

²⁶ Then they arrived at the country of the Gerasenes, which is opposite Galilee. ²⁷ As he stepped out on land, a man of the city who had demons met him. For a long time he had worn no clothes, and he did not live in a house but in the tombs. ²⁸ When he saw Jesus, he fell down before him and shouted at the top of his voice, "What have you to do with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I beg you, do not torment me"—²⁹ for Jesus had commanded the unclean spirit to come out of the man. (For many times it had seized him; he was kept under guard and bound with chains and shackles, but he would break the bonds and be driven by the demon into the wilds.) ³⁰ Jesus then asked him, "What is your name?" He said, "Legion"; for many demons had entered him. ³¹ They begged him not to order them to go back into the abyss.

³² Now there on the hillside a large herd of swine was feeding; and the demons begged Jesus to let them enter these. So he gave them permission. ³³ 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.

³⁴ When the swineherds saw what had happened, they ran off and told it in the city and in the country. ³⁵ Then people came out to see what had happened, and when they came to Jesus, they found the man from whom the demons had gone sitting at the feet of Jesus, clothed and in his right mind. And they were afraid. ³⁶ Those who had seen it told them how the one who had been possessed by demons had been healed. ³⁷ Then all the people of the surrounding country of the Gerasenes asked Jesus to leave them; for they were seized with great fear. So he got into the boat and returned. ³⁸ The man from whom the demons had gone begged that he might be with him; but Jesus sent him away, saying, ³⁹ "Return to your home, and declare how much God has done for you." So he went away, proclaiming throughout the city how much Jesus had done for him.

In the movie "Young Frankenstein", the monster has gone on a bit of a rampage, and they subdue him and place him in cell at the castle. Dr. Frankenstein, played by Gene Wilder, then tells his assistants, Inga and Igor that he is going in there to be with the monster, and try to help him. He tells them that "no matter what I say, don't let me out." Well, the monster, who has been sedated, finally wakes up, and begins to make noises. When he begins to do that Dr. Frankenstein gets scared and begs to be let out. While he eventually does get the monster to change, it initially looked too scary for anything good to be done. One couldn't blame poor Dr. Frankenstein. The monster was downright scary! This scene from the movie brings up an interesting question. Can we help or is there any hope for someone who is frightening to us, and seems so far gone that when we encountered such a one, we want to "lock the door and throw away the key?"

The gospel lesson from Sunday answers that question, as well as showing us the surprising response when such one is actually healed from terrifying evil and power.

Reading the text, it is certain the gerasene demonic is not your average demon possessed individual. He is truly frightening and physically very powerful. You have to wonder how the disciples felt when he gets "up close and personal" with Jesus. A number of years ago, while working on janitor crew at a factory, one of my coworkers, who had issues in the past completely flipped out and threw a chair at me. Eventually they took him out of the factory, but believe me, I didn't want to get anywhere near him! I imagine some of the same feelings must have been going through the disciples minds when the man approached Jesus.

The name of the demons, "legion" is term for a 5,000 man division of Roman troops.

But Jesus does have the power to cast out that many demons, even though they have been sent to a herd of pigs, with the herd throwing themselves off a nearby cliff and into the sea.

The man is cured. But what is even more ironic, the people see him in his right mind; and the bible tells us that they are frightened! They even ask Jesus to leave. Jesus even challenges the new expectations of the man who has been healed by telling him to be an "evangelist" amongst his own people!

Over the years in the church, starting with the apostles, over and over again God has used individuals, who were terrifying to people. If you start with the apostle Paul and go forward unlikely even "scary" folk have done great things for God and God's kingdom.

This should challenge us in how we see God's power, and that God can do truly more than we ask or think.