

Telling the Deliverance Story
Luke 8:26-39

Well brothers and sisters – it would have been quite something to have heard this fellow tell his story wouldn't it, especially if you had known or heard about him before.

Which if you lived in that region on the other side of the Sea of Galilee was quite probable, given what the gospel of Luke and Mark have to say about his condition.

In the scripture passage we just read Luke recounts how the man did not live in a house... but had been living naked among the tombs – which means he would have lived in the caves like this, where the dead were wrapped and laid to rest.

And in Mark's gospel we read that *"night and day among the tombs and in the hills he would cry out and cut himself with stones."* (Mark 5:5)

And when Matthew mentions this man's story he says that he was *"so violent that no one could pass that way"*

And so it seems that with this man being such a danger to himself and to others, the local authorities had attempted to capture him and keep him chained and locked up, but this man had such strength that he was able to break his chains and escape.

As Mark says *"no one could bind him anymore, not even with a chain. For he had often been chained hand and foot, but he tore the chains apart and broke the irons on his feet. No one was strong enough to subdue him."* (Mark 5:3)

So, stories about this man would have no doubt spread far and wide across this region, recounted in sober tones as warnings to watch out for this dangerous man if you had to travel past those tombs, or better yet just avoid that area all together.

And probably more than one traveler had nervously hurried past that area- looking over their shoulder, ready to run if the wild-man of the Gerasenes showed up.

I'm sure he would have been a terrifying sight as well – unshaven, matted hair, bloodied and bruised, dirty and filthy, screaming at the top of his lungs running at you intent on doing you harm.

It wouldn't be too far of a stretch to imagine that mothers in that region maintained some discipline over their children with stories about how the Wildman of the Gerasenes might come to carry off naughty boys and girls who didn't listen to and obey their parents.

So to then see this fellow cleaned-up and dressed, calmly telling his story about how an encounter with some man named Jesus had set things right for him... well that would have been an amazing experience. In fact Mark 5:20 says that *"all the people were amazed!"*

Now at first glance you might think *"wow – this sounds like a transformation story. Just look at the difference meeting Jesus made in his life! He went from being a naked wild man and living in caves full of dead people to being a decent civilized*

person who is safe to be around! That's quite a transformation!"

And that is quite true – he had undergone quite the transformation, as Luke 8:35 says *"they found the man from whom the demons had gone out, sitting at Jesus' feet, dressed and in his right mind;"*

Oh, that's right – if we had heard this man tell his story we would have also heard him say that the reason for this transformation was that he had been set free and delivered from evil spirits.

Evil spirits or demons who had taken control of his mind and body and soul and were responsible for all the misery and torment this poor man had suffered. He was not in full-control of himself; instead Luke says that the man was *"demon-possessed."*

And the irony in this situation – as much as there can be – is that the man's fellow citizens were incapable of keeping him

physically chained up because he was already spiritually chained up and in bondage to these demons.

So this man's story is not actually a transformation story, even though transformation results, it is instead a story of deliverance, a story of freedom!

And the first thing that we need to notice about a story of deliverance is that there is a situation where someone has been taken captive, or they are being controlled, or they are subject to harassment or abuse – and they are powerless to free themselves or make it stop.

But then someone else steps in and does something to free that person and rescues them from their situation and they are free from that control or bondage and able to resume normal life.

We're certainly familiar with the whole idea of rescue stories as they show up in the news, back in 2012 a daring rescue mission took place in Mogadishu Somalia when Seal Team Six

went in and rescued two aid workers who had been captured and taken hostage by Somali pirates.

And the next year 2013, in Cleveland Ohio a young girl who had been missing for ten years was found and freed by a neighbor who happened to hear her cries for help and went and broke down the door and helped her call 911.

And just last year, in June of 2016 we heard about how the Nigerian Army rescued about 5000 people in four remote villages in the northeast part of the country which had been under the control of the Islamist group Boko Haram.

So it's not hard for us to understand stories of deliverance, such as these, where people are freed from other people who have kidnapped them or taken them hostage...

We can understand how one becomes powerless when someone who is physically stronger than you, or armed with weapons, overpowers you and physically prevents you from

going anywhere and keeps you against your will by the threat of force or injury.

However, it is rather difficult for us to grasp what it is like to be captured or to be in bondage to spiritual beings like we see here in this story, beings that can cause us to do things and feel things and even believe things that are against our will – unless we have actually seen or experienced that.

Partly because our Western worldview does not believe such beings exist, partly in response to how our society overreacted to such being in superstition in the past, and partly because we have been able to observe and study so much of God's creation and come to understand how it works that we are reluctant to attribute causation of events to spiritual beings and spiritual power.

In fact if you look at our society's attitude towards those who suffer from addiction and mental illness I would even say that it's incredibly difficult for us to attribute causation of actions

and feelings and beliefs to unseen chemical and biological causes that we understand – let alone spiritual ones.

Case in point... when someone does something horrific and is found not to be criminally responsible for their actions because of their mental condition – that is hard for the public to deal with. Look at how people have responded to the recent release of Vincent Le – who beheaded a fellow passenger on a Greyhound bus back in 2008.

And as the number of deaths from Fentanyl overdoses continues to increase and spread across our country we are simply baffled as to why people would choose to take drugs when the risk of getting something laced with Fentanyl and overdosing on it is so high?

But brothers and sisters, we need to understand and accept the reality that there are situations in people's lives where they are in bondage, they are captive to unseen forces that may be biological or chemical or psychological and most definitely spiritual which compel them to act and feel and

believe in ways that are harmful to themselves and others and they are powerless to stop it.

That is the starting point for any story of deliverance.

So the question for us to reflect on this morning, as we consider how it was that Jesus met our spiritual thirst, our spiritual need, is... were we in a situation where we were powerless against something or someone that was keeping us captive?

Maybe it was a struggle with an addiction or a sinful and destructive habit... maybe you were in an unhealthy or dysfunctional relationship or in an abusive situation... and through encountering Jesus through the scriptures or through hearing the Gospel or through the actions of one of his followers.. something happened which allowed you to kick that addiction or leave that relationship or have demonic power over our life broken off and you were freed.

Because friends the truth of a deliverance story is that however powerful and strong your captor is or was – be it a person, an addiction or habit or an illness, or even a legion of many demons... the truth is Jesus that is stronger!

And however we tell our story of deliverance we need to be sure that we describe how Jesus' power was greater than what bound us, and how we encountered him in a way that he was able to set us free.

Because that's exactly what Luke does here when he tells this story...

In fact we need to understand that this story is actually presented as an "invasion" story where Jesus is stepping outside the bounds of the historic promised-land where God's presence dwelt in His Temple and he is going to where idolatry and lies and the worship of false gods reigned.

And as Jesus crosses the sea of Galilee, we have that famous Sunday-school story where a sudden storm comes up and

threatens to sink the boat, but Jesus with one word calms the storm.

Now what you don't learn in Sunday school is that this is a "demonic" storm – almost like the first line of defenses of the Kingdom of darkness trying to stop "Disciple Team Twelve and their leader" from landing on their shore.

But Jesus is stronger – he calms the storm with a simple rebuke and they proceed on.

Then, they reach land and Luke says "*When Jesus stepped ashore, he was met by a demon-possessed man*" (vs. 27)

Jesus is immediately engaged by the enemy as he steps on to enemy territory, but Jesus engages the enemy back and commands the impure spirit to come out of the man.

However because this is their home turf, these demons will not yield to Jesus as easily as the demons back in Israel have – whom Jesus silences and casts out with a single word.

Instead these demons attempt to be evasive, and they call out Jesus' name – for by knowing and speaking the full name of someone you can attempt to exercise authority over them, or at least bargain with them.

So these demons speak Jesus name in an attempt to limit what Jesus will do to them, they resist his initial command to come out of the man they've possessed.

So, this spiritual power encounter continues and Jesus counters by asking them for their name, and they cagily reply – we are Legion...

Now a Legion in the Roman Army consisted of approximately 5000 soldiers, so what these demons are telling Jesus is there are so many of us you're going to have a hard time getting all our names and casting us out.

But Jesus stands his ground, though the demons continue to try and resist him – they protest and delay having to submit to

His authority and power by appealing to him not to send them away. Finally they come up with an idea!

They know Jesus will inevitably drive them out of the man – so perhaps they can find another way to remain in the territory which they occupy – there is a large herd of pigs nearby, maybe they can go into the pigs? Jesus says yes and off they go...

So, Jesus' power is greater and has prevailed and this man has been delivered from the bondage that he was in and is free!

Now – we're looking at this story this morning to see what we can learn about telling our own story as a story of deliverance - so I don't have time to go into all the interesting details about the pigs running off the cliff and the people not wanting Jesus to stay and so on - but if you want to know more about that you can look up a previous message I did on this passage in the sermon archives called "[Demons and Pigs](#)" and read up on it.

But what we need to take from this right now is how are you going to describe the way in which Jesus encountered what was holding you captive and how did He break the power it held over you and set you free?

And lastly it's important that you articulate what it meant that you were freed.

We've heard how Luke describes the man sitting at Jesus feet, which means he was receiving teaching, and he was dressed and in his right mind.

Because he was free from demonic control this man could now receive teaching, he could become grounded in the truth not be made to believe lies – and he was "clothed." Now think of how often being "clothed" in the scriptures represents being taken into God's family...

Last week we heard about how the prodigal son was "clothed" in the best robe (Luke 15:22) and Jesus also tells a Kingdom parable about how wedding guests received wedding clothes

to attend the banquet (Mat 22) and in Revelation 3:18 Jesus says *“I counsel you to buy from me... white clothes to wear, so you can cover your shameful nakedness...”*

So this man was set free from the Kingdom of Darkness and he is now at Jesus feet, in his right mind, and fully clothed and thus described Luke is proclaiming how he now belongs to the Kingdom of God.

So brothers and sisters, it’s important that we remember and communicate, if our story is one of deliverance, that we were set free – not so that we could pursue life, liberty and happiness – but so that we can serve the one who delivered us – in whom we find and receive eternal life and assurance that we belong to the Kingdom of God.

As Paul says in Galatians 5:1 *“It is for freedom that Christ has set us free!”* and again in 5:13 *“do not use your freedom to indulge the sinful nature; rather, serve one another humbly in love.”*

So, be sure to explain to people in your story that one of the results of being set free is that you now share your story to encourage other people that they too can experience freedom in Christ and be set free from whatever they are powerless to overcome in their life.

That’s exactly what Jesus told this man he had to do now. Luke says *“The man from whom the demons had gone out begged to go with him, but Jesus sent him away, saying, “Return home and tell how much God has done for you.” So the man went away and told all over town how much Jesus had done for him.”* (vs. 38-39)

Now here’s the hard part for us brothers and sisters – as we come to the end of this message series on telling our story, one last question for us to consider this morning...

Do you think that Jesus’ words to that man apply any less to us? Are we not also supposed to go and tell how much Jesus has done for us? Especially in light of how Jesus has also instructed us to go and make disciples of all nations, and

specifically ensured that the Holy Spirit was poured out upon his church to empower them for this task... So are we doing that? Are we telling our stories?

We've been working to become better trained and equipped to do it - in January we looked at how to recognize spiritual thirst, this month we learned about how to tell our stories...

So are we going and telling people how much Jesus has done for us?

Maybe you don't have an amazing deliverance story where you were set free from an addiction or illness or from demonic oppression – but brothers and sisters at the very least we ought to remember that scripture says in Romans 3:9 *“that Jews and Gentiles alike are all under the power of sin.”*

And in Romans 5:6 Paul describes this situation in familiar terms for us *“You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly”*

So brothers and sisters every single one of us ought to know our own powerlessness before the power of Sin and how Jesus' death and resurrection breaks that power of Sin in our lives and we should be able to tell that as a story of being delivered from the power of Sin in our lives...

And further we can share how we have been given the power of the Holy Spirit so that we may resist and overcome the effects of sin and the temptation to sin...

As Paul says in Galatians 5:16-17 *“walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature. For the sinful nature desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the sinful nature. They are in conflict with each other, so that you are not to do whatever you want.”*

Brothers and sisters – I think there is some deliverance that needs to happen for us here at Valleyview... because whether it is our sinful nature, or whether it is fear – something is preventing us and blocking us from going out and telling people how much Jesus has done for us.

And this is not guiltting you into trying to do it – because guilt only produces shame and that doesn't empower you.

No brothers and sisters, we need to name what it is that is blocking us and preventing us from obeying our Lord...

And the good news is that Jesus Christ is here, the Power of the Holy Spirit is here this morning to deliver us from that fear, to empower us to overcome our sinful nature's resistance to His command.

Because the truth is that *“the Spirit God gave us does not make us timid, but gives us power, love and self-discipline. So do not be ashamed of the testimony about our Lord” (2 Tim 1:7)*

So brothers and sisters – to help us receive that Spirit of boldness and power and love which can deliver us from fear and shame this morning we're going to move into a time of ministry...

I want to invite the music team up right now – they are going to lead us in singing “This is my story” and as you sing it – make that claim, make that statement... this story of deliverance and being set free is YOUR story this morning...

And I want to offer you prayer this morning as well – we want to pray for the powerful name of Jesus to release us and set us free so that we can proclaim it boldly and without fear...

So brothers and sisters – it's time to embrace freedom this morning, this is our story – let's make it our pray and our song. Amen.