



*"...to seek and save that which is lost"*

*Matthew 8:28-9:13*

By **Pastor Tim Dodson**  
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*Matthew 8:28 – 9:13 When He had come to the other side, to the country of the Gergesenes, there met Him two demon-possessed men, coming out of the tombs, exceedingly fierce, so that no one could pass that way. 29 And suddenly they cried out, saying, "What have we to do with You, Jesus, You Son of God? Have You come here to torment us before the time?" 30 Now a good way off from them there was a herd of many swine feeding. 31 So the demons begged Him, saying, "If You cast us out, permit us to go away into the herd of swine." 32 And He said to them, "Go." So when they had come out, they went into the herd of swine. And suddenly the whole herd of swine ran violently down the steep place into the sea, and perished in the water. 33 Then those who kept them fled; and they went away into the city and told everything, including what had happened to the demon-possessed men. 34 And behold, the whole city came out to meet Jesus. And when they saw Him, they begged Him to depart from their region. 1 So He got into a boat, crossed over, and came to His own city. 2 Then behold, they brought to Him a paralytic lying on a bed. When Jesus saw their faith, He said to the paralytic, "Son, be of good cheer; your sins are forgiven you." 3 And at once some of the scribes said within themselves, "This Man blasphemes!" 4 But Jesus, knowing their thoughts, said, "Why do you think evil in your hearts? 5 "For which is easier, to say, 'Your sins are forgiven you,' or to say, 'Arise and walk'? 6 "But that you may know that the Son of Man has power on earth to forgive sins" —then He said to the paralytic, "Arise, take up your bed, and go to your house." 7 And he arose and departed to his house. 8 Now when the multitudes saw it, they marveled and glorified God, who had given such power to men. 9 As Jesus passed on from there, He saw a man named Matthew sitting at the tax office. And He said to him, "Follow Me." So he arose and followed Him. 10 Now it happened, as Jesus sat at the table in the house, that behold, many tax collectors and sinners came and sat down with Him and His disciples. 11 And when the Pharisees saw it, they said to His disciples, "Why does your Teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?" 12 When Jesus heard that, He said to them, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. 13 "But go and learn what this means: 'I desire mercy and not sacrifice.' For I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance."*

**I think that never before in the history** of man has our culture...our *world*, been as narcissistic and self-centered. Such a dynamic is so deeply engrained in our modern humanity, that to think differently is so alien, so strange, as to be suspect! We paint pictures of a white Caucasian Jesus because we imagine Him to be thus. Passionate in the things that drive us, supportive of that which inspires us, and rejecting the issues that repel us.

Essentially we imagine Him to be...*well*, just like us! Whether that be a suburban upper-middle class baby-boomer, or a skate-boarding hipster from the inner city, we kinda want Jesus to be like *us*. We tend to imagine Him so, and therefore, without a lot of real thought, we place ourselves in the position of the quintessential spiritual target...the embodiment of His redemptive pursuit...the epitome of the genre of the receiver of Christ's effectual work on the cross. ***But are we?***

Certainly we can say that Christ died for *all* of mankind and our heads know that. But our hearts tend to say He not only came for *me* but He came for *people like me*! But if we look to the scriptural account, who would we find Jesus specifically reaching out to? Jesus died for all, but is there a class of people that are more apt to hear Him and even receive Him more than another? Is there attitudes and attributes that "open the door" to the heavens and "turn on the intercom?"

Psalms 66:18 tells us that if we hold on to sin, God will not hear us. Job warns us also about the practice of hypocrisy in 27:8 *“For what is the hope of the hypocrite, Though he may gain much, If God takes away his life?”* Proverbs 15:29 also says *“The LORD is far from the wicked, But He hears the prayer of the righteous.”* And Proverbs 21:13 *“Whoever shuts his ears to the cry of the poor Will also cry himself and not be heard.”*

A violent individual will have problems also, Isaiah 1:15 says *“When you spread out your hands, I will hide My eyes from you; Even though you make many prayers, I will not hear. Your hands are full of blood.”* The bottom line is if we continue to make a practice of sinful life, we are in danger. John 9:31 *“Now we know that God does not hear sinners; but if anyone is a worshiper of God and does His will, He hears him.”*

We also don't find Jesus in the palaces of kings or the boardrooms of fortune 500 companies. We know that Jesus said it was seriously hard for a rich person to get into heaven. So I think therefore if there is such a group that has an open line to Jesus, it is not the rich and worldly self-sufficient. You are probably thinking right now "Okay, that's not me." But are you aware that if you make \$25,000 a year, you are in the wealthiest 2 percent of the world? That's about 12\$ per hour. If you are pulling down about 8 dollars an hour you would have about \$17,000 a year, but yet in global standards you're actually still quite wealthy. We must stop and realize that the world is not like us. We individually are not the standard, not the personification of “median humanity.” In the perspective of the whole of the world, we're rich!

**In the first story before us today** we see Jesus coming into the “country of the Gergesenes.” Many New Testament manuscripts refer to the "Country of the Gadarenes" or "Gerasenes" rather than the Gergesenes. Both Gerasa and Gadara were cities to the east of the Sea of Galilee. They were both cities filled with citizens who were culturally more Greek than Jew, and thus that would explain the presence of the pigs in the biblical account...in a Jewish world that did not eat pork because such was “unclean.”

Having disembarked, Jesus promptly was met by Satan in the form of two demonically possessed men who thus evoked great strength and taunted Jesus. Ironically, these two men recognized Jesus for who He really is when so much of humanity fails to grasp the presence of deity. Once again, let's review: Two broke down violent demon possessed homeless guys with nothing to their name, recognized Jesus as ‘the Son of God,’ *and Jesus came for them.*

Hmmm. Seems like there would be more hospitable venues to pitch this whole salvation message. One that would be more conducive to calm and order! Because it's hard to imagine this scene without a level of messiness. In fact...truth be told, the battle for our souls more often than not is a messy affair. There seldom is a quiet surrender. Yet at the hands of Jesus, the other gospel accounts record that the men (or man) after this event sitting at the feet of Jesus...worshipping, and “in his right mind.”

Evidently, it was not darkness that hindered the Spirit; at least darkness in the life of an unredeemed and eternally lost soul. Jesus fearlessly ventured in where man feared to tread! Notice how evil immediately claimed its right to liberty. It always does! *“...they cried out, saying, ‘What have we to do with You, Jesus, You Son of God? Have You come here to torment us before the time?’”*

Man wants to be “free.” To do as they please and be in control of their destiny, even at the cost of homelessness, isolation and sanity. *So this is what freedom and liberty looks like?* While we will not surrender that freedom willingly, we will however ironically endure being ‘kidnapped’...hostages to powers that force their will upon us! Perhaps because in our entrenched pride we believe we can and will overcome such usurpers and we will eventually gain control of our lives. This, despite centuries of universal failure!

**Our second story** tells of man suffering from physical disease, in that he was paralyzed. Again we find an individual captive to a situation outside of his control. This was not a life he had chosen. He was not “free” at all was he? Jesus’ first and foremost concern was not the physical however, but rather it was the *spiritual*. It was not the immediate and truthfully the temporal, but rather the eternal that was primary to Christ. Thus Jesus moved first to correct the matter of sin in the man’s life.

Was his physical state a result of the practice of sin? We don’t know. But we do know that had there never been the entrance of sin into the realm of humanity back in the garden, there would be no sickness and disease, and ultimately not even final death! So Jesus moved firstly to correct what the man could never correct, not with a thousand of histories best doctors! Mayo Clinic had nothing for this issue. Jesus *forgave*. And in doing so, power over this man’s life was restored to the Creator. The man came to be healed. He “surrendered.” And again the irony is not lost herein, for the man was now really free!

There were those present who objected. It almost was a necessity as such can be offensive to our individualized sensibilities that say there is a “proper” way to do these things...that Jesus wasn’t following the rules. Certainly if He was not who He said He was, such indeed would have been blasphemy! But many of those present failed to recognize Him. They thought they had the matter of life under control. They were good religious people who did not feel they were lost or broken. They were participating in religion but failed to see themselves as really needing salvation.

**The third event** takes us to the calling of Mathew. We need to understand that as the gospels were lived out, and the ministry of Jesus took place, the people of Israel were under military occupation. We tend to forget that as we read the accounts before us. Rome held Israel in bondage, though there was a kind of “mind-over-matter” kind of thing going on, as the Jews tended to mysteriously reject the premise and live their lives in denial.

There were also at that time individuals that were Jewish by blood and culture that were...in the eyes of the masses anyway, turncoats. They assisted the Roman rulers in aspects of control and taxation. The people on the street despised these folks. They despised those who would force authority over them and yet they would seek their assistance when it came to ridding themselves of this problem of Jesus of Nazareth wouldn’t they? The church isn’t any different...we do the same today. We tend to despise our government and rail against it at every turn, but we seek it out for a rescue when it proves to be personally advantageous.

The story before us introduces one such “turncoat” by the name of Matthew. How he must have been hated! He would have been trash in the eyes of the population. Such folks were fit only for the garbage heap. Jail them, or kill them, but the people wanted them gone! Matthew was one such target. Today we have the legal offenders. The sex offenders, the druggies, the thieves and the morally and legally corrupt. They won’t follow the rules we have decided to be the standard of socially acceptable behavior, so they are to be ostracized and abandoned. We often will have nothing to do with these people, but not Jesus. He had a history of not just engaging these folks

but actually *seeking them out*. Matthew was apparently one of these guys, along with a whole bunch of them that were there that day hanging out with Jesus.

But hey...this Matthew was free right? Liberty and all that nonsense? Matthew had been doing what *HE* wanted to do and what was good for **his** life and well-being. If the people could have got their hands on him, he would have been a dead man. But Jesus *sought him out*. Jesus was herein accused of eating with “tax-collectors and sinners.” Indeed! It was all so wonderfully true! His answer to his detractors was hardly a defense, and it sure wasn’t an excuse. It was more of an overt statement. A credo. A manifest. *“I didn’t come for all of you that think you don’t need saving...all of you that think you have it all together and your life is in control. I came for those who are sick...those who know they are broken, needy, and powerless.”*

Of course that is *everybody*, but most of us will never know it.

So what tied all these men together? What was the commonality that opened the gates of heaven and brought God in human flesh to their door? **Firstly, they were all broken.** Oh, but that was not sufficient! They had to *know* they were broken. And oh how these guys knew it! And in that knowledge they were half way home!

**Secondly, they were lost.** They were lost in the middle of a crowd, alone in the midst of burgeoning humanity! So many people around them and yet how alone they were. Jesus said He had not come to call the righteous, but sinners. And these guys were there. They were lost and broken and “all the kings horses and all the kings men, couldn’t put these guys back together again.” But the king Himself could. **And He did.**

**Thirdly, these men all recognized Jesus for who He was.** Not just a prophet and teacher, but their Savior, their God, and their answer. He was the lifeboat. He was their rescue. They were lost and Jesus had found them, and they were never going to be lost again.

**And lastly, they surrendered.** They all surrendered what they perceived as freedom and liberty for the “bondage” of His healing arms! And in doing so they found the greatest freedom that they could ever experience on this side of eternity. They came to understand Romans 1:22, that having “Professed themselves to be wise, they had become fools...” They knew in fact that they were broken and lost, and in that state, they surrendered and Jesus came to them.

**Broken, lost, recognizing Jesus, and surrendering.** This is those to whom He comes even today. The Bible states in the book of Romans, “*for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God*” (Rom 3:23). All of us. Even those who refuse to acknowledge such. And Jesus declares, “*I tell you.... unless you repent you will all likewise perish*” (Luke 13:3). Unless we are able to grasp the fact that we are so broken and lost, we will be lost for eternity...

This is to whom He came. This is why He came down from heaven and took upon Himself the fallen humanity and lived for us, loved us, and died for us. It has been said that “*Christianity is one beggar telling another beggar where he found bread.*” Do we get that today? If we do, the phone is ringing...