

# Luke 8:34

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

When they that fed them saw what was done, they fled, and went and told it in the city and in the country.

## Analysis

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**When they that fed them saw what was done, they fled, and went and told it in the city and in the country.** The swineherds become unwitting evangelists. "When they that fed them saw what was done" (idontes de hoi boskontes to gegonosemeron, ιδόντες δὲ οἱ βόσκοντες τὸ γεγονός) emphasizes eyewitness testimony—they didn't hear rumors but personally observed the entire event: demon-possessed man's confrontation with Jesus, demons' plea, swine's possessed stampede, 2,000 animals drowning. The participle "saw" (ιδόντες) indicates careful observation, not casual glancing.

"They fled" (ephygon, ἔφυγον) reveals their terror. Whether fleeing physical danger (demonic power, Jesus' authority) or economic consequences (they just lost their employers' valuable herd), fear drove them away. "And went and told it in the city and in the country" (apēngeilan eis tēn polin kai eis tous agrous, ἀπήγγειλαν εἰς τὴν πόλιν καὶ εἰς τοὺς ἀγρούς) shows comprehensive proclamation—urban and rural areas both received the news. The verb "told" (ἀπήγγειλαν) means to report, announce, proclaim—they spread the news everywhere.

Their testimony serves God's purposes despite their fear and possibly hostile intent (reporting property destruction). Unwitting witnesses spread news of Christ's power throughout the Decapolis—Gentile territory previously unreached by His ministry. This pattern recurs in Scripture: God uses even hostile witnesses to advance His kingdom (Acts 5:33-42, Philippians 1:12-18). The swineherds' report

would bring crowds to investigate, setting stage for the healed demoniac's powerful testimony (v. 39).

## Historical Context

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The Decapolis consisted of ten Gentile cities (Damascus, Philadelphia, Raphana, Scythopolis, Gadara, Hippos, Dion, Pella, Gerasa, Canatha) established as Greek colonies after Alexander's conquests. These cities maintained Greek culture, language, and religion despite Roman rule. News traveling from rural areas to cities was common—swineherds would report to owners (likely wealthy urban dwellers who invested in commercial farming).

First-century communication relied on oral testimony. Eyewitnesses held special authority—their accounts carried weight in legal and religious contexts. That multiple swineherds witnessed the event strengthened credibility. Jewish law required two or three witnesses to establish facts (Deuteronomy 19:15)—here, numerous witnesses observed the entire sequence, preventing later denial or rationalization.

The swineherds' proclamation prepared the region for Jesus' return. Mark 5:20 records that the healed demoniac "began to publish in Decapolis how great things Jesus had done for him: and all men did marvel." When Jesus returned to Decapolis (Mark 7:31), crowds thronged Him—the groundwork laid by these unwitting witnesses and the transformed demoniac bore fruit. Early church missionary strategy often followed similar patterns: initial witness, local testimony, subsequent ministry building on established awareness.

## Related Passages

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**Revelation 20:12** — Judgment according to deeds

**Matthew 25:31** — Final judgment

## Study Questions

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1. How does God use even fearful, potentially hostile witnesses to spread news of His mighty works?
2. What does the swineherds' immediate, comprehensive proclamation teach about the impact of witnessing divine power?
3. How should Christians view 'negative publicity' or hostile reports that nonetheless spread knowledge of Christ's authority?

## Interlinear Text

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ιδόντες δὲ οἱ βόσκοντες τὸ γεγενημένον ἔφυγον καὶ  
them saw When G3588 they that fed G3588 what was done G1096 they fled G2532 and  
G1492 G1161 G1006 G4172 G5343 G2532

ἀπελθόντες ἀπήγγειλαν εἰς τὴν πόλιν καὶ εἰς τοὺς  
went and told in G3588 the city and in G3588  
G565 G518 G1519 G4172 G2532 G1519

ἀγρούς

the country  
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## Additional Cross-References

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**Mark 5:14** (Parallel theme): And they that fed the swine fled, and told it in the city, and in the country. And they went out to see what it was that was done.

**Matthew 28:11** (Parallel theme): Now when they were going, behold, some of the watch came into the city, and shewed unto the chief priests all the things that were done.

**Matthew 8:33** (Parallel theme): And they that kept them fled, and went their ways into the city, and told every thing, and what was befallen to the possessed of the devils.

