
JESUS DOES NOT LEAVE US ALONE
Sermon for the Second Sunday after Pentecost, 2022
Luke 8:26-39

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all. Amen.

The text for our sermon today is our Gospel from before, Luke 8:26-39: **They sailed to the region of the Gerasenes, which is opposite Galilee.** ²⁷ **When Jesus came out onto the shore, a certain man from the city, who was possessed by demons, met Him. He had not worn clothes for a long time and did not stay in a house but in the tombs.** ²⁸ **When he saw Jesus, he cried out, fell before Him and shouted, “What do we have in common, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I beg You, do not torment me!”**

²⁹ **For Jesus had commanded the unclean spirit to come out of the man. For it had been seizing him violently for a long time. He used to be bound with chains and shackles and used to be kept under guard but would tear the chains and be driven by the demon into lonely places.**

³⁰ **Jesus asked him, “What is your name?”**

He answered, “Legion,” because many demons had gone into him.

³¹ **They kept begging Him not to order them to go into the abyss.** ³² **There was a herd of many pigs there, feeding on the mountain. The demons begged Jesus to permit them to go into them, and He permitted them.** ³³ **The demons came out of the man and went into the pigs, and the herd rushed down the cliff into the lake and was drowned.** ³⁴ **However, when those who had been taking care of the pigs saw what had happened, they ran off and reported it in the city and in the country.** ³⁵ **People came out to see what had happened. When they came to Jesus they found the man from whom the demons had been cast out. He was sitting at Jesus’ feet, clothed and in his right mind, and the people were afraid.** ³⁶ **Those who had seen it told them how the man who had been demon-possessed had been made well.** ³⁷ **Then the whole crowd from the surrounding region of the Gerasenes asked Jesus to go away from them, because they were overcome by great fear. He got into a boat and went back.** ³⁸ **The man from whom the demons had gone out kept begging Jesus that he might be with Him. However, Jesus sent him away, saying,** ³⁹ **“Return home and tell what great things God has done for you!”**

The man left and preached throughout the whole city what great things Jesus had done for him.

Lord God, heavenly Father, sanctify us through Your truth, Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear friends in Christ,

What a sad existence the man we have in our text today must have had! To be possessed by a single demon would be terrible, but when Jesus asked this man his name, he answered, **“Legion,” because many demons had gone into him.** These demons **“had been seizing**

him violently for a long time. He used to be bound with chains and shackles and used to be kept under guard but would tear the chains and be driven by the demon into lonely places.” Not only this but **“He had not worn clothes for a long time and did not stay in a house but in the tombs.”** He was destined for a life of torment, madness, and loneliness.

This man is the personification of all who are doomed to death being caught in the futility of pagan worship, which really is the worship of demons. As Scripture says, there is *“salvation in no one else. For there is no other name under heaven that has been given among human beings by which we must be saved”* (Acts 4:12). Anyone who does not recognise Jesus as the Son of God who has come into our sinful world to save us is in the worship of demons.

Leading up to our text, Luke wrote of how Jesus and His disciples had hopped onto a boat and crossed the Sea of Galilee. While sailing across **“to the region of the Gerasenes,”** a *“windstorm came down on the lake, and they were being swamped and were in danger”* (Luke 8:23). The Greek words used here by Luke are very picturesque. Literally, they mean: *“an intensive sucking of wind.”* Perhaps we could think of a tornado. This description helps us appreciate the terror of the disciples as they see their boat being swamped. But Jesus was sleeping peacefully in the boat. When they finally woke Him up and begged Him for help, He commanded the storm, the wind, and the water to cease, which they did. Jesus asked the disciples, *“Where is your faith?”* They were afraid and amazed and asked one another, *“Who, then, is this, that He commands even the winds and the water, and they obey Him?”* (Luke 8:25). Jesus had left the disciples mystified at His power.

Now reaching the other side of the lake, **“When Jesus came out onto the shore, a certain man from the city, who was possessed by demons, met Him....”**²⁸ **When he saw Jesus, he cried out, fell before Him and shouted, “What do we have in common, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I beg You, do not torment me!”**

Did you hear what this demon-possessed man said about Jesus? What he confessed *should astonish Christians and shame unbelievers.* While the disciples are still wondering who Jesus is after calming the storm just a few hours ago, and even whole cities in Israel have trouble understanding Jesus, this demon knows exactly who Jesus is and why He has come into the world. We can see here that even Satan and the demons believe who Jesus is, and they shudder.¹ Because of their rebellion against God in heaven, they are beyond redemption. They are condemned to the eternal fires of hell, which God has prepared for the devil and his angels.² But notice how the demons don’t even want to go there.³¹ **They kept begging Him not to order them to go into the abyss.**³² **“There was a herd of many pigs there, feeding on the mountain. The demons begged Jesus to permit them to go into them, and He permitted them.”** What a thought! Not even the demons want to be in hell! But until the time when they will be cast into the abyss for eternity, they are on the prowl. Even today, due to their *utter hate for God*, their goal is to turn us away from faith in Christ, which would then

¹ James 2:9

² Matthew 25:41

condemn us to an eternity of suffering with them.

Back to the demon-possessed man's question, "**What do we have in common, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I beg You, do not torment me!**" perhaps we wonder, who is speaking this question? Is it the demons or the man?

If this question is voiced by the demons, they already know the answer. Jesus will not leave them alone. Jesus has come to conquer Satan and his grip on humanity by His death and resurrection. He has come to destroy evil in all its forms and drive it from the face of the earth. In our day and age, the need for this is becoming more and more evident as we see Satan's grip on humanity tearing man apart from God and one another. Acts of terrorism mean to cause fear, doubt, and paranoia; bloodshed and wars remind us of how fragile life is. Even the stress of day-to-day living tempts us to just give up. So the need for a Saviour is all the more pressing and obvious.

Now consider if this question is asked by the man. He has been possessed and harassed by evil. As he asks Jesus, "**What do we have in common, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I beg You, do not torment me!**" he hopes Jesus will not pass Him by. That is what he fears most - that Jesus would turn away from him and leave him to suffer as he deserves!

God has every right, in His justice, to leave him alone. Not only him but us as well. In the midst of bloodshed, of disease and death, of hatred shown toward one another, God could easily abandon us to the sin, pride, and arrogance of our society and of each one of us in our sin and guilt. *But in His mercy, Jesus does not leave us alone.* In fact, He can't. We are as helpless as that poor demon-possessed man. Sin and evil mean separation, and that's a result that Jesus cannot bear to let happen to us. Though we deserve it, Jesus cannot bear the thought of leaving us to our own demise, to forever live among the tombs in eternal death.

So He doesn't leave us alone to suffer what we deserve. He comes to His creation, a creation possessed by bloodthirsty and rebellious spirits, to save us from sin and Satan. Jesus comes from heaven into our world to be with us. He comes to right all wrongs, to cast out all sin, fear and evil, and to bid us follow and listen to Him. He does this in order to become one with us, to experience the evils we feel and know, and to bring us through them to be with Him in His holiness and purity forever. And all this He does by dealing with sin once and for all in His body on the cross.

As Jesus cast out demons, as He healed the sick and diseased all throughout His ministry, He was pointing all people to see His ultimate power over sin and death at His cross. After all, that is why He came into this world - to die for all who are possessed by sin, worried by evil sin, and pestered by demons. For all who feel isolated and alone, and are looking for comfort and peace.

Christ Jesus has shed His blood for our sin. He has suffered the just punishment, being forsaken even by His own Father in heaven. Jesus was left all alone, bearing the sin of the world, bearing your sin, bearing my sin. In His innocent suffering and death, Jesus has cancelled all our sins and taken away our guilt. By Jesus dying on the cross, Satan, with all

his power to accuse has been squashed under the feet of Jesus in utter defeat. All our sins are removed, and our lives are safe with Jesus. We know this to be true because God the Father accepted the payment of His only Son by raising Him from the dead. And to further assure us of Christ's work for our salvation, Luke writes, **“There was a herd of many pigs there, feeding on the mountain. The demons begged Jesus to permit them to go into them, and He permitted them.”**³³ **The demons came out of the man and went into the pigs, and the herd rushed down the cliff into the lake and was drowned.”**

How do these words of Luke assure us? This is a wonderful foreshadowing of what happens in Holy Baptism. Jesus, with a word, commands the demons to leave the man. This is a great picture of the forgiveness given to us in the waters of baptism. There, in those blessed waters, the demons which held us tight have been cast out. Martin Luther's 1526 baptismal rite actually begins very boldly with the words, *“Depart, O unclean spirit, and make room for the Holy Spirit.”* They were cast out. The sin which plagued us is washed away, drowned and dead with the old Adam. The devil is forever cast out. Now we, possessed by the Holy Spirit, are made alive to be with Jesus, fully clothed with His righteousness and purity forever. We, the people who have come out of the great tribulation, have washed our robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.³ Remember how the apostle Peter writes how baptism now saves *“not by washing dirt from the body but by guaranteeing a good conscience before God, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ”* (1 Peter 3:21). We are forgiven and holy because of Christ. That forgiveness is applied to us in baptism. Christ has earned the life we are given in baptism. He is our assurance – He is our comfort.

Going back to the demon-possessed man, Luke writes, **“When those who had been taking care of the pigs saw what had happened, they ran off and reported it in the city and in the country.”**³⁵ **People came out to see what had happened. When they came to Jesus they found the man from whom the demons had been cast out. He was sitting at Jesus' feet, clothed and in his right mind, and the people were afraid.**³⁶ **Those who had seen it told them how the man who had been demon-possessed had been made well.**³⁷ **Then the whole crowd from the surrounding region of the Gerasenes asked Jesus to go away from them, because they were overcome by great fear.”** How sad! Asking Jesus to go away was a rather surprising request to make of a Person who was obviously very powerful and who could potentially do much good for them. But **“the people were afraid.”** The Greek word used here means they were *“filled with awe.”* It's the same feeling that Peter had when he beheld the large catch of fish. Sinful man is filled with terror when confronted with the holy God. This is the fear that these Gentile people felt. The good that Christ had brought to the demon-possessed man is matched by the judgment that had come upon the demons. It is this judgment that the sinner fears. Only in the cross is this fear taken away, and that is why when they get to Jesus and the man, they see that no longer is he crazy and possessed and naked. Jesus is sitting with the man, peacefully, who is **“clothed and in his right mind.”** Jesus and

³ Revelation 7:14

the man are completely removed from the chaos, anxiety, and fear that surround them. While everyone else is in a panic and uproar, they are remarkably calm and peaceful.

Such is the power of Jesus for us, too, as He brings heavenly peace in His body for us. We see from this episode in Luke that, in His great mercy, *Jesus never leaves us alone*.

Having the desire for us to be with Him eternally, He will never leave us alone. He comes to us in His risen flesh in His Word and sacraments. There is our assurance. There is our comfort, for in these *we own Jesus*. Even in the midst of overwhelming and crushing forces that we cannot comprehend or battle, the power of Jesus for us is *undiminished*. Though Satan is like a roaring lion seeking someone to devour⁴, he is a defeated foe. He cannot harm us as Christ is with us, and we are with Christ. God “*has rescued us from the authority of darkness and has transferred us into the kingdom of the Son, whom He loves*” (Colossian 1:13).

Thanks be to God that there is nowhere we can go where we shall ever be away from Jesus. He does not leave us alone to eternally suffer but has come to save us by His almighty power over sin, death, and the devil. He has come to be with us, and in Him we shall always have hope, comfort, life, and eternal peace. Amen.

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

PRAYER FOR THE SECOND SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

Almighty God, our heavenly Father, our strength and our stay, we praise You for creating all things by Your power, and for sustaining the earth and all who live on it. Help us to hear the witness of Your creation and to see the wonder of Your glory.

Father, we praise You for revealing Yourself to us in Your Word, and for showing us Your holy will. We thank You for the inspired writers of Your wise and true Word, for through them You have shown us Your forgiving love and given us rich promises of hope. We praise You for Your grace in Christ Jesus, by which You have provided us our escape from Your judgment on all disobedience. Pour out Your Spirit on us so that we may grow in knowing You.

We praise You for leading us from death to life through the sufferings, death, and resurrection of Je-sus Your Son. We praise You for our freedom from the condemnation of Your Law, and for delivering us from the ceremonial shadows of the Old Testament Law. By Your love for us, move us to the love and mercy that is the concern of Your moral Law, so that we may not love in mere words but in deed and truth. Give us sympathetic hearts for those in need, that we may share with them the things You have given us. Grant that through our love they may learn to know Your love, and praise You.

⁴ 1 Peter 5:8

We thank You that You have prepared for all people the rest of eternal salvation, and that through the Gospel You invite all to it. Enable us faithfully to spread the good news of this great relief to all whom we meet in our lives, that they also may respond to Your mercy with happy and thankful hearts. Grant that the spiritually poor may taste and see that You are merciful and good.

Almighty Lord, rule over our nation, and guide all to whom You have given authority. Bless our society with pure motives, noble goals, and moral strength. Give all Australians the desire to live before You in loving trust and obedience.

Bless our homes, and make them places of true learning and love, that all who live in them may find peace and joy in harmony with You and with one another.

We pray for Your special protection and help for the sick, the sorrowful, the aged, and the lonely. Meet their needs with Your mercy, and show them the wonderful things You have prepared for all Your children. Father, hear our prayers, and if there is anything else we should have asked for, grant it for the sake of Jesus Christ who has saved us and pleads for us. Amen.

THE SECOND SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST (Proper 7)

Isaiah 65:1-9

¹ “I have let Myself be searched for by those who have not been asking for Me. I have let Myself be found by those who have not been looking for Me. I have been saying, ‘Here I am! Here I am!’ to a nation that has not been calling on My name. ² I have been stretching out My hands all day long to a stubborn people, who have been walking in a way that is not good and have been following their own plans. ³ This people has been constantly provoking Me to anger to My face, sacrificing in their gardens and burning incense on their bricks. ⁴ They sit in the tombs and spend their nights in secret places. They eat the meat of pigs, and broth made from unclean things is in their pots. ⁵ They say, ‘Keep to yourself! Do not come near me! For I am too holy for you.’ These people are smoke in My

nostrils, a fire that keeps smouldering all day long. ⁶ Look! It has been written in front of Me: ‘I shall not be silent but shall pay them back. I shall pay them back into their laps ⁷ for your wrongs and your fathers’ wrongs together,’” the LORD has said. “For they have been burning offerings on the mountains and have been insulting Me on the hills. I shall measure into their laps the retribution for their former deeds.”

⁸ This is what the LORD has said: “As juice is found in a cluster of grapes, and someone says, ‘Do not destroy it! For there is a blessing in it,’ this is what I shall do for the sake of My servants, that I may not destroy them all. ⁹ I shall bring a Descendant out of Jacob and One who will inherit My mountains out of Judah. My chosen people will inherit them, and My servants will live there.”

Galatians 3:23-4:7

²³ Before the faith came, we were being imprisoned by the Law, locked up until the faith came, which was about to be revealed. ²⁴ Therefore, the Law was our guardian until Christ came, that we might be justified by faith. ²⁵ However, now that faith has come, we are no longer under a guardian. ²⁶ For you are all the sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus, ²⁷ because all of you who were baptised into Christ put on Christ. ²⁸ There is neither Jew nor Greek. There is neither slave nor free. There is neither male nor female. For you are all one in Christ Jesus. ²⁹ Moreover, if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's descendants and heirs according to the promise.

^{4:1} What I am saying is that, while the heir is a child, he is no different from a slave, although he is the owner of everything. ² Rather, he is under guardians and managers until the time set by his father. ³ We also, when we were children, were enslaved under the elementary principles of the world. ⁴ However, when the time had fully come, God sent out His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law, ⁵ to redeem those who were under the Law, that we might receive adoption as His sons. ⁶ Moreover, because you are sons, God has sent out the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, the Spirit who cries, "Abba! Father!" ⁷ Therefore, you are no longer a slave but a son. Moreover, since you are a son, you are also an heir, through God. ⁸ However, when you formerly did not know God, you were the slaves to those who by nature are not gods. ⁹ Now that

you know God or rather, now that you are known by God, how is it that you are turning back again to those weak and beggarly elementary principles and that you wish to be slaves to them all over again? ¹⁰ You are observing days, months, seasons and years. ¹¹ I am afraid for you, that the hard work that I have been doing for you has somehow been wasted.

Luke 8:26-39

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the whole crowd from the surrounding region of the Gerasenes asked Jesus to go away from them, because they were overcome by great fear. He got into a boat and went back. ³⁸ The man from whom the demons had gone out kept begging Jesus that he might be with Him. However, Jesus sent him away, saying, ³⁹“Return home and tell what great things God has done for you!” The man left and preached throughout the whole city what great things Jesus had done for him.