

June 19, 2022

St. Luke 8:26-39:

## **“The Two Sides of Eternity”**

- I. The Reality.
- II. The Dark Side of Fallen Man.
- III. The Light.

Pilgrim Lutheran Church  
2155 N. Oakland Avenue  
Decatur Illinois 62526

St. Luke 8:26-39

Dear Friends in Christ,

It's chilling to consider that, at the beginning, Satan and the fallen angels were perfect and perfectly blessed with the love and presence of God. It's chilling to consider that they rejected God's love, were cast from His presence, would never be forgiven, and would never have a way back. God's love and joy would never be again. It's chilling to consider that they threw away their position as God's holy angels only to become known as *the demons of hell; devils!*

For those who reject Jesus and prefer to focus on this world, in their commentary the Albrechts write: "Satan and his evil angels will not have another chance to return to the kingdom of heaven, from which they have been cast out, but sinful people in this world have that opportunity until their dying day (unless God has already ended their time of grace and made repentance impossible for them because of their stubborn and persistent despising of his grace)."

We're looking at...

## THE TWO SIDES OF ETERNITY

### I. The Reality.

When Jesus had stepped out on land, there met him a man from the city who had demons. For a long time he had worn no clothes, and he had not lived in a house but among the tombs. When he saw Jesus, he cried out and fell down before him and said with a loud voice, "What have you to do with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I beg you, do not torment me." For he had commanded the unclean spirit to come out of the man...Jesus then asked him, "What is your name?" And he said, "Legion," for many demons had entered him. And they begged him not to command them to depart into the abyss (27-31).

It's a penetrating look at the dark side of eternity. The demon addresses Jesus as the "Son of the Most High God." He does not question who He is. Hell knows and acknowledges Jesus. Satan and those who joined with him knew Jesus from the very beginning; knew but openly rejected Him. Francis Pieper wrote, "The evil angels who by their defection from God became evil and can never more become good." Again, there is no way out. There is no forgiveness.

And look at this: "What do you have to do with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I beg you not to torment me." Every hell locked demon knows that the worst is yet to come. And then we quickly learn that there is more than one demon. His name is "Legion". I understand that a Roman Legion consisted of 4,000 to 6,000 men. The basic unit, a cohort, consisted of approximately 480 men. Think of it: a legion in one man! The one speaks for the many. P.E. Kretzmann wrote:

Their home was in limestone caves...which were used for tombs...The naked, filthy, raving maniacs terrorizing the neighborhood, too strong to be bound with ropes or chains, associated with darkness and death, with grave and destruction, a fitting setting for the devil's powers, under God's permission. (P.E. Kretzmann, Popular Commentary of the Bible, New Testament, Vol. I. P. 46.)

And so, Jesus responds to the request not to be sent to the abyss:

"Now a large herd of pigs was feeding there on the hillside, and they begged him to let them enter these. So he gave them permission. Then the demons entered the pigs, and the herd rushed down the steep bank into the lake and drowned.

These monsters of eternal darkness see existing in pigs as preferable to the final judgment. And they should. John reports the final judgment of the fallen angels and all who reject God's love in Christ in these words: "Then Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire." (Rev. 20:14,15). Connect to that these terms the Scriptures use for eternal hell: "outer darkness...eternal fire...eternal punishment...weeping and gnashing of teeth." But look at what happens next...

### II. The Dark Side of Fallen Man.

“When the herdsmen saw what had happened, they fled and told it in the city and in the country. Then the 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 in his right mind, and they were afraid. And those who had seen it told 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. So he got into the boat and returned (34-37).”

I'm sure we understand it, the dark side of fallen man. “They saw what had happened.” They witnessed the whole incident. They “told it in the city and in the country.” They went everywhere and witnessed to what had happened. We're told, “they were afraid” when they saw the man healed. Afraid? Of what? Of Jesus! They asked Jesus to depart from them!

There's something else Kretzmann wrote that should make every one of us examine our walk with the Lord:

The loss of swine was to them a calamity. And they felt uncomfortable in the presence of the Holy One of God. They much preferred their swine and their sinful life to His pure presence. They repudiated the opportunity for grace (Kretzman, p. 47).

Do we ever feel that way: “uncomfortable in the presence of the Holy One of God?” Does that touch us living in a world that wants everyone on the same page in their thinking and speaking and doing; a world where countries pass laws forbidding Christians to discuss and teach the Word; a world that demands that God conforms to its twisted thinking and ways? Do we truly take seriously the words God gave to John:

Do not love the world or the things in the world (do not sacrifice our walk with the Lord for anything or anyone that would cause us to walk away). If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For the desires of the world—the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride of life (it's ways, its wants, its obsession with so much)—are not from the Father but from the world (I Jn. 15:15,16).

And hear this again: “...all the people of the surrounding country of the Gerasenes asked him to depart from them...”. I was thinking back to several months ago when we heard the Pharisees say to Jesus, “Get away from here.” And many of them had eye-witnessed Jesus' miracles. They loved the world far above the love of God for them. But look at what happened to the man possessed by “Legion”:

### III. The Light.

The man from whom the demons had gone begged that he might be with him (Jesus), but Jesus sent him away, saying, “Return to your home, and declare how much God has done for you.” And he went away, proclaiming throughout the whole city how much Jesus had done for him (38,39).

So the man's new life was not about getting in touch with the world. It was not about making up for lost time. It was about Jesus. *Begged that he might be with him*. He moved from eternal darkness into the light of eternal life, the light that impresses upon us that our rotten, fowl sins are forgiven; that through Jesus and Jesus alone we have God's pardon, love and peace. Forever.

And this one who had been long tormented by the darkness of hell ran with the Light. He “proclaimed throughout the whole city now much Jesus had done for him.” This world - what he had missed, what his flesh might have desired - this world was not the issue of life. I cannot think of any better explanation of what awaits in eternal life than these words given to John:

And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more (it will never again be anticipated or known), neither shall there be mourning (grieving over the

dying and death of someone), nor crying (over hurt or loss)nor pain anymore (never, ever again), for the former things have passed away (Rev. 21:3,4).

This morning we have glimpsed the two sides of eternity. And the best part of this? God has already moved us from darkness to the promise of Everlasting Light. As Jesus said... "Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me... I will come again and take you to myself, that where I am you may be also (Jn. 14:1,3)." And where is He? In everlasting light and love. He is everlasting Light and Love. We're running with the Light to the Light of eternal life.

Amen.

Pastor Bill Abbott