

Adult Teaching Resources

June 23, 2019



Easter Season (April 21-June 2)

Resurrection Realities

Acts 16:16-34 – “Doubled Deliverance”

Pentecost Sunday (June 9)

Genesis 11:1-9 – “What Did You Say?”

Season After Pentecost (June 16-November 24)

Trinity Sunday

Romans 5:1-5 – “Imaginary Numbers”

On the Road with Jesus

Luke 8:26-39 – “A Bad Day for Pigs”

Luke 9:51-62 – “A Hard Row to Hoe”

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A Bad Day for Pigs

Luke 8:26-39

FIT Teaching Guide

by David Woody

This adult teaching outline is designed to support THE BIBLE LESSON by Tony Cartledge, printed in *Nurturing Faith Journal*. You can subscribe to either the digital or print edition of *Nurturing Faith Journal* to access the lessons. Please also ensure that each person in your class has a copy of *Nurturing Faith Journal* so they can prepare before the lesson.

Bible Background

“Then the demons came out of the man and entered the swine, and the herd rushed down the steep bank into the lake and was drowned.” Luke 8:33

We all have difficult days where absolutely nothing goes right and we want to wave a magic wand to either fix the bad or rush the day to the end.

In our lesson today, we have the story of a man who desperately wanted to wave a wand and change not only his day, but his life.

Instead of a wand, he got Jesus. That encounter made all the difference in his life.

Opening

After everyone arrives and is settled, share with your class the summary of the children’s book “Alexander and the Terrible Horrible, No Good, Very Bad Day”.

“Alexander, knows it’s going to be one of those days, the second he wakes up. “I went to sleep with gum in my mouth and now there’s gum in my hair and when I got out of bed this morning I tripped on the skateboard and by mistake I dropped my sweater in the sink while the water was running and I could tell it was going to be a terrible, horrible, no good, very bad day.” Alexander has two older brothers that seem to have everything go their way. They both find toys in their cereal boxes when Alexander just finds cereal. They get brand new shoes with colorful stripes, but Alexander has to get plain boring white ones because they’re sold out of his size in everything else. At school, Alexander’s teacher doesn’t understand his drawing of the invisible castle. When it’s time to count, he left out sixteen. He wonders, “Who needs sixteen?” Then Paul told him he didn’t want to be his best friend anymore and found two new best friends, and Alexander was only his third best friend. At the dentist, he was the only one with a cavity. His brother pushed him in the mud, he got scolded by his mother for being muddy, he upset his father, and he got soap in his eyes during his bath, which was way too hot. Alexander wants to move far, far away to Australia, mainly because he doesn’t believe these things could happen to him there. Little does he know, people in Australia have bad days too. Not only is Alexander having a terrible, horrible, no good, very bad day, but no one seems to care.”

<http://reviews-of-childrens-literature.pbworks.com/w/page/10581671/Alexander%20and%20the%20Terrible%2C%20Horrible%2C%20No%20Good%2C%20Very%20Bad%20Day>

Opening *continued*

After reading the summary, ask for volunteers to share any real life experiences they had like Alexander.

When did you have a terrible, horrible, no good, very bad day?

What happened?

Who went through it with you?

How did you survive the day?

What did you learn about yourself during that day?

What did you learn about God during that day?

Spend some time listening to others' stories, and then move on to the Bible.

Reading the Bible

Where is the country of the Gerasenes? (opposite Galilee)

Who met Jesus there? (A man of the city who had demons)

What did the man do when he saw Jesus? (He fell down before him and shouted at the top of his voice)

What did Jesus do? (He commanded the unclean Spirit to come out of the man)

What was the man's name? (Legion)

Where did the demons beg to go? (To enter a large herd of swine)

What happened to the herd after the demons entered them? (They rushed down the steep bank into the lake and were drowned)

What did the swineherds do? (They ran off and told it in the city and the country)

When the people came what did they see? (They found the man from whom the demons had gone sitting at the feet of Jesus clothed and in his right mind)

How did they feel? (They were afraid)

What did the people ask of Jesus? (To leave them)

What did Jesus say to the man? (Return to your home, and declare how much God has done for you)

Making Connections

When you hear of someone having demons, what comes to your mind? Describe that type of person.

What do you think is the best treatment for someone with demons? Is there a cure for that? If not what do you think a cure could be?

When have you experienced a transformation that can only be ascribed to Jesus being at work?

If you had the power and authority to cast all your troubles away onto something or someone, where would you cast them? Why would you cast them there?

When have you experienced something of God that might have been good for the soul, but was bad for the pocketbook? What did you end up doing in that situation?

Our Lesson Writer shares part of the story, “To their astonishment, they found the local wild man sitting calmly, wearing clothes without complaint, and apparently conversing clearly enough for all to judge that he was in his right mind. They had once feared the man because of his violent mental turmoil. In a surprising twist, seeing him healed frightened them even more (vv. 35-36).” When have you had a similar experience, being more afraid, or concern, after a transformation? What do you think that fear was about? Where was God when you were afraid?

What is it that gives you great fear? Is there anything God can do to help you with that fear?

What is the good news of Jesus, from your own experience, that you share with others?

So What?

Ask everyone to find a partner. Share with everyone our lesson writers words, “And how might we be touched by this story?”

Are we plagued by inner demons of our own, fears or habits or temptations we can’t seem to control? Do we believe the liberating Spirit of Christ is still active in the world and available to us?

It’s possible that we might believe in the power of Christ to bring change, but – like the Gerasenes – we’re afraid of that that change might mean. Some of us may prefer to hold on to the demons we know for fear that liberation might include the loss of our piggish possessiveness and solitary selfishness.

Jesus might even send us to declare how much God has done for us. Are we ready for that?”

Ask Partners to discuss these questions:

What inner demons, fears, or habits still bother us that we can’t control?

What would we like Jesus to do with our demons, fears, habits?

Do we believe the liberating Spirit of Christ is still active in the world and available to us?

So What? *continued*

How does it work? What does it look like?

What message are we prepared to take out into the world about Jesus?

Ask couples to share these questions and answers with each other, then open the conversation to the larger group asking for volunteers to share their ideas.

The Challenge

This week, share the message of your transformation with someone. Declare how much God has done for you!

Prayer

Loving God you are the one that meets us where we are, with all our fears, demons, and bad habits. Take away those things that hold us back so that we might be transformed into who you are creating us to be. Amen.

Digging Deeper

by Tony Cartledge

Digging Deeper is designed to support THE BIBLE LESSON by Tony Cartledge, printed in *Nurturing Faith Journal*. Watch for the “shovel” icon in the THE BIBLE LESSON, and then reference that item in this Digging Deeper resource. You can subscribe to either the digital or print edition of *Nurturing Faith Journal* to access the lessons. Please also ensure that each person in your class has a copy of *Nurturing Faith Journal* so they can prepare before the lesson.

A long night’s journey into day—The long day Mark and Luke describe began with a long night: after a tiring day of dealing with crowds and healing many, Jesus instructed the disciples to put in one of their boats and sail southeast to the other side of the Sea of Galilee, a distance of several miles over open water. A life-threatening storm blew up, but Jesus slept through it – at least, until the disciples woke him up (8:22-25). Jesus responded by calming the storm with words alone, then questioning the faith of his followers.

The process would have stirred all kinds of thoughts in their minds, and they may have been just as afraid of Jesus as they had been of the towering waves: wasn’t he even more powerful than the storm? The disciples were still learning to understand that Jesus really was more than just a man: what kind of man can control the wind and the sea?

The next day, the long day, would go far toward increasing their understanding – and their questions.

Three hard cases—The first hard case is found in our text for the day, the story of the Gerasene wild man, which takes place on the eastern side of the Sea of Galilee (Mark 5:1-20, Luke 8:26-39). The second story, the story within a story, occurs after Jesus had returned to the north shore, probably to Capernaum. There he met a centurion who asked him to heal his daughter, but as he was going he met with a woman who had suffered from persistent bleeding. In each case, Jesus brought healing and hope (Mark 5: 21-43, Luke 8:40-56).

Matthew’s gospel contains a variant of the first story, in which there were two demoniacs and the people are called Gedarenes instead of Gerasenes (Matt. 8:28-34). It is also followed by a re-crossing of the sea, but then a different story, the account of Jesus offering forgiveness and healing to a paralyzed man, leading to conflict with the scribes (Matt. 9:1-8).

Demons?—Ancient peoples did not understand either physical or mental illness as we do. When someone experienced convulsions or an epileptic seizure, they assumed that an evil spirit had seized them (as in Luke 9:37-42). When someone exhibited schizophrenia, bi-polar behavior, or multiple personalities, the common diagnosis was demon possession. Even ordinary physical diseases could be attributed to evil influences.

Digging Deeper *continued*

Cemeteries—Ancient cemeteries in the Middle East were often found in rocky hillsides where caves could be expanded or chiseled out as family tombs. Benches were typically fashioned against the walls, where the dead were laid. After bodies had decomposed, the bones were gathered and piled in a corner or put into an ossuary (bone box), freeing the bench for the next death in the family. This practice lies behind the concept of being “gathered to one’s ancestors,” as the bones of succeeding generations were gathered together.



The tomb pictured above (with modern supports and walls added) is located on the Mount of Olives, near a chapel called Dominus Flevit, the traditional site of Jesus’ weeping over Jerusalem.

A divine appointment?—It is interesting to note that Jesus had left the Capernaum area to cross the Sea of Galilee, met with the demoniac, and then immediately returned to his starting point. This seems like a lot of trouble for a very short stay, giving the impression that Jesus went with a purpose and not just to escape the crowds. It was as if he’d had a divinely arranged appointment to keep.

Legion—The troubled man in the story called himself “Legion,” referring to the legions of demons he believed had tormented him. First century readers would have recognized an oblique reference to the powerful Roman legions, each consisting of thousands of soldiers who occupied the country and often extorted money from local citizens.

There might have been some subtle pleasure in thoughts of a “Legion” getting its comeuppance from Jesus, who possessed greater power.

The Hardest Question

by Tony Cartledge

The Hardest Question is designed to support THE BIBLE LESSON by Tony Cartledge, printed in *Nurturing Faith Journal*. You can subscribe to either the digital or print edition of *Nurturing Faith Journal* to access the lessons. Please also ensure that each person in your class has a copy of *Nurturing Faith Journal* so they can prepare before the lesson.

Where did the story of “Legion” take place?

Where did the story recounted in Luke 8:26-39, Matthew 8:28-34, and Mark 5:1-20 take place? That subject is a matter of debate, for several reasons. Both Mark and Luke say that Jesus had come to “the country of the Gerasenes,” presumably named for the city of Gerasa (now known as Jerash). But Gerasa, whose marketplace is shown at right, was located more than 30 miles southeast of the Sea of Galilee. That’s a longer distance than Jesus and company would have covered in a day – and would require a pig stampede longer than a marathon.



Matthew’s account says Jesus had come to the region of the Gadarenes, which seems more reasonable, given that the city of Gedara (left), like Gerasa a member of the Decapolis, was only a few miles from the lake’s eastern shore. Though it was south of the Yarmuk River, what was considered the “region of the Gadarenes” could easily extend to the seashore. Recognizing this, scribes who made copies of Greek manuscripts began to change “Gerasenes” to “Gadarenes” in the text of Mark

and Luke, too. Thus manuscripts belonging to later traditions have “Gadarenes” in Mark and Luke, but the earlier manuscripts – probably closer to the original reading – have “Gerasenes.”

At least one scholar has suggested that the event occurred near a town called Kersa, which was adjacent to the sea. “Kersa” sounds similar to “Gerasa,” so it’s possible that there was understandable confusion about the name of the place.

As noted in the lesson, while the identity of the place may be troublesome, it has no real bearing on our understanding of the text: it was clearly in Gentile territory, and did not take place in any city, but by the seashore.

The Hardest Question *continued*

The question of location is regularly discussed in commentaries and there is little unusual presented here with the exception of the idea that there was a town named “Kersa.” I found it in Craig A. Evans’s commentary on Luke (*Luke*, Understanding the Bible Commentary Series [Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2011], 138). Evans credits Earl Ellis with the observation about Kersa as a possibility (*The Gospel of Luke*, rev. ed., New Century Bible [London: Oliphaunts, 1974]).