

Fourth Sunday after Pentecost

CRAZY IS AS CRAZY DOES

Luke 8:26-39

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Analysis by Mark Marius

26Then they arrived at the country of the Gerasenes, which is opposite Galilee. 27As 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. 28When 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" – 29for 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.) 30Jesus then asked him, "What is your name?" He said, "Legion"; for many demons had entered him. 31They begged him not to order them to go back into the abyss.

32Now 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. 33Then 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.

34When the swineherds saw what had happened, they ran off and told it in the city and in the country. 35Then 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. 36Those who had seen it told them how the one who had been

possessed by demons had been healed. 37Then 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. 38The man from whom the demons had gone begged that he might be with him; but Jesus sent him away, saying, 39Return 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.

DIAGNOSIS: All Aboard! Ha ha ha ha ha haaaa! “Crazy Train”

Step 1: Initial Diagnosis (External Problem) : *Crazy*

So who is crazy? The lawyer, the mother, the pastor, the construction worker, the nurse, the teacher, the banker? Or the demoniac who runs around naked, screaming and having seizures? Easy answer, I know. You and I and the rest of society would probably choose the demoniac. But could it be that we are all crazy and the demoniac is just aware of it? We crazies hide behind our masks and uniforms, our positions and titles, and appear to keep things together. The demoniac lets it all hang out, and by his presence torments us. We can see how sin seizes and derails him from society. But even though we may remain on society's orderly track, sin has seized us as well. How we treat the crazy one is a sure sign.

Step 2: Advanced Diagnosis (Internal Problem) : *Locked up*

We are seized with fear when we look at this crazy man. Fear because we know that inside we are every bit as crazy as this crazy man is on the outside. We fear being exposed, so we try to lock up the derailed and deranged person. We offer no hope, no life to him because we have nothing to give. For the good of society we figure we must contain the insane. We would rather

not get God involved in the matter because we fear being exposed. So, like the demoniac, we send Jesus away instead of dealing with our own sin and crazy tendencies. We too wonder what Jesus would have to do with us and our crazy hearts-hearts that seize sin more than they seek to seize God's love.

Step 3: Final Diagnosis (Eternal Problem) : *Derailed!*

But sending Jesus away is completely crazy! We fear the abyss and know that God's judgment will put us there, so we plead for God not to destroy us. But unfortunately our sin will. And we are crazy not to see that, apart from God, our sin will drive us off the cliff and lead us straight into the abyss. It may be very difficult to understand Ozzy Osbourne when he mumbles, but he is crystal clear when he sings, "we are going off the rails on a crazy train."

PROGNOSIS: Crazy in Love

Step 4: Initial Prognosis (Eternal Solution) : *Crazy for Loving (Me and) You*

But the good news is that for all of our craziness, God is even crazier-by our worldly standards. God counts himself among the crazies in the person of Jesus. (Of course, if the entire world is acting crazy then the one who isn't may look crazy.) So as crazy as it seems, Jesus willingly takes our sin, takes our torment, is stripped naked and nailed to the cross. But he did not let the demonic voices persuade him to shed his bonds ("save yourself" were the torments, 23:35-38) and come down from the cross. Instead, Jesus willingly surrenders himself to the abyss in his death. It is here where the Father meets him, to vindicate him. And what happens next is absolutely crazy, because it had never happened before: Jesus is raised to new life. I know, crazy talk-but true.

Step 5: Advanced Prognosis (Internal Solution) : *God Gives Me Love, Love, Love, Love-Crazy Love!*

And because Jesus has conquered sin, the devil, and the abyss, we are no longer derailed. We jump off the cliff, head first into the waters of baptism, where God's crazy love enters (seizes) our hearts and our lives. And with the help of the Holy Spirit, we can swim, we can float, we can do laps. We just can't sit still. This love reorders our lives. It empowers us to get up in the morning, live in Christ's peace, and follow his word.

Step 6: Final Prognosis (External Solution) : Go Crazy Folks!

When we trust in God's word and promise, the world will judge us as crazy. But we now lead a life where we happily go to the tombs and unchain the crazy captives our society has locked up. We clothe them with God's righteousness (Gal. 3:27). We feed them with the bread of life and give them the cup of salvation to drink. We share the good news with them and call them "sister" and "brother." We baptize them and go for a swim together. We reach out to all those who are derailed on the crazy train of life, drowning in the abyss, and offer them Jesus' victory and a path to paradise (23:41).