

Sermon Luke 8 26 39 5th S af Pent S C

Sermon: 5th Sunday after Pentecost

Text: Luke 8:26-39 (v.28)

Theme: Does the demon fear Jesus?

Goal: Jesus is powerful and gracious. He conquered the devil on the cross and by His resurrection. We can trust in Him when we are assaulted by the devil.

Dear Friends,

Introduction: Do you believe that demons exist? Or maybe people with a strange behavior are just considered mentally disturbed? - There is a Spanish proverb that says: *I don't believe in demons; but I'm sure they exist...*

We have to acknowledge that sometimes it is really difficult to distinguish if a person is mentally disturbed, or if he/she is demon possessed. In our Western culture demons do not play an important role anymore, and usually we are not scared of them, as it used to be in the Middle Age, and how the reality in Mozambique still is. The demon lives around the corner and people are scared of the spirits of their ancestors. - Even so, there are lots of satanic cults and Satan worshipers nowadays in the Western culture.

The famous Christian writer *C. S. Lewis insisted in "The Screwtape Letters" and elsewhere that the apparent disappearance of the Demons was simply a tactic on Satan's part. Lewis thought that Satan found it easier to lull the modernist into believing that the demons were not there at all, and that made them much easier to deceive.* (Phil Brandt p. 26). Is this our case?

Luke, the writer of this Gospel, was a medical doctor. He didn't raise any questions if the man of this story was demon possessed or mentally disturbed. He strongly believed that demons were very

active during Jesus' ministry, trying to disturb and to divert Jesus from his main goal: To save humankind from the power of the devil, of sin and of death. And we are the beneficiaries of Jesus' battle and victory over the devil!

I – Jesus entered the demon's territory

Our text says that Jesus left Galilee, where He had many followers, and decided to cross the lake to the other side, to the region of the Gerasenes. It was a pagan territory. Gentiles, that is non-Jews were the inhabitants of that region. This is confirmed by the fact that there was a huge herd of pigs; and Jews would never eat pork. This means, Jesus was entering the territory of the enemy, Satan himself.

And a demon possessed man confronted Jesus, “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!’” – What always amazes me when I read this and other stories of demons possessed people in the Gospels is that the demons recognize the Man of Nazareth as the Son of God, while even the disciples had sometimes doubts about the true nature of Jesus.

Jesus was not afraid of that man, although it was not just one demon, but a Legion! A Legion of the Roman's army had 6,000 soldiers, and the Roman Legions were famous that no one could surpass them. They were always strong and the victor. But in this case, the demon legion was aware that someone stronger than them had entered their territory and could expel them from there.

Jesus is not scared to enter devil's territory. This is the reason why He came from heaven to earth, and made Himself a human being like us, but without sin. The Apostle John wrote in his first letter (3:7,8): “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."

Jesus was not even scared to enter the main territory of the devil: Hell itself. We confess in the Apostles' Creed: (Jesus)...*was crucified, died and was buried. He descended into hell. The third day He rose again from the death.* He went there to show Himself as the Victor over the devil, sin and death to those who in the past didn't believe in God's promise (1 Peter 3:18-22), and to bound the devil with a great chain, putting limits to his power (Revelation 20:1-3).

II – Jesus is confronted by the devil but He is the Almighty

It seems that Satan doesn't learn the lesson. Of course, he sometimes was and is successful in his attempts. He deceived Adam and Eve. He deceived the people of Israel in the Old Testament period several times. He sometimes is successful deceiving us as well and leading us to the wrong way. But the final battle is already won by Jesus' resurrection. As Jesus resisted the temptations in the wilderness, using God's Word as His only weapon; He also healed this demon possessed guy. - Every time a child or an adult is baptized, the devil is expelled from the life of that person and Jesus enters, being the new Lord of our lives. A commentary wrote: *In casting out the Demons from the Gerasene man, the Gospel establishes Jesus as the one who is the solver of our deepest and most profound problems. Not merely as a doctor might treat the symptoms of our distress, but going to the very root of the problem, to the serpent who first tempted our forebears and under whose domination the world has groaned since that day.*

That is the story which the Christian has to tell. Jesus is much more than a friend or a wise man doling out advice. While some of what He does is therapeutic, to think that He is simply offering therapy for our condition is to miss the point. He is Life, the defeater of Satan, the resurrection of the dead, the forgiveness of sins. There is no problem which is larger than His love or His power. (Phil Brandt pp. 1 ,2)

The local people of Gerasa didn't understand the power and the grace of Jesus healing that man. For them, their pigs were more important than that man, now healed; but the pigs were gone. They asked Jesus to leave them. – “What good is it for a man to gain the whole world, yet forfeit his soul? Or what can a man give in exchange for his souls?” (Mark 8:36,37) asked Jesus in another occasion. What are your priorities?

But Jesus was gracious with those people and left the healed man there to witness to all what Jesus had done to him and who Jesus was. He was left as a missionary among his own people. And his mission was fruitful. Archeologists digging *in the ancient city near the Gerasenes report that this was a very Christian place; eight churches in a rather small place in the centuries which followed the exorcism of these many demons. Apparently through the willing witness of this man, God continued to exorcise a few demons and it became a very Christian place.* (Phil Brandt p. 46).

Conclusion: Don't be naïve. “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...And the God of all grace, who called you to his eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered a little while, will himself restore you and make you strong, firm and steadfast. To him be the power for ever and ever. Amen.” (1 Peter 5:8-11).

Pastor Carlos Walter Winterle, Cape Town, 19 June 2016