

Introduction:

Warning to parents!

- A. Illus.: Earlier this month an article appeared *The Washington Post* entitled, “As a psychiatrist, I diagnose mental illness. Also, I help spot demonic possession.” It was by Dr. Richard Gallagher, a board-certified psychiatrist and a professor of clinical psychiatry at New York Medical College. He wrote,

In the late 1980s, I was introduced to a self-styled Satanic high priestess. She called herself a witch and dressed the part, with flowing dark clothes and black eye shadow around to her temples. In our many discussions, she acknowledged worshipping Satan as his “queen.”

I’m a man of science and a lover of history; after studying the classics at Princeton, I trained in psychiatry at Yale and in psychoanalysis at Columbia. That background is why a Catholic priest had asked my professional opinion, which I offered pro bono, about whether this woman was suffering from a mental disorder. ... I was inclined to skepticism. But my subject’s behavior exceeded what I could explain with my training. She could tell some people their secret weaknesses, such as undue pride. She knew how individuals she’d never known had died, including my mother and her fatal case of ovarian cancer. Six people later vouched to me that, during her exorcisms, they heard her speaking multiple languages, including Latin, completely unfamiliar to her outside of her trances. This was not psychosis; it was what I can only describe as paranormal ability. I concluded that she was possessed....

So began an unlikely partnership. For the past two-and-a-half decades and over several hundred consultations, I’ve helped clergy from multiple denominations and faiths to filter episodes of mental illness — which represent the overwhelming majority of cases — from, literally, the devil’s work. [7/1/16]

It’s an important caution: mental illness is much more common than demonization and might involve ideas about Satan and demons so beware of jumping to conclusions.

- B. In the Bible demons are also known as unclean or impure spirits, or evil spirits, which tells us that they do not have bodies of their own. But they can dwell in people, animals, buildings and other things. They are fallen or sinful angels and are under the control of Satan. They exist, to use the Bible's language, "in the heavenly realms" as well as throughout the earth. They are governed through a kind of hierarchy, like an army.

In the gospel stories, like the one we're studying today, they indwell people. But demons also work through systems, cultural practices, blinding legalism (like that of the Pharisees), and false teaching. Paul warned Timothy, "*The [Holy] Spirit clearly says that in later times some will abandon the faith and follow deceiving spirits and things taught by demons.*" [1 Tim 4:1]. **1 John 4:1** says, "*Dear friends, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world.*"

- C. Except for raising the dead, Jesus' most powerful miracles were in casting out demons because through that Jesus showed his unparalleled power, greater than Satan's. **Matt 9:33** tells of a time "*when the demon was driven out, the man who had been mute spoke. The crowd was amazed and said, 'Nothing like this has ever been seen in Israel.'*" In **Luke 11:20** Jesus responded to his critics, "*If I drive out demons by the finger of God, then the kingdom of God has come upon you.*"
- D. Now let's turn to this amazing story in **Mark 5**. Jesus had crossed to a gentile region on the east side of the Sea of Galilee. **5:1-5....**

I. **WHEN DEMONS GAIN ACCESS TO SOMEONE THEY SEEK TO DISTORT OR DESTROY GOD'S IMAGE IN THEM (5:1-5)**

- A. Demons cannot typically indwell or control people. Derek Prince wrote, "*Human beings are like walled cities. Certain natural defenses protect us against the entrance of demons. Basically, these are provided by sound, healthy minds, emotions and wills.*" Timothy Warner added, "*The*

point is, demons cannot do whatever they please. They operate under the limits established for them by God. They have to devise a perversion of God's plan and induce a person to act on that perversion in order to gain control over the person." [T. Warner, "Spiritual Warfare", for the EFCA, 5/7/90]

- B. This demon (actually an army of demons) is called an *impure spirit*. Demons are horribly vulgar and vile. When they speak, their language is often incredibly offensive, worse than anything a racist or sexist or sadist might say. They are foul and wicked to the core.
- C. Demons dehumanize people. This man was utterly isolated. Matthew tells us he and another demoniac with him were so violent no one dared pass that way. He wore no clothes and had no home except among the bones and decay of tombs carved in the cliffs. When demons get a grip on a person they have that dehumanizing effect. Isolating, bizarre, frightening behavior. A seeming madness or menace. This man "*would cry out and cut himself.*" God's image in that man was almost obliterated!
- D. Demons may show themselves in superhuman ways. This man could not be bound. How can anyone break iron chains without breaking bones?! Demons work through bodies but aren't bound by human physical limitations. They may even levitate. They can speak with a voice their victim could never produce naturally.

Another demon Jesus encountered would throw a child into fire. Others rendered their victims mute, crippled or blind. Paul encountered a young woman who was clairvoyant—till he commanded the spirit to come out of her. *Illus.:* I think I watched such a woman recently on a TV talent show. I don't think it was a magic trick. A spirit, of course, can move where he cannot be seen and see what is all but hidden. Demons know secrets because they've watched unseen. They can speak, mimicking the voice or story of out "dear departed" because they witnessed it.

- E. Demons deal in death. Wherever demons are at work there is a kind of whiff of death. There are often impulses to harm or kill oneself—or perhaps someone else—or there is

a fixation on death. That's why some movies, music, books, and video games alarm me—because, like the demons, they glorify destruction, death and the devil. This man literally reeked of death and was all but dead himself.

- F. The deepest tragedy in all this is not only the hopeless, dehumanizing suffering of this man but that God's image in him was all but destroyed. The demons had defaced the creative and loving work of God, which is their systematic purpose in the world, one way or another. **They hate God!**

In the next verses the focus is on names. In our culture we're not very familiar with the power of names. We get a little flavor of it sometimes when we don't want to give our name to someone, like a slick salesman: "*What did you say your name was?*" "*I didn't say.*" Because if he has your name he has a certain advantage. Well, that is certainly true in the realm of spiritual powers. So listen to **vv.6-10...**

II. JESUS CHRIST DOMINATES SATAN AND HIS DEMONS (5:6-10)

- A. Jesus has absolute authority over them. It seems strange that the demoniac ran *toward* Jesus and then fell to his knees. I wonder if it was the man himself who ran, despite the demons. What he said *sounded* like worship. At this point, no one else was recognizing Jesus as "*Son of the Most High God,*" not even his disciples! That's recognition of Jesus' divinity. But as James wrote, "*Even the demons believe [in one God] and shudder.*" They have no difficulty identifying the Lord. What it seems the demon was doing was trying to gain the upper hand on Jesus by using his name. Then he says something incredible, "***In God's name don't torture me!***" He has the gall to call on God's name to protect him from God's Son! Again, it was a kind of power play. But it didn't work.

Jesus was already in the process of casting the demon out but now Jesus ups the ante on the name game in v.9, "*What is your name?*" A common tool of those who deal with demons is to say, "*In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, we command you to tell us your name.*" Remember: to know the name is to have the upper hand. Either the

victim will hear the name in their mind or an actual voice may speak.

In this case, the demon said its name was “*Legion, for we are many.*” A Roman legion was 6000 men. Whether there were that many demons, or it was a way of saying, “*There’s an army of us,*” Either way, they soon took out 2000 pigs! And all of them had raged in that poor man!

Never forget the power of Jesus’ name because he entitles you as a believer to use his name against Satan because we are seated with Christ “in the heavenly places” above the authority of the enemy. We are no match for the enemy on our own. We cannot outwit him or overpower him but *at the name of the Lord Jesus Christ Satan and his demons must submit so long as Christ is our Lord.*

- B. There was another way here that Jesus dominated the demons, even though it seems like he acquiesces to their please. Jesus always subverts the enemy’s plans to achieve his purposes. **The demons begged for two things,** whimpering like bullies who’ve met their match.

First they pleaded not to be sent “out of the area.” Matthew explains that they meant not to be sent to the Abyss—to hell. And Jesus doesn’t, because the time for that had not yet come. That doesn’t happen till after Jesus returns. Even though they continued their evil ways they were still bound by God’s plan.

Secondly, they begged to be sent into the pigs. So weird! **Vv.11-13...** Jesus sends them into that huge herd of pigs, and true to their nature, the demons immediately destroy the pigs. Once those hosts were dead, I assume the demons resumed their diabolical troublemaking. But what that pig stampede demonstrated vividly was that the demons “*real purpose was the total destruction of their host*” [W. Lane]. They fully intended to do to that poor man what they did to those swine. What’s more, the whole incident would reveal vividly the hearts of the people in that area.

And the weirdness just keeps on coming: **vv.14-15... Now they were afraid!**? They got used to this man when a legion of demons turned him into a monster but they trembled when Jesus gave him his life back, when he sat there quietly, clothed and in his right mind? What kind of people were these!? **Vv.16-17...**

III. JESUS' POWER OVER EVIL UNCOVERS HEARTS (5:14-17)

- A. This is a lesson for Jesus' disciples, like us, that not only do we face the dark and destructive powers of the devil but also the blind unbelief of people who, if push comes to shove, would sooner live with fear and death than welcome Jesus' authority and life. Just look at the TV and movie listings. **People are drawn to the Satanic but frightened of the holy.**
- B. I want you to notice two lines. Back to **v.10** where the demon Legion "*begged Jesus again and again not to send them out of the area.*" And Jesus didn't. Then **v.17** where the same Gr. word is used, "*Then the people begged Jesus to leave their region.*" So the demons stayed and Jesus left. How do you think that all turned out?
- C. **John Oxenham** wrote a poem entitled, "GADARA, A.D. 31."
*Rabbi, begone! Thy powers
Bring loss to us and ours.
Our ways are not as Thine.
Thou lovest men, we--swine.
Oh, get you hence, Omnipotence,
And take this fool of Thine!
His soul? What care we for his soul?
What good to us that Thou hast made him whole,
Since we have lost our swine?*

There is yet one more surprise. Over and over Jesus told people to follow him. But when this man *begs* (there's that word again) *begs* to go with Jesus... well, listen to **vv.18-20....** I just love this guy! All by himself, like a man back from the dead, cuts still healing, but perhaps now the only truly sane man in the region! And with no more knowledge than what we've read here, Jesus dispatches him to tell his story to the Decapolis—the ten towns in that area. And he went. Sometimes that's what following Jesus looks like.

IV. WE FOLLOW JESUS WHEN WE TELL PEOPLE HOW MUCH THE LORD HAS DONE FOR US (5:18-20)

- A. Do you think you could do that? Tell your own people how much the Lord has done for you and how he has had mercy on you? Can you tell them your story? It's just that simple. *Illus.*: Daniel has been going out on his lunch breaks to try to tell people about Jesus. He made a little folder he found on the internet from the Billy Graham organization. It has the steps to salvation on one side and Daniel's own story on the other, "How I Found Peace with God." He just tells people what Jesus did for him.
- B. Mark 7-8 tell us that Jesus returned to Decapolis not long after where he amazed people with his miracles and where 4000 people gathered for three days just to hear Jesus' teach even though their food ran out. So Jesus again multiplied bread and fish, this time feeding 4000 people. **4000** from Decapolis. I wonder how many were there because of that one-time demoniac told them what Jesus had done for him?

Conclusion

My pastor friend, Bob Page, tells this story.

Before I actually encountered the demonic, I had a flawed theology about it. Even though I was a pastor, I saw the whole thing kind of like flying saucers—*yeah, I'll believe it when I see it*. Well, that all changed when a person in our church had a troubling case of demonization. Working with her was the first of multiple encounters I had with the demonic over a span of four or five years.

I remember one of these cases in particular, where we were helping a family that had been plagued by demonic forces. The wife was pregnant, and at one point, suddenly a demonic voice within her started screaming, "The baby is mine! The baby is mine!"

We ended up baptizing this young woman and there was an incredible breakthrough. She professed her faith in Christ and when she came up out of the water, there was just an amazing release. Then on the day that we dedicated that baby to the Lord, there was unbelievable resistance. The woman started thrashing around, almost as if she was having seizures. She was able to pull herself together to get on the platform that day. But it stopped completely right at the point that she

and her husband dedicated their baby to the Lord. It really opened my eyes to the significance of things like baptism and dedication.

There's an incredible calm in the moments after someone is delivered. Once the demons leave, there's just this feeling of peace that envelops the room. Everybody in the room feels it, a great quietness, and a sense of sacredness. Suddenly you hear the clock ticking on the wall, the building creaking; you can hear every single sound.

A few years ago I received a letter from that girl that we dedicated as a baby. She was now 18, and in the letter she told how her mom and dad recently sat down and shared the whole story with her. She was writing to tell us how grateful she was. She wanted us to know that she loved Jesus Christ with all her heart. She was about to leave on a missions trip and asked if we would be her prayer partners. What an unbelievable letter to get! All these years God had his hand on her, protecting her, and making good on the vows made at that dedication. We praised God for being faithful and keeping his promises.ⁱ

Remember what Jesus told his disciples when they returned amazed at their power to cast out demons. *“I have given you authority to trample on snakes and scorpions and to overcome all the power of the enemy; nothing will harm you. However, do not rejoice that the spirits submit to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven.”* [Luke 10:19-20]

ⁱ *Leadership Journal* (Spring 2012, p.32), “Promises Kept: Deliverance can bring freedom to multiple generations.”