

Title: NOTHING BUT FEAR OR NOTHING TO FEAR, LUKE 8:26-39  
(Chatham, NJ; 06/20/10, AM) [Pt – Narrative Analysis]

Theme: Although the story of the demoniac with the legion of demons exudes fear from beginning to end, the episode ends with a quiet but dramatic testimony of a man blessed, healed, and given a new life.

Purpose: To demonstrate that fear is not one of the emotions we need to maintain in a relationship with God.

Introduction:

1. Go through the story while highlighting the moments when fear is the dominant reaction. It seems to drive the entire story.
2. Note the fears from my childhood: the “zombie,” and the “death” house. These as with many fears were irrational.
3. There certainly are legitimate fears, but it is hard to overcome the irrational ones even once we learn better.
4. Let’s see if we can break through this side of fear and get to the other side, courage.

I. This Side of Fear – the things that evoked it.

- A. The demon-possessed man: what do you see or what might you have seen?
  1. “Wore no clothes,” “lived among the tombs,” “guarded and bound with shackles,” which he would break, and “driven into the desert.” (vs. 27, 29).
  2. Imagine a boy describing his encounter with him, “He surprised me by the cemetery. I saw him; I froze. He seemed like a man, but his eyes darted back and forth, fierce, wild, like they could see through me. His nakedness shocked me, his skin caked with dust and burned by the sun, his hair knotted by the wind; wild beasts had scraped and clawed him with sores; sweat dripped from his eyebrows; his wrists bloody and raw. Chains clanked as he reached for my arm. Luckily he slipped and fell. I never ran so fast. I never looked back.” To which his mom replied, “Didn’t I tell you never to come home by the cemetery?”
  3. Those who guarded and bound him (29) knew to fear him.
  4. He was the neighborhood “zombie.”
  5. People had every reason to fear him.
- B. The rush of the pigs into the sea
  1. I am a little perplexed the PETA has not taken Jesus to task for this abuse.
  2. Perhaps this is why the townspeople were so afraid. A lawsuit was inevitable.
  3. On a more realistic note, the herdsmen would have had to explain the loss of the entire herd to their employer.
  4. However, even before such considerations, this was a chaotic scene.
  5. What might they have seen leading up to when the pigs bolted for the water?
  6. They witnessed a mass suicide; they panicked.
  7. We can imagine the confusion as they all tried to explain what had happened. (Explain how they might have recounted it later among themselves.)
- C. Fear when the townspeople saw the man “clothed and in his right mind,” 35
  1. They had learned to fear the sight of him.
  2. They have never seen him so calm, much less clothed.
  3. They must be informed about what happened, 36.

4. Remember that they only know about the pigs up to this point.
5. I suspect that their fear turns to bewilderment at this strange turn of events.
6. They can see the man, but his appearance now betrays everything they have known about him.
7. Think of the way the church treated the Apostle Paul immediately after his conversion: “Steer clear; he’s crazy.”

D. They ask Jesus to leave, 37.

1. Everyone from the surrounding country asked him to leave.
2. This defies explanation except as an irrational response to fear: get rid of the thing that created the fear.
3. Perhaps it was too soon to probe and ask for explanations; fear and bewilderment drove them to seek a quick resolution.

## II. The Other Side of Fear: Courage.

A. Fearing the demon no more.

1. Remember that the demons feared Jesus.
2. We have not mentioned them yet.
3. Jesus allows them a merciful departure.
4. Perhaps they know that the abyss awaits when Jesus conquers evil.
5. In the meantime Jesus demonstrates the power to overcome them.
6. This is a cause for courage, not fear.

B. The Stampede

1. Despite the economic loss, no one, except the pigs, was hurt.
2. Swine were unclean animals and shouldn’t have been in Israel anyway.
3. Over time this was a lasting memory, a story told to children and grandchildren.
4. A story of danger from a stampede became a story of hope and healing.

C. Seeing the new man

1. Seeing someone in a new way takes time.
2. It could be a trick, or we could just assume that the change was only temporary.
3. We get used to people in a certain way, and we get uncomfortable when we have to learn new ways of interacting with them.
4. However, this is exactly what we are called to.
5. We are new creatures given a second chance, see 2 Corinthians 5:16-17.

D. Asking Jesus to leave

1. This is the most perplexing response.
2. Doesn’t it make sense to ask him to stay and help them put things in order?
3. But when fear overrides rational thought, courage cannot come to mind.

### Conclusion:

1. Jesus’ power evokes fear.
2. Change makes people fear, as does a lack of understanding.
3. But Jesus unleashes the one thing that could eventually quiet the fears and erases the doubts of everyone: the testimony of the man (39).
4. Jesus had done only one thing, but to get one’s life back is actually much.
5. Let his testimony speak to you today, “Don’t be afraid.” Jesus rules.