

June 22, 2025

Luke 8:26-39:

“No One Too Far Gone”

- I. No One Too Far Gone
- II. Declare What God Has Done

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No One Too Far Gone

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Dear Brothers and Sisters in Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ,

In 1906, a priest in South Africa reported one of the most terrifying encounters with a possessed individual ever recorded. The subject was a young girl named Clara Cele. According to eyewitness accounts, Clara levitated several feet off the ground, climbed up walls, showed clairvoyant abilities, and demonstrated knowledge of languages she had never learned. Some even claimed her limbs stretched unnaturally long, as if her body were no longer her own. During the exorcism, it took not only the priest and several nuns, but eight strong young women to try and restrain her. But even they couldn't hold her. Reports say that all eight were lifted into the air with her as she hovered. Eventually, they resorted to handcuffing her, but it took three exhausting hours. She kicked, punched, bit, and choked anyone who came near.

Whether this account is true or not, I haven't shared this story to stir up a morbid curiosity or to spark in you an unhealthy fascination with the demonic. And I certainly haven't shared it to leave you lying awake at night, afraid of the thought of the devil and his legions. I assure you with the utmost certainty that our Lord Jesus Christ and His angels always protect you. He will not allow harm to come your way. I've told you this so you might grasp more clearly the seriousness of the very real, dangerous, and insidious enemy we face. There is an unspeakable power of darkness that still moves in this broken world that we must avoid like the plague.

But more than that, I've shared it so you might be moved to marvel at something far greater: the overwhelming, unshakable, and effortless authority of our Lord Jesus Christ. Simply with His words, He does what no earthly force ever could. Satan may be strong, but Jesus doesn't need to wrestle. He speaks, and the demons run. That's the Savior you have. That's the Word that saves you.

I. No One Too Far Gone

Our Gospel lesson for today tells the story of a man who was possessed by many demons. This man was living in shame, ostracized from the world due to the spiritual forces of evil that plagued him. Luke tells us this happened in the region of the Gerasenes. Although there is some debate on where this place is, we can surmise that this is a place far from the heartland of Israel. Whether the man was a Gentile or a Jew influenced by pagan culture, we can't say for certain. But this much is clear: he lived far from the light of God's Word. He was surrounded by idols, spiritual confusion, and detachment from God. His condition reflects what Paul describes in Ephesians 2. He was,

“dead in trespasses and sins...following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience...separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and a stranger to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world.”

This man seemed to be the most detached from God that a person could be. He was lost. But then comes Jesus, the Son of God, the one through whom all things were created. Jesus didn't just stumble upon this suffering man; he went with a purpose, braving a storm off the beaten path, straight to rescue him. With infinite power and authority of which these demons were privy to immediately, Jesus, with a simple command, rids the man of these demons, sending them into filthy animals and successfully rescuing this lost man. He's restored. Not just freed from demons, but restored in dignity, in identity, and purpose.

Brothers and sisters, when I hear this account, I can't help but think of the men, women, and children I've known who are so deeply lost and without Christ. I think of the people overtaken by the rottenness of sin, deceived by the tricks and lies of the devil. I think of the lost souls who once walked in the light but now seem consumed by the darkness. And I know I'm not alone in that. I know many of you carry those same heartaches with loved ones who seem unreachable, hearts you've pleaded for in prayer, and souls you long to see restored in Christ Jesus.

This account in Luke is a comfort to us precisely because it shows us what Jesus can do. If Jesus could cross a sea, walk into a graveyard, step into the middle of spiritual chaos, and rescue a man the world had already written off, how much more can He do for the people we love? How much more can He do for the lost in our world today, including those we know and pray for, and those we've never even met?

The environment Jesus entered in this Gentile nation is not far from what we experience today. Many idols surround us, and this is the case so strongly that they are hard to even recognize at times. People today worship power, pleasure, self, and security. Our world is filled with lures of addiction, isolation, bitterness, and fear. And yet, into that kind of world, Christ still comes.

If this man isn't too far gone, then neither are you. Neither is your loved one. Neither is the person you've given up on. There is no pit that we have dug for ourselves that is so deep that Christ's mercy cannot reach in. He comes to sinners, to the unclean, to the isolated and broken, not to condemn, but to restore. That's what He has done for you. That's what He is doing, even now. And that's what He will continue to do until every lost soul He calls His own is brought back. So don't give up on the lost, even if they don't want anything to do with you or Jesus. You never know where a person truly is in their relationship with the Lord. Continue to pray for them if they do or don't want to see you, be there for them if they will let you, and let the love of Christ shine through you that the Holy Spirit may work through you to bring them to the knowledge of the truth.

Titus 3:3-7 says,

“For we ourselves were once foolish, disobedient, led astray, slaves to various passions and pleasures, passing our days in malice and envy, hated by others and hating one another. But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that being justified by his grace we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life.”

II. Declare What God Has Done

Having been freed from the demons by the goodness and love of Jesus, this man, like most who experience the freedom that comes from the cross, naturally wished to become a disciple of Jesus. That kind of power Jesus displayed must have been very intense for someone who had been plagued for so long. Who wouldn't want to stay around the person who makes demons tremble with His very presence? The text says, “The man from whom the demons had gone begged that he might be with him, but Jesus sent him away, saying, 'Return to your home, and declare how much God has done for you.’”

This command from Jesus was not a rejection of the discipleship the man longed for. On the contrary, Jesus was sending him to do exactly what a disciple of Jesus is called to do: to declare what God has done. This text is placed on the Second Sunday After Pentecost because it is a strong reminder of the calling to discipleship that all the faithful have received in Christ. Having become heirs of the Kingdom of God by grace, we have become a living testimony of the love of Christ. By our words and our deeds, we show the world a different kind of love that surpasses all love. That love is rooted in forgiveness and mercy.

The text I shared with you from Titus reminds us that we, too, were once lost and are now found in Christ. To quote it again, “For we ourselves were once foolish, disobedient, led astray, slaves to various passions and pleasures, passing our days in malice and envy, hated by others and hating one another.” Having been saved by the love of Jesus at the cross, your testimony, what you have been through, the temptations that God has helped you to overcome, the struggles He has saved you from, and the pain and the suffering He has gotten you through, are now all ways in which you can reach the people who don't understand or who don't know Christ.

When we come to realize that everything we have gone through or suffered in this life is to get us home to Christ, everything changes. Talking to people about Christ becomes a whole lot easier when we can look back on our lives and see the righteous work of God that has been with us all along. Even death itself is the most powerful witness of the victory won in Christ. What else but the cross can turn the grave into the door to eternal life? What else but the resurrection of Jesus can turn hopelessness into hope, or fear into peace? I'd be surprised if anyone here has

been plagued as this man was by demons, but you do know what it was like to be a slave to sin. You also know what it is like to be rescued by grace.

Therefore, Christ sends you and me in the same way. Not because we are perfect people who really have our act together, and not because we are somehow better than others. He sends us because just like this lost man, we too had to be found and brought home by our great Shepherd. If you wonder to yourself, “How am I to witness in such a terrible world filled with sin?” then you are already asking the right kind of question. It means you know you can’t do it alone.

The same Jesus, who braved the sea, who found this man, who cast out his demons, who sent him, who performed many miracles, who raised many from the dead, who willingly endured the cross, and who suffered and died and rose on the third day, is with you and me. He goes before us, He stands beside us, and He speaks through us. It all depends on His Word that is living, effective, and never powerless.

And what has God done for us? He has done what no one else could: He has forgiven us entirely, freely, and forever. He has looked upon every sin and all the guilt we’ve carried in secret, every moment we wished we could erase, and instead of condemning us, He took our place. And when He rose, He left your sin in the grave where it belongs. That is the gift Christ has given you, not because you earned it, but because He loves you.

So dear friends, **return to your home, and declare how much God has done for you.**

Amen.

Pastor Lucas Abbott