

Pentecost 2 6/19/22  
Luke 8:26-39 7C

THEN ALL THE PEOPLE OF THE SURROUNDING COUNTRY OF THE GERASENES ASKED HIM TO DEPART FROM THEM, FOR THEY WERE SIEZED WITH FEAR.

What are you afraid of? Because of a little thing called the internet, I can tell you what the top 3 fears of your fellow Americans are. # 3: Bugs, snakes, and other animals. # 2: Heights. And the # 1 fear of Americans is ... public speaking. Are those fears your fears?

The people living in the country of the Gerasenes are a fear-filled people. And their fear was not bugs or snakes, or heights, or public speaking.

Nor, are they afraid of a man possessed by demons. When I say "demons," I mean demons, with an "s", as in lotza demons. So many in fact, his name is "Legion," meaning, many demons. And these many demons had made his life a living hell.

He's naked. And he literally walked among the dead because he made his home among the tombs. But, the people of the Gerasenes, they are not afraid of that.

Oh, and these demons gave him super-human strength, incredible Hulk-like strength. The people would try and bind him in chains, but he would just break the chains and be driven out into the desert by the demons. But, the people of the Gerasenes, they're not afraid of that.

But, when Jesus comes to town, it is this naked, super-Hulk-strength creature who breaks chains that serves as the Welcoming Committee. He falls down before Jesus and cried, "What have you to do with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I beg you, do not torment me" (v. 28). He said that because Jesus had commanded the unclean spirits to come out of the

man. Consider this for a moment: Here, you have a cosmic confrontation between good and evil going on, and yet the people of the Gerasenes, they seem indifferent; not particularly interested.

And the demons beg Jesus not to command them to depart into the abyss. So, Jesus gives them permission to enter a large herd of pigs feeding on the hillside. And the demons left the man and did what demons do – they kill and destroy. They entered into those pigs and rush into the lake, where they drowned.

But, but ... that is not what the people of the Gerasenes were afraid of. The herdsmen saw what happened and ran into the city to tell everybody what had happened and the Gerasenes were just not afraid.

Doesn't that seem a little odd? We just have to ask: What are the people of the Gerasenes afraid of? They have a naked, demon-possessed man, with Hulk-like strength so that he can even break chains, living among the tombs; and the people of the Gerasenes have no fear. You have a whole herd of pigs run headlong into a lake and are drowned and ... nobody is afraid. I think it's a fair question to ask: What are these people afraid of? Luke tell us it is this,

Then people went out to see what had happened, and they came to Jesus and found the man from whom the demons had gone, sitting at the feet of Jesus, clothed and in his right mind, and they were afraid. And those who had seen it told them how the demon-possessed man had been healed. Then all the people of the surrounding country of the Gerasenes asked him to depart from them, for they were seized with great fear (vv. 35-37).

Demon possessed. Living among the tombs. Incredible strength. Herd of pigs running headlong into a lake. They are not afraid of that. But what they are afraid of is ... Jesus. They are afraid because He comes into

town and upsets the status quo. And you, Dear Child of God, can understand that pretty well.

If you were one of those people living in the country of the Gerasenes you would understand that they have their own way of life. They have their own way of doing things. And part of their way of life is living in an easy, peaceful co-existence with the evil around them. They lived with a guy who was naked, demon-possessed with super-human strength, breaking chains, an entire herd of pigs – which are their livelihood, by the way – dying, and that doesn't bother the people the Gerasenes. What really bothers them is ... Jesus.

Does that make any sense? Yea, it makes a whole lot of sense. Think about your life. You know what God commands. Jesus Himself says, "Have you not read that He who created them from the beginning made them male and female" (Mt 19:4). Yet, when someone decides they can be any gender their little heart desires, you don't dare speak up to remind them that they are even in disagreement with Jesus. Rumor, gossip, are all from the devil, but it's all so exciting and fun to log on and read all about it. Jesus says "Love one another," and the Bible says, "Love bears all things," but anger, jealousy, that's just the way we are today. Yea, I know what God says; yea, I know what His commands are, but yet our leisure time comes calling and Sunday becomes our high holy day to worship self, so we take up our clubs, our fishing pole, sleep in, and no one says, "Remember the Sabbath Day by keeping it holy."

Do you see what's happening here? We have become just like the people of the Gerasenes. We have become incredibly comfortable with the evil around us. And nobody seems to say anything about it. No one is afraid of it. It's just our way of life.

Until Jesus shows up. We see all these things we are comfortable with -- the adultery, fornication, gossip, anger, jealousy, despising God's Word, and we are just plain ok with all of it. Then, Jesus shows up and casts all the evil out. Life's different now. It's all been changed. And we're like, "Hey, wait just a minute here. What are you doing? Now, what am I going to do? And, it's all your fault, Jesus! So, just get back in your boat and go back to where you came from because we like life just the way it is and we don't want you messing it all up." Our fear, our fear, is really Jesus and His Word and His way.

But, the Good News of the Gospel is that there is no need for such talk or thoughts, and there is no need for such fear. And if anybody could tell us that, it's the man sitting at Jesus' feet, who is clothed and in his right mind. Remember what He used to be. He was the same man who was begging Jesus not to torment him. Now, he begs Jesus to allow him go with Him, but Jesus sent him away, saying, "Return to your home, and declare how much God has done for you" (v. 39).

Remember this man and what he used to be. You think Jesus upset your status quo, your way of life. Look at his status quo. He was running around, possessed by legions of demons. He was naked; living among the tombs; no one could bind him, not even with chains; his life was a living hell. The evil never did leave him. Look at all the evil around you, Dear Child of God; in your life and in your heart. You've pretty much grown use to it. You're pretty comfortable with it. But, Jesus comes along and changes all of it.

He changes the status quo. And, Jesus does that by means of His Word and His cross. When Jesus went to the cross, he won the victory over all the demons, by crushing the head of the prince of demons. Upon

the cross extended, He died for you, in your place, as the wages of your sin, so that the prince of demons cannot bind you in chains of sin, death, despair, shame, anymore. Then, He descended into hell to proclaim His victory to the prince of demons, thus putting an end to the power of the demons over you. Three days later, He rose again to bring His victory over all those demons to you and to bring the power of the resurrection into your life.

That He did when you were baptized. There, by water and the Word, He joined you to Himself that His victory over the prince of demons and all the evil of sin, is your very victory. Yes, you could say, in the new birth of your baptism, Jesus changed the status quo. You went from being a child of darkness, dead in sin and trespasses, to being a child of light, one who shares in His victory, one of Jesus' own. So, Dear Child of God, there is nothing to be afraid of when it comes to Jesus.

In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.