

*June 19, 2016*

*Luke 8:26-39: **“Deliver Us From Evil”***

*Pilgrim Lutheran Church  
2155 North Oakland Avenue  
Decatur, Illinois 62526*

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

In these last days, following the advent, death, and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ancient serpent, who is called the devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world has been thrown down to the earth, and his angels/messengers/demons have been thrown down with him. It says in Revelation:

“Now the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of his Christ have come, for the accuser of our brothers has been thrown down, who accuses them day and night before our God. And they have conquered him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, for they loved not their lives even unto death. Therefore, rejoice, O heavens and you who dwell in them! But woe to you, O earth and sea, for the devil has come down to you in great wrath, because he knows that his time is short (Revelation 12:10-12)!”

The devil stirs up the earth and the sea in great wrath [he stirs up the sinful nations and false religions], and in doing so, he relentlessly pursues “those who keep the commandments of God and hold to the testimony of Jesus Christ (Revelation 12:17).”

It is no wonder then that our Savior taught us to pray, “Deliver us from evil.” As Luther says in the *Large Catechism*, “if God did not support us, we would not be safe from him for a single hour.” And in the context of the whole of the Lord’s Prayer, we are to be mindful of the fact that this petition is last, as Luther remarks, “for if we are to be protected and delivered from all evil, God’s name must first be hallowed in us, his kingdom come among us, and his will be done. Then he will preserve us from sin and shame and from everything else that harms or injures us.”

The works of the devil and his demons are manifold. He is a deceiver and murderer of souls. Through every misfortune, he would convince us that God is our enemy. He uses all misfortune to drive us to an evil and cheerless conscience. He entices people into a false sense of knowledge and power by the Satanic arts. It says in Deuteronomy 18:10-12, “There shall not be found among you anyone who burns his son or his daughter as an offering, anyone who practices divination or tells fortunes or interprets omens, or a sorcerer or a charmer or a medium or a necromancer or one who inquires of the dead, for whoever does these things is an abomination to the LORD.”

All those shows about ghosts and UFOs, everything that generates an extra-Biblical source to tell the future, all that magnifies paranormal experiences and powers beyond human ability and God’s hand, the use of hallucinogenic drugs to escape or open up people to an alternate reality, inviting spirits to dwell within your body for increased knowledge and power, using the occult to discover hidden treasure or resources, is from the devil and is designed by him to appeal to your sinful flesh and lead you down a path of eternal destruction. Indeed! Whatever might hamper us so that God’s name is not kept holy among us, whatever pulls us away from His kingdom and its coming, whenever good does not happen in life, and in those moments when we are not able to eat our daily bread in peace and with good conscience, these are the crushing attacks of the devil and his demons. From all this we pray to be delivered. Paul was not

exaggerating when he wrote : “For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places (Ephesians 6:12).”

If it were not for Jesus Christ, who is our armor from God, all would be lost. His truth, righteousness, and readiness from the gospel of peace, his victory over the flaming darts of the evil one, his salvation earned for us through the cross and empty tomb, the words of his mouth, and his invitation for us to pray and his promise to hear, are our guarantee of victory. All is the strength of his might. We see the strength of his might in our Gospel lesson for this morning, that we may not be overcome with despair.

The devil and his demons would drive us to the same place as the man in the country of the Gerasenes, which is opposite of Galilee. We are told that Jesus had sailed there by boat, and we read that when he “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 (Luke 8:26-27).” It is in this text that we see the objective of evil. The forces of evil would take away everything good and drive us to death. But, there is more. Jesus then asked him, “What is your name?” And he said, “Legion,” for many demons had entered him.

It is significant that the name “Legion” is used. We are not given an exact number in our lesson, but, as I mentioned, we are told that “many demons had entered him.” Still, the word “legion” magnifies the “many.” It wasn’t a handful of demons. In Roman understanding, a full strength legion was officially made up of 6,000 men, but typically all legions were organized at under strength and generally consisted of approximately 5,300 fighting men including officers. The point is that this man was full of powerful demons, and here they are in a stand-off with Jesus of Nazareth. It would appear that Jesus is completely outnumbered. Yet, we read, “And they begged him not to command them to depart into the abyss (Luke 8:31).”

Before Jesus Christ, “Legion” is reduced to begging. With Jesus as our Savior, we should never overestimate or be afraid of the power of the devil and his many demons. At the same time, with our sinful flesh, we should never underestimate and disregard their cunning. The bottom line, is that while they want us to be dazzled and afraid of their power, they are pathetic before our Savior Jesus Christ. Even though they do all they can to crush us, our Lord saves us and turns their crushing attacks for our good, even as he himself rose from the dead!

The end of the devil and his demons is to depart into the abyss, and every unclean pig should rush down the steep bank and be drowned as well. We should join all unclean pigs if it were not for the sufferings and death of Jesus. What else is there but give thanks and praise that our Lord was crucified and suffered the pangs of the abyss so that we might be forgiven and have eternal life?! What a glorious thing it is to behold the man who was possessed by “Legion” sitting at the Lord’s feet, fully clothed, and in his right mind! The forces of evil have no power over Jesus or over those he saves! He is able to make clean that which is unclean!

Our Gospel lesson tells us that the pig herdsman went to the city and in the country and told people what had happened. People went out and saw with their own eyes. And we are told that “the people of the surrounding country of the Gerasenes asked him [Jesus] to depart from them, for they were seized with great fear.” No longer were the people seeing the horrible condition of the demon possessed man. Now they were seeing their own horrible condition. It is sad that they loved their pigs so much that they wanted Jesus to leave, but that is always the danger. The danger is that we love our sin so much that we are like pigs who after having been washed return to the mud. This is quite a contrast with the man who had been released from the demons. He does not want to go back to the “mud” - he does not long for the tombs.

Jesus got into the boat and returned. And Luke writes: “The man from whom the demons had gone begged that he might be with him, 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 (Luke 8:38-39).” In love, Jesus came. He came not just for a man possessed, but in love for all who are enslaved to sin that we might be free - free from sin, death, and the devil. He delivers us from evil! And what will we do with that? Will we return to pig farming, jump in the “mud,” long for the tombs, or will we go and proclaim what Jesus has done for us? In the words of our **Collect of the Day**:

O God, you have prepared for those who love You such good things that surpass our understanding. Cast out all sins and evil desires from us, and pour into our hearts Your Holy Spirit to guide us into all blessedness; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Amen.

Pastor Brock Abbott