

HEALING OUR SPIRITS

Sermon preached by Robbie Russert and Kyle Inom
Introduction by Reverend Dr. Cynthia Alloway



*Jesus, the Gerasene, and the Unclean Spirits: James Tissot, 1836–1902
Between 1886-1894. Brooklyn Museum*

Scripture:

Galatians 3:23-29

²³Now before faith came, we were imprisoned and guarded under the law until faith would be revealed. ²⁴Therefore the law was our disciplinarian until Christ came, so that we might be justified by faith. ²⁵But now that faith has come, we are no longer subject to a disciplinarian, ²⁶for in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith. ²⁷As many of you as were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. ²⁸There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus. ²⁹And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to the promise.

Luke 8:26-39

²⁶Then they arrived at the country of the Gerasenes, which is opposite Galilee. ²⁷As 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. ²⁸When 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"—²⁹for 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.) ³⁰Jesus then asked him, "What is your name?" He said, "Legion"; for many demons had entered him. ³¹They begged him not to order them to go back into the abyss.

³²Now 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. ³³Then 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.

³⁴When the swineherds saw what had happened, they ran off and told it in the city and in the country.

³⁵Then 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.

³⁶Those who had seen it told them how the one who had been possessed by demons had been healed.

³⁷Then 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. ³⁸The 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.” So he went away, proclaiming throughout the city how much Jesus had done for him.

This is the Word of the Lord! Thanks be to God!



HEALING OUR SPIRITS

I am anxious for you all to hear from Robbie and Kyle. But first I want to explain how this passage fits with their testimonies. It was definitely a Holy Spirit guided day last week when Robbie said he and Kyle could join me for our sermon. Then I studied this passage for today. I was amazed how well their stories fit with this story of Christ healing a Gentile man from demonic spirits!

We all have demons haunting us in various ways in this world. Often, they come in the form of addictions, shopping, gossiping, eating, besides alcohol and narcotics. Sometimes we are afflicted all at once by a legion of demons causing us to self-destruct in many ways.

**Pride can even be a demon that
can bring us down.
Jesus often preached about how
prideful people miss out on
the glory of heaven because
they believe they don't need faith.**

**Mark Twain once said:
Human pride is not worthwhile;
there is always something lying
in wait to take the wind out of it.**

It takes humility to admit we have demons and get help for them.

GENTILE COUNTRY

In today's story, Jesus has just saved his disciples from a storm on the sea of Galilee. They are still amazed that he calmed the storm when they land across the sea in a Gentile country. The Gerasenes were people of a town called Gergesa in a region now known as the Golan Heights. The majority of the people in this region were Gentiles. That's why they found pigs being raised there. Jesus, a Jewish Rabbi, clearly believed the swine were expendable but not the man.

Still today a majority of Jews and Muslims don't eat pork because pigs are thought to be "unclean." (Despite being very cute.) It is symbolic that the man's demons were given to the pigs and the demons caused swine suicide.

JESUS' UNCONDITIONAL LOVE

Look at the image on the cover of your bulletin. Could you reach out to help a naked man tormented by demons? There are many mentally ill in this country who have no access to mental health treatment. Some of them end up looking like this man that Jesus embraced. Maybe he tried self-medicating with wild mushrooms or other herbs that ended up doing more damage than good.

The healing of this man's spirit symbolizes Jesus breaking down many cultural taboos and demonstrating in action the message from the Galatians passage that Kim read today.

Jesus didn't care if the man was Jew or Greek, male or female, enslaved by mental illness or free.

Jesus intentionally showed his disciples how to heal someone who was considered unclean, demon possessed, dangerous, and considered hopeless. Jesus reached out to demonstrate his unconditional love and healing power for all — no matter their status, religion, or condition.

KYLE

I met Kyle Isom for the first time when his appearance was a little bit like this Gerasene man in our passage for today. Kyle was wearing dirty clothes asleep in my backyard. I thought he might be high on something, while Robbie worked around him on my landscaping. When I questioned Robbie about who this was asleep on a chair, he said Kyle was his friend and he didn't want to leave him alone ... because he might die.

I was concerned he might die, too, because his speech was slurred, eyes all bloodshot, he was super skinny, and very sleepy. The mother in me had to feed him because he was so frail looking. He thanked me as he accepted the granola bars and juice and then went back to sleep.

ROBBIE

I trusted Robbie after getting to know him and his family quite well since he and his brother Craig had been wonderful team members on our second mission trip to the orphanages in Haiti.

Then two years later, a few weeks ago, I attended a graduation reception for Robbie's brother Craig. I thought I recognized the eyes of one of the other attendees as I passed by him there but wasn't sure how I knew him?

Kyle introduced himself and said he had been with Robbie in my backyard that day. This was hard to believe because he has been totally transformed looking ten years younger, strong and healthy. Kyle praised God for his recovery. So I asked if he might like to share his testimony with you all.

Benediction:

May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you now and forevermore. Amen



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