

Driven to Loneliness

by Jim Cymbala

The sermon 'Driven to Loneliness' by Jim Cymbala teaches that Satan uses isolation and loneliness to drive people away from God, but that we can avoid this by being part of a community of believers and being open and honest with others.

Duration: 31:00

Scripture: Mark 5:18-20, Luke 8:26-39, John 2:1-11

Topics: "Loneliness"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker shares his personal testimony of how Jesus transformed his life. He describes how he used to be isolated, lonely, and engaged in self-destructive behavior. However, after encountering Jesus, he experienced a radical change and now wants to share the great things God has done for him. The speaker emphasizes the power of personal testimonies in sharing the Gospel and encourages believers to tell others about the transformative work of Jesus in their own lives.

Transcript

Let's read a story that's found in the book of Luke, but let's try to see what we can learn from it. They sailed to the region, Jesus and his disciples, of the Gerasenes, which is across the lake from Galilee. 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 where dead people are buried, driven, wandering. 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. Well, who exactly is doing that talking? 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. So before we go on, let's just think about this. What is a demon or an unclean spirit? These are things that Jesus dealt with a lot.

Demon possession, setting people free from that. And this man was possessed, as we're going to learn, not by just one, but by several of these invisible, unclean spirits. What is the origin of demons? Where do they come from? Why did God permit them? What do they want? Where do they roam? Many people have tried to link them to the fallen angels that were cast out of heaven with Lucifer when he rebelled against

the Most High God.

You'll remember that the origin of Satan is that he was a beautiful creation, maybe the most beautiful of all the angels, most powerful, called Lucifer. But he rebelled, his heart was lifted up with pride, and that's amazing because there was no devil to tempt him. So think how easily pride must come.

And he was cast out of heaven with a third of the angels, so he must have been persuasive in that rebellion. We know nothing of that. It's in the mists of time past.

The problem with that is there's no indication anywhere in scripture that angels can possess a human being or want to possess a human being. They have their own angelic being and their own angelic presence, entity. So I have never found that argument very persuasive.

Plus the scripture says that those that rebel with Satan are being kept in chains under some kind of God's lock and key until the end times. So then what are these unclean spirits? Well, there's different theories which I don't want to go into now because they're conjecture. But one thing about them, as we're going to learn, is they want to inhabit a person.

They want to dwell in something living. They want to have a corporal body. Some people have linked them to some kind of pre-Adamite creation which were part of some rebellion that led to the mess that we read in Genesis 1-2.

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth is Genesis 1-1. 1-2 says, and the earth was, or literally in Hebrew, and the earth became dark and void and barren. And it speaks of some cataclysmic event.

So the theory is, I'm not proposing it to you, the theory is that between Genesis 1-1 and 1-2 something happened because God couldn't create something. Void and darkness covered the face of the deep because God is light. So how did the earth get to that mess where he had to say, let there be light? Did something else happen here that would make for an older earth? Whatever the case, demons are unclean.

They work under the leadership of Satan and there seem to be principalities and powers and authorities and rank and a whole host of organized opposition to us. So Satan can only be in one place at one time. He's limited to that.

He's not God. He's not omnipresent. But who's doing his work? The general teaching of the scripture are these powers of darkness which are invisible and which possess this man.

Notice that the man was possessed by the evil spirit to the loss of personality. Jesus did not speak to the man. He spoke to the thing that possessed him.

So classical demon possession in the New Testament is always loss of personality. Over the years they had developed, especially in the last 40-50 years, this whole idea of deliverance, of Christians needing deliverance from some evil spirit that's in them. So you have ongoing deliverance services.

And while demons can oppress us, if you're a child of God washed in the blood, no demon can live inside of you. Yeah, let's say amen to that, that we belong to God. Because that would mean that the body, our bodies which are called the temple of the Holy Spirit could be indwelt by a demon and that makes no

sense whatsoever.

But people, starting back with Flip Wilson and his comedy, *The Devil Made Me Do It*, is what Geraldine used to say, people instead of facing up to our own misbehavior and repenting of it and being humbled by it, we blame it on the spirit. That's nowhere found in scripture. Nowhere does Paul ever address trouble in the church by saying have a deliverance service and cast the demons, the devil, out of all those people in the church that are causing trouble.

So it's not a good thing to fool around and say to someone, you know, he's got the devil in him. That's not a good thing to say. How many are with me? Say amen.

These are serious issues. So there's loss of personality. And notice what these demons drove this man to do.

If you compare this with the rendering of this story in Mark, I believe, he was driven first of all to nakedness. The devil doesn't usually lead you to put on clothes, men and women. He likes to undress people.

Modesty is not his forte. He's into sensuality and lasciviousness. The man was naked.

The man also cut himself and was tormented and driven and became isolated and lived solitary in a lonely, tormented kind of way. When you just analyze how this man lived, it just breaks your heart. Also, he was compulsive and strong beyond measure because they tried to stop him from hurting himself and roaming around and howling like a wolf in the tombs.

But nothing could hold him. No human force can overcome spiritual power. You know, my late friend David Wilkerson, he was preaching here and he was talking about just the power of sin.

So in the early days of Teen Challenge, they had a guy who was a heroin addict. And yeah, there was methadone, but he didn't want to do methadone. He wanted to go cold turkey and he was using a lot of heroin every day.

He received Christ, tried to pray through. He didn't really receive Christ, but he just made up his mind, I'm going to beat this thing. So he said, lock me in this room right over here on Clinton Avenue.

He told his friends, I want you to handcuff me. They got handcuffs. I want you to handcuff me to the radiator.

And I don't care how I yell. I don't care how I scream. I don't care what I do.

You do not come and get me. I'm going to sweat this out, kick it. I'm going to do this.

But drug addiction is like a picture of demonic activity because it drives you. You're compelled. Your conscience can say no.

But when that power begins to work, it's no holding it back except through the power of Jesus. What happened was during the night, he began to suffer the shakes and began to sweat and every kind of thing. And the pain just became unbearable.

But then he realized I can't live without heroin. But he was handcuffed to the radiator. He somehow with the hand that wasn't handcuffed and with the hand that was handcuffed, screwed the thing loose from the floor and walked out in the middle of the night to buy drugs holding a radiator.

Like this poor man, nothing could control him. So that's what Satan wants to do. That's what demons want to produce is compulsive driven behavior.

The other thing I want you to notice is that he went to lonely places. Satan usually drives you away from the crowd. He'll use the crowd to seduce you.

But you end up driven away from the herd and you get alone so you can be depressed and lonely and tormented and he can work on your mind without you being distracted. This is incredibly important to remember when Satan begins to work many times. Let me reverse it.

When you begin to get anti-social, you don't want to be with people and you don't want to have fellowship with anyone because let me give you the idea Satan will give you. No one really likes you. The people are against your race or your color.

All churches are the same. They're a bunch of cliques and you're not part of it. Everyone looks down at you because of your lack of education or whatever it might be.

And all of that is all people are phony. No one really cares for you. All of that is to isolate you just like these predator animals isolate the animal they want to kill from the herd.

And once they start to run, how these lions communicate is when they run for that one that they've isolated away from it, then even if another animal panics and runs up almost right into the lion, the lion will not even go for it. It's only going for the one it pulled away from the herd. That's why the Bible says don't forsake the assembling of yourselves.

You've got to have friends, brothers and sisters in Christ. Every instinct that you have not to come to church, not to call anyone, to be alone, to have a pity party. No one knows the trouble I've seen and nobody knows what I can't.

Ministers have this all the time. I've met ministers who I've prayed with and wept with who got isolated because between the pressure they were carrying, the criticism of people, they locked themselves in. I'm not mixing with the people.

You can't trust people. That when I was a kid was big time among pastors. You don't hang with the people because you can't trust them.

They'll turn on you. And that's all Satan. Listen to me today.

Anybody being isolated here and getting lonely and feeling no one cares, that's the devil. Somebody say amen. That's the devil.

That's the devil. That's what he did possessing through these evil spirits, this poor man. Jesus asked him, the spirit, what's your name? Legion, he replied, because many demons had gone into him.

And they begged Jesus repeatedly not to order them to go into the abyss, place of punishment. A large herd of pigs was feeding there on the hillside. Some commentators point out that you weren't supposed to

be raising pigs because that was non-kosher.

The demons begged Jesus, notice this drive to be possessed or to possess some kind of flesh or to be covered by something, not to be left just to roam. The demons begged Jesus, let them go into the pigs. He gave them permission.

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. When those tending the pigs saw what had happened, they ran off and reported this in the town and the countryside, the town that the guy who was possessed and naked and tormented had come from.

They went into town and said, you can't believe what just happened with the pigs and the whole thing. And the people went out to see what had happened. When they came to Jesus, they found the man from whom demons had gone out sitting at Jesus's feet.

Oh, is that a good place to be? Instead of roaming among tombs, he's sitting at Jesus's feet, dressed. The minute he got free from that, he put on his clothes and in his right mind, instead of being driven, isolated, tormented, here he was peaceful, dressed and sitting at Jesus's feet. Can we just praise God for what Jesus can do in our lives? Dressed, sane in his right mind, sitting at Jesus's feet.

And now it says, and they were afraid. They didn't rejoice. They got afraid.

Those who had seen it told the people how the demon-possessed man had been cured. And now one of the strangest verses in the Gospels, 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 he left.

You know, in Barbados, I was speaking at the concert there to almost 15,000 people, telling them, reminding them about the first miracle Jesus ever did, which was turning the water into wine in the wedding in Cana of Galilee. And the miracle could have never happened except that Jesus was there. And why was Jesus there? Because they invited him to the wedding.

And Jesus is a gentleman. Wherever he's invited, he comes. Into your problem, into your marriage, into your relationship, into the problem with the child, into your finances, just invite him in, he will come.

He's a gentleman. But this is odd. He will also leave when you tell him to leave.

What the total application of that is, I can't say, but all I know is this. They didn't want anyone who would rock the boats. Uh-oh, with him here, we just lost all those pigs.

Who knows what else he's going to do to rock and roll this place upside down. And rather than having Jesus and letting him have his way. Oh, how many times, pastors, have we seen that? Rather than having Jesus, inviting him in and saying, Jesus, I don't care what you do, because whatever you're going to do is going to help me.

No, they said, we can't be sure what he'll do next. So, would you please leave? And he said, bye. And he left.

He left. That's an awesome thought, isn't it? He keeps knocking at the door. But there's sometimes when you just tell him to leave, and he'll say, fine, I'll find someone who wants to trust me.

And he went on. Invite him, and he'll come. Tell him to get out.

And in this case, he said, I'll do what you say. Instead of rejoicing, they saw this man. This is how unbelief, which we're going to read about in Hebrews.

This is how powerful unbelief is, and it's the root of all sin. Because here they saw a miracle sitting in front of them, and they still said, would you please leave? They knew. Who changed that man? They knew that man.

He was tormented. And here he was, delivered and free. But they didn't want Jesus.

That's the way a lot of people are. They want church on Sunday, but they don't want Jesus all the way. They want a little religion when they're sick, and their temperature is 104.2. But they don't want Jesus all the way.

How many are with me today? You want Jesus all the way. All the way where he leads us, we will follow. But with that sentence, I'm going to contradict myself.

The man from whom the demons had gone begged to go with him, with Jesus. But Jesus sent him away, saying, return home and tell how much God has done for you. So the man went away and told all over the town how much Jesus had done for him.

I wonder all those years being possessed and living where he lived on the wrong side of the Galilee in the Gerasene region. I wonder how much he knew about Isaiah 53. Probably not much.

I wonder if he knew all the furniture in the tabernacle. I wonder if he knew the story of Noah's Ark. I don't know.

I wonder if he had memorized any verses. I doubt it. He was demon possessed.

Usually the demons don't lead you to Bible study, right? That's okay. Jesus said, I can use you. Just go and tell people the great things God has done for you.

You don't need a PhD. You don't need to be graduate of a seminary. Is that not a word to all of us? Just tomorrow when God gives you an opportunity, tell everyone you meet the great things Jesus has done for you.

If you don't know too many verses, don't give them. Don't make them up. You don't know them, but you can tell people your testimony, can't you? Someone says, oh, that's just a testimony.

Jesus said, no, don't follow me. I got disciples. I have another plan for you.

Listen, they're kicking me out of town, but you lived here and I still love them. I'll leave because they asked me to leave, but you stay and here's what you do. Just tell them the great things God has done for you.

Just tell them, you know what? I was driven. I was compulsive. I was lonely.

I used to cut myself and howl at night. I used to live in the tombs. I got isolated.

I couldn't relate to people. Didn't want to be with people, but now look what Jesus has done, right? That's powerful. That's powerful.

So that's a good word for us this Easter season. Just tell people, did you know that Jesus is alive? I can prove it. Let me tell you what he did in my life.

Just tell people the great things God has done for you. How many have things, a story of what God has done for you in your life? Wave your hand if he's done a lot in your life that you could tell people about, right? In every area of our lives, just tell people this is what God did for me. Nah, that, no, no, it happened to me.

I'm not telling you even a Bible verse. I'm telling you what he did for me. And I used to mock it just like you're mocking it, but that's what he did for me.

Oh God, make us bold to tell people the great things God has done. But here's the thing troubling me today because of something I heard a couple of people say to me after I prayed for them and they cried and grabbed me as I was coming, going out at one o'clock. Don't let the devil isolate you.

Some of you have hardly any Christian friends. You're all isolated. Your best friend is your smartphone, texting people.

You know, social media has made people anti-social. They don't talk. They don't open their heart.

They don't share. They don't, listen, they don't have someone to pray for them. They don't open up.

They get isolated. But I'm telling you what happens after he isolates you, you don't even want to know. He drives you away from the people who love you.

So I wanted to declare something to you today. I want to say it on behalf of Pastor Burgos and the rest of us in the front. We love you.

That's a lie. Satan tells you nobody cares about you. So the meeting is going to end and you're going to go down there and get on 41 bus all by yourself.

And even if you see people who are from the church, you won't sit with them, will you? You're going to go by yourself because in your head he's already told you nobody really likes you. Don't tell me that's not true. I hear this, I've heard this for too many years.

This is how Satan works in our minds. You're not good enough. People look down on you.

This, that, the other. You can't be isolated. Oh how beautiful it is when brethren dwell together in unity.

When we flow together, love, talk, pray, cry over each other. But Satan is an isolationist. He wants you isolated.

And he'll make up any kind of crazy story to try to get you to believe it so you can be isolated. And maybe your parents were isolationists. So it's already in your DNA.

It's in your culture, in your mind. You know, I don't open up to anyone. I'm not going to trust anyone.

And you talk and everybody, you just hold everybody over there. You're never really going to open your heart. You're going to die very lonely that way.

You're going to die lonely. That's not God's will. That's Satan's will.

Did you notice God could have saved us and kept us alone with ourselves for all eternity? No. He put us in community. The Bible says in heaven, every nation, every tribe, there's so much noise.

They're praising God. They're waving things. They're worshipping around the throne together.

If God wants us together in heaven, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. He wants you together now. And you know who I'm speaking to.

You know that this is convicting you. But this is Satan. I'm trying to help you.

Satan will try to drive you away from relationships and openness and friendship with people. I feel it myself because of the pressures that I sometimes have on me and all of that. And many times when people want to be with me, they talk to me.

I'm being totally now transparent. They have a problem. They want to give me their problem.

They don't want to talk to me. They want to tell me their problem. And that's fine.

That's what God called me to do. I love to try to solve problems and pray with people. But you know, tomorrow night, I'm meeting people that I met when I was in college.

Two guys, two brothers. And they're going to meet me at five o'clock. And I'm going to have a meal with them.

You know why? They don't call me Pastor Simba. They call me Jimmy. That's right.

Some of the few left. They call me Jim or Jimmy. And they don't know me from pastor.

They're Christians. They watch the webcast. They love the Lord.

But when I'm with them, I can just be nobody. I can just be. And they make fun of me.

They throw stuff at me. And I just love that. How many just love to be with friends and brothers and sisters in Christ? Because you know what? We were made to be together.

I'm telling you, Satan. You think I saw this when I first went in the ministry? No, I had no clue. I was in the ministry a couple decades before I saw the power of this.

How Satan isolates people. They come to church. They worship.

And then they leave. They don't say five words to anybody. You think that's God's will? Can't be.

But it has origins and things. But we're going to cure it today. Some of you lonely people are going to get visited by such comfort today and love.

And you're going to know. Oh, listen, we pastors, we're going to hug you. We're going to hug you so tight that the love of God is going to come out of you.

And you're going to know that you're loved. I know this is an odd topic, but this is the root of a lot of things that Satan leads people to do. You know, people who commit suicide, Wall Street, all these people that sometimes take their lives.

You read about all of them, almost all of them, kept to themselves, locked themselves in their room. These guys that get guns and go do these mass shootings. You think they're hanging out and praising God and sharing and loving and having meals together with people? No.

They get, usually for the most part, they get isolated. That's how Satan works. Isolate, then move in.

But we're going to fight for you. We're going to love you. Close your eyes with me.

If you're here tonight, I've never done this before in the history of my ministry. And this is going to take a big step for you. I know it.

But if you know that that's what Satan is trying to do for you, using whatever your family stabbed you in the back. So now you're isolated from your family. You don't trust them.

You don't trust anybody. I'm telling you, that's the devil. The demons drove this guy into solitary places.

Just get out of your seat and come up here and say, Pastor, I want to be free from isolation. I don't want to be alone. I don't want to be afraid of people.

I want God to just break these chains off of me, bring these walls down. Just come up. I know that takes courage.

Come right up here. A lot of it comes because someone hurts you. Someone hurts you and you figured, I know one way not to get hurt.

I won't be in relationship with anybody. I won't talk to anybody. Just line up across there.

God's going to help you tonight. Congregation, does God love these people? Say amen. Do we love them? And I want you to know all the people up front, we've all been hurt.

But Satan is going to use past hurts to try to isolate us. And then you don't trust anyone. Then you're all by yourself.

Then you start imagining things. And then he moves in for the kill. And you have no one to fight for you.

You're all by your lonesome. Praise the name of the Lord. Praise the name of the Lord.

Praise the name of the Lord. Those of you that in the front here, just lift up your hands to God. Father God, I praise you for these people.

You love them. Let them know how much you love them. You're so wonderful because no matter how much we do wrong, no matter how we've messed up, you're a God of mercy.

Like we read in Psalm 130. If you would count sins against us, nobody could stand. So first I ask you to let them draw close to you.

Draw close to them. Draw close to them today. Put your arms of love and comfort around them.

Let them sense it. Let them feel it. Let them know of your love, the love that sent your son Jesus to die for them on the cross.

We praise you, Jesus. We praise you, Jesus. Satan, we resist you in the name of Jesus.

They're not going to live alone. They're not going to be driven to solitary places, psychologically and emotionally and physically. They're going to mingle.

They're going to love. They're going to share. They're going to be prayed for.

They're going to pray for others. They're going to talk. They're going to open up.

They're going to cry with those who cry. They're going to laugh with those who laugh. You're setting them free tonight, Jesus.

You're setting them free tonight, Jesus. Jesus, break those chains, Jesus. Those invisible chains.

We defeat you, Satan, in the name of Jesus. In the name of Jesus, the Son of God. We are loved.

We're part of God's family. You're not going to have your way. Thank you, Jesus.

Thank you, Lord. We are not ignorant of Satan's devices. He has many devices, but one of them is to drive us into emotional, psychological, and even physical, social isolation, away from the brothers and sisters, away from the church of God, away from the body that we're a part of.

But he is a liar. We belong to Jesus, and we belong to one another. Thank you, Lord.

Now, Lord, as we hug and minister to these people, we need more, Lord, than just the pastors and the deacons. I pray the congregation will not only love one another, but will look for these folks in the front to just hug them and let them know, we love you. We care about you.

You're important to God. You're important to us. Let that be liberating and encouraging and comforting to them as we pray this in Jesus' name.

Get us all home safely. But right now, we're going to minister to our friends in the front in Jesus' name. And everyone said, come on, start giving them a hug.

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