple

Week 17 | Luke 8:26-39 | “From Maniac to Missionary”

Last week, we talked about storms. We learned that no matter what kind of storm we are in if Jesus is in the boat with us, we'll get through it. Why? Because Jesus is God. He confirms our destination, commands storms, and challenges his disciples to have faith amid trying situations. Thus, **knowing Jesus' identity makes every hardship navigable.**

Today, we'll be talking about *evangelism*. Telling others about Jesus can be intimidating. What are you supposed to say? What if you can't answer all their questions? Won't people get upset? And while these are legitimate questions, it betrays a misunderstanding of what evangelism actually is. There is no script to follow when evangelizing; it is as fluid and unpredictable as the sea. Furthermore, it is not "if" you will be stumped by questions; it is when. Being dumbfounded is unavoidable. And, yes, should you talk about Jesus long enough, eventually, you'll make someone angry.

But all of that is okay.

Evangelism isn't about following a script, it's not about having all the answers, and it's not about avoiding conflict. To be an evangelist is nothing more than telling your story. It's testifying about who you were *before* Jesus and who you are *after* Jesus. So long as you talk about Jesus, rest assured, you'll be saying the right thing. So long as you point people back to Jesus, trust me, you won't need all the answers. So long as you rely on Jesus, speaking from experience, upsetting someone won't impact you nearly as much as you thought it would.

To illustrate how we are to evangelize, Luke retells the story of an interaction between Jesus and a demon-possessed man. And I want you to notice two things about the Maniac of Gadara:

i. Who he was **before** Jesus (vs. 26-29).

READ: Luke 8:26-29 (ESV)

²⁶ Then they sailed to the country of the Gerasenes, which is opposite Galilee. ²⁷ When Jesus had stepped out on land, there met him a man from the city who had **demons**. For a long time he had worn no clothes, and he had not lived in a house but among the tombs.

²⁸ When he saw Jesus, he cried out and **fell down** before him and said with a loud voice, “What have you to do with me, 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 many a time 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 desert.)

The first time the disciples step out of Jewish territory, they're threatened by a storm and met by a legion of demons.

This demon-possessed man lived an unenviable existence.

1. He wore no clothes.
2. He lived in a cemetery.
3. He was uncontrollable.

ii. Who he was **after** Jesus (vs. 30-39).

READ: Luke 8:30-39 (ESV)

³⁰ Jesus then asked him, “What is your name?” And he said, “**Legion**,” for many demons had entered him. ³¹ And they **begged** him not to command them to depart into the **abyss**. ³² Now a large herd of pigs was feeding there on the hillside, and they **begged** him to let them enter these. So he gave them permission. ³³ Then the demons came out of the man and entered the pigs, and the herd rushed down the steep bank into the lake and drowned.

³⁴ When the herdsmen saw what had happened, they fled and told it in the city and in the country. ³⁵ Then people went out to see what had happened, and they came to Jesus and 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**. ³⁶ And those who had seen it told them how the demon-possessed man had been healed.

³⁷ Then all the people of the surrounding country of the Gerasenes asked him to depart from them, for they were seized with great **fear**. So he got into the boat and returned. ³⁸ The man from whom the demons had gone **begged** that he might be with him, but Jesus sent him away, saying, ³⁹ “Return to your home, and declare how much God has done for you.” And he went away, proclaiming throughout the whole city how much Jesus had done for him.

During the reign of Augustus, the term "legion" referred to 6,000 soldiers. But considering that the word could refer to as many as 4,000, we can surmise that "legion" wasn't meant to convey

a specific number but the impression of a horde. This is backed up by Mark 5:13, which tells us that around 2,000 pigs were possessed. So, which number is correct? 6K, 4K, 2K? Certainty eludes us. But what is certain is that the demons meant not only to convey their vast numbers but also that they were militaristic. They were "Legion," that is to say, an army of thousands. They were not a club or band but a brigade, a troop, an enemy force. They were many, and Jesus was one.

After the demon-possessed man met Jesus, he became an entirely new man:

1. At one time, no man could control him; now, he was sitting at the feet of Jesus.
2. At one time, he did not wear clothes; now, he was clothed and in his right mind.
3. At one time, he lived in tombs; now, he was sent home with a mission.

So, what's the takeaway?

Whether a Christian has been sent **abroad** or sent **home**, all believers are **missionaries**.

Everyone that's been transformed by Jesus becomes a missionary for Jesus.

Never forget the first person commissioned to bring the gospel to his city was a gentile. Always remember, the first missionary was, at one time, controlled by thousands of demons. It was far better for Jesus to leave the once demon-possessed man behind than to have him come along. The city needed the testimony of that formerly possessed man more than that man needed to go with Jesus.

According to a Pew Research study from 2014, 69% of people identify as "Christian" in the state of Maryland, while 8% identify by another faith (i.e., Jewish, Muslim, etc.), and 23% are unaffiliated (i.e., atheist, agnostic, nothing at all).¹ [SHOW GRAPH] And while that can seem like our state might lean heavily in the direction of Christianity and that most of our neighbors believe as we do, the reality is that only about a half (52%-2.14mil.) of those who identify with Christianity are protestant; which is to say, that only half of those so-called "Christians" believe that salvation is by faith alone and not by works. The rest are Catholics (15%) and Christian cults—i.e., Mormonism, Jehovah's Witness, etc. This means that, at best, 35% (2.1 million people) of MD's population is actually going to heaven while the other 65% (3.9 million people) are going to hell. Another way of saying that is two-thirds of Marylanders have no hope after death. [SHOW GRAPH] And, bear in mind, this data is nearly a decade old, and religion, by and

¹ "Religious Landscape Study: Religious composition of adults in Maryland," 2014, *Pew Research Center*, <https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/religious-landscape-study/state/maryland/>, [accessed August 9, 2023].

large, has been trending down for some years.² So, the difference between those who are going to heaven and those who are going to hell is ever-widening.

² *ibid.*

Video Description

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Pastor's manuscript can be found here: