

Jesus and Demons (Part 2)

The Messianic Commission

Introduction

The Text

²⁶ Then they sailed to the country of the Gerasenes, which is opposite Galilee. ²⁷ When Jesus had stepped out on land, there met him a man from the city who had demons. For a long time he had worn no clothes, and he had not lived in a house but among the tombs. ²⁸ When he saw Jesus, he cried out and fell down before him and said with a loud voice, “What have you to do with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I beg you, do not torment me.” ²⁹ For he had commanded the unclean spirit to come out of the man. (For many a time 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 desert.) ³⁰ Jesus then asked him, “What is your name?” And he said, “Legion,” for many demons had entered him. ³¹ And they begged him not to command them to depart into the abyss. ³² Now a large herd of pigs was feeding there on the hillside, and they begged him to let them enter these. So he gave them permission. ³³ Then the demons came out of the man and entered the pigs, and the herd rushed down the steep bank into the lake and drowned.

³⁴ When the herdsmen saw what had happened, they fled and told it in the city and in the country. ³⁵ Then people went out to see what had happened, and they came to Jesus and 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 And those who had seen it told them how the demon-possessed man had been healed. ³⁷ Then all the people of the surrounding country of the Gerasenes asked him to depart from 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.” And he went away, proclaiming throughout the whole city how much Jesus had done for him. (Luke 8:26–39)

The Messianic Contradiction

- A. This is now my second of what I think will be three sermons on this text. The title of the sermon last time was Jesus and Demons—The Messianic Contradiction. We looked at how everything the Devil is after in this man’s life, and in ours as well, Jesus, the Messiah, has come to contradict.
- B. There were four instances of this contradiction that I gave us.
 - 1. The demons aim to pollute—there was an “unclean spirit” within him (v. 29). The demons make this man filthy in the sight of a holy God.
 - a. And yet when Jesus gets a hold of this brother, He washes him up. He commands “the unclean spirit to come out of the man” (v. 29).

2. The demons aim to expose—this man was naked and shamed, living unprotected outside rather than under shelter of a house (v. 27). The devil will lure you into sin and uncleanness and then expose you for all to see.
 - a. But when Jesus gets a hold of this brother, He covers him. He puts clothes on him (v. 35) and tells him to return to his “home” (v. 39).
 3. The demons aim to isolate—this man couldn’t even be kept in human company. He would break the chains and shackles and run off to “the desert” where he could be alone (v. 29). Guilt leads to shame, shame leads to isolation.
 - a. But Jesus finds him in the wilderness and welcomes him. He moves him from isolation into fellowship, and we find the man “sitting at the feet of Jesus”(v. 35).
 4. The demons aim to kill—the man lived not just in the desert but “among the tombs” (v. 27). He felt at home among the dead. And Mark tells us he would even slash at his own body with stones. “Just let me bleed out. Just let me die!”
 - a. But then Jesus gets a hold of this brother and He brings him back to life. Not only He washed, clothed, sitting at the feet of Jesus. We read in v. 35 that he is “in his right mind.” He’s alive again.
- C. Everything the Devil is after in this man’s life, and in ours as well, Jesus, the Messiah, has come to contradict—the “Messianic Contradiction”.

The Messianic Commission

- A. Now why do I take the time to review all of this? Well, it’s because, if you notice, our story doesn’t end with this man’s healing. No. What we see at the close is that Jesus actually heals this man so that he might become an instrument of healing in the lives of others.
1. In other words, Jesus contradicts the Devil’s activity in our own lives so that we might join Him in contradicting the Devil’s activity in the lives of those around us—so that we might (in a supporting cast sort of way) help to wash, and cover, and welcome, and bring back to life others in the name of Jesus.
 - a. V. 39: “Return to your home, and declare how much God has done for you.” And he went away, proclaiming throughout the whole city how much Jesus had done for him.” That’s the note this story ends on.
- B. So the title of today’s message, therefore, is Jesus and Demons—The Messianic Commission. And we’re going to look at how we start to participate in all of this with Him.
1. As we look more closely at this text, three principles will emerge towards this end: (1) My Staying Is Going; (2) My Story Is Glory; and (3) My Blessing Is Yours.

Request Denied

- A. That's where we're going. But before I can unpack these, I first need to bring your attention to what initially seems to be a very disturbing observation. It's actually in the context of this disturbing observation that these three principles start come into view.
- B. It occurred to me as I read this text that the only request Jesus denies in this narrative is the one made by this restored man.
 - 1. The demons beg Jesus not to torment them, nor to send them into the abyss but into the pigs, and Jesus gives them "permission" (vv. 28, 31-32).
 - 2. The townspeople come and beg Jesus to leave their region—maybe they're scared of His power, maybe they don't appreciate the economic troubles He just put them in by wiping out a whole herd of pigs. Whatever the case, they beg Jesus to leave, so He does (v. 37).
- C. But then in v. 38, here comes our healed man with a request of his own, one that we can certainly understand and sympathize with. He wants to stay by the side of the One who healed Him. He's ready to go wherever Jesus goes.
 - 1. And that, we think is the only request made in this whole narrative that actually is worthy of granting. Right? "Let me follow You! I want to let go of everything familiar, reset the course of my life, and go with You!"
 - a. And we say, "Yes!" But Jesus says, "No": "The man from whom the demons had gone begged that he might be with him, but Jesus sent him away . . ." (v. 38). Or in Mark's account: "He did not permit him" (Mark 5:19).
- D. He gives permission to the demons, but He does not give permission to this man? Why?!
 - 1. Short answer: the Messianic Commission: "^{38b} . . . Jesus sent him away, saying, ^{39a} 'Return to your home, and declare how much God has done for you'" (vv. 38b–39a). "I don't permit you to come with Me now because I have a mission for you here."
- E. Now we're ready for those three principles . . .

(1) My Staying Is Going

Are You a Missionary?

- A. This brother desperately wants to go with Jesus, he is ready to leave it all. But Jesus looks at him and says, in essence: "If you want to go hard for me, stay here in your hometown—be a disciple here, be a missionary here." His staying is going. His mission field is his hometown.
- B. I wonder if we get this. Let me ask you, Christian: According to the Bible, are you a missionary?
 - 1. I fear I run the risk of unsettling some of us by my answer here, but I would say: Yes. You and I are missionaries for Jesus right here . . . at least we should be.

- C. Now, on the one hand, I fear my answer will unsettle those of us who have a narrower understanding of what a missionary is. By calling all of us missionaries, you'll feel I'm devaluing the great sacrifice of those who've left everything familiar to bring Jesus to foreign lands.
1. I am not wanting to devalue them and their sacrifice at all. But I am wanting to include us in that missionary call. It might not look the same, but, nonetheless it is our calling as well.
- D. We have this whole set of qualifications we've attached to this idea of a missionary.
1. It means you get money from the church—you live on support.
 2. It means you go somewhere else, especially overseas.
 3. It means you're the particularly hardcore brand of Christian—these are the guys that memorize the book of Leviticus because they find it particularly edifying; they prefer to sleep on the floor instead of in a bed because it helps them remember this place is not their home; they're always traveling from place to place just going hard for the gospel.
 - a. That's what it means to be a missionary. It certainly doesn't mean that you stay in one place and live a "normal" Christian life among familiar places and people for the long haul.
- E. But I want to know: Where did we get these qualifications? I don't think we find this in the Bible.
1. I think Oswald Chambers is closer to the biblical definition when he writes: "A missionary is someone sent by Jesus Christ just as He was sent by God" (cf. [John 20:21](#)). It's not a question of where you've been sent, but if you have been sent.
 - a. So let me ask again: Is that you? Has Jesus sent you to San Jose? Are you called to be a disciple of Christ, to take up your cross and follow Him in the Bay area of California? Are you called to be an ambassador for Christ when you walk into work at Apple's HQ or you walk into the YMCA off of Santa Teresa Blvd? Are you called to be the salt and light of your neighborhood?
 - i. Are you a missionary, a sent one of Jesus, right here? Yes!
- F. And, you see, now, perhaps, I'm starting to unsettle another group of people. They also have had that same narrow definition of a missionary and, honestly, they've used it to wiggle out of this call on their life. There may be some among us who are secretly thankful for the fact that God has not called you to the "mission field".
1. "Somebody's got to stay, make the money, support the mission from the homeland. And you know what, I'm thankful it's me. The whole sacrifice, cross-bearing, evangelizing, persecution thing, that doesn't sound like a good gig. I'll take the staying and sending role."
- G. And here I am saying: If you are in Christ, you are a missionary. Period. Some are called to leave, others are called to stay, but all of us are called to go hard for the gospel wherever Jesus sends us.
1. In the case of this healed man, his missionary call was to go hard by staying. Or in the words of Jesus: "[Return to your home, and declare . . .](#)" (v. 39).

- a. He was sent home, not because he wasn't hardcore enough, but because that's where Jesus had a mission for him to accomplish.

Is Your Staying Going?

- A. So let me ask you: Is your staying going? Are you returning and declaring with missional intentionality among familiar places and people?
- B. It seems to me that this can sometimes be the harder work.
 1. We get all geared up for mission trips. We pray, and we fast, and we prepare. But ordinary, day-in-and-day-out life? After months, years, of the same old places and faces, we often lose sight of the mission among the mundane.
- C. Let me give you just one example of this. I remember reading something in the Babylon Bee, a Christian news satire website. It's funny but, sadly, I could relate: "Father Of 3 Wonders When He'll Get Chance To Influence Others For Christ—Stating that he had been feeling a sense of purposelessness and melancholy for some months now, local father of three Andrew Harbaugh recently began wondering when he would ever get a chance to impact anyone for the sake of Christ, sources close to him confirmed Thursday. Harbaugh reportedly spends his days working ten hours at a desk job and his nights talking and playing with his three children.
'I just wish God would place a few people in my life for whom I could make an eternal difference,' Harbaugh told reporters, his head in his hands. 'I just don't have time to do anything for the Kingdom of God while I provide for my family and spend time with my three boys.' 'Surely the Lord will have something important for me to do someday,' he added sadly. He further stated that every second of his day is taken up with 'mundane' tasks like instructing and caring for his children, leaving him little to no time to evangelize or influence others for the gospel. 'I've just got my hands full with these kids. When will I ever get to do some important Kingdom work for God?' he lamented.
 1. The great work God is calling him to is right in front of him, but he doesn't have eyes to see it. It's too common, too mundane.
- D. This is one of the reasons why Kossiwa, Sanvi, Megan, and myself have been putting so much time and energy into our Children's Ministry lately. We don't want our church, our parents to miss this!
 1. I've been working on a document that explains our new mission statement for the ministry and I wanted to read to you a few lines from it: "When we think of the mission field we often think of someplace on the other side of the world with a sea or two in between. We talk about the 10/40 window and the unreached peoples of the world. But do we realize that with the birth of every child God brings that 10/40 window to us?! We take an unreached person home with us from the hospital wrapped warmly in a blanket and strapped tightly in a car seat. The frontlines of the mission field lay not out there somewhere across oceans, but right here across from us in the living room, sitting next to us in high chairs around our dinner tables. To be sure, we desire to bring the gospel to the ends of the earth. But we begin by bringing the gospel to our children."

- E. You know it's crazy, many of us might be familiar with those vv. in Eph 6 that talk about putting on the armor of God and engaging in spiritual warfare "against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places" (v. 12).
 - 1. But how many of us have noticed the context? Paul elevates into this discussion of cosmic battle immediately following his discussion of how husbands and wives ought treat one another, parents and children, bosses and employees.
 - a. In other words: It's in these mundane everyday realities that we have a chance to make some serious gains on the Devil. It's right here, with your spouse, or your kids, or your coworkers, or your neighbors, or whoever, that you can join Jesus in the Messianic Contradiction.
- F. So I wonder, is there a mission field you've been missing among the mundane? Christ is calling you to return and declare with a renewed sense of purpose. Go hard for Him by staying right here on mission.

(2) My Story Is Glory

- A. We're not told exactly why this man so desperately begs to travel along with Jesus, though, obviously, his reasons are not all that hard to imagine.
 - 1. Certainly one of the many things that might've been motivating him here is a desire to start over, right? "I've burned my bridges in this town (in his case, perhaps even literally). I want to get out of here where people don't know me and start afresh. To be honest, I'm kind of embarrassed. I'd rather not have to rehash it all, or deal with all the whispers and double-takes as I walk by."
 - a. We get that don't we? That's how we think. When we've really blown it, in a relationship, at a job, in a church, or whatever, we kind of think the best thing for us to do is just move on, start again.
- B. But Jesus doesn't let him do this, why? Because his story is glory—God's glory.
 - 1. Do you know what I mean here? Sure, there may be whispers and double-takes and gossip, but do you know what they're going to be gossiping about in the end? The glory of God.
 - a. "Wasn't that the guy we would hear howling out among the tombs at night? Isn't that the maniac that would be foaming at the mouth and we'd have to take the long way home when we had our kids with us? Nah, it couldn't be. Wait, it is! Look at all the scars on his arms and legs from where he would cut himself. That's him. How can this be? God you say? Jesus you say? Who in the world is that?!"
- C. Do you think some of that would be hard to hear for this healed man? Absolutely it would. But Jesus sends Him home anyways and tells him to "declare how much God has done for you" (v. 39).

1. That word “declare [diegeomai] in the Greek means: “to give a detailed account of something in words” (BDAG). In other words: “Tell them your story. Don’t hold back. Don’t edit out the hard stuff. Because your story is My glory!”
 - a. Jesus sends him back to the very people who know how broken and hopeless his life once was, because they in particular are the people primed to see what the grace of God can accomplish!
- D. We might think of Paul here. He didn’t hesitate to call himself the “chief” of sinners (1 Tim 1:15) because he knew that his story—with all the self-righteousness and murder and rebellion—was to God’s glory in the end: “And they glorified God because of me” (Gal 1:24).
- E. You know, when God saved me back in college, it was so exciting, there was like this ripple effect of conversions around me.
 1. In my landscape architecture lab at Cal Poly there were no Christians when I began and then, after I got saved, there was one and then another and another until there were like five or six of us. Because they saw God at work in a sinner.
 2. And the same thing happened when I came home for the summer. I’ll never forget what my dad said to me at the end of those few months: “You used to be the most selfish person I’ve ever known, but now I feel like I don’t even know who you are.”
 - a. And he gives his life to the Lord. And so does my mom. And then my sister.
 - i. My story is God’s glory. Broken people become trophies of His grace.
- F. So I don’t know what your story is, but I do know that we’re prone to edit out the stuff we don’t like. We’re prone to hide the stuff about our brokenness or sin or failures, whether from our past or even stuff we’re dealing with right now. We don’t want people to see that.
 1. But our text this morning is rebuking that in us and saying: “Listen, if you don’t let others see your brokenness, your sin and shame, then they also won’t be able to see the glory of God’s grace when He helps you overcome this stuff and He changes you.”

(3) My Blessing Is Yours

- A. This really brings our discussion full circle. Jesus sends this man home to spread the blessing. He contradicts the work of the Devil in this man’s life, so he can go and partner with Jesus in contradicting the works of the Devil in the lives of others. My blessing is yours.
- B. Isn’t it just like our Savior to commission broken, sinful people and allow them to participate in His great work of redemption?! What a privilege, what a joy!
 1. This man whom, just a day ago, any would’ve said his life is over, it’s a dead end, it’s a lost cause, I mean look at him! He’s crazy. He’s lost his mind. Jesus gets a hold of him and his life is given new footing, new hope, new purpose.

- a. The man who was devastatingly destructive to any who would come near and a threat to himself, is now a source of blessing for those in the very city he once haunted.
- C. Imagine the ministry he could have. Imagine the stories he could tell. Imagine the comfort in Christ he could bring.
1. Paul could say I was the chief of sinners. Because God has saved even me by way of the cross, you can know for sure He can save you (1 Tim 1:15-16).
 2. Well, this guy can come and say likewise: “I was as filthy as they come and Jesus washed me. I was as exposed and shamed and embarrassed as they come and Jesus covered me. I was as isolated and lonely and depressed as they come and Jesus welcomed me. I was as close to dead as a person can be and Jesus brought me back to life. And I know He can do the same for you!”
- D. Do you see that?! The Messianic Contradiction gives way to the Messianic Commission: “As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you” (John 20:21).