

G'day,

Well, welcome to a Bush Disciples 4th Sunday.... The first 3 Sundays of the month, I'm planning on working my "real job" only 1 day per week, which gives me time to prepare a full message and do a little bit of visiting and stuff... But on the 4th Sunday, – well, I actually need to work sometime, to feed my family – so in the week leading up to the 4th Sunday, I'm planning on working a full week if I can get it, and we'll have a lower-key Sunday on the 4th Sunday...

I'm hoping that sometimes we'll be able to get some guest preachers to come. Other times, we might just listen to God's Word being read. Other times, we'll be doing what we're doing today – Taking a little piece of God's word, and reading through it, and just having a bit of explanation as we go.

And so, it's a pretty short piece that we're up to today, so what I think we might do, is read it, and then go through it verse by verse.

Matthew 8:28–34 (ESV)

Jesus Heals Two Men with Demons

²⁸ And when he came to the other side, to the country of the Gadarenes, two demon-possessed men met him, coming out of the tombs, so fierce that no one could pass that way. ²⁹ And behold, they cried out, "What have you to do with us, O Son of God? Have you come here to torment us before the time?"

³⁰ Now a herd of many pigs was feeding at some distance from them. ³¹ And the demons begged him, saying, "If you cast us out, send us away into the herd of pigs." ³² And he said to them, "Go." So they came out and went into the pigs, and behold, the whole herd rushed down the steep bank into the sea and drowned in the waters. ³³ The herdsmen fled, and going into the city they told everything, especially what had happened to the demon-possessed men. ³⁴ And behold, all the city came out to meet Jesus, and when they saw him, they begged him to leave their region.

Let's pray,

Lord God, Heavenly Father, this morning, as we study your word, open our eyes to see Jesus, open our ears to your truth, open our hearts to Your Holy Spirit, and open our lives to Your transformation. Guard and protect us from the evil one, by the power of the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ...

In Jesus' name, Amen.

Well, I've been thinking about this passage all week – what am I going to tell you? And even though I started out by saying "This is a low maintenance Sunday", God's put a lot on my heart to share. There's nothing milky about this topic this morning – it's meat... So let's start the bbq...

28 And when he came to the other side (Alright – Jesus and His disciples have just crossed the lake...) , to the country of the *Gadarenes*, which is Gentile territory (and we talked about Jews and Gentiles a couple of weeks back), and two demon-possessed men met him, Wooh... Now, let's stop right there - two demon-possessed men met Jesus – what's that about???

For most people today, any talk at all, of demon-possession – or the spirit world – or personal evil – is relegated to the domain of horror movies or fantasy, or science fiction, or maybe studies of non-refined or primitive cultures and religion....

But you know what??? If we actually believe that what's written in the Bible is true – if we actually believe, the same as what Jesus believed about the Spirit world – we cannot so simply dismiss the existence of Demons...

So, I'm just going to give you a quick overview, and I won't be going into any of this in-depth, but I will tell you where you can find it in your Bible, so you can go and read it for yourself...

OK, so here's the condensed – ultra-quick over-view of the spirit world.

Many people are willing to believe in God and some believe in His Angels, but they will not believe in the existence of Satan. And one of Satan's greatest tricks, is to convince people that he doesn't exist... But the thing is, he does exist – and that's what makes him dangerous – many people ignore his existence. *A hidden dog trap is much more dangerous than a dog trap you can see...*

So, here's an overview: There is God (Father, Son and Holy Spirit), and under Him is His angels – there are Cherubim, Seraphim, Archangels... and so on...

But standing against God, is Satan and his demons... Who are they? Who are these bad guys??? Where did they come from? Well, I have to be very open – right at the start – and say “I can't give you a chapter in your bible to read, that explains it all, in one nice complete article”...

You see, the Bible is filled with the good news about God, and about Jesus Christ... And it doesn't, in any section, concentrate on the history and existence of evil... But what we find, is little glimpses, that begin to answer some of our questions.

And what these glimpses reveal to us, is this:

- ❖ First of all, something beyond dispute is, God, is God. There is only one God (Father, Son and Holy Spirit) – together in perfect unity – the One God. Anything that exists apart from God, was created by God. (John 1:3, Colossians 1:15)

- ❖ And so, Satan is a created being... There is no other god – Satan is not a god. Anything else, that is worshiped as a god, is not a god at all, but demons, trying to take the place of God (Deut 32:17)..... So, if Satan is a created being, what sort of being is he?... And why did God make him?
- ❖ Well, the Bible, (and here’s a few bible references for you – [Luke 10:18, Revelation 12, Ezekiel 26-28]) seems to indicate that Satan started out as an Angel, but he became proud, and he didn’t want to serve God any longer .. – he wanted to become God – and so he rebelled against God, along with a third of the angels. And this 1/3 of the angels, became demons...
- ❖ So, we now have God, and His holy angels, and Satan and his demons. But it’s very important to remember, that Satan is **not** a god. Satan can never be above God. He can never even equal God.

So, that’s where they came from – they once were angels, who rebelled against God...

Righto, we’ve just learnt about demons, but what does it mean to be “demon-possessed”?

Firstly, let me say, “Satan can’t just get a hold of you and move in.”. Satan needs a legal reason to get a foothold in a person’s life.

The second thing I want to say, is there is a difference between “oppression” and “possession”...Demons can

oppress (that is, influence) many people. A person can be oppressed by a demon only when they've been given a foothold through sin. It could be a giving in to temptation, curses, a history of sin, a family history of sin, misleading teaching that's been received, an involvement in things like Free Masonry, or pornography, or abuse of some kind... and so on.... And many of us (even Christians) need prayer, to be released from an ongoing spiritual oppression. - but that's not possession. ... Possession is a whole another level...

Usually, even though a Christian may be getting influenced or tempted by an evil spirit, God inside of us, is always stronger than the devil. **1 John 4:⁴ Little children, you are from God and have overcome them, for he who is in you is greater than he who is in the world.**

Alright, when you pray; when you read God's word; when you share together with other Christians; when you put on the full armour of God – it doesn't matter how much the devil tries to oppress you – he's not going to succeed...

But when you put that aside – when you turn your back on God and reject God – when you open yourself up to Satan and receive Satan.... That's what leads to possession.....

So, in practical terms (and this is what I've been taught by older, more experienced ministers, who work in this area), In their experience, the sorts of activities that can open someone

up to possession, are things like: heavy drug use; involvement in the occult (and that could be anything from full on in-your-face Satan worship to other expressions of the occult, such as séances; playing with Ouija boards; fortune telling; witchcraft; divination (including water divining); astrology (not the science of astronomy, but astrology – star signs and stuff); indigenous religion and ceremony; new-age type activities such as crystals and transcendental meditation; involvement in other religions, and taking on their spiritual practices, such as Yoga, Thai Chi, Rake, Iridology; biodynamic farming.....

All this sort of stuff – when we reject God – and disobey His command to have nothing to do with these sorts of practices – by rejecting God, and embracing the spiritual disciplines of Demons, (and guess what) this gives the devil a foothold, which can (and does, sometimes) lead to possession...

Now, having said that, if you've ever unwittingly, been involved in any of these things – if you've given the devil a foothold – and most of us have, in some area – in Christ, there is freedom. If sin, gives a foothold..., the removal of sin – takes away that foothold.... When we confess our sin, and repent of it – that means to turn away from it, to do it no more – we know that in Christ, our sins are forgiven – the foothold's gone... There's no legal right for Satan to step in...

So, two demon-possessed men met him, coming out of the tombs, so fierce that no one could pass that way.

When someone becomes possessed, an evil spirit actually takes control of them. Only 3 times in my life, have I encountered someone who I am pretty sure, was possessed... Their personality could just change like that... And it was like something evil, controlled them. And that's what these two men were like... **so fierce that no one could pass that way.**

²⁹ And behold, they cried out, "What have you to do with us, O Son of God?"

Notice that? In Matthew, up to this point in Jesus' ministry, no-one has acknowledged that Jesus is the "Son of God".... Only the devil (Satan) who tempted Jesus out in the desert, and now a demon, recognised that Jesus is the Son of God...

"What have you to do with us, O Son of God? Have you come here to torment us before the time?"

Yes, He has... What time? – What's this time of torment, that the demons are so worried about??? ... Well, here's some good news... At the moment, demons have pretty much a free hand in the world ... But that's going to change.

When the Governor for Connecticut spoke about the school shooting in Newtown, CT, he said "Evil visited this community today" ...

When you open your eyes to the extent of evil in the world today, when you begin to consider “What drives such evil?” And when you open your eyes, to the spiritual reality that’s behind it, ... It’s pretty obvious that Satan and his demons are pretty active in the world...

But that time is going to come to an end. Revelation 20: ¹⁰ tells us their final fate... and the devil who had deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and sulphur where the beast and the false prophet were, and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.

Umm, there is a hell. The good news is, Satan and his demons will end up there, and will be punished, for all eternity, for the evil that they have brought to this good earth. A warning for you and I though, is “People who reject Jesus go there too”.
^{V¹⁵} And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.

It’s pretty important to get your name written into “The Lamb’s Book of Life”, and there’s only one way to get it there: To become a disciple of Jesus Christ.

OK. Let’s move on.

³⁰ Now a herd of many pigs was feeding at some distance from them. ³¹ And the demons begged him,

saying, "If you cast us out, send us away into the herd of pigs." ³² And he said to them, "Go." So they came out and went into the pigs, and behold, the whole herd rushed down the steep bank into the sea and drowned in the waters.

Jesus Christ has the authority to cast demons out... And so do we. In the name of Jesus Christ, lives destroyed by possession, can be set free. But we have to be careful, because when demons come out, they've got to go somewhere, and that's a whole another topic – we don't have time for that today.

But I do have to say, "Don't go trying to do it unless you've been taught how." The disciples watched Jesus do it many times before they attempted it, and even then, they needed further instruction when they had trouble. If you believe, there is a need for casting out a demon, come and talk to me about it....

³³ The herdsmen fled, and going into the city they told everything, especially what had happened to the demon-possessed men. ³⁴ And behold, all the city came out to meet Jesus, and when they saw him, they begged him to leave their region.

CS Lewis once said:

There are two equal and opposite errors into which our race can fall about the devils. One is to disbelieve in their existence. The other is to believe, and to feel an excessive and unhealthy interest in them¹.

This bible reading today, is not about demons – it's about Jesus Christ. It's about Jesus having authority over demons. It's all about Christ bringing freedom. But Jesus didn't only come to feed the hungry, and heal the sick. Jesus didn't only come to teach a better way to live, or to exemplify a righteous life... Jesus came, to free us from sin and death. Jesus came to release the oppressed and the possessed... It's all about Jesus.

And maybe, for some of you, hearing about the spiritual world – the battle against Satan and his demons – maybe that's pretty exciting stuff for you to hear... But it's not about Satan – it's about Jesus. Know about this stuff – know that in Jesus Christ, we have victory over Satan and his demons – but keep “the main thing” the main thing. (and what is the main thing? Jesus Christ)

When Jesus sent 72 disciples out to have a bit of a go themselves, then they came back, they were excited: **Luke 10:¹⁷ The seventy-two returned with joy, saying, “Lord, even the demons are subject to us in your name!”¹⁸ And he said to them, “I saw Satan fall like**

lightning from heaven. ¹⁹ Behold, I have given you authority to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall hurt you. ²⁰ Nevertheless, do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven."

So, one extreme, is to become consumed by the excitement of spiritual battle. Another extreme, is to be scared off by it.

³⁴ And behold, all the city came out to meet Jesus, and when they saw him, they begged him to leave their region. Why? God had just intervened supernaturally into their world, and it scared them... And so they turned their backs on Jesus.

In many churches in our culture, you will never, ever, hear a message, teaching you about Satan and evil spirits. Some of you may have gone to church all your life, and never heard any teaching on demonic possession... Many people are open to teaching on "less spiritual" matters, but don't want to have anything at all, to do with that kooky supernatural stuff...

Don't be scared off by it. But don't be consumed by it. Keep Jesus, "The main thing".

Questions???

Sentence: Demons – their defeat is all about Jesus.

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ⁱ CS Lewis, Screwtape letters, in Nelson's complete book of stories, illustrations & quotes, Morgan RJ.