

The Tale of Two Cities

Luke 8:35-37; Mark 6:53-56

We are all familiar with the Charles Dickens novel, *A Tale of Two Cities*. The story is set in the late 18th century against the backdrop of the French Revolution. The novel depicts the plight of peasants in Paris, with many social parallels to life in London. The complex plot involves Sydney Carton's sacrifice of his own life on behalf of his friends Charles Darnay and Lucie Manette. The book is likely best known for its opening lines, "It was the best of times; it was the worst of times."

I am in no way placing a literary work on the level of inspired Scripture, but we have read the account of two different and yet very similar cities in our text passages today. In many ways, these too were the best of times, and yet for many they were the worst of times. His time had not yet come, but our blessed Lord was fulfilling the will of God as He prepared for the cross that loomed in His future.

Each of these regions was presented a firsthand experience with the presence and power of Christ, and they responded in totally different ways. The choices they made remain for all who read these enduring words. We too are confronted with the presence and power of Christ. It is up to us as individuals as to how we will respond. I want to examine the timeless truths revealed in the text as we consider: [The Tale of Two Cities](#).

I. The Land of Gadara ([Luke 8:26-37](#)) – Gadara was located on the SE side of the Sea of Galilee. It was included in the region known as Decapolis, an area made up of 10 cities, largely comprised of Gentile settlers. Let's consider the day that Jesus came to Gadara.

A. The Maniac (27, 29) – And when he went forth to land, there met him out of the city a certain man, which had devils long time, and ware no clothes, neither abode in any house, but in the tombs. [29] (For he had commanded the unclean spirit to come out of the man. For oftentimes it had caught him: and he was kept bound with chains and in fetters; and he brake the bands, and was driven of the devil into the wilderness.) The man was clearly in need of the Lord. He was possessed with devils and was helpless to free himself from their bondage.

B. The Messiah (28) – When he saw Jesus, he cried out, and fell down before him, and with a loud voice said, What have I to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of God most high? I beseech thee, torment me not. As soon as the maniac encountered Jesus, he immediately recognized Him as the Son of God. When Jesus comes into the midst, you will know it is Him. He is unmistakable; there are none like Him!

- The man literally prostrated himself before the Lord. Even the devils that possessed him recognized the deity of Christ. [Jam.2:19 – Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble.](#)

C. The Mercy (26) – [And they arrived at the country of the Gadarenes, which is over against Galilee.](#) The maniac had no idea that He would meet the King of glory on that fateful day. He had not gone seeking the Lord. Christ in His mercy came seeking him!

- As I consider the grace and mercy of our Lord, I am amazed that He was willing to lay aside His glory and condescend to the lowly estate of man. I am amazed that He was willing to become my sacrifice, taking my sin and yours upon Himself. I am amazed that He submitted to the awful death of the cross. But what amazes me more than all of this was that He came at all. The mercy in this story is the fact that Jesus even took the time for one who was undeserving!

D. The Miracle (29a, 32, 35) – [For he had commanded the unclean spirit to come out of the man. \[32\] And there was there an herd of many swine feeding on the mountain: and they besought him that he would suffer them to enter into them. And he suffered them. \[35\] Then they went out to see what was done; and came to Jesus, and found the man, out of whom the devils were departed, sitting at the feet of Jesus, clothed, and in his right mind: and they were afraid.](#) Illustrate the context of all this.

- When we consider the miracles that our Lord performed, this one has to stand out as one of the most magnificent. There is hope for all of humanity in this passage. We maybe didn't dwell among the tombs literally, but we were all dead men walking, dead in sin and separated from God. The greatest of all miracles is the saving grace and forgiveness of our Lord.

E. The Multitude (37) – [Then the whole multitude of the country of the Gadarenes round about besought him to depart from them; for they were taken with great fear: and he went up into the ship, and returned back again.](#) This reveals the tragic response of the people of Gadara regarding the miracle that Jesus had performed. I'm sure there was a measure of astonishment and fear that fell upon them, but apparently they were more concerned with their material possessions and wealth than they were the power of God being manifest in their lives.

- Our Lord comes to humanity, revealing Himself in wonderful and powerful ways and yet they continue to reject Him. Many today respond the same way the Gadarenes did. They will admit that Christ has done great things in their midst, but there are things in their lives that they value more than a relationship with Christ!
- Has the Lord revealed Himself to you? Has He come to you in your time of need, wanting to deliver you? How have you responded?

Luke doesn't record the account of our Lord coming to the land of Gennesaret, so let's turn to [Mark 6:53-56](#).

(Much has transpired in the time between these two visits.)

II. The Land of Gennesaret ([Mark 6:53-56](#)) – Gennesaret was much different from Gadara. It was located on the NW shore of the Sea of Galilee. This area was known for its abundant fertility in regard to agriculture. Gennesaret was largely settled by Jews. The Sea of Galilee is fairly small in regard to bodies of water. It is roughly 12 miles long and 7 miles wide. So, these lands were only miles apart by sea, but they were worlds apart in spirit. Now let's consider the day that Jesus came to Gennesaret.

A. The Messiah (54) – [And when they were come out of the ship, straightway they knew him.](#) Just as with the maniac at Gadara, when Jesus came out of the ship, they immediately knew Him. No doubt by this time His fame had reached every corner of the region around Galilee. Everywhere that Jesus went, people knew Him and desired to be near Him.

- It is good to hear of Jesus. It is good to know about Him. Surely each of us has heard of the miracles that Jesus performed. We all know those whose lives have been changed by an encounter with Him. But, simply hearing of Jesus and knowing those whom He has touched will do nothing for the condition of your soul. My question to you is, have you met Him in a personal way? Have you trusted Him as your personal Savior?

B. The Mercy (53) – [And when they had passed over, they came into the land of Gennesaret, and drew to the shore.](#) Clearly this was not a chance encounter. Jesus was not just wandering aimlessly through the regions of Galilee. He came to them because He knew there were needs to be met. He was there for a purpose.

- When I consider all that Jesus did in the short time between these two visits, I am amazed at His compassion for their needs. What was it that drew Jesus to this Gennesaret at this particular time? We really don't know, but I am certain that it was appointed of God. In His mercy, He came to the people of Gennesaret, just as He came to the demonic in Gadara.

- It is no chance encounter that Jesus has passed by our way today. We have met to worship Him and He is in the midst. I fear that we often take His presence and power lightly, but I am amazed that He would visit us.

- If you stand in need of salvation, Jesus has come to meet your need. If you need help or healing, He can provide. We just need to recognize Him and submit ourselves to His Lordship and power.

C. The Multitude (55-56a) – *And ran through that whole region round about, and began to carry about in beds those that were sick, where they heard he was. [56] And whithersoever he entered, into villages, or cities, or country, they laid the sick in the streets, and besought him that they might touch if it were but the border of his garment:* There is a vast difference in the reception in Gennesaret than the one Jesus received in Gadara. (*Illus. the people hearing that Jesus had come to shore, running throughout the city proclaiming His arrival, and coming to Him for healing.*)

- We have a choice to make today. Will we be as the multitude of Gadara and desire Jesus to depart or will we be as the multitude of Gennesaret and receive Him with gladness? It is no insignificant matter that Jesus has passed our way today. He has come to us for a purpose. He wants to touch and change our lives. He wants to be accepted and embraced by those whom He has visited.
- The choice is up to you. You can either embrace the Lord and receive His abundance or you can reject Him and He will depart from you. I want to welcome His presence and receive all that He has for us!

D. The Miracles (56b) – *and as many as touched him were made whole.* The multitude just desired to touch the hem of His garment, just like the woman with the issue of blood. The towns and villages had brought their sick unto the Lord and all that touched Him were made completely whole.

- Jesus is not in the business of half-way touching lives. He does not meet part of our needs and leave us with the rest. Jesus has the ability to completely heal and transform.
- There is not a need within the church today that He cannot meet. There is not a one here today that is beyond His ability to save. There are none that have gone so far that He can't claim them. Whatever the need is, Jesus is the answer. All who come to Him are made whole.
- He stands ready to provide the miracle that you need today, but you must come to Him in faith, believing. You must recognize who He is and put your faith and trust in Him. There is absolutely no reason for a one of us to leave this place today without being made whole in Christ, whatever that need is!

Conclusion

The Message – We have looked at the Tale of Two Cities. Each of these had a providential encounter with the Lord. He had come to each of them with a desire to meet their individual needs. Some received what they needed by faith and others rejected the Lord and missed the opportunity to receive the abundance that He gives.

The Lord has returned once again to Fellowship. He stands ready to meet your need, whatever that need may be. He stands waiting for you to come to Him and receive His blessing. However, He will never force you to make that move. He gave the people of these two cities a choice. One received Him and the other rejected Him. The choice is yours today. What will you choose?