



Luke 8. ²⁶⁻³⁹

²⁶And they arrived at the country of the Gadarenes, which is over against Galilee. ²⁷And when he went forth to land, there met him out of the city a certain man, which had devils long time, and ware no clothes, neither abode in any house, but in the tombs. ²⁸When he saw Jesus, he cried out, and fell down before him, and with a loud voice said, "What have I to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of God most high? I beseech thee, torment me not." ²⁹(For he had commanded the unclean spirit to come out of the man. For oftentimes it had caught him: and he was kept bound with chains and in fetters; and he brake the bands, and was driven of the devil into the wilderness.)

³⁰And Jesus asked him, saying, "What is thy name?"

And he said, "Legion:" because many devils were entered into him.

³¹And they besought him that he would not command them to go out into the deep. ³²And there was there an herd of many swine feeding on the mountain: and they besought him that he would suffer them to enter into them. And he suffered them. ³³Then went the devils out of the man, and entered into the swine: and the herd ran violently down a steep place into the lake, and were choked.

³⁴When they that fed them saw what was done, they fled, and went and told it in the city and in the country. ³⁵Then they went out to see what was done; and came to Jesus, and found the man, out of whom the devils were departed, sitting at the feet of Jesus, clothed, and in his right mind: and they were afraid. ³⁶They also which saw it told them by what means he that was possessed of the devils was healed.

³⁷Then the whole multitude of the country of the Gadarenes round about besought him to depart from them; for they were taken with great fear: and he went up into the ship, and returned back again. ³⁸Now the man out of whom the devils were departed besought him that he might be with him: but Jesus sent him away, saying, ³⁹"Return to thine own house, and shew how great things God hath done unto thee."

And he went his way, and published throughout the whole city how great things Jesus had done unto him.

I have often thought that if he had it to over again, Luke might tell the story found in today's reading without including the bit about the pigs. Why have I thought so? Because the pigs often, in my experience, distract from Luke's central point. I have been involved in discussions of this story which turned to and came to focus on "demon possession" or the importance of mortal bodies—"the fact the evil spirits were so willing to enter pig bodies demonstrates how important and desirable it is to have a body."

I am having none of it. For me, the point of the story is the transformation and renewal that Jesus brought into the life of an extraordinarily disturbed individual, and the hope that it holds out to me that I too can be transformed and renewed through my own encounter with Jesus.

The man's transformation is found in descriptions of him "before and after" his encounter with Jesus. For example, the man who had been out of control and uncontrollable before his encounter with Jesus, is found "sitting at the feet of Jesus" docile and controlled after the encounter. Then again, upon first

encountering Jesus, the man thought of Jesus as a tormentor, not someone with whom one would wish to associate. But afterward, the man is anxious that he be allowed to remain with Jesus, then and always.

Not only, then, was the man transformed, but God in the person of Jesus, was transformed. The kind of Being God is, was transformed in the man's mind, and, through him, in the mind of every one who reads his story. I know that this story has transformed and renewed me personally. It has transformed my view of God and the kind of Being he is. And it has transformed me such that I long to sit at his feet and enjoy his healing and accepting influence now and into eternity.

Even so, come, Lord Jesus!

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