

Sermon Script

I. Information

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Title: A Legion of Demons
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Theme: Jesus defeats evil forces
Purpose: To encourage people to live out their faith in a hostile environment.

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II. Text preached

A. Introduction

[Only for the preaching in Church]

Thank you very much for inviting me to talk to you. My name is Christoph Lameter. I am a student at Fuller Theological Seminary in my final quarter. And I am also a Intern at Westminster Presbyterian Church. There is a long ongoing connection between both our churches. I think that is why I am on loan to you today.

[End special text]

One of the assigned texts of the Presbyterian lectionary for this Sunday is Luke 8:26-39. If you have a Bible then please open it up to Luke 8:26-39 and follow along while I am reading.

B. Reading of Scripture

Hear the word of God as given to us by the Evangelist Luke in Chapter 8:26. Jesus and his disciples have crossed the Sea of Galilee with a boat to the other side:

- 26 Then they arrived at the country of the Gerasenes, which is opposite Galilee.
 27 As 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.
 28 When 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"--
 29 for 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 demons into the wilds.)
 30 Jesus then asked him, "What is your name?" He said, "Legion"; for many demons had entered him.
 31 They begged him not to order them to go back into the abyss.
 32 Now 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.
 33 Then 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.
 34 When the swineherds saw what had happened, they ran off and told it in the city and in the country.
 35 Then 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.

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

37 Then 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.

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." So he went away, proclaiming throughout the city how much Jesus had done for him.

C. The Reality of evil

Demons! Do they really exist? But certainly not today, right? Here is an article from the LA Times dated October 1st that talks about the catastrophic Laguna Beach Fires. I will read some passages from that article:

1. LA Times article

Title: Transient Held in Devastating Laguna Fire

SANTA ANA: A 26-year old transient was charged with arson Friday after telling investigators that he started the \$528 million Laguna Beach Fire last October in an effort to *commune with a demon*.

Law enforcement officials said Martinez "willfully and maliciously" set the blaze that in a few hours devastated the scenic beach community.

Martinez told investigators that he was also responsible for other "big fires" in the area, according to court documents. He identified an Aug. 5 brush fire on Green River Drive near Anaheim and later made statements implicating himself in the Laguna fire, law enforcement sources said.

Sources also confirmed that Martinez told police he set the fire to *conjure up a demon king named Gotam*.

After his capture, Martinez seemed calm witnesses and court records said, saying matter-of-factly that it was *his "job" to light fires*.

Councilman Robert F. Gentry said, "This is obviously a man with some mental illness and maybe there's going to be a chance of some therapy".

2. Denial of evil

The councilman's remark echoes the common attitude of our society concerning demons and other spiritual encounters. They do not exist. That man has just some trouble with his mind. His brain is damaged or needs to be reprogrammed in therapy. Evil does not exist. We do not believe in evil. What is called "evil" are just people who do not know better. These people need to be reeducated. There is just a malfunction. Humans work like machines with a kind of computer in their head. It needs to be fixed if it does not work right.

Evil is just a superstition.

From the way the article is written I have the feeling that people sympathize with Martinez. They try to help him since he is evidently mentally mixed up. No one in his clear mind would talk about

demons. He must be mentally ill and not responsible for his action. Let us help him by fixing his mind. You can be sure that a lot of people will not believe his story and doubt that he set the fires. And as I saw on the news yesterday? the charges against him have just been dismissed.

For demons do not exist and evil is just a superstition.

But Martinez said that it was his “job” to set the fires. Who gave him that job? That demon Gotam? Why did he know exactly how these fires started if he did not do it? Why was he trying to contact that demon king? No one tells us. No one is interested in the thoughts of a mentally ill person. But that fire was really successful in the sense that a demon would have wanted it.

3. Evil is real

Are there not indications that there might be more than just a mental illness? Perhaps Martinez is really demonized or is trying to gain supernatural powers from them.

Look at what is going on in public high schools and colleges. In contrast to the public opinion there is widespread fascination with evil among the youth. [wiji]Ouija-Boards, Drugs, Sorcery all is going on among pupils of these schools. I have met pupils for whom demons were a matter of a fact and nothing else. And they are supposed to get “educated” and rid of these notions in these schools.

Evil is a reality today.

My wife experienced something strange a while ago. She was talking on the phone with a woman who had practiced sorcery and other weird things in the past. When she tried to speak a blessing to the woman on the telephone the woman suddenly burst out in curses and foul language. She spoke in a strange voice. And she acted suddenly uncontrollable.

A demon! There are evil forces out there! That incident was a very convincing reminder for us that there are demons. There is evil that will overcome us if we do not stand in the faith. All the denials of our society will not change that. There are beings out there, that want to do us harm, that want to control us.

For demons do exist and evil is a reality today.

Back to our Bible passage to the demoniac. This man that Jesus healed, he had no mental illness! There is no need to find some explanation for the weird concept of demons. Demons are among us today. Concern with demons and other dark forces are one of the major concerns of the New Testament that is often overlooked today in our churches. The Apostle Paul says in Eph 6:12

For we are not contending against flesh and blood, but against the principalities, against the powers, against the world rulers of this present darkness, against the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.

We have to bear this in mind when we read this story of Jesus conquering evil, that evil is real but evil can be conquered. *Jesus overcomes evil forces!* There are evil forces out there. Who are they and what are they doing?

D. Evil Forces and their effects

1. Cannot cope with Jesus. Manifestation

First of all evil forces cannot stand against Jesus. As soon as the demoniac sees Jesus he freaks out and totally loses control. The demons immediately know with whom they are dealing and they panic. The evil forces recognize Jesus and his powers and they cannot stand the pressure they are under. They start shouting.

Something along the same lines happened when my wife talked with the woman on the phone. The blessing was too much for the demons within her and she also lost control. They cannot stand against the power of God. *Jesus overcomes the evil forces.*

2. Effects of evil forces

What did these forces do to the demoniac? The demons took control of him. They gave him superhuman powers. He broke heavy iron chains that were used to control him. Some people are looking for the superhuman effects of spiritual beings and actually want to have a spirit-guide - sounds much nicer than demon -- to have supernatural abilities.

But beware. Being a demoniac is brutal. They drove him away from society. He had to live in caves among the dead. Selfdestructively he is driven into the desert without clothes. They must have tormented him severely. Evil is destructive and destroys this man's personality, his relations to his family and to others. Demons hate humans and first make a mockery out of humans and then destroy them.

The ultimate concern of evil forces is to bring humans away from faith in God and insure that the purposes of God are not realized here on earth.

3. Who are these evil forces?

Who are these forces? Where did these demons come from? There is a passage in 2 Peter 2:4 that might shed some light on their origin.

[For if] God did not spare the angels when they sinned, but cast them into hell and committed them to chains of deepest darkness to be kept until the judgment.

There are evil angels! Contrary to our usual understanding of Angels as faithful servants of God some of the heavenly creatures have rebelled against God. They do not obey him anymore and now try to destroy God's creation including us! There is another passage in Jude 6

And the angels who did not keep their own position, but left their proper dwelling places, he has kept in eternal chains in deepest darkness for the judgment of the great Day.

Some angels have left their posts that were assigned to them by their creator. They are now outside of their places. Note especially the proper place of the evil angels now. They are kept in "chains of deepest darkness" until the judgment day. That is the place where they now belong. It is not God's will that they are freely roaming around on earth but they shall be kept in hell until the day of judgment. Evil forces and demons seem to be Angels that have fallen away from God.

4. How can they affect humans

How can they affect humans? It usually only works when humans willingly cooperate. A passage that sheds some light on that can be found in what the Apostle Paul says concerning Demons in 1 Cor 10:20:

[No,] I imply that what pagans sacrifice, they sacrifice to demons and not to God. I do not want you to be partners with demons. You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons. You cannot partake of the table of the Lord and the table of demons.

Usually there is a real evident act of willing cooperation necessary to get involved with evil forces. Like for example here worshipping them! That is also why they usually cause trouble when people want to come out of witchcraft and sorcery to faith. God and demons do exclude one another. One or the other. If you are a Christian living in the light of God, evil forces will not be able to control you because *Jesus overcomes the evil forces*.

E. *Jesus conquers evil*

1. Driving out thousands of demons

Now that we have laid the foundations for the understanding what is going on here let us get back to our passage. Look at Luke chapter 8 verse 27. Jesus steps on shore, out of his boat, and there you have a man with demons! Note the plural. There is not one, there are many in him. In verse 28 we have the reaction of the demons when they recognize who is approaching them. They immediately know who this is. Here comes the Son of God himself! They know him and they know his power over them. He is their master, the one that they have disobeyed. They are terrified and shout in panic. They fear that he will bring punishment for them. Rightly so because Jesus was already using his authority over them to command them to leave the demoniac. But they do not want to leave. They want to strike a deal with Jesus.

Amazingly Jesus talks with them. I would not want to talk with these demons but perhaps Jesus wants to give us a little bit of helpful insight into how demons operate. Asked for their name they reveal that their name is "Legion". Legion is a reference to the name of a division of the Roman Army. A Legion contains 4000-6000 men! There are thousand of demons in this demoniac!

How could this man ever have accumulated so many demons? We do not know, but he must have been heavily involved in some kind of magic, sorcery and demon worship to be afflicted in such a way. The result was that he was totally uncontrollable. Although people had often tried to keep him in iron chains the powers within him were so strong that he could break them and run around uncontrollable. Demons are tormenting him.

2. CHURCH ONLY: The perpetrator becomes the victim

Then something happens that is quite amusing. When Jesus comes they - the evil spirits - complain that Jesus is tormenting them! The classic turning around of the problem. The poor demons complain that they are abused by Jesus. The perpetrators becomes the victims! That is also a characteristic of evil. Going against evil is often seen as harsh treatment. They are good at rationalizing are they not?

3. Back to the Abyss?

The demons continue trying to get a better deal out of Jesus. And he listens to them! Verse 31 is highly interesting concerning the origin of demons, it says:

They begged him not to order them to go back into the abyss.

The abyss is the same as the place referred to in Jude 6. "Hell" where the evil angels are kept. They know the Abyss or Hell is the place that they belong to and where they are supposed to be. They do not want to "go back". They have been there before! Do we have Demons escaping from hell to trouble people on the earth?

Amazing is again that Jesus grants them their wish not to have to go to hell directly. There is a herd of around 2000 pigs nearby. They enter them, but the pigs cannot stand the demons either and so they drown in the Lake. A powerful sign that the demons really had left the demoniac and a good illustration of the great number of demons that were in that poor man.

4. Restoration of the demoniac

Then - glory to God - the demoniac is restored to regular human society! When people come to see what has happened they see him sitting at the feet of Jesus. He is clothed and talks like any other man. Jesus has freed this man from the powers of darkness that tormented him and held him captive! Now he is just the regular guy again. He is restored to the way God wanted him to be. He is snatched from the hands of evil that abused him.

5. The Power of Jesus is our power

Jesus drove thousands of demons out of the demoniac. Evil has to leave when Jesus enters. Evil forces cannot stand before Jesus. *Jesus overcomes the evil forces.*

Not only Jesus! The power of Jesus is in us through the Holy Spirit as he says in John 14:12

Very truly, I tell you, the one who believes in me will also do the works that I do and, in fact, will do greater works than these, because I am going to the Father.

Jesus went up to heaven to work for us and left us here with his power to do the same things that he did! *Jesus overcomes the evil forces.* Jesus is in us through the Holy Spirit and so we -- through him -- can *overcome the evil forces!*

F. Fight evil in the midst of evil

All this sounds very easy like a simple recipe but it is difficult since all the world around us seems to be so filled with evil. And daily there is be more and more evil. Major parts of our society have abandoned faith completely and are hostile to faith in Jesus Christ. From what I have heard from the public schools, I know that this is the case here in the United States. Even much more than it was in the past when I went to school back in good old Germany. A Christian in the public schools will usually stand alone against all sorts of seductive ideas, ridiculed because of strange beliefs and belittled as primitive belonging to an age long gone. A very hostile environment!

1. Hostile environment: The Rejection of Jesus

This is nothing new for Jesus. Jesus experienced a very hostile environment here on the other side of the Sea of Galilee. The news of what he had done to the demoniac spread. His great power was evident. But what was the reaction? People were afraid of Jesus and begged him to leave. They

probably did just look on their loss of around 2000 pigs instead of seeing the advantage to be free from the threat of the demoniac.

In the same way people are sometimes afraid of us. We are strange to the world. Naturally we are not of this world but of the world to come. People might be afraid of us and not understand us like they did not understand Jesus here. Fear gets them here and they humbly ask Jesus to leave them alone.

And Jesus respects their wishes and leaves. It is very simple to get rid of Jesus. Just say no. They saw that Jesus gave new life and healing to the demoniac. Fear is there, the fear of the unknown and they think it is safer to get rid of him. His presence reminds him of the potentiality that much more of these strange things could happen.

2. A Missionary left

Jesus respects their wishes and does the best that one could do for the people. The healed demoniac is so thankful that he wants to be a disciple of Jesus. But Jesus does not allow it. The demoniac has a family of which he should take care now. And he is a witness of the power of God right there. Jesus leaves him to declare and witness to all what great things God has done to him. The demoniac becomes a messenger of Christ in this hostile city. They reject Christ and sent him away but Christ leaves a living witness of his power.

Leaving him there leaves a witness that no one ever will forget. They might ridicule him and do lots of things to him they will never be able to forget what Jesus has done to him. Jesus could just have stayed with them for a short time. Now they have something better, a lifelong witness of God's power. They got rid of Jesus but his message is left in this healed demoniac, ever to remind them of their rejection of Christ.

In our own hostile environments are we not witnesses like him? We are ridiculed, but even by our presence we are witnesses of a lifepower, witnesses of a different life, witnesses of God in a hostile environment. We are witnesses, we show the world what the difference between evil and good is. For *Jesus overcomes the evil forces*.

3. CHURCH ONLY: Loneliness in our struggle

Yet we are often alone in those struggles with evil. God is on our side but we sometimes grow tired of all the struggles. All this opposition and all these efforts to convince us that our faith is just ridiculous. We can get very discouraged and desperate of our own faith by constant exposure to this.

Remember Elijah, the a great prophet of God. It did not rain when Elijah prayed for no rain and it rained when he prayed that way. He did even greater miracles and finally was taken away by God so that he did not have to die! Elijah was a great man, but he also constantly had to fight with the evil all around him. He worked among the Israelites who were following Ba'al rather than God. He once was very weary of the fight. He just sat down and said to God [Story in 1Kgs 19:9-18]: "It is enough; now, O Lord, take away my life, for I am no better than my ancestors." He had enough. He felt he was as sinful as the rest of society. He felt powerless. Do we not sometimes feel the same?

What did God do? He let him experience his presence and then sent him on his next task. We too need to be refreshed from time to time coming into the presence of God and most of all getting reminded that *Jesus overcomes the evil forces*. We need not be discouraged!

4. CHURCH ONLY: Invisible Powers on our side

We do not see what is going on in the invisible world. In fact our knowledge about Angels and other invisible forces is severely limited. The message seems to be that we need to trust God, have faith and not be overly concerned with the world of spiritual beings. There is one passage in Scripture that gives us a peek about what is happening in the spiritual realm. This is a story about an army hunting down Elisha - the successor of Elijah -- and is found in 2 Kgs 6:15-17

15 When an attendant of the man of God rose early in the morning and went out, an army with horses and chariots was all around the city. His servant said, "Alas, master! What shall we do?"
 16 He replied, "Do not be afraid, for there are more with us than there are with them."
 17 Then Elisha prayed: "O LORD, please open his eyes that he may see." So the LORD opened the eyes of the servant, and he saw; the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha.

Even if there is an army surrounding us "there are more with us than there are with them.." Elisha was safe in the hand of God in the midst of being surrounded by a whole hostile army! [*MORE EXPLANATIONS NEEDED HERE*]

5. CHURCH ONLY: But we are the ones that count

There are few of the faithful to God on the earth as it has always been. What did Jesus say about us in Matth 5:13:

You are the salt of the earth; but if salt has lost its taste, how can its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything, but is thrown out and trampled under foot.

We are what makes the earth worthwhile for God. Without us the earth will not be worth anything to God. We give real spice to life of the earth.

Once before the earth became evil and God destroyed all living creatures in the Great Flood. Only Noah and his family escaped, the only spices left.

Without you the city you live in might be doomed. Remember Sodom and Gomorra. Would God have found 10 righteous people in Sodom and Gomorrah, it would have been saved. Only Lot and his family escaped the only ones worth it for God.

You are very important to God. You are the reason God's judgment is postponed. You are the apple of God's eye! The salt of the world. Salt for people who have contact with you day by day. That does not mean that you must be perfect. No one is perfect in obedience to God. But God will be with you. [*MORE NEEDED*]

G. Conclusion: Remember the power of God

Remember what Jesus said to his disciples before he left his disciples (Matt 28:20b). He said: "Remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age". Remember this and trust him and rejoice because *Jesus overcomes the evil forces*. Amen.

III. Commentaries consulted

Maier, Gerhard Bibelkommentar Band 4: Lukas-Evangelium 1. Teil, Stuttgart: Haenssler Verlag, 1991.

Laymon, Charles M. The Interpreters One-Volume Commentary on the Bible, Nashville, Abingdon Press, 1971

Brown, Colin ed. New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology Zondervan 1986, *Article "Demon" Vol I 449-454*

IV. Material from Literature

Brown: Air the home of the spirits and also meeting place of Jesus and the Church. Qumran: Angels(or Lords) of Darkness rule over evil spirits.

Daimon= word stem from divide. Divided personality? Schizophrenia? (450) Greek thought: Work of demons are the disaster and the human misery. They especially made men sick or mad. Can be synonymous with gods. They were appeased and called on for protection from evil.

Maier: There are Caves even today in the area indicated (375).

The man lived in the city but could not stay there anymore and came now from the gravesites. Seems that he was a Greek a pagan since this area belonged to a Greek area. Pig herd are an indication too.

The man cried and threw himself down => Jesus is confronted with wild uncontrolled powers. Jesus was meek and therefore subject to dangerous and awful situations.

Demons know with whom they are dealing and therefore cry out in fear.

Person is in pain because of Jesus!

Name is his character "Legion" Many. Roman legion = 4000-6000 people. Many many demons.

Abyss the prison place for Satan in Rev 20:11. Outside of earth area of evil forces. They do not want to be there since real life is only on earth. Evil is never something on itself. It has to feed on the good.

Demon kill the pigs. Mk 2000 pigs. A very impressive sign that the demons have really left the person here.

Pig herd possibly owned by people in city. People came out to see what had happened and eyewitnesses tell them.

Jesus is suggested to leave. People are afraid of him and do not know what to do. It is the fear of God but a bad fear. They do not want to deal with him. Jesus respect it.

Gadarener wants to stay with Jesus but he is left as a living witness in the city that rejected Jesus,

V. Ideas

Jude 6, 2 Peter 3 Reference to fallen Angels. Are Demons fallen Angels?

Susa in Israel. Process of getting a ticket. Evil forces surrounding country?

Eph 6:11- Amor of God. Invisible Wars in the air

Trust God and he will protect you even if the darkness is that thick.

Elijah and desperation. The only ones left

Flood was precipitated by fallen Angels. Same as now?

Jesus is example for us. We can do it too.

LA times story about Laguna blaze as an intro.

VI. Important Phrases

Jesus overcomes the evil forces