

Sermon: 5th Sunday after Pentecost

Text: Luke 8:26-38 (v.28)

Theme: The Power of Jesus, the Son of the Most High God.

Goal: To assure that the power of Jesus is bigger than any other power – even the power of demons and death.

Dear Friends,

Introduction: Jesus and the disciples were confronted by a very unusual situation: a man that couldn't live in the society any more, due of the power of demon that had possessed him, came and met Jesus as He stepped out of the boat on the other side of the lake.

Unexpected situations happen in our life several times. Not everything happens as we had planned and we become confused, sometimes shocked, frustrated, angry, hopeless... Who do we blame? What is our reaction?

I – The reaction of the demon

The demon had total control over that poor man. Several attempts were made by local people to control the situation, but nothing proved helpful. They had even chained his hands and feet and kept him under guard; but he broke the chains and had been driven by the demon into solitary places. The demon was sovereign in that area... until Jesus appeared!

When Jesus appeared, the demon immediately acknowledged that someone stronger than him had come into his territory. “When he saw Jesus, he cried out and fell at his feet, shouting at the top of his voice, “What do you want with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I beg you, don’t torture me!” The demon was scared and afraid about his future.

It's amazing to note how Jesus was greeted and recognized by the demon: "Jesus, Son of the Most High God!" Very seldom that someone called Jesus in that way. – James ^(2:19) wrote: "You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that—and shudder." – This means that the true faith is not just to recognize Jesus as the Son of God as the demon did, but to trust in Him over all things.

Jesus showed His power and healed the demon possessed man. It is interesting that Jesus accepted the request of the demons and allowed them to enter the herd of pigs. What matters here is the welfare of the man, and not the pigs. Jesus' concern is always about the people in their needs: physical needs and spiritual needs.

II – The reaction of the people

Local people came running from the town after the report of those tending the pigs. Something very unusual happened that day! What was their reaction? They became afraid. They didn't recognize who Jesus was, as the demon had recognized it. They didn't like what Jesus had done. Their pigs were more important than the now healed man. And they had lost all their pigs – about two thousand in number ^(Mark 5:13). The people didn't want to know more about that strange and powerful man and asked Jesus to leave them. They did not recognize the time of God's coming to them ^(Luke 19:44).

Those people were not Jews, probably, because they had pigs; and the Jews don't eat pork. They were Gentiles. The time to evangelize the Gentiles had not come yet. Only after His resurrection Jesus gave the order to go to all nations. But this could be an exception in Jesus' ministry. They rejected Him. But Jesus didn't give up. He left a missionary among them. How many believed on the testimony of the healed man? The story doesn't tell us.

III – The reaction of the healed man

The healed man had a totally different reaction from his own people. After the demons were driven out of him, “he was sitting at Jesus’ feet, dressed and in his right mind”. What Jesus was telling him is not registered in the Bible. But Jesus used to talk about the Kingdom of God to all His listeners, warning against sin and temptations, and strengthening the faith in God’s promises. The man was a new creature, free from the power of the demons and trusting in Jesus as his Saviour. The Apostle John wrote: “Dear children, do not let anyone lead you astray. He who does what is right is righteous, just as He is righteous. He who does what is sinful is of the devil, because the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil’s work” (1 John 3:7-8).

The healed man was willing to follow Jesus, his Saviour. But Jesus had other plans for him.

IV – The reaction of Jesus

Jesus was at the command of this entire episode. As the Son of the Most High God, powerful, He showed patience even with the demons when He dialogued with them. He agreed when they begged to enter the pigs. He healed the demon possessed man. He accepted the request to leave that region. But He left a representative there. When the healed man wanted to go with Jesus, Jesus said to him: “Return home and tell how much God has done for you.” The seed was sown. “So the man went away and told all over town how much Jesus had done for him.” A missionary was left in that area. It was given a special chance and time for those people who rejected Jesus that day to think about what had happened and, maybe, to repent and to believe in Jesus through the living testimony of the healed man.

V – Our reaction

The demon is real and is still active. Maybe he doesn't possess someone anymore in such a strong way as he had possessed the man of our story. He comes in subtle ways. He tempts us. He takes our goods (as he took the pigs of those people). He tries to lead us to desperation, away from our friends, maybe out of our home, as it happened with the man, who was living in the tombs and totally alienated from the society...

James warns us: “When tempted, no one should say, “God is tempting me.” For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone; but each person is tempted when they are dragged away by their own evil desire and enticed. Don't be deceived, my dear brothers” (James 1:13-16). Peter is more emphatic: “Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. Resist him, standing firm in the faith” (1 Peter 5:8-9).

We need to be aware of this. But not with a scared heart, but with confidence that Jesus comes to meet us and to help us. We believe and trust that He is the Son of the Most High God, who has destroyed the power of the demon and even the power of death by His resurrection from death. We believe in the living Christ!

Conclusion: This story is the background for our watchword for the last year: “Go home to your family and tell them how much the Lord has done for you and how He has had mercy on you” (Mark 5:19). This task didn't finish at the end of last year; it never finishes! We were freed from the power of the devil and were forgiven by the grace of God in Jesus Christ, receiving a new life. We have to witness this blessing whenever we have opportunity! Amen.

