

Pentecost 2 6/22/25
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.

The Incredible Hulk. You most likely know about the Incredible Hulk because of the movies that have been made; the tv series from a few years ago; maybe, some of you even remember the comic books that started it all. The Hulk is Dr. Robert Banner who is exposed to bad things when a bomb denotes and is transformed into this huge, green-skinned, hulking brute with unlimited physical strength, especially when he is angry.

Whenever I read the words of our Gospel for today, I am always drawn to thinking of the Hulk. Look at this guy. His name is Legion, because he is possessed by demons. I don't mean like one little, two little, three little demons; that would be bad enough. But he has demons, with an "s", as in lots and lots of demons. And these many demons had made his life a living hell.

A living hell like this: for one thing, he's naked, he doesn't wear any clothes and he had not worn any clothes for a long time. And he literally walked among the dead because he did not make his house in a home, but among the tombs.

If I encountered the Hulk, I would be a little concerned. But, you know, the people of the Gerasenes, they are not afraid of this man Legion who lived among the tombs. These demons gave him super-human strength, incredible Hulk-like on steroids 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.

And, there is even more to it than that.

Notice that when Jesus comes to town who is Welcoming Committee is. It is this naked, super-human Hulk-strength creature who breaks chains. 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. You have a cosmic confrontation between good and evil going on, and note the reaction of 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, “Please, Jesus, don’t do that.” 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 they destroy. They entered into those pigs and rush into the lake, where they drowned.

And the people of the Gerasenes were not afraid at all. The Evangelist Luke tells us the herdsmen saw what happened and ran into the city to tell everybody what had happened and the Gerasenes were just not afraid.

So, you look at these people and it seems kind of odd. They have a naked, demon-possessed man living among the tombs, with Hulk-like strength that he can break chains; and the people of the Gerasenes have no fear. He confronts Jesus face-to-face and they have no fear. You have a whole herd of pigs run headlong into a lake and are drowned and nobody is afraid. We have to ask the question: What are these people afraid of? What troubles them? What strikes fear and terror into their hearts? 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 can easily and readily understand that, Dear Child of God.

The people living in the country of the Gerasenes have their own way of life. They have their own way of doing things. And part of their way of life is living in 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.

And you can understand that. And you can relate to that. Think about how your life is. You know what God commands. You know what He expects of us and yet when two men decide it's time to get married, no one dares to even speak up to say, "You shall not commit adultery." Rumor, gossip, innuendo are all from the devil, but it's all so exciting and fun to log on and read all about it. Yea, I know 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 having 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. Jesus shows up and casts evil out. And we're like, "Oh, wait just a minute here. Who do you think you are, Jesus"? Our status quo has been changed. We see all these things we are comfortable with -- the adultery, fornication, gossip, anger, jealousy, despising God's Word, and we get very excited and very uncomfortable because we don't know what to do. Life's different now. It's all been changed. And, it's all because Jesus showed up.

The truth of the matter is there is no need for us to be afraid. 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 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. But, Jesus comes and changes all of it.

Jesus comes along and changes the status quo. 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 to you 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, because in Him, you have forgiveness, life, and salvation.

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