

Sam, Some of you may have heard I have on now. Good morning. Thank you. I had a bad bike accident a couple weeks ago. But the positives out of it was my bike wasn't damaged.

The ambulance was really well air conditioned, and I got butterscotch pudding at the hospital. I don't know why they said they had pudding. I want pudding. We don't have pudding at home that much. I was like.

So the butterscotch pudding did not alleviate the pain, but it was satisfying. So anyway, my body didn't fare so well, but I'll be okay. So, hey, this sermon this morning is about demons.

Like a slap of the face. Let me get another shot at that. The sermon this morning is about a crazy, violent, dangerous man who was under the influence of demons. Scary story. Let me take another shot of that.

This sermon is about Jesus. It's about Jesus and his power to set us free. It's about his power to set this man free, but it's also about his power to deliver us and set us free. So this sermon, the passage. Yeah, there's a demon.

There's demons in here. There's a violent man influenced by demons. But the big picture I want you to see is it's about the power of Jesus, supernatural power of Jesus to set us free from the ways that Satan grips us and wants to kill us. So we've been. This is a part of a series this summer called Mountains and Lakes.

Lakes and Mountains. I can't remember which order we put it in. Mountains and Lakes. But they're all stories about Jesus. They're all stories about Jesus, you know, talking about Jesus feeding the 5,000, Jesus walking on the water, Jesus calming the storm.

Maggie talked about Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount and how it makes. He calls us to be uncomfortably bold with some things. Quentin talked about Jesus calling us aside to rest. But through all these stories about Jesus, I want to ask you to do something or challenge you to something. You can look at these vignettes of the life of Jesus almost like you're walking through a zoo.

Here's this story. Here's that story. Here's this story and that story. But these stories, like the wild animals, their habitat is not in the cage. Their habitat is out in the wild.

So these stories about Jesus as supernatural, calling us to rest, calling us to be bold and uncomfortable, that's your world. Don't come to church and turn the service or the sermon into a story that was nice to see, and you go home. These are when Jesus is let out of his domestic Cage. It's a wild adventure. So live the wild adventure with these stories of Jesus.

So the story we're looking at today is Jesus casting out demons. So go to the next slide. It takes place. I'm gonna give you context. It takes place.

The first verse of the passage says. So they arrived at the other side of the lake in the region of the Jerusales. Sometimes it's called other things, but that's the. And I have a circle up there off to the right, the east of the Sea of Galilee, and that's where we're talking about. Sea of Galilee for point of reference is about four times as big as Lake Monroe.

So big, but not big big, but it's big. And on this right side of the Sea of Galilee is typically, what's typically a gentile region. And Jesus and the disciples had just been on the boat on the Sea of Galilee when Jesus supernaturally calms the storm and. And the disciples say, who is this man that the waves and the winds obey him? Just to give a little more context of size.

Next slide. That's about how big Israel is. All right, so it's not a huge part of the world, but the most important things in the world happened there. All right, so Jesus. So the northern part is the Galilee region.

The southern part of Israel is where Jerusalem is. So you usually when you read the Bible, it's either up in the north with Galilee area or down in the south in Jerusalem. But I just wanted to give you some context. So they arrived the other side of the lake in the region of the Gerasenes. Now I'm gonna read the rest of the passage.

It's a little long. Ish. But what I want you to do is I wanna let your imagination see what's happening. And I don't mean imagination like make something up. I mean, if you just hear the story, it may provoke.

You may know that Ozzy Osbourne died this week, who made a. Made a brand out of Satan and things like that. It may provoke memories of. Maybe you didn't see it, I hope you didn't see it. The movie the Omen or some of the movies that were kind of Freaky Friday the 13th, those kind of things.

But this is the tone of this passage. Like really supernatural, dark stuff happening. All right? So I'm just saying. So when you listen, I want you to see the story.

All right, Here we go. So they arrived at the other side of the lake. When Jesus climbed out of the boat, a man possessed by an evil spirit came out from the tombs to meet him real quick. In the original language, evil spirit is usually unclean spirit, but any unclean spirit was seen to be not from God. Thus evil.

All right, A man with an evil spirit came out to the tombs to meet him. This man lived in the burial caves, could no longer be restrained, even with a chain. Whenever he was put in chains and shackles, as he often was, he snapped the chains from his wrists, smashed the shackles. No one was strong enough to subdue him. Day and night he wandered among the burial caves and in the hills, howling and cutting himself with sharp stones.

In the other gospels, we're also told he was naked, didn't have any clothes. I mean, he was a wild animal. When Jesus was still some distance away, the man saw him and ran to meet him and bowed low before him. With a shriek he screamed, why are you interfering with me, Jesus, son of the Most High God, in the name of God, I beg you, don't torture me. For Jesus had already said to the spirit, come out of this man, you evil spirit.

Alright again, put yourself like you're hanging out with the disciples now you're watching all this, it's kind of freaking you out. Then Jesus demanded, what is your name? He replied, my name is Legion, because there are many of many of us inside this man. Then the evil spirits begged him again and again not to send them to some distant place, because Jesus had the authority to send them to the abyss. There happened to be a large herd of pigs feeding on the hillside nearby.

Send us into those pigs, the spirits begged, let us enter them. So Jesus gave them permission. The evil spirits came out of the man, entered the pigs, and the Entire herd of 2,000 pigs plunged down the steep hillside into the lake and they drowned in the water. The herdsmen fled to the nearby town and the surrounding countryside, spreading the news. As they ran, people rushed out to see what happened.

So there's commotion going on. A crowd soon gathered around Jesus and they saw the man who had been possessed by the legion of demons. He was sitting there, fully clothed and perfectly sane, and they were all afraid.

Then those who had seen what happened told the others about the demon possessed man and the pigs. And the crowd began pleading with Jesus to go away and leave them alone. They were scared. As Jesus was getting into the boat, the man who had been demon possessed begged to go with him. But Jesus said no.

Go home to your family and tell them everything the Lord has done for you and how merciful he has been. So the man started off to visit the 10 towns the 10 towns were in that Red Circle region, often called the Decapolis. Went to these 10 towns in the region, began to proclaim the great things Jesus had done for him. And everyone understandably, was amazed at what he told them. Cause they knew his story.

I'm gonna ask you to do four things in this. First thing is gonna be this. I want you to enter the story. By that, I mean, maybe you're standing with the disciples and you're watching this happen. Maybe you're one of the townspeople who knew this guy before he went demonic.

And I'll say somehow he must have given the devil a foothold. Something got really bad, right? So maybe you're a town. Maybe you're a family member of this man and you've seen this happen and you're so ashamed. Or maybe you're one of the.

But end of the story. Because in entering this story, I'm really asking you to enter your own story. Because your story also includes harassment from the evil one. And you might say, as some say, well, no, I can't be touched. I'm a Christian.

But let me remind you, the passages in the New Testament that are written to Christians warn us, don't give the devil a foothold. Watch out for his schemes. He prowls around like a lion. He came to steal, kill and destroy. Those are written to us.

Written to us. So just be aware that some of these things are about us. I'm assuming nobody here is naked in chains, but there's degrees. The word demon possessed, we usually translate demon possessed could be better translated demonize. Kind of like demon harassed.

And it's part one of degrees. So this man obviously had an overwhelming demonic presence in his life. You know, 98% plus whatever have you. But there's all kinds of degrees in which Satan tempts us, accuses us, and lies to us. And one, one.

One author who's done a lot of interaction with people around this area of spiritual and demonic oppression said he figures only 15% of us Christians are free completely of the bondage of the evil one. Wow. Only 15% of us. He said most of us have. A lot of us have some area of bondage where we've believed a lie, we've given into something to Satan.

We're not running around naked, breaking chains, but we're not living a fullness of life with Jesus. Because there's certain areas of our life, certain lies we believe, certain certain accusations we take to heart that have stalled us in our Christian lives.

I spent some time a couple weeks ago Talking to. There's actually somebody here from Sherwood Oaks during this service. I don't know if they're here or not, but I think they're in this service. And we talked about this passage quite a bit. And this is one of the things he wrote me that I'll just about this issue of the supernatural part of Christianity.

He says, anytime I find myself considering the supernatural aspects of the Christian. Christian faith is generated by this passage, I can't escape the feeling that I'm missing out on the most dynamic elements of what it means to be a follower of Jesus. So you can kind of live your life, Christian life, and kind of pretend that the spiritual world doesn't exist. I don't mean just the demonic. I mean even the power of the Holy Spirit.

You can pretend it doesn't exist, but it does. And sometimes we need to be pushed into it in a sense and realize, like this friend of mine says it might be one of the most dynamic elements of following Jesus. Not like we're casting out demons, but. No, it's just there's an invisible world that's real and we live in it all the time. And we can do this or we can do this or whatever, but it doesn't change anything.

Cause we all face supernatural harassment. And some people might say, which some do. Well, the demons were active in Jesus day, but not today. I don't know how somebody can believe that with all the evil in the world. Some would say, well, we now understand these things as mental illnesses.

But if that's the case, then with a word, psychologists and psychiatrists could heal people. You know, you go down. Go down Beeline Trail, see homeless people in Bloomington. And some who are talking to themselves and just strange. I don't know, maybe these are the people that Jesus would have stopped and helped.

I don't know. But we talk. There's mental illness, there's spiritual oppression, but we're all one person. So those things intertwine and spin together.

So we have to understand that. Some say, you know, you know, demonic behavior is only the extreme and violent. But there's all kinds of evidence of different degrees of demonic oppression in our lives. Satan lies to us all the time.

Peter tells us to be alert. The devil prowls around. Paul in Ephesians says, the fiery darts of the enemy are directed at us. Paul also says to the Corinthians that there's cunning ways of Satan toward us. Then in Ephesians, Paul says, we can give a foothold to Satan with unresolved anger in our lives.

So somehow this man had given a foothold and then just kept opening and opening himself up to more of Satan's influence in his life. Harassment, demonization, I'll call it that. So it's not about salvation. This is not about whether you're saved or not. It's about whether you're able to have an intimate, victorious, life giving relationship with Jesus.

And sometimes Satan, he knows not, sometimes Satan is absolutely opposed to that. So he'll do anything he can to thwart harass you so you don't have a fulfilling life giving, satisfying, full of abundance life with Jesus, that's what his goal is, right? So you got into the story, be in the story. Cause maybe it's your story, right? Or maybe it's somebody you know.

Maybe you have a family member, friend that's deep in the holds of Satan and you just don't know what it's gonna take for God to rescue them. That's the first thing. Second thing is this. Run to Jesus says Jesus was still a distance away. The man saw him and ran to meet him.

So when I was talking about this passage with a friend of mine here from Sherwood Oaks, we both had the very first same question was why did the demonically influenced man run to Jesus and not away from Jesus? Not only did he run to him, he bowed down low before him, got on his why. I mean, shouldn't the demon go that way? Or shouldn't the demon come and flail at Jesus? Swing, broken chains, maybe.

Maybe I think that man, whatever his name was, was made in the image of God. The image of God can never be taken away from a human. So there's something in that person that still had his own human agency. Maybe it was 0.5%, was still he had some control. Maybe he knew this man.

Jesus was his only hope to stop living a life full of addiction and shame and pain and violence. Maybe he knew that's my only hope and that's why he ran to him. It was deep desperation. Maybe you know what that feels like, Deep desperation.

Times. There's times where you and me, I'm including myself in this. We need to run to Jesus. So times when you're overwhelmed by fear or anxiety, don't try to just figure it out. Run to Jesus.

I'm not saying it's magical or whatever. Run to Jesus. I've shared before in this couple different sermons. When I was, before I was married, when I was in seminary actually, I had addiction to pornography. Well, I tried willpower, I tried discipline.

Then when I finally Ran to Jesus. Actually, Jesus pushed me toward him. I was changed. My wife recently told me. Not recently, a couple years ago.

She said, you have a forgiveness problem with a certain group of people. After about a fraction of a second of defensiveness, I knew she was right. She's not here. But I'll say it again. She was right.

I only say it once in the next service when she's here. All right? And I remember thinking, saying to Jesus, I don't wanna be this way now. I could have worked on it and tried hard. No, I just said, Jesus, what

do you want me to do?

I don't wanna be this way.

In my soul. I ran to Jesus.

Set me free.

So when you're deep in addiction and shame, run to Jesus. Don't think, I gotta get it figured out. I gotta clean up a little bit.

When your whole body feels gripped with bitterness and unforgiveness, run to Jesus. Don't say, well, I gotta work this out. It's gonna take me some time. No, just run to Jesus. The prodigal son, when he found himself in the mud pigsty after rebelling against his dad, he said, I'm gonna get up and go back to my father.

And his father ran to him and hugged him. Run to Jesus. That's the character of Jesus. Run to Jesus. I don't know any.

I don't know many of you, so I don't know to what degree there might be addictions. Maybe it's chemical, or maybe it's just addiction to anger. Maybe it's addiction to yourself. I don't know. Maybe you're a narcissist.

I don't know if you're not. If you are, somebody should tell you that, right? But run to Jesus. I'm not saying good therapy and good psychological help, that's helpful, but you are not just a psychological being. You're a spiritual being.

And somehow Jesus wants to do both those in your life. He wants to set you free. So run to Jesus.

Next, cry out to Jesus. So in this passage, we're told the demon with a shriek. Actually, we don't know if this was the man or the demon shrieking. We don't know. With a shriek, he screamed.

So that word shriek, scream is a word that's used a lot in the New Testament about people who approach Jesus. Right? People with unclean spirits often would approach Jesus, evil spirits, with a loud scream. The father of the boy, there was a father in Book of Mark, had a son that was being harassed by a demon. And the father cries out To Jesus.

He screams to Jesus. When Bartimaeus, the blind man knew Jesus was coming down the road, Scripture says he cried out, right? The word cried out is the same word in all these. When the disciples saw Jesus walking on the water, they cried out in fear. When, when Peter was sinking in the water, he cried out.

That word cried out. And I don't know often use the Greek words, but

it's helpful in this. The word is krazo. And it's one of those words like we use the word boom or whatever. It's a word that is meant to mimic a sound.

So krazo was meant to be like thunder or a croaking frog or a cowing raven. So when somebody krazoed, it was from a deep part of them. It was a place of distress and anguish out of need and fear. And is when people were at the breaking point. Bartimaeus was blind, Peter was sinking.

These people influenced by demons were dying. The father of the demonic, the boy influenced by the demon. There was another story of a mother who has a daughter who's demon influenced. And they all cry out to. They all cried out to Jesus because it's distress.

Now, I'm not saying you need to shout at the top of your lungs when you do, when you cry out to Jesus, but there are times where you need to go to that place of deepest distress and deep desperation and say, Jesus, I need you right now. I'm not gonna try to figure this out on my own. I'm not gonna try to do willpower.

There was a time to bring it kind of day to day a couple years ago, actually about five years ago. So I was pastoring another church in town and we were a small church, right? So I drove by a church on a Monday morning, a different church, not this one. And they had more cars in their parking lot on a Monday than we have on a Sunday. And I actually said out loud to God in the car, come on, that's not fair.

Immediately I realized that's what envy is. And I just said to Jesus, I don't wanna be that way. I didn't cry out verbally, but in my heart I was crying. I don't wanna be that way. I don't wanna be that way.

When my wife pointed out that I was living with an issue of unforgiveness in my life, I remember leaving the house that day and saying to Jesus, I don't wanna be that way. I didn't bear down. I didn't try harder. I didn't try to discipline myself. Those are all good things.

But when it comes to supernatural healing, you need to cry out to Jesus. I need your help. When I talked about in the past about my young adult addiction to pornography, I tried discipline. I tried everything. Only when I cried out to Jesus.

And this is a case where I think Jesus, somebody was crying out for me, for Jesus. And I cried out to Jesus and he changed me. So maybe you have. Maybe it's you. You have some addiction issue, anger issue.

It may be small, but you've believed these accusations from Satan. He's lying to you. And you believe them about your worth. He's lying to you about God. God doesn't care about you.

He can't be trusted. And if God can't be trusted, then of course anxiety and fear is a natural byproduct. But God can't be trusted. That's the number one lie of Satan told Eve in the Garden of Gethsemane. You can't trust God.

He's holding out on you. So I don't know what your issue is, but once you know what it is, cry out to Jesus. I just help me, Help me. Have mercy on me. Or maybe it's somebody, you know, family member that you just think, wow, they are deep in the grips of Satan in their lives.

You may not say it that way, of course, you don't talk about it at the family dinner table that way. But you know, they're blind. They don't see. Maybe you pray for them. Maybe you cry out to Jesus on their behalf.

And you stop trying to figure it out.

You stop trying to do the things that you think you're supposed to. Until Jesus tells you what to do. Cause you've cried out to him lastly. So run to Jesus, Cry out to Jesus lastly. Tell your story.

So this man, after Jesus healed him again, you can see all these, you know, advertisements of before and after diets and things like that. So before wild, naked, supernaturally powerful, breaking chains. And he's cutting himself with it. And he's living in the tombs. That's his before, his after.

He's sane, totally sane, Bible says. And he's clothed, so of course he's amazed. And he's so attracted to Jesus, he goes to the boat when Jesus was leaving. Disciples says, can I go with you? And Jesus says, no.

And this is what Jesus tells him to do. Read this out loud with me. This is what Jesus says to this man who had radical supernatural change. Out loud. Here we go.

Go home to your family and tell them everything. The Lord has done for you and how merciful he has been. One more time, go home to your family and tell them everything the Lord has done for you and how merciful he has been. You may not know how to answer people when they say, can you prove that God exists? Why is there evil in the world?

Blah, blah. All of these hard questions area we call apologetics, but you're like, I don't know all the answers, but what you can do is you can tell your story. Often when Jesus healed people, he would say, go tell them somebody what happened to you. Go tell them what Jesus did for you. He didn't say, go study apologetics.

That's good to do that. I'm not saying you shouldn't do that, but you

might think, well, I can't really, I can never talk to anybody about evangelism. Well, evangelism is telling your story. So there's an author, current author, some of you may have read his books. His name is Lee Strobel.

Before he was a Christian, he was an investigative reporter for one of the big Chicago newspapers. And he's like, I'm going to investigate Christianity and I'm going to prove it wrong. Smart guy. A lot of logic in his head. As he studied and he believed, he changed.

And now he writes books about how to defend the Christian faith, what's called apologetics, how to. What are these answers? So he's really big on that. But somebody asked him about the most powerful point of evangelism he knows. And he said, well, the most powerful thing to me was after I became a Christian, my five year old daughter said this.

My dad doesn't scream at us anymore and he doesn't hit the wall with his fist. And he said, that's the most powerful apologetic I have because I have a changed life.

So I'll give you an easy outline that I actually am getting this from a pastor I heard preached last week in Akron, Ohio. Here's your three part story. I was then Jesus and now. All right, I was a captive to bitterness and unforgiveness. Then Jesus stepped in and healed me.

And now I'm no longer a slave to bitterness and anger. I was addicted to pornography years ago. Then Jesus stepped in and set me free. And now I'm free. So I don't know what your story is.

I was then Jesus and now. But I'm guessing a lot of you have stories, whether it's addictions, whether it was anger, whether it was any variety of thing. I also tell people this. When I was in college, I hated Public speaking, hated it. I mean, that's not a strong enough word.

So when I tell people that knew me then that my living is speaking in public, one person actually said to me, I would have never guessed that of you. Cause I was timid and afraid of people then Jesus. Over a course of years, part of what Jesus used was teaching junior high. You lose all public fears when you do that, right? I was then Jesus.

And now if somebody would have told me when I was 20 years old, I'd make a. My living would be teaching and preaching. I'd be like, no way. But Jesus does that. So we're gonna sing a chorus here in a second.

We're gonna do it a cappella. And I want everybody to sing. But you might know this, but it's. Cause I want you to think about your own story. I'm guessing some of you already think about an I was, I was

this.

Then Jesus did this. All right, so there's a chorus that goes this way. It's from the hymn Blessed Assurance, but the chorus is pretty simple. It's. This is my story, this is my song.

Praising my Savior all the day long this is my story this is my song.
Praising my Savior all the day long. So when I.

When I was listening to this week, this week, I found like multiple versions on Spotify. I found one I really like, but I was thinking about how Jesus rescued me from pornography, how he rescued me from timidity and fear, how he rescued me from. Unfortunately, that's my story. You all have stories. You've been rescued.

And maybe you're thinking about somebody who you wanna see them have that story. Family member, friend who's far from God. All right, here's what I want you to do. I want you to close your eyes for a second, and I'm gonna ask you to do this. If you have.

And clearly comes to mind to you that you have an I was story. I was this. And Jesus changed me. Just arise. I want you to stand up.

Nobody's. We're not gonna ask you what it is, but you know, Jesus has changed your life. You know there's something changed.

So you're standing and you're saying, this is my story.

And now if you're not yet standing, if you have a family member or a friend that is deep in the hold of Satan and you want their story to be one of redemption and you're praying for that, I want you to stand. Maybe some of you are already standing, I don't know.

Now I want the rest of you to stand with them.

So there's a. There's a passage in Colossians where it talks about. I'm gonna put it on the screen. Put Jesus triumphs. Yeah, Jesus Passion of the Colossians where Paul is talking about what Jesus did when we're dead in our sins, that because of the cross.

He nailed it to the cross. And then this is what it says. We're dead in our sins. And Jesus takes it away. And then it says this.

And having disarmed the powers and the authorities. That's talking about Jesus and demons. He's disarmed them. He's. He stripped them of their power.

Having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them. He exposed them, triumphing over them by the cross. They have no power anymore because Jesus. What he can do. And the word

triumphing, the triumph word in the.

In that day was used as a. As a kind of a entry hymn for a conquering king who had triumphed over the enemy.

It was an anthem for the king, a triumph anthem. Here's what I want us to do. So we're gonna sing this chorus. This is my story this is my song. I want you to picture kind of Jesus coming down the center aisle.

And when you sing this is my Story, this is my song, think of the thing that he saved you from, or think of the thing you want that friend or family member of yours saved from, and sing it as a prayer that their story would come to fruition in Jesus. All right, so here we go. Jesus is coming down the aisle. This is my story this is my song Praising my Savior all the day long this is my story this is my song Praising my Savior all the day long One more time. Lift your voices.

This is my story this is my song Praising my Savior all the day long this is my story this is my song Praising my Savior all the day long have a seat, Jesus. You win. And when we're going to. We have a time of response now. Take communion.

And like I said, we just read the passage from Colossians where Jesus triumph triumphed over the accusation and the lies of Satan. Because he nailed it to the cross, he wins. Satan is an inferior power, not even close to equal. So when you take this, if you're new here, we come up and just. People just take it.

And there's bread and juice in the same packet if you have enough dexterity to open up in time. But that's okay, right?

Jesus said, remember me when you do this. I want you to remember this. He wins. Maybe you just say Jesus, thank you, that you triumph over the lies and the accusations and the grip of the enemy. Maybe that's what you remember for today.

The enemy came to steal, kill and destroy. Jesus said, I came to give them life and life more abundant. And then also on the sides there'll be people that have the orange lanyards on that can pray for you. And maybe you just go to somebody and say, I just. I need Jesus to triumph.

You don't need to go any more detail. Maybe it's about your life. Maybe it's by a loved one that you don't know how to help them anymore. Just ask one of these prayers. Just, could you pray for me that.

That I would remind myself that Jesus triumphs. All right, so we pray

and then we'll take Jesus. You win, you triumph. You powerful. You're amazing.

There is absolutely no one like you. We love you. Amen.