Research on: “Healing of the Gadarene”

Luke 8:26-35

22 Now it came to pass on a certain day. That he went into a ship with his disciples: and he said unto them, Let us go over unto the other side of the lake. And they launched forth.

26 ¶ And they arrived at the country of the Gadarenes, which is over against Galilee.

“Gadara was an important Gentile town, the capital of Peraea. . . Mark and Luke state more precisely that the incident took place at Gerasa, to be identified with the ruins of Kersa [Kursi] or Gersa on the E. side of the lake. There are ancient tombs in the vicinity of this place, and about 1 m. S. of it is a steep, even slope, which may be the ‘steep place’ by which the swine used down into the sea” (Dummelow 655).

“Gadara was a city not far from the lake Gennesareth; one of the ten cities that were called *Decapolis*” (Barnes 40).

The area is part of the Decapolis where ten cities maintained some political autonomy within the Roman Empire. It was a pagan environment. Jesus has moved into Gentile territory.

27 And when he went forth to land, there met him out of the city a certain man, which had devils long time, and ware no clothes, neither abode in any house, but in the tombs.

“The deeply disturbed or divided person is likely to feel himself possessed – possessed by a power or by powers, more or other than human, who have somehow got into him and gained control over him, . . . The word *demons* calls attention not only to the alien and malign character of the disturbing influence, but also to the basically religious character of our ‘inner conflicts.’ ” (*IB* 8.157).

The problem of this man was one of *insanity* which can mean unsound in mind; a deranged intellect. It can also indicate one whose mentality is severely divided, distracted, mentally wondering.

“The truth of the case was, that he [the demoniac] was born and educated in the city; he had probably been a man of wealth and eminence; he was well known; particularly struck with his case, and as his cure fully established the power of Jesus, he [Luke] recorded it.

*“Coming out of the tombs.* Mark and Luke say that he dwelt in the tombs. The sepulchers of the Jews were commonly caves, beyond the walls of the cities in which they dwelt, or excavations made in the sides of hills, or sometimes in solid rocks” (Barnes 41).

28 When he saw Jesus, he cried out, and fell down before him, and with a loud voice said, What have I to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of God most high? I beseech thee, torment me not.

29 (For he had commanded the unclean spirit to come out of the man. For oftentimes it had caught him: and he was kept bound with chains and in fetters; and he brake the bands, and was driven of the devil into the wilderness.)

“What have we to do with thee? This might have been translated with great propriety, What hast thou to do with us? The meaning is, “Why dost thou trouble, or disturb us?” (Barnes 41).

“He had been often bound with fetters and chains - Efforts had been made to confine him, but his great strength - his strength increased by his malady - had prevented it. There often appears to be a great increase of strength produced by insanity, and what is here stated in regard to this maniac often occurs in Palestine and elsewhere now. Dr. Thomson ("The Land and the Book," vol. i. p. 213) says respecting this case: "There are some very similar at the present day - furious and dangerous maniacs, who wander about the mountains, and sleep in tombs and caves” (Barnes online).

Jews would have considered this environment unclean. There is an “unclean” spirit, a man dwelling among “unclean” tombs, the “unclean” Gentile community involved in raising “unclean” animals – pigs.

30 And Jesus asked him, saying, What is thy name? And he said, Legion: because many devils were entered into him.

“*Legion*. The demon gives not a name in reality, but a number. A Latin word *legio*, transcribed into Greek, *legion* is used. In the time of Augustus a Roman *legio* numbered six thousand soldiers” (*AYB Luke i-ix.*739).

“It is recorded that once Jesus asked the name of a disease, — a disease which moderns would call *dementia*. The demon, or evil, replied that his name was Legion. Thereupon Jesus cast out the evil, and the insane man was changed and straightway became whole. The Scripture seems to import that Jesus caused the evil to be self-seen and so destroyed” (S&H 411).

“The personality is so ‘shot’ or torn to pieces by conflicting interests and drives the ‘I’ seems not one person, but a whole mob of people with conflicting purposes. . . Our existence is filled with a multitude of separate and often conflicting experiences. Impressions follow one another with bewildering rapidity and in bewildering variety. Crowding interests of all kinds demand our attention and effort, and we are confused and distracted” (*IB* 8.157).

31 And they besought him that he would not command them to go out into the deep.

“to the *abyss*. [the deep] The Greek word *abyssos* can denote either the abode of the dead or the final prison of Satan and the demons. It is used often in the LXX to translate Hebrew *tehom*, which designated in OT cosmology the ‘watery deep,’ or cosmic sea under the earth, the symbol of chaos and disorder conquered by the creator” (*AYB Luke i-ix.*739).

32 And there was there an herd of many swine feeding on the mountain: and they besought him that he would suffer them to enter into them. And he suffered them.

“*many pigs*. Mark 5:13 numbers them as two thousand, but Luke omits this. In the sight of Palestinian Jews they were worthless animals because they were ‘unclean,’ i.e. not to be eaten” (*AYB Luke i-ix.*739).

33 Then went the devils out of the man, and entered into the swine: and the herd ran violently down a steep place into the lake, and were choked.

34 When they that fed them saw what was done, they fled, and went and told it in the city and in the country.

“The drowning of 2,000 swine represented a considerable monetary loss, and they feared further losses if Jesus remained in their neighborhood. It is not clear whether the owners of the swine were Jews or Gentiles. The population of Decapolis was mainly, but by no means exclusively Gentile” (Dummelow 655).

“*The keepers fled in consternation*. They were amazed at his power. Perhaps they feared a further destruction of property; or more likely, they were acquainted with the laws of the Jews, and regarded this as a judgment of heaven for keeping forbidden animals, and for tempting the Jews to violate the commands of God” (Barnes 41).

35 Then they went out to see what was done; and came to Jesus, and found the man, out of whom the devils were departed, sitting at the feet of Jesus, clothed, and in his right mind: and they were afraid.

What a radical transformation of character! However, instead of rejoicing in this man’s freedom, the verse states, “they were afraid.” Are they more afraid of this holy presence of the Christ than the previous actions of the wildly insane man? This expression of fear and ignorance prevents Jesus from staying in the area, but their rejection does not stop the man from bearing testimony to what Jesus has done. A representative will be left behind who will act the part of a missionary – someone who will proclaim the good news about Jesus in Gentile territory.

“Let us see to it that we realize it, and do what in us lies to send the light, and healing, and life of the gospel to those who at our very doors are perishing for lack of it . . . by preaching of the gospel and the might of the Holy Spirit, [let us carry on] this great work for ‘they that turn many to righteousness shall shine as the stars for ever and ever’ ” (Taylor 226).