

# JESUS: HEALER OF OUTCASTS

## Open

Many societies in biblical times had a significant underclass. Poverty often forced them into begging, theft, menial labor (sometimes as slaves), or prostitution.

How are those living on society's margins viewed in your culture and country of origin? What is their life like?

## Context



The demoniac would have dwelt in caves like these, probably nestled between burial containers. Photo Credit: [BiblePlaces.com](http://BiblePlaces.com), used with permission.

After a storm at sea and upon arriving by boat on land where non-Jews live, Jesus and his disciples encounter an internal storm, a man tormented by demons.

## Read Luke 8:26-39 (NIV)

<sup>8:26</sup> They sailed to the region of the Gerasenes, which is across the lake from Galilee. <sup>27</sup> When Jesus stepped ashore, he was met by a demon-possessed man from the town. For a long time this man had not worn clothes or lived in a house, but had lived in the tombs. <sup>28</sup> When he saw Jesus, he cried out and fell at his feet, shouting at the top of his voice, "What do you want with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I beg you, don't torture me!" <sup>29</sup> For Jesus had commanded the impure spirit to come out of the man. Many times it had seized him, and though he was chained hand and foot and kept under guard, he had broken his chains and had been driven by the demon into solitary places.

<sup>30</sup> Jesus asked him, "What is your name?"

"Legion," he replied, because many demons had gone into him. <sup>31</sup> And they begged Jesus repeatedly not to order them to go into the Abyss.

<sup>32</sup> A large herd of pigs was feeding there on the hillside. The demons begged Jesus to let them go into the pigs, and he gave them permission. <sup>33</sup> When the demons came out of the man, they went into the pigs, and the herd rushed down the steep bank into the lake and was drowned.

<sup>34</sup> When those tending the pigs saw what had happened, they ran off and reported this in the town and countryside, <sup>35</sup> and the people went out to see what had happened. When they came to Jesus, they found the man from whom the demons had gone out, sitting at Jesus' feet, dressed and in his right mind; and they were afraid. <sup>36</sup> Those who had seen it told the people how the demon-possessed man had been cured. <sup>37</sup> Then all the people of the region of the Gerasenes asked Jesus to leave them, because they were overcome with fear. So he got into the boat and left.

<sup>38</sup> The man from whom the demons had gone out begged to go with him, but Jesus sent him away, saying, <sup>39</sup> "Return home and tell how much God has done for you." So the man went away and told all over town how much Jesus had done for him.

## Discuss

1. What can we know about demons by observing their effect on this man (vv. 27-29)? Why did their influence over him make him an outcast?
2. How do you think the pig herders felt while viewing hundreds of their pigs floating lifeless in the lake (v. 33)? How would you feel as one of them?
3. Why do the townspeople want Jesus to leave (v. 37)? Why are they so afraid of him? How do modern systems treat people with similar presentations (e.g., schizophrenia, PTSD, homelessness)? What might this reveal about society's resistance to true healing or the reintegration of marginalized individuals?
4. After healing, the man is "*clothed and in his right mind*" and sent to tell others (v. 39). What strikes you about his recovery?

## Reflect

The man exhibited severe symptoms: isolation, violence, homelessness, self-harm, and rejection, often chained. Jesus restored the man to wholeness and gave him a new mission and purpose, showing us that true healing goes beyond mere symptom relief; it involves reintegrating individuals into their community, restoring their sense of identity, and guiding them to discover God's purpose for their lives.

- Can we see ourselves in this outcast, perhaps hidden behind success, words, social poise, and clothes, fearing exposure? How might we receive Jesus' healing?
- Jesus crossed social, religious, and geographical boundaries to restore the man to wholeness. What marginalized population might you work with (e.g., substance use, incarcerated individuals, psychiatric patients) to help restore dignity to them?
- Responding to Jesus' command, the man proclaims, "*throughout the whole city the wonderful things God had done for him*" (8:39–40). What great things has God done for you? Who could you tell about those things?

## Pray

Silently sit with Jesus. Picture him beside you in temptation, struggle, and brokenness. What does he say? Pray for the courage to approach the "unclean" and for the grace of God's healing, even when it is uncomfortable or misunderstood.