

Immanuel (Augsburg) Lutheran Church
Shobonier, Illinois
Pentecost 2C - Proper 7C
June 19, 2022
Luke 8:26-39

A Life Set Free

Then they sailed to the country of the Gerasenes, which is opposite Galilee. 27 When Jesus had stepped out on land, there met him a man from the city who had demons. For a long time he had worn no clothes, and he had not lived in a house but among the tombs. . . . (Luke 8:26-27 ESV)

In the name of Jesus, the only Savior of the world,

Today we hear a fantastical account of demon possession and a man being freed from it. It sounds like nothing we've ever encountered. But don't think for a moment that this event recorded by St. Luke isn't real or that it didn't really happen. Don't think for a moment that this event has nothing to do with us or has nothing to say to us. For the realm of the demonic is very real, even today. And so is the joy of being set free from bondage to demons.

Jesus has crossed over to Gentile territory. When He steps on land from the boat, He immediately encounters a demoniac. This man had many demons inside of him. For a long time he wore no clothes, and he had lived not in a house but in the tombs of the dead. This man was dead while he was still breathing. When the demoniac sees Jesus, he falls down on his knees and cries out, "What have you to do with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I beg you, do not torment me."

Indeed, what do Jesus and demons have to do with each other? Because of the demons which possessed this man, he was as far from Jesus as one could get. This man does not belong to Jesus and the demons will ensure that this so. Yet, they also give a hint of what they believe about Jesus, "I beg you, do not torment [torture] me."

Why would this man or the demons inside of him ever think that Jesus was the sort to torture? Is this not the same Jesus that says in John 3:17, "For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him."? And as far as the demons go, they and Satan caused their own fall. What end they have coming to them is their own doing. But Satan is the father of lies. Satan will do whatever he can do to paint a picture of Jesus that is simply not true.

The trouble with the demon-possessed man was that he was the very picture of unbelief. The philosophies of the world are empty, and we must remember that in the spiritual realm, biblically speaking, there is no such thing as being spiritually neutral. Either the person drinks from the wells of the world's teachings or the person drinks from the springs of God's Word.

What you spend your time doing will lead you either towards your life in Christ or you will be driven from the church and into the spiritual desert.

This is what happened to the demoniac. He was in the desert, alone. He had no name, except Legion, the name of the demons. This namelessness suggests that this man was forgotten. Being alone and without a name is a characteristic of damnation. Just the opposite is true of the baptized in Christ. Those who believe in Jesus Christ and are baptized are named, and they are yoked together with Jesus and all the saints in the body of Christ. What a blessed life!

For Christianity is the gathering of the saints. Christianity is being in oneness with Jesus. Luke's account of the demoniac highlights for the church a very important part of Christ's earthly sojourn. This account highlights for us the encounter between Jesus and the lost. This man was lost....lost to the world and lost to God. He had obviously drunk from the wrong water source and poisoned himself.

Jesus comes down to earth, steps on the earth and encounters the demon-possessed. Suddenly the lost is found. Jesus is this man's only hope. Men could not get near the demoniac, for even chains couldn't hold him. The man lived among the dead, but Jesus the author and perfecter of our faith enters this man's world and stops the demons in their tracks. As the account unfolds, we hear that Jesus cast the demons into a herd of pigs who rushed into the lake and died. This was their sentence of condemnation. The unclean demons cast into the unclean swine to their destruction. The man was then found by the people in the region as he was sitting at the feet of Jesus, clothed, and in a sound mind. He had been delivered and set free.

This is what happens to those who abide in Christ and become a part of Him. The man was put in order, so to speak. The man, in sitting at the feet of Jesus, shows that he has become a disciple of Jesus. He now drinks from the springs of life—the preaching of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

As I said before, demons are real. How they manifest themselves in human lives is not always clear. Oftentimes, it may appear as a mental illness of some kind. For some it may be addiction to alcohol or other drugs. I've heard reports about someone being high on something who had superhuman strength. Others may engage in ungodly, unhealthy living, even claiming that it is good and natural. Look around and you can see the demonic at work, even if we can't specifically identify it as such. Our prayer is that those so afflicted may be freed from such bondage.

Still, there is a tragedy to this whole account, and you must take heed to it. Jesus came to these people. He showed a miracle in healing the demoniac. Jesus demonstrated His power over the demons. So what is the tragedy? Luke records, "Then all the people of the surrounding country of the Gerasenes asked him to depart from them, for they were seized with great fear. So Jesus got into the boat and returned."

The Lord's hand in the life of one so forsaken showed the power of Jesus Christ. Jesus is God incarnate. But it was too much for people who liked the world. They didn't know what to make

of the demoniac, but they didn't want to deal with the spiritual realm on either side. The tragedy is that they saw a miracle, they saw the hand of God in their midst, and they wanted it gone. Jesus, God comes down to them in order to bring the light of life to them, and they ask Jesus to leave and He does. How horrible it is to ask Jesus to leave one's midst. For without Jesus they are as bad off as the demoniac had been, though they didn't realize it.

Now we must be careful for this is a warning to us all. For most people are like the people of that region. They like church to be a social club. They like the activities, they like the social aspect, but to delve into the depths of truth becomes uncomfortable for many. Good and evil, God and Satan....most people don't want to consider these things. But everything has results and consequences. The Gerasenes people, in turning Jesus away, invited more demons and Satan himself.

So, how do you look at the church? Is it the well-spring of life that conveys holy words and holy truth? Is the gospel Jesus' way of encountering us and changing our lives forever? Is the Lord's Supper Christ's very interaction in our lives, which imparts to us the forgiveness of our sins and strengthens us as we journey with Christ? Is it true that the preaching of the gospel and the eating and drinking of Christ's body and blood do for us what Jesus' command did for the demoniac?

Yes, dear Christian. Your sins are forgiven, Satan is cast away as you are brought closer to Jesus. You find yourself sitting at the feet of Jesus, as the gospel is proclaimed. You are put in order, gathered with God's people, and made holy. It is true that we all have consumed too much from the world's philosophies. In many cases we still fight this battle and temptation. But Jesus has placed on you a name. He knows you. He calls you by the name He's given you. You are clothed with not just any clothing, but with the white robe of righteousness that is Christ, and that was placed on you in baptism. Jesus protects you, clings to you, and leads you as you go forth in the goodness of His love.

Thanks be to God for the Lord's undying love for the demoniac, for you and me, and for all the world. His love comes to us and sets us free from the bondage of eternal death and gives us the gift of eternal salvation. We, like the demoniac, find ourselves seated at the feet of Jesus drinking from the spring of life. God grant that we too tell at home and throughout the whole city how much Jesus has done for us. Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

Rev. Timothy J. Landskroener