

Aughnacloy, Ballymagrane, Clogherney & Sixmilecross Presbyterian Churches

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1Peter 5:8-9. *Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. Resist him, standing firm in the faith, because you know that the family of believers throughout the world is undergoing the same kind of sufferings.*

Dear Friends

As your minister, it is a great privilege that I have in bringing this weekly devotion to you. It was a great opportunity and a blessing to return to the Meeting House last Sunday for public worship. We continue to pray that others will have confidence enough to join with us again at some point over the summer months. We also remain mindful of the many who feel that they are unable to attend public worship at present, that is ok too. Your safety is important to us. However, as we return to Church, we are unable at present to continue with weekly worship online and it has proved difficult to record the service for audio also. This is a major disappointment for many of you, including ourselves, however we encourage you to listen into the Moderators online service and continue with this weekly devotional in the meantime.

I plan to be on annual leave from Monday 20th July to Monday 10th August and Monday 24th August to Tuesday 1st September. During these periods emergency pastoral care will provided: 20th-26th July Rev J Smith for Aughnacloy & Ballymagrane and Rev J Hanson Cloghereny & Sixmilecross, 27th July 9th August Rev. J Boyd (all four) and 24th – 31st August Rev E Frazer (all Four). Please contact your Elder and they will arrange the contact.

Our theme this week is "Jesus' power over the Devil" 'The mad man of Gadara'. Mark 5:1-20. *They went across the lake to the region of the Gerasenes. ² When Jesus got out of the boat, a man with an impure spirit came from the tombs to meet him. ³ This man lived in the tombs, and no one could bind him anymore, not even with a chain. ⁴ For he had often been chained hand and foot, but he tore the chains apart and broke the irons on his feet. No one was strong enough to subdue him. ⁵ Night and day among the tombs and in the hills he would cry out and cut himself with stones. ⁶ When he saw Jesus from a distance, he ran and fell on his knees in front of him. ⁷ He shouted at the top of his voice, "What do you want with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? In God's name don't torture me!" ⁸ For Jesus had said to him, "Come out of this man, you impure spirit!" ⁹ Then Jesus asked him, "What is your name?" "My name is Legion," he replied, "for we are many." ¹⁰ And he begged Jesus again and again not to send them out of the area. ¹¹ A large herd of pigs was feeding on the nearby hillside. ¹² The demons begged Jesus, "Send us among the pigs; allow us to go into them." ¹³ He gave them permission, and the impure spirits came out and went into the pigs. The herd, about two thousand in number, rushed down the steep bank into the lake and were drowned. ¹⁴ Those tending the pigs ran off and reported this in the town and countryside, and the people went out to see what had happened. ¹⁵ When they came to Jesus, they saw the man who had been possessed by the legion of demons, sitting there, dressed and in his right mind; and they were afraid. ¹⁶ Those who had seen it told the people what had happened to the demon-possessed man—and told about the pigs as well. ¹⁷ Then the people began to plead with Jesus to leave their region. ¹⁸ As Jesus was getting into the boat, the man who had been demon-possessed begged to go with him. ¹⁹ Jesus did not let him, but said, "Go home to your own people and tell them how much the Lord has done for you, and how he has had mercy on you." ²⁰ So the man went away and began to tell in the Decapolis how much Jesus had done for him. And all the people were amazed. Amen*

Today as we come to God's word we see the power Jesus has over the Devil. In order that we identify the power Jesus has over the Devil we must identify the influence the devil has over many aspects of our life and society.

How many distractions are there from worship of God on the Lord's Day, today, Sunday? How many things around us are not God centred and lifting His name high? Satan can be very subtle indeed. In this passage, we see three powers at work: 1. the power of Satan, 2. the power of society, 3. The power of Jesus.

The power of Satan. Verse 1 tells us that after the storm, they travelled 'unto the other side of Galilee, into the country of the Gerasenes. Do you believe that there is such a thing today as the phenomenon of demon-possession? Most people in the world do not. I don't believe it is unreasonable, to say that there is. We must beware of unbelief in regard to the personality of the devil, because as one has well said: 'Unbelief in the devil has often proved to be the first step in unbelief in God'. It's obvious that the devil exists, and demons, because his grubby fingerprints of an unclean spirit are all around us. This man had an evil spirit which characterized itself with moral filthiness, and often caused much harm to the person who was possessed. There are some in our local society who are dabbling in sinful practices thinking there's no harm in it. Watch out If you let the evil spirit of this day get a foot hold in your life, he will fleece you, he will destroy you, he will distort the image of God in you! This man lost his home; he lost his family. He lost his identity. This man also lost his decency, he's running around naked. He's lost his self-control; he's like a wild animal. He has lost peace in his mind and in his heart. He has lost his purpose for living. *1 Peter 5:8 Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. 9 Resist him, standing firm in the faith.* This man is an extreme example of what Satan can do - but this ought to reveal to us the danger of dabbling with sinful things, with satanic things. It ought to cause believers in Christ to resist the devil so that he will flee from us - have nothing to do with him! For us today as we read Gods word we can be encouraged by remembering that Jesus is the strongest power and he has conquered Satan already. That is why peter encourages us to be 'Self-controlled and alert'. The force of Satan today is the same as it ever was.

The power of Society! The second force we encounter is the force of society. *Mark 5:4 For he had often been chained hand and foot, but he tore the chains apart and broke the irons on his feet. No-one was strong enough to subdue him.* The lesson here is that the world's ingenuity was no match for the enemy of souls. He broke out of their puny chains and cords. Our society believes the same. it can't cope with the problems caused by sin and Satan. It doesn't know what to do with them. *'Room for pleasure, room for business, but for Christ the Crucified, not a place that He can enter, In the heart for which He died'*. These people saw a miracle, - what did they do? Pray the sinner's prayer? No! They said: 'Jesus of Nazareth, get away from us!' Frighteningly close to home, isn't it? But it's obvious that our society today has the same reaction. The wages of sin is death - society doesn't want to hear that! They say: 'Be gone with your gospel! Be gone with your Jesus!' There is a cost to sin, here it is pigs. For you and I it is something else. There may be a cost but there is also a reward for following, Everlasting life.

The Power of Jesus! Praise God, he is still with us, and Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever! Glory to His name! All may change, but Jesus never! *Mark 5:6 When he saw Jesus from a distance, he ran and fell on his knees in front of him. 7 He shouted at the top of his voice, "What do you want with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? Swear to God that you won't torture me!"* The demons knew that He was God, and then they not only knew that Christ was God and God's Son, but they knew there was a judgment day coming for them. These demons believed more than most people in our world believe today. They believed that Jesus was God the Son. They believed there was a judgment day coming. They believed that Christ had all authority over them. Whatever controlling force dominates you, the Lord can break it and deliver you, whatever it is. You just have to believe it; He can do it! It's no surprise that he wanted to be with the Lord Jesus - would you not want to be? Verse 20 says that he didn't only go home to witness to his family, he went out and proclaimed to Decapolis, the ten cities.

Whatever you're doing or not doing for the Lord, you need at least do two things that this man did: you need to go home and tell your family, and you need to go out and tell others. Do you do that?

Father, we just ask in Your presence, that those who are oppressed by Satan and sin would find deliverance through the Saviour whose force is not diminished in the 21st century. We thank You that His blood will never lose its power. He is able to deliver! May He deliver folk in our communities in these present times. Amen.