

# JESUS IS LORD OF ALL

LUKE 8:26-39

## **ONLY JESUS CAN BREAK THE POWER OF DEMONIC STRONGHOLDS**

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# Jesus is Lord of all

Luke 8:26-39

One of the threads that Luke is following through with is this idea of how people receive the message of Jesus. This goes way back to the Sermon on the Plain when Jesus said that people who hear His words and put them into practice are likewise people who choose to build their homes on solid foundations of rock. No matter what storms come, their houses will be able to weather any conditions. On the other hand, people who hear His words and choose not to obey them are like foolish and lazy people who build their houses on sand foundations. Any inclement weather will topple those houses.

Jesus then made the same point by using the parable of a farmer sowing seed. Jesus described the good soil as people who heard His word and obey them by putting them into practice. Foolish people were described as hard ground, rocky soil, and weed infested soil. Jesus' words could not take root in them and grow.

Jesus then moved on to the description of light and how when exposed to light, the light reveals their true nature. Jesus also pointed out that those who hear His words and obey them are family to Him. And we left off last time with Jesus taking the disciples on an adventurous boat ride.

That's where we will pick up the text this morning. Jesus will encounter a demon-possessed man. Many commentators prefer to avoid all this talk about demons and are more comfortable as portraying this guy as crazy.

Did you ever take some time and think about craziness? It is becoming epidemic in the United States. It seems to be the disease of our time. The latest statistics show that one out of four Americans is mentally ill. What does that mean for each one of us practically? The next time you're hanging out with a group of four people; take a good look at them. If they look all right to you, then you're the one.

In his introduction to *The Screwtape Letters* C.S. Lewis makes an observation concerning the demonic realm. He said that one mistake we can easily make is to deny their existence. That would be a mistake because that would allow them to operate undercover. On the other hand, to attribute to them too much power would be a mistake as well because then we could be intimidated by them.

Neil Anderson portrays demons as germs. We know that we live in a world of germs but we don't live in fear of them. We take proper precautions and live our everyday lives.

Charles Kraft portrays demons as rats who feed on garbage. To get rid of demons in our lives, we simply need to get rid of the garbage they feed on.

One other thing I'd like us to keep in mind. Our scientific, psychological, and medical communities separate our minds from our bodies from our souls. The Bible never makes these distinctions. There is never a problem we face in any of these areas that do not affect the other areas. For example, when we face emotional crisis, it affects our minds, bodies and souls. When we face psychological disorders, it affects our bodies, minds, and souls as well.

When we face demonic attacks, our minds, souls, and bodies are affected as well. When we face suffering of all kinds, we also are vulnerable to demonic attacks as well. Since we all willingly give into temptation and sin, it would be safe to say that we all have demonic strongholds in our lives. But the good news is the main idea of this morning's text. **ONLY JESUS CAN BREAK THE POWER OF DEMONIC STRONGHOLDS.** Sometimes our situations and our plights look hopeless. But Jesus is more powerful than anything or anyone. If you are facing torments or sufferings, then turn your eyes towards Jesus.

## **EVIL CANNOT HIDE FROM JESUS (VS 26-27)**

In verses 26-27 Luke makes it clear that evil cannot hide from Jesus. In other words **JESUS IS ANYWHERE THAT PEOPLE NEED HIM.** Do you remember where we left off last week? Jesus wanted to go on a cruise. So He talked the disciples into taking Him across the Lake. During the cruise, this incredible storm came up and threatened to swamp the boat. The disciples were scared out of their mind but they remembered they had Jesus in the boat. They woke Jesus up, and Jesus told the winds, the waves, and the disciples to calm down. The winds and the waves calmed down, but the disciples were even more frightened at what they just saw. Jesus just spoke to nature, and she obeyed.

And that's where we pick up the text this morning. In verse 26, you can imagine the disciples thank God for dry land. In putting all the Gospels together, it seems as if they started their boat trip in Capernaum which is on the Northwestern shore of the Sea of Galilee and they were headed to the Southeastern shore. Galilee is on the west side of the Jordan River and Gerasa is on the east side of the Jordan River. Jesus has now headed for Gentile territory. The events in the Gospels agree that the storm and the incident we are studying this morning happened in this sequence. Let's review quickly and put ourselves in the disciples' shoes. We get caught up in this storm that threatens to kill us. We are scared out of our minds. And then when Jesus speaks to the wind and waves, and they obey Him, we are even more freaked out. As the boat hits the shore, can you see us all jumping out of the boat, running to dry ground, falling on our knees, kissing the ground, and saying, "Thank God for dry land."?

But wait a minute, not so fast. Verse 27 describes déjà vu all over again. Oh yeah, they are kissing the ground and thanking their lucky stars. But then they realized where they were. They found themselves in a cemetery, with wild man greeting them with wild screams ... and he was naked. This cannot be good. They were greeted by a demon-possessed man. Again, I find myself in panic mode. I'm

freaked out all over again. If we were with the disciples, wouldn't we want to say to Jesus, "Come on Jesus, this is not funny. Are you trying to kill us with fear?" Again I have to say, "Being a Christian ought to be anything but boring."

But a lesson to the disciples ... and a lesson to us about Jesus is that He is available to help anyone who is in need and humble enough to receive the help. He helped His Jewish countrymen and He helps outsiders as well. This man is demon-possessed and He needs Jesus' help. Maybe the disciples are not so comfortable, but Jesus is perfectly at home where He is. JESUS IS ANYWHERE THAT PEOPLE NEED HIM.

## **EVIL CANNOT RESIST JESUS (VS 28-33)**

We have just seen that evil cannot hide from Jesus. Jesus makes Himself available. In verses 28-33 we see that evil cannot resist Jesus. This much is clear. EVIL CANNOT EVER WIN OUT OVER JESUS. Even though the demons had tormented this man for years, they were about to be evicted by the man's proper landlord. This man had been forced to live as an outcast and as a freak. He roamed around the graveyard naked and alone. His only company was the demons.

In verse 28 and the first half of verse 29 the encounter takes place. If we take these sentences in chronological order, it seems as if the man ran up to Jesus, Jesus told the evil spirit to come out, and now we pick up the exchange. The demons speak and act through the man. The man is on his knees because He wants help from Jesus. The demons force the man on his knees because they recognize Jesus as Lord of the Universe. At the top of the man's voice the demons scream to Him, "What do we have to do with each other?" I just want to take an aside here and quote to you from the Apostle Paul's letter to the Corinthians:

*"14Don't team up with those who are unbelievers. How can goodness be a partner with wickedness? How can light live with darkness? 15What harmony can there be between Christ and the Devil? How can a believer be a partner with an unbeliever? 16And what union can there be between God's temple and idols? For we are the temple of the living God. As God said:*

*'I will live in them*

*and walk among them.*

*I will be their God,*

*and they will be my people.*

*17Therefore, come out from them*

*and separate yourselves from them, says the Lord.*

*Don't touch their filthy things,*

*and I will welcome you.*

18And I will be your Father,  
and you will be my sons and daughters,  
says the Lord Almighty” (II Corinthians 6:14-18 / NLT).

We belong to Jesus Christ and we should never involve ourselves in demonic activities. Christians should not go to fortune tellers or participate in things like the horoscope. Christians should not play with Ouija boards or tarot cards. We live in a culture that gives equal value to all religions. If you take this kind of an attitude, then you open yourself wide open to become demonized. Teachers bring dream catchers and other mystic religious artifacts into class. Stay away from these things. Certain forms of martial arts and eastern yoga and meditation techniques involve demonic forces. Voodoo, witchcraft, and other religions have mixed Christianity with demonic practices. Do not be fooled by any of this. Jesus has nothing in common with demons. Be careful what you participate in.

The demons recognized Who Jesus was and they realized He would have nothing to do with them. But here is what I want us all to realize. Even though demons will try and speak for us, Jesus is able to discern the difference. Out of the mouth of the man comes the words, “What do you have to do with me Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I beg you, don’t torture me!” First of all, Jesus is not there to torture or harm this man in any way. He is there to set him free. When working with demon-possessed people, it is one of the first orders of business to help the person understand that they are not the demon. Secondly, they can gain their freedom and get rid of these demons if they choose to submit to the power and love of Jesus.

But there is also a negative side. People, who have been demonized for a very long period of time, often only have the demons for friends. The demons have caused them to act so bizarrely that they are lonely. But Jesus must have given the man confidence because the demons start to bargain with Jesus.

In the second half of verse 29 through verse 30 the formal introductions are made. People who are demonized manifest all sorts of superhuman traits. I have seen people levitate. I have seen people being thrown against the wall. Here we see that this man was able to break chains. Jesus simply asks the demon, “What is your name?” Now comes a very interesting answer. The demon says his name is Legion. In the organization of the Roman Army, a legion consists of 6,000 soldiers. Even if this is an exaggeration, Luke informs us that there were many demons inhabiting this man. So here stands Jesus, face to face with 6,000 demons. 6,000 to one: that doesn’t sound like a fair fight. And it’s not; especially when the One is Jesus. This is no contest, even though the man must feel as if Jesus is up against overwhelming odds.

I want to stop here and point out some of Satan’s tactics. The demon drove the man into solitary places. If you are a believer, one way to fight off the attacks of Satan is to stay connected to the community and share what is going on with you.

Christian brothers and sisters can help you evaluate your situation and your circumstances. Satan's trick is to get you alone so he can fill your mind with all sorts of garbage. Jesus is now present and He will be able to counter the lies of Satan. For some reasons, Christians feel they have to pretend everything is all right. They think that if they are having evil thoughts and share them, then others will judge them. Satan wants us isolated and alienated.

Let me quote this picture Peter gives of Satan:

“8Be careful! Watch out for attacks from the Devil, your great enemy. He prowls around like a roaring lion, looking for some victim to devour.  
9Take a firm stand against him, and be strong in your faith. Remember that your Christian brothers and sisters all over the world are going through the same kind of suffering you are: 1 Peter 5:8-9 / NLT).

Notice that Peter describes the tactic of Satan as a roaring lion. If you have ever watched these National Geographic specials, you will notice that a few lions will come up and spook a herd of animals. They will get the herd running and single out one that cannot keep up with the herd. Perhaps one is a little lame, or too young to keep up. Whatever the reason, they will cut off this animal from the herd. Once the animal is separated from the herd, the lions pounce on it, kill it, and devour it.

That's why Peter reminds them that brothers and sisters all over the world face these dangers. We must stay alert! We must stay connected! It is each one of our jobs to stay connected to Jesus and the Body. Church ought to be one of the most important priorities in a Christian's life.

Verses 31-33 describe the confrontation proper. I understand a lot of this confrontation but there is lot I cannot understand nor can I figure it out. Jesus has commanded the demons to leave this man. They begged Jesus to let them enter the herd of pigs instead of being sent to the Abyss, also known as the pit. The Abyss is the place where demons that have been captured and chained are sent. Some day Jesus will put Satan there as well. However, after the Thousand Year Reign of Christ also known as the Millennium Kingdom, Satan and his demons will be loosed one last time before they are ultimately cast into the Lake of Fire for an eternity.

However, having said all that, I have no understanding what happened to the demons after the pigs rushed down the hill, jumped into the lake and drowned.

I do understand why Jesus may have done this. Think about this from the man's perspective. That had to be a powerful graphic lesson for him that would explain why he was so crazy. Once he saw the craziness and the power of those demons as an onlooker, his behavior and thoughts would have all of a sudden make him realize it was the demons that tormented him.

Secondly, when the demon-possessed pigs ran off the cliff and drowned in the lake, it would have been a graphic illustration that Jesus set him free.

So if you are an animal lover and ask me why Jesus allowed the demons to possess them and kill them, all I can say is that Jesus valued this man more than any other animal or number of animals. After all Jesus died for our sins, even though nature will also be redeemed.

If you ask me what happened to the demons, I have to say that I don't have a clue. But at any rate, we do learn this. **EVIL CANNOT EVER WIN OUT OVER JESUS.** If you stop and think about this for a moment, it is kind of freaky. Jesus came to set the captives free. Part of our job as we carry on Jesus' ministry is to also set captives free. Before we move on, let me say that some of the common themes I have seen over the years in working with demonized people is that sexual immorality is almost always a factor. Religious pride is another factor. So if you stay away from sexual immorality, if you stay away from sexually explicit material, and if you pursue sexual purity, you have a pretty good chance of staying away from demonization. Again, I feel I have to say this to young people. That includes staying away from heavy petting, fondling, oral sex or other inappropriate forms of touching. In today's culture it also means staying away from sexting; sending or receiving. Those are all perversions of God's design for sex.

Addictions are another way demons gain access into our lives. The usual addictions like drugs, alcohol, pornography, etc. are easily identifiable. But socially acceptable addictions like workaholism or food addictions are just as devastating.

And then the spiritual pride issue is also a killer. Humility is the quality that goes a long way to keep us free from demons. As I said at the top of the sermon, demons are like rats. Get rid of the garbage in your life, the demons will go. Jesus made two things clear. Demons are not so hard to get free from. However, living free is a lot more difficult. It takes a lifetime of pursuing holiness.

## **WE CAN OVERCOME EVIL (VS 34-39)**

Let's pursue these themes of getting free and staying free. Verses 34-39 make it clear that we can overcome evil. **AS WE SUBMIT TO JESUS, WE TOO CAN DEFEAT EVIL.** There is no magic trick to this or secret formula. James, the brother of our Lord laid out a pattern of resistance for us by which we can get free from the devil. In his New Testament letter to the churches, James talks about attitudes and behaviors that open us up to demonization. We talked about these earlier. He lists some of these in verses 1-7 in chapter 4.

Then he gives the way to fight off Satan in verses 7-10. Here is what he says:

“7Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. 8Come near to God and he will come near to you. Wash your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded. 9Grieve, mourn

and wail. Change your laughter to mourning and your joy to gloom.  
10Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up” (James 4:7-10 / NIV).

The first step in getting free from the grip of Satan is to first humble ourselves and to submit to God. We do that by coming to God and confessing to Him that we need Him and the power of Jesus to defeat these strongholds. We confess Jesus as our Lord and Savior.

Next, we resist the devil. First of all, I need to remind us that devil does not possess the same attributes as God. The devil is not omnipresent. He can only be one place at a time. But he has many demons that work for him. Secondly, he is not omniscient. That means that unlike God, Satan cannot read our mind. Therefore when we resist him, we should do so out loud. I’m not saying that you should jump out of your seat at work and scream out, “Be gone you evil devil.” You can resist and rebuke Satan with a whisper. Further we should resist and rebuke Satan with the authority of Jesus. For example, we could say to Satan, “In the Name of Jesus, I command you to leave me alone.” To be sure, many people who are severely demonized may need help and support from other believers to accomplish this.

We have seen that the devil cannot stand up to the power of Jesus. And in humility, we must remember always that it is the power of Jesus. I have had demons spit at me and say, “You are nothing,” to which I always reply, “You may be right that I am nothing but this battle is not between you and me. This battle is between you and the Lord Jesus Christ. He is something.” Getting people free is relatively easy. But look at the next step. Once the person is free, they should confess and repent of all the ways in which they participated with this demon in immoral thinking, speaking, and behaving. As we rebuke Satan in the Name of Jesus, he must flee. When we confess, repent, and draw near to God, God draws near to us and fills us with His Holy Spirit. As we learn to humbly submit to the authority of Jesus, He will lift us up and give us victory over sin.

So we pick up the story when after those tending the sheep ran back to town and reported this spectacle, the townspeople came out to see for themselves. Here is what they saw. The demon-possessed wild man was now calmly seated at the feet of Jesus. He was dressed and most of all, in his right mind. They no longer had to take the word of the pig herders, they saw for themselves.

Their response was fear. Have you been taking note of this? It seems that the disciples and people who come in contact with Jesus are often described as being afraid.

Let’s take that a step further. In verses 36-37 we see that some people prefer staying bound. Look how they responded. Because of their fear, they asked Jesus to leave. Now please think about this with me for a while. They were perfectly content to live with this wildly demon-possessed guy running around naked,

breaking restraints, and living among the tombs, never knowing when this guy would show up in town. Weren't they afraid of this crazy guy?

And yet, Jesus took care of this problem. He miraculously healed this poor guy. This guy could now return to his family, friends, and neighbors. He could now be a productive part of the city. And yet the townspeople's response is one of fear? They are afraid of Jesus.

Let me touch on this for a moment as well. Many times demonized people are extremely afraid to get well and to get rid of the demons. I know that sounds strange, but the misery they are in the grip of is one they know. Getting free gives them a great deal of anxiety because living free brings a great deal of responsibility. It also requires a great deal of change. They have no more excuses for failure or bad behavior.

And I have to let you know this as well. Oftentimes people around the demonized person don't really want him or her to get well. For example, a large number of alcohol or drug addicts go to rehab to get well. The problem is that when they return home, no one knows how to treat the new person and they are uncomfortable with the new behavior. They often sabotage the healing process because they know the old addict and have learned to live with it.

They could also have been afraid of what else Jesus would destroy. He destroyed a herd of pigs. But for Jesus there was no question of what was valuable. I have no idea why Jesus sent the demon into the pigs except to facilitate the guy's understanding but I do know that one man's freedom was more important than the whole herd of pigs.

I have noticed that in our society, oftentimes animals are valued much more than human beings. If that is the case then we are way out of line with Jesus' priorities.

Carefully pay attention to the outcome of this encounter, "Then all the people of the region of the Gerasenes asked Jesus to leave them, because they were overcome with fear. So He got into the boat and left." How sad is that? Jesus rescued one of their own people and yet because of fear they asked Jesus to leave. He did. They were still bound by Satan and fear. Let us make sure that we never send Jesus away. He just may leave.

On the other hand, verses 38-39 describe what becoming a living testimony looks like. In the 4th chapter of John's Gospel, Jesus went to another city of religious outcasts. They were the Samaritans. Jesus met a woman of questionable character at a public well. Jesus ministered to her and she was transformed. She ran back to her city and told everyone about Jesus. However, listen to how differently that event turned out:

"39 Many Samaritans from the village believed in Jesus because the woman had said, "He told me everything I ever did!" 40 When they came

out to see him, they begged him to stay at their village. So he stayed for two days, 41long enough for many of them to hear his message and believe. 42Then they said to the woman, “Now we believe because we have heard him ourselves, not just because of what you told us. He is indeed the Savior of the world” (John 4:39-42 / NLT).

In this case, a whole town came out and rejoiced in Jesus and what He did for the woman and they then understood what He could do for all of them. The townspeople who came out to see and worship Jesus were freed from the grip of Satan.

Everyone in Gerasa however wanted Jesus to leave; everybody but the guy who was set free. If Jesus had to go, then he wanted to go with Jesus. He wanted to go with Jesus because he was in love with Jesus. Are we that grateful for what God has done in our lives? It seems to me that “Thank You” ought to be the words we use most in our verbal conversations.

However, Jesus gave the guy a little bit more difficult of an assignment. Jesus wanted the guy to be a living witness to the power and love of God among his own family and village. Every time any of the townspeople passed this guy on the street, they would have to remember when he ran around as a Wildman and now how healthy he was now.

Jesus wants us to be living testimonies of God’s power and love among people we come in contact with all the time. In order to do this we must continually and consciously live free from demonic influence. Here is how the Apostle Paul instructed us to do this:

“4The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. 5We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ” (II Corinthians 10:4-5 / NIV).

As we continue to grow in our understanding of the Bible by reading, studying, memorizing, listening to sermons and other teachings, we come to understand God’s Word. The Bible is compared to a powerful sword. This weapon has the power to demolish demonic strongholds of all kinds. When we are tempted, we are to take our thoughts captive and expose them to the truth of God’s Word. We are responsible to take our thoughts captive, evaluate them, and make them obedient to the will of God. This takes hard work, perseverance, diligence, and courage. So you can see that living free is a lot more difficult than getting free.

The man obeyed Jesus, went back home and told all his family, friends, neighbors, and anyone else who would listen about the power and love of Jesus. There is a powerful lesson here. AS WE SUBMIT TO JESUS, WE TOO CAN DEFEAT EVIL.

What is also clear to me about all this is that if we have truly been set free by God, then we should be passionately in love with Him because ONLY JESUS CAN BREAK THE POWER OF DEMONIC STRONGHOLDS.

How in love with Jesus are we exactly? The old Nazarene evangelist Bud Robinson used to pray this prayer each day:

“O Lord, give me a backbone as big as a saw log and ribs like the sleepers under the church floor. Put iron shoes on my feet and galvanized breeches on my body. Give me a rhinoceros hide for skin and hang up a wagon-load of determination in the gable-end of my soul. Help me to sign the contract to fight the devil as long as I’ve got a tooth – and then gum him until I die.”

I’m hoping that as we study through the Gospel of Luke, we will fall in love with Jesus all over again and take on the determination of the man in today’s passage and the evangelist described at the end.