



The Reverend Dr. David V. Silvernail, Jr.
Matthew 8:28-34

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English Standard Version

“Fear and the Kingdom”

The 25th Sermon in a series on the Gospel of Matthew entitled
“The King and His Kingdom!”

Matthew 8:28-34

“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.”

Heavenly Father, thank You for giving us the Scriptures and making us Your people. You have brought us to this amazing Gospel to learn more about your Son, Jesus. We know that this word is not recorded simply to be interesting, nor even to give us an accurate account of the miracles of our Lord, though it does that, and we praise You for it. This word is written for our instruction, for our counsel, for our admonition. So teach us the spiritual truths contained in it, and by the spirit apply it to our hearts. Open this Gospel to us and help us to see Jesus, and, as always, for this we need Your grace. Give us the desire to learn from You this morning, in the name of Jesus we pray, Amen.

INTRODUCTION: *Was Paul Wrong? How About Jesus?*¹

Now, as some of you know, I was raised in the Episcopal Church, once upon a time a fine church of sound doctrine and insightful preaching. Once upon a time, **but not** at this time. Just recently, the Presiding Bishop of the Episcopal Church, The Most Reverend Katharine Jefferts Schori, has **denounced** the Apostle Paul as mean-spirited and bigoted for having released a slave girl from demonic bondage.

In her sermon delivered at All Saints Church in Curaçao in the diocese of Venezuela, the Bishop decided to preach from **Acts 16:16-34**, which contains this account of the Apostle Paul **casting out a demon** from a slave girl. The first few verses of that passage read as follows, “*As we [Paul and Silas] were going to the place of prayer, we were met by a slave girl who had a spirit of divination and brought her owners much gain by fortune-telling.*¹⁷ *She followed Paul and us, crying out, “These men are servants of the Most High God, who proclaim to you the way of salvation.”*¹⁸ *And this she kept doing for many days. Paul, having become greatly annoyed, turned and said to the spirit, “I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her.” And it came out that very hour.*”

The presiding bishop opened her remarks with an observation on the Dutch slave past. “The history of this place tells some tragic stories about the inability of some to see the beauty in other skin colors or the treasure of cultures they didn’t value or understand,” she said. To illustrate her point she turned to the book of Acts, noting “There are some remarkable examples of that kind of blindness in the readings we heard this morning, and slavery is wrapped up in a lot of it. Paul is annoyed at the slave girl who keeps pursuing him, telling the world that he and his companions are slaves of God. She is quite right. She’s telling the same truth Paul and others claim for themselves.” So far so good. If only she stopped there. But, alas, she didn’t. She goes on to say, “But Paul is annoyed, perhaps for being put in his place, and he responds **by depriving her of her gift of spiritual awareness**. Paul can’t abide something he won’t see as beautiful or holy, so he tries to destroy it. It gets him thrown in prison. That’s pretty much where he’s put himself by his own refusal to recognize that she, too, shares in God’s nature, just as much as he does – maybe more so!”

The New Testament passage goes on to say that Paul and Silas were imprisoned by the girls’ owners because, after freeing the girl of her demonic possession, Paul has deprived them of the ability to make money off of her. The Presiding Bishop noted “an earthquake opens the doors and sets them free, and now Paul and his friends most definitely discern the presence of God. The jailer doesn’t – he thinks his end is at hand.” However, **Paul now repents of his mistake in casting out the spirit** of divination, she argues. [Even though this so-called repentance appears nowhere in the text].

She goes on, “This time, Paul remembers who he is and that all his neighbors are reflections of God, and he reaches out to his frightened captor. Paul acts with compassion rather than annoyance, and as a result the company of Jesus’ friends expands to include a whole new household. It makes me wonder what would have happened to that slave girl **if Paul had seen the spirit of God in her.**”

In what can only be considered one of **the worst sermons ever**, with a **sensationally poor** interpretation, **incredibly poor** understanding, and **pitifully poor** application of the

¹ The Introduction relies upon the article, “Diversity, not Jesus, Saves says Presiding Bishop” by George Conger, <http://anglicanink.com>, 5/20/13.

passage, forcing it to mean **the exact opposite** of what it actually says, Bishop Jefferts Schori concludes by stating that we are not justified by our faith but by our respect for diversity and condemning those who did not share her views as enemies of the Holy Spirit.

I'm reminded of **2 Timothy 4:3-4**, *"For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions,"⁴ and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths."*

I've spent several days thinking about this sad turn of events, and in so doing, I kept coming back to this one question, **"What would she do with Jesus?"** After all, here in Matthew 8, our passage for this morning, it seems that **He too** is **Casting Out Demons**. Perhaps **He didn't** see the Spirit of God in them. Maybe **He didn't** recognize the gift of spiritual awareness they had, after all, they certainly recognized Him. Poor Jesus ... if He only had Bishop Jefferts Schori around to enlighten Him. What can you do? The Prophet Isaiah warns us, **Isaiah 5:20**, *"Woe to those who call evil good and good evil, who put darkness for light and light for darkness, who put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter!"*

"Woe to those who call evil good and good evil" ... to hear that sentence is to realize that the Bible presupposes that **some things** are good and **other things** are evil. **Some actions** are good and **other actions** are evil. **Some words** are good and **other words** are evil. And that's what we're going to look at this morning — **Why** are people willing to accept evil? We have to understand that this passage is more than just another healing miracle, but it's much broader in scope than that. It's a visual demonstration of **Jesus' power** over evil, **Jesus' power** over Satan and demons, and **Jesus' power** over all things that oppose His Kingdom.

So let's start by looking at the context. To understand the passage, you have to understand the context, and in this case, we need to understand ...

CONTEXT: THE PATTERN OF EVIL²

We're looking at events in the life of Jesus. What we're really trying to find is who **the real Jesus** is. **The real Jesus** believed in demons. **The real Jesus** believed in the Devil. In **Matthew 4:24**, for example, we have a verse that really helped me understand this. Most of us, when we read these passages about Jesus casting out demons we say, "Ah, yes. The gospel writers (and even Jesus Himself) were men of their time. They didn't know what we know now. That is, we know there are viruses that are the basis for disease. They didn't understand the whole idea of mental illness. They didn't understand these things, and they attributed them to devils and demons." That's a pretty scientific worldview.

However, when you get to Matthew 4, you see something that explodes that whole idea, **Matthew 4:24**, *"So His fame spread throughout all Syria, and they brought Him all the sick, those afflicted with various diseases and pains, those oppressed by demons, epileptics, and paralytics, and He healed them."*

It says demon-possessed people, paralyzed people, and then literally Matthew says, *those touched by the moon*. That's using a Greek word that had to do with madness. And sometimes

2 The Context and the Exposition of the text is adapted from the books, *The Reformed Expository Commentary: Matthew, Volume 1* by Dr. Dan Doriani, pages 355-365; *The Conversations of Jesus*, pages 26-30, and *The Miracles: Exploring the Mystery of Jesus's Divine Works*, pages 123-130, both by Dr. Simon Kistemaker; **And the Sermons, "With a Troubled Man" by Dr. Tim Keller, Redeemer Presbyterian Church, New York, NY, 2/2/97, sermons.redeemer.com; Logos Bible Software 4: *The Timothy Keller Sermon Archive*; and "The Miracles of the Kingdom (3): Jesus Casts Out Demons" by Dr. J. Ligon Duncan, First Presbyterian Church, Jackson, MS, nd, www.fpcjackson.org.**

Jesus heals epilepsy by healing and sometimes Jesus heals epilepsy by casting out a demon. Sometimes its physical and sometimes its demonic. The point is both the gospel writers and Jesus understood there was paralysis, madness, and disease that had a demonic cause and a kind that didn't. In other words, Jesus Christ did not believe in demon possession out of ignorance, but out of conviction. If you screen that out, you won't understand who the real Jesus is. Even beyond that, if you screen it out, you'll miss very important, very profound insights this passage gives you for living your life.

This passage teaches us several things about evil. Specifically, the first lesson is that evil in this world **cannot be understood simply in human terms**, and it cannot be dealt with simply through human resources. The power and complexity of evil, the Bible teaches, is such that if you try to understand it simply in **human and natural** terms, and if you try to deal with it simply in **human and natural** terms, you will be defeated. Everyone knows if you underestimate an enemy, you're going to be defeated. That's what this is teaching us. This is saying there's more to evil than the **human** ... there's more to evil than the **natural**. The Bible teaches there's evil **in us** and **outside of us** and **above us**. The Bible teaches us there's both **natural** and **supernatural** evil. The Bible teaches us evil has a transcendent dimension, and if you **don't admit that** or you **don't see that**, then you run into **tremendous problems**. Look here in verse 28, where we're told the men were *coming out of the tombs*. They were experiencing **a living death**.

Both Matthew and Mark keep saying **no one**. **No one** could bind him. **No one** could help him. **No one** could restrain him. **No one** was strong enough. **No one could pass that way**. That's the first lesson. Let me just develop this a little bit. This is extremely practical. Let me show you that at both the corporate level **and** at the individual level, we have a tendency (especially we modern people in the West) to **radically underestimate evil**. We want to believe it's strictly a human phenomenon. As a result, we're continually being defeated about it.

For the last hundred and fifty years, the intelligent people in the West have said all evil, whether we're talking about selfishness or violence on an individual level, or if we're talking about war or crime or poverty or racism on a corporate level, can be reduced, analyzed, understood, and dealt with because it has human roots. If you get rid of the transcendent, if you get rid of God and the Devil, then you say, "Why do we do these things to each other?"

Some people would take more of a **psychological** approach. They would say the reason there's violence and selfishness in people is that we have psychological problems. We weren't loved properly; we had inadequate family background, and so on and so forth. We deal with evil through counseling. Some people like more of a **sociological** view. They say racism and poverty, for example, are the result of an unjust social system. Therefore, it can be dealt with through education and social policy and programs.

Other people would say no, a lot of the problems we have are only **physiological**. They're the results of evolutionary biology and natural selection. They're survival of the fittest, and we have to deal with it, really, through chemicals. It's chemistry that makes us aggressive. It's chemistry that does this sort of thing. We deal with it through drugs.

Nothing wrong with counseling, education, or medicine ... unless you're using them to try and control **evil**. When I said the last hundred to hundred and fifty years, we've been looking at evil as strictly human, something we can manage, control, analyze, prescribe, and deal with, and that period is ending. We are being **trounced** by evil. We are giving up all those kinds of optimistic ideas. We've been working at the counseling. We've been working at education.

We've been working at the social progress. We've been working at the medicine. We've been working at these things. ... **And things are not getting better!**

I'm trying to say if you decide we can deal with evil because it's us and it's only us, it's just human and natural, it's just psychological or sociological or physiological, you will be defeated. No one could help them. No one was strong enough. **No one!** If you say, "I can deal with the problems in my life if I just suck it up and really do what I know I'm capable of doing;" if you go to little classes where you tell people in elementary school you can be anything you want to be; if you see the slogans that say, "If we all just pull together, we can make the world a better place," this passage says no, you need intervention, **You Need A Savior**.

Look at your own lives. You don't have to be demon-possessed to understand this. Look at yourselves. You know you're out of control. You have habits you can't fix. You're driven in ways you don't know what to do with. There are things that scare you. We can make fun of commitment phobia, but some of you just can't do it. So you've gone to therapy. The therapy very often shows you the psychological way in which all this has come about. Then you turn to this therapist and say, "Great. I understand. What do I do about it?" Most any reputable therapist will say, "What do you think?" On and on and on.

Why? What therapy can do is it can show you how you got into this condition. **It cannot get you out.** It doesn't get you out. You know that. You see it. No one can break the chains, the power of evil. If you think of it in merely human terms, if you deal with it with merely human resources, we're going to be defeated, and we are. Corporately, we're defeated. Individually, we're defeated.

This shows the power and complexity of evil. It's evil **inside** and evil **outside** and evil **above**. You don't want to be naïve. We don't mind being wrong, as long as we're not naïve. We don't mind being messed up, as long as we're not naïve. You think you're deep and complicated, but you're more deep and complicated than you know ... because the pattern of evil is pervasive — in our society, in our community, and in our lives. And even if you don't believe it, I can assure you that Jesus does.

This is a strange passage. It's the first passage in the Gospel of Matthew where the Christ's encounter with the demon-possessed is described. It had been mentioned earlier in this chapter that the Jesus had healed those who were demon-possessed. Now, we see an incident actually depicted for us. And there are great spiritual truths for us in this passage, but I would like to point you to three of them. The first of them you see in verses 28 and 29, where we learn

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v. 28-29: THE POWER OF POSSESSION

"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?"

First of all, Matthew reminds us that even the demons acknowledge that Jesus is the Son of God. And so Matthew brings home to us, with particular force, the truth that Jesus Christ is the very Son of God. The incident occurs when he crosses the Sea of Galilee, and he goes to the other side **to the country of the Gadarenes**. It was a region predominately populated by Gentiles, as is shown by the presence of the herd of pigs, not an animal particularly loved by the Jewish people. And so Jesus comes into this region of Gentiles preaching the gospel and performing deeds of power.

And as He comes ashore, He meets two demoniacs, terrifying people possessed by demons. Now demon possession is a mysterious subject. One of the founding fathers of the PCA once said, "I don't know much about demon possession but I've read a lot of books by people who say that they know much about demon possession, and they don't know much about demon possession either." The word "*demon*" is often rendered "*devil*" in the King James Version. Demons are spoken of as spiritual beings hostile to God and as having certain power over man. They recognize our Lord as the Son of God, but they belong to that number of angels who fell from Heaven; they are unclean spirits; they are of the devil. They're the principalities and powers against whom we must wrestle. A demoniac is one **possessed** of a devil.

In the days of our Lord, evil spirits were mysteriously allowed by God to exercise influence over men. Sometimes that was seen in the person not being able to speak. Sometimes the people would be blind. Sometimes the people would have epileptic seizures. Although, as I said, sometimes diseases like epilepsy have nothing to do with demon-possession. The Bible distinguishes between physical illness and mental illness and demon possession. There are differences. However, these two men are afflicted by demon possession.

But interestingly in this passage, when these two demon-possessed individuals approached the Lord Jesus, and by the way, Mark and Luke only tell us about one of these two individuals. That doesn't mean there is a contradiction. The gospel writers often focus on particular details because they want to bring home particular spiritual truths by emphasizing different aspects of the same historical account. And so it's better to view these accounts as complimentary. When these demon-possessed men approached Jesus **they acknowledge Him as the Son of God**, though they rejected Him. They don't acknowledge Him as their leader, but they do acknowledge Him as the Son of God.

Now I want to remind you of something very interesting about Matthew's use of the term "*Son of God*." The first time the term "*Son of God*" is recorded in Matthew, it comes from the lips of Satan himself. It comes in the temptation in Matthew 4, where Satan tempts Christ using the term "*Son of God*." Matthew doesn't record that to cast doubt on whether Jesus is the Son of God, but to point out to you that **even Satan knows** Jesus is the Son of God. There are very many enlightened people today who will suggest that's believing a fairy tale, believing Jesus is the Son of God. In the Bible, only humans are stupid enough to deny that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. In the Bible, **even the demons** acknowledge that Jesus is the divine Son of God.

The third time, after this occurrence in Matthew 8, that Matthew uses the phrase "*Son of God*" is in the interrogation of Jesus by the high priest in Matthew 26. The high priest asks Him, commands Him, "**Tell me if You are the Son of God.**" So again, an opponent of Christ, this time the high priest, is asking if Jesus is the Son of God. The next time that "*Son of God*" is used is in **Matthew 27:40**. That's when the thieves are mocking Christ. The next time that "*Son of God*" is used is in Matthew 27:43, and that's when the priests and the scribes and the elders are mocking Jesus Christ. The last time that "*Son of God*" is used in Matthew is when a Gentile, a centurion, a Roman soldier, looks up at the cross and says, "**Surely this Man is the Son of God.**"

Matthew, by reminding us that even the demons acknowledge Christ as the Son of God, is saying to you, "Do you see who this Man is? Do you realize who He is? This is not just a great moral teacher. This is not even an exalted prophet. This is someone who is on an entirely different plane than anything that you've ever known before." Jesus Christ is the Son of God.

And yet these demons say, "**What have you to do with us, O Son of God?**" He was not

their Savior. He **was not** their leader. But they recognized that He was ultimately going to be their Judge. *“Have you come here to torment us before the time?”* Isn't it interesting that these demons seem to know about both the first and the second coming of our Lord Jesus Christ? Even Christ's disciples stumbled with that truth. And yet the demons know, “Wait a minute; we're not supposed to be thrown into the abyss with Satan and experience eternal torment until Your second coming. Have you come before the time?” These demons **know a lot**. And they **say a lot**. **But they don't follow Christ.**

There are many truths that we can learn from this exchange. For one, this is an important testimony to the deity of the Lord Jesus Christ. Even the demons acknowledge Him to be the Son of God. But it's also a solemn reminder that it's possible to acknowledge Christ with your lips and not to acknowledge Him with your heart. It's possible to **profess** Christ without **possessing** Him in your heart. It's possible to claim to be a follower of Christ and yet not be a follower of Christ in how you live. We do well to reflect upon that truth when we realize who Jesus is. He is the very Son of God. The next great spiritual truth you see in verses 30-32, where we learn about ...

v. 30-32: THE POWER OF JESUS

“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.”

There's a second thing we learn in this passage. And that's that the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is **sovereign even over demons**. Jesus Christ is **sovereign even over the forces of evil**. Even when He walks through this world as our Prophet, Priest and King bearing our infirmities and sorrows and suffering on our behalf, **He is sovereign** over the forces of evil. The Lord Jesus has wandered into a region where there are many Gentiles and we're explicitly told that there was a herd of pigs. Of course, pigs were unclean animals for Jews. One was not allowed to touch that which was unclean and one was certainly not allowed to eat that which was unclean.

And so He confronts these two demoniacs, and before the Lord Jesus even begins to speak **to them**, the demons speak **to Him**, asking Him to cut a deal, to diminish His plans for them. Jesus' power and authority is seen even in the requests of the demons. Even the demons know they must make a **request** of Christ. And so the Lord Jesus Christ's sovereignty is stressed in several ways.

First of all, notice the first half of verse 31, it's clear that the demons acknowledge that Christ has the power to cast them out of these two men. They never attempt a strategy to **resist** being cast out. They only attempt to mitigate where Jesus is going to send them once He does cast them out. **He's sovereign.**

Then, in the second half of verse 31, notice that the demons request permission, **permission**, to possess a herd of pigs nearby. Even their plans, even their evil desires, must be submitted to Christ. And finally, notice that the demons **obey** Jesus. I find it interesting, that in contrast to Mark and Luke's account, Matthew only records one word of Jesus. Jesus only speaks one word in this whole section as Matthew records it, **“Go.”** Matthew is showing the sheer sovereignty of your Lord. *“One little word shall fell them,”* as Luther reminds us. The Lord Jesus Christ is **sovereign** over the forces of evil.

Now you may ask, “Why in the world did the demons want to go destroy a herd of

pigs?” And that’s a good question ... but I don’t have time to get into it this morning, perhaps another sermon, at another time. Very quickly, let me just say that Jesus had very good reasons for what He did. I can’t tell you all of them, but I can certainly tell you this:

1. He rescued a human being from Satan’s tyranny.
2. He showed the pigs’ owners the value of a person.
3. He send the healed man back to his own people, and
4. He used this man to introduce the Gospel to this Gentile land.

Notice also, He gives a testimony of His power to the disciples. He is **sovereign** even over the forces of evil. How important would that be for His disciples to remember as they faced principalities and powers. The next great spiritual truth you see in verses 33-34, where we hear

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v. 33-34: THE PLEA OF THE PEOPLE

“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.”

These Gentiles, we find out, were hard-hearted. They cared more about **those pigs** than they did about **those men**. Human value surpasses material value by far, but they can’t see it. They begged Jesus **to leave, to run away, to just go and not come back**.

There are many things that we learn in this particular section of Matthew 8. This is an important testimony to the sovereignty of God. It’s an important testimony to the sovereignty of Christ over the forces of evil. God is sovereign. God is not the author of evil. He is not the responsible cause of evil, but God rules and overrules everything in this world. The deed to this world does not belong to dictators or devils — it belongs to God. And sometimes the devil’s way of **extinguishing** goodness is God’s way of **advancing** goodness.

And this reminds us that Christ is more powerful than all the forces arrayed against us. That’s an important thing to remember when the news has come to your door that a little boy has died; when the news has come to your door that there has been a tragedy in a high school and a sick young man has killed fellow students. And that’s an important thing to remember when the word comes that a dear friend has been in a horrible automobile accident and there’s paralysis. And that’s an important thing to learn when you face the horrible difficulties of living in a fallen world. God is not out of control. God will rule and overrule **for your good**.

Martin Luther understood this. Martin Luther taught us, in the third stanza of *A Mighty Fortress is our God*:

“And though this world, with devils filled,
should threaten to undo us,
we will not fear, for God hath willed
His truth to triumph through us.

The prince of darkness grim, we tremble not for him;
his rage we can endure,
for lo! His doom is sure,
one little word shall fell him.

That word above all earthly powers
no thanks to them abideth;

the Spirit and the gifts are ours,
through Him who with us sideth.

Let goods and kindred go,
this mortal life also;
the body they may kill:
God's truth abideth still,
His kingdom is forever.”

Our Christ is more powerful than all the forces arrayed against us. Never forget it. It's very tempting, isn't it, in this world to believe the forces of darkness are stronger than the forces of life. Don't believe that lie. One little word shall fell him. Christ is sovereign.

CONCLUSION: *Two Dugouts, Two Men*³

I thought of this incident all this week, you know, Joanne & I recently saw “42,” the film about Jackie Robinson, a story of shames and glories, of the hard-face of institutional racism that plagued a nation and of courageous choices by people like Branch Rickey and Jackie & Rachel Robinson to chart a different path for themselves and for America. There's nothing cheap in this story.

The film shows this through the lives of Jackie Robinson and Branch Rickey. It's the 1950s, and racial segregation is the law and the culture of the land. Rickey, a white man who runs the Brooklyn Dodgers, and a lay preacher in the Methodist Church, decides to break down baseball's color barrier by signing Jackie Robinson, a talented young African-American ballplayer.

There's a great scene in the movie where Branch Rickey (played by Harrison Ford) starts to challenge Jackie to see if he can handle the pressure. And Jackie gets in his face and says, “You want a player who doesn't have the guts to fight back?” And Rickey responds, “No, I want a player who's got the guts **not** to fight back. Like our Savior you got to have the guts to turn the other cheek.” No one knew how hard that would be. The language in the movie, the insults, the humiliation, the hatred, the taunting ... was a little tough to take.

In one dramatic scene, Jackie, overwhelmed with frustration, leaves the field and walks into the tunnel, exploding in anger and tears while smashing his bat against the concrete walls until there's nothing left but splinters and toothpicks. Branch Rickey calms him down, and Jackie says, “Do you know what it's like, having someone do this to you?” And Rickey responds, “No ... you're the one living this sermon.”

I have this Brooklyn Dodgers hat. It was given to me several years ago. And it's signed by the then six living legends from the Brooklyn Dodgers: Carl Erskine, Roger Craig, Clem Lebine, Don Zimmer, Duke Snider, and Ralph Branca. The great Dodger legend, Duke Snider, once observed about Jackie, “The pressure was enormous, overwhelming, and unbearable at times. I don't know how he held up. I know I never could have.” Jackie had a core group of people who supported him, but for a long time, he suffered alone. It took Robinson's teammates a while to summon the courage to publicly stand by him, but when they did, it helped to break down walls of hatred and anger that surrounded him.

There's a great, and at the same time terrible, scene where Jackie came to bat and the

3 The Conclusion draws upon the article, “*Stories and the Moral Imagination*” by Dr. Steven Garber, The Washington Institute for Faith, Vocation, and Culture, 5/23/13, www.washingtoninst.org

Phillies manager came out and stands in front of **his dugout** and taunted Jackie with the most **cruel** and **racist** words, just dripping with **hatred**, riding Jackie to leave, to run away, **to just GO and not come back**. And then another Dodger legend, Ralph Branca, comes out and stands in front of **his dugout**, and says, somewhat quietly, “He’s a Brooklyn Dodger, **and he stays.**”

One man is yelling at him to “**Go.**” Another man is telling him to “**stay.**”

That’s the choice often in life. And that’s the choice in this passage. The last thing we read is that “**they begged Him to leave their region.**”

Mark tells us, **Mark 5:15-18**, “*And they came to Jesus and **saw** the demon-possessed man, the one who had had the legion, sitting there, clothed and in his right mind, **and they were afraid.*** ¹⁶ *And those who had seen it described to them what had happened to the demon-possessed man and to the pigs.* ¹⁷ *And they began to beg Jesus **to depart** from their region.* ¹⁸ *As he was getting into the boat, the man who had been possessed with demons begged Him that he might **be with him.***”

The people are yelling at Him to “**Go.**” The healed man is begging Him to “**stay.**” What are you telling Him?

Think about that ... You need to pray.

Take a moment to do that, and then I’ll close.

Our Lord and our God, thank You that You have given us a King. In this passage, we see Your Son. Open our eyes that we might see our sin and then see our Savior. We see Him as You want us to see Him, doing battle with Satan and with His kingdom on our behalf. And we know in the end that in the gates of hell will not prevail against the King and His Kingdom.

And we know that there’s nothing in our lives that He can’t deal with. It doesn’t matter how naked we are. It doesn’t matter how self-hating we are. It doesn’t matter whether we’re demoniacs or not. Jesus Christ, with just a word, is able to cleanse us and free us. Help us to know that. Help us to know and believe that the kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever. Amen.

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Mark 5:19

“And Jesus said, “Go home to your friends and tell them how much the Lord has done for you, and how He has had mercy on you.”

Luke 8:39

“And he went away, proclaiming ... how much Jesus had done for him.”