

Healing a Demon-possessed Man

Place

- How are you this morning?
 - how are you feeling; what concerns are on your mind?
 - did you put the lunch on? work tomorrow? family coming over? illness? money?
 - ...
 - for me that might include.....

Jesus

- What place was Jesus "at" as we come to this passage?
- What we have seen over the past few weeks is Jesus engaged in a ministry of preaching, teaching, healing and liberating.
 - he is calling people to follow him;
 - he is freeing people from evil and sin that binds them;
 - he is healing people from illness that impairs them;
 - he is pointing people to the true and living God.
- In other words, he is bringing in God's Kingdom; allowing it break in from eternity to daily life:
 - so Simon Peter's mother-in-law, healed in 1:31, he opened the door of heaven and shone through a little of the freedom from illness that will prevail then;
 - for the leper healed in 1:42, he brings wholeness and at the same time restores relationship with other people and with God, a picture of what eternity is like;
 - for the crowds listening to his teaching, he opens their eyes to see in through heaven's window as they listen to the parables, the sower and the others...
- And so it goes on!
- Jesus is inaugurating a brand new kingdom, where he has kicked down the door between heaven and here, and allows us to participate in a preview of what is yet to be!
 - and he's yearning that those he comes across might come and follow him, might join him in entering into that new kingdom!

Demonic

- Anything further from that you could not imagine for the place that the man under the power of these demons was "at":
 - bound, not by the chains which were probably meant to help (keep him from harming himself and others), but by evil;
 - in the presence of death (graveyard), not life; away from people;
 - the evil in him had great strength, utterly held him:
 - "My name is Legion," he replied, "for we are many" (vs.9)
 - legion - a thousand - a conquering army
- Wherever we are "at" this morning - happy, sad, strong, weak, hopeful, fearful - God's desire is to break in and bring eternity into our souls.

Presence

- First thing Jesus brings is his presence
 - he gets out of the boat!
 - doesn't hold the man at a distance.
- And his presence provokes a reaction!
- Duck Lady - God's presence in the preacher provokes a reaction... (p.36, "Let me tell you a story", Tony Campolo)
- Reaction from the demons is not exactly welcoming!!
 - evil knows perfect goodness when it sees it alright!
 - none of this "there's no real right or wrong, only what you feel..."

- and evil knew that Jesus' presence meant its end;
- Jesus' presence in our lives signals the beginning of the death of evil:
 - new behaviour, new patterns of living
- Sometimes we are resistant, even as Christian folk, to having Jesus more fully in our lives because we know that his presence isn't compatible with behaviour we cherish...
 - almost like our reaction when we are asked "how are you", we give a surface answer - and hide our real concerns;
 - sometimes we can be guilty of doing the same with God - maintaining a surface relationship, but never allowing him to deal with deeply entrenched habits of the heart - lust, envy, deceit, anger
- Jesus' presence in our lives signals the beginning of the death of evil...

Power

- Hard on the heels of Jesus' presence comes his power.
- We've already seen the place this man was in.
 - evil had a powerful, almost awesome grip on him - right to the heart of his being.
- And yet Jesus power makes such a grip seem suddenly very fragile!
 - evil spirits recognise Jesus as Son of the Most High God!
 - instant recognition - and acknowledgement of the power Jesus has;
 - evil spirits make a fearful plea that Jesus not torture them;
 - who can torture? - only one who has power over someone!
(eg Song: "He that is in us is greater than he that is in the world....")
- The man is restored to his right mind, clothed, sitting in company with Jesus and the disciples (v.15).

But, what is it with the pigs?

- Peculiar feature of the story!
 - probably a very visual demonstration of the power being wielded:
 - legion - many - many pigs - clearly evil power, hence destroy pigs;
 - a fearful, disturbing incident - visual picture of what has happened inside the man
- Jesus' power acts to bring about the kingdom he was bringing in, to make real the place he desires to draw us to.

Proclamation

Go Out!! (Story)

- There was a Lifeboat station at a particularly dangerous stretch of coast. One winter a particularly vicious storm blew up - wind roaring, waves thundering, rain and sleet lashing. And the crew of the boat were called out - there was a boat breaking up off the coast, floundering in the storm. Amongst the crew was a new recruit - he'd been through all the training, even done a rescue or two in calmer conditions, but this was his first "for real" storm rescue. As the skipper of the boat woke his men, and told them to prepare to go out, the young recruit asked incredulously, "But Skipper! If we go out there, we may never come back."
 - To which the skipper answered, "Son, you don't have to come back! You have to go out!"
- Being a Christian requires betting our lives on the truth of the gospel and committing ourselves with all the risks involved. It requires the abandonment of the securities that this world has to offer, and that we launch out into the unknown where the threats are great.
- The restored demoniac was put in exactly that situation:
 - to "go out" of his comfort zone and stay with his people, not take the easier option of going with Jesus;
 - no, he had to go back and tell his neighbours, his fearful, possibly distrustful neighbours about what Jesus had done for him.

- and so, as a result of Jesus' work & presence in his life to proclaim the gospel!

Conclusion

- Jesus meets us all at exactly the **place** we are "at".
- Jesus brings his **presence** - confronting evil, turning things around;
- Jesus **power** is more than sufficient to meet any situation;
- And as a result of our encounter with Jesus, we are called upon to **proclaim** his goodness!