

Written Copy For: Satan vs. Jesus-Luke 8:26-39
Proper 7-2nd Sunday @ Pentecost
Sunday June 22nd, 2019

Text: Luke 8:35-39

³⁵ 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. ³⁶ And those who had seen it told them how the demon-possessed man had been healed. ³⁷ 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. ³⁸ The man from whom the demons had gone begged that he might be with him, but Jesus sent him away, saying, ³⁹ "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.

Exegetical Statement

Following Jesus' demonstration of power and authority over nature by calming the storm out of the Sea of Galilee they arrive on the opposite shore in the area of the Decapolis in the region of the Gerasene's. As soon as Jesus disembarks, He meets a man who is possessed by thousands of demons. The man has fits where he is uncontrollable, strong enough to break the bonds put around him. He runs off into the wilderness and sleeps in the tombs. The demons recognize Jesus as the "Son of the Most High God" and fall at His feet, not in worship but in subjugation. Although they outnumber Him Jesus is clearly in command and authority. They beg Him not to be sent into the Abyss: the place where evil spirits are constrained until judgment day, but instead plead to be allowed to go into a herd of pigs. Jesus allows them, but when they so enter the pigs run down the embankment and drown in the lake, into the abyss of the water. This sends the herdsmen running back into town and telling all on the way what has happened. People from the town and surrounding countryside arrive and find this once uncontrollable man in control of himself-in his right mind, clothed and sitting at the feet of Jesus. Eyewitnesses tell them how this all happened. But rather than extol this great work or worship Jesus for this miracle that only God could do they react in fear over all that has happened to their pigs and the man and ask Jesus to leave them. As He prepares to go the formerly possessed man asks to go with Him. Instead Jesus sends him back to his home and with the command to tell everyone about how great a thing God has done for him. He returns and proclaims the great works of Jesus to the whole town.

Focus Statement:

Jesus is more than a match for thousands of demons who, at His appearance instead of fighting back bow in subjugation and beg for mercy. But Jesus mercy is for us who, while not demon possessed were born into the devil's kingdom. With the same show of power that forced the demons out of the man in our Baptism He ended the devil's control over us and implants His Spirit who is stronger than any number of demons and protects us by faith. With the same ordering of all things according to His will whereby the demons actually chose their own demise He used the devil's most evil plan of making Him suffer and die to save all mankind from the devil's grasp. The devil and his demons cannot overcome Him or thwart His will but always serve to fulfill it against their will

Function Statement:

Why it's important to know:

Because evil still exists in the world we can view Jesus as unable to contain or completely control it. While He may be able to protect us He must do so from a reactionary position instead of a proactive position. We wonder perhaps at times if He is outnumbered

What the hearer should do as a result:

As we do as Jesus commanded the demonic and proclaim the victory He has worked in our hearts and lives go forward unafraid of any evil forces that might assail us. They are not strong enough to defeat our Savior or foil His directives to share the Gospel

Subject Sentence: Jesus beats Satan every time

As many of you know I am a Rod Sterling fan. I love to watch the Twilight Zone and Night Gallery. I've always had an affinity for supernatural tales. And I know I'm not the only one. I've come across a number of people who like me have been waiting for the next series of episodes of Netflix's "Stranger Things" to come out in July. I've also watched a TV series called "Supernatural" which is about two brothers who battle against demons and monsters and even Lucifer himself, with the help of an angel, and occasional divine help from God. I know that there is a TV Series entitled Lucifer that was airing on the Fox Network where Lucifer leaves hell and begins to run a nightclub in Los Angeles. One could argue I suppose that's not that far from the truth.

But, listen to me: I am not suggesting you watch any of those shows, especially Supernatural, Lucifer, Angels and Demons, or anything like them. They are creations of Hollywood not based on fact. And what they portray is not anything remotely Scriptural. But here is the thing about TV; we know it's made up and not true, but it can still make a lasting impression upon our minds. It can color our thoughts to the point that we regard the devil and his demons as being stronger and more in control than they really are. Those shows can impress upon us that the evil in this world is something God barley can contain, that it's a constant battle of which Satan and his demons sometimes win temporary victories. It leaves some of us thinking that it's best not even to talk about or study such things, such as our upcoming Bible Study "Faith on the Edge" because those things are better left alone.

But its that very reason that its important for us to look at topics like Miraculous Events, Near Death Experiences, Ghostly Apparitions, and even Angels and Demons. We need to look at them from the truth found in Scripture instead of leaving them in the hands of Hollywood and the Reality TV shows like those Ghost Hunters. And in our Gospel Lesson today we have the words of hope and comfort that Jesus offers to us even though our world is at times is filled with evil.

That being said, our Gospel Lesson today is a tale that even those two brothers on Supernatural would be proud to be a part of. Jesus vs. Evil. Jesus vs. not one demon as he

had done earlier in Luke's Gospel but Jesus vs. Thousands of demons. Jesus vs. Satan. But I'll give you the spoiler alert for this tale: in the end Jesus wins, big time.

Our Gospel Lesson begins directly following another supernatural occurrence that happened to Jesus and the disciples. They were crossing over the Sea of Galilee when a fierce storm came up and threatened to flood and capsize their boat. In terror they wake up Jesus who, with a word, calms the storm. He then turns to His disciples and says: **"Where is your faith?"** A question He asks you and I at times when we fail to see Him as the Omnipotent God that He is.

When they reach land, they find themselves on the other side of the sea from the area of Galilee where Jesus has been doing most of His ministry. Luke calls it the region of the Gerasene's. The other Gospel writers call it by different names but is the same difference as someone saying Lamb of God is located in Flint, and another saying we are located in Genesee county. It's in the Gentile territory that is part of the Decapolis, which means the 10 Cities. These were 10 independent city states bound together by the common Greek Culture and were by and large populated by Gentiles.

As soon as Jesus steps out of the boat He comes face to face with a demon possessed man. A man whose description is scary enough to warrant being the villain on any of those TV shows. He is unkempt, half naked, and very strong. At times he is able to be bound, but when the demons take hold of him no rope or chains can hold him. He shreds his binds like they were paper. He yells and runs off into the wilderness. He sleeps in tombs among the dead. Now if this was an episode of Supernatural this demon possessed man would probably run at Jesus and attack Him, pick him up, and throw Him back in the boat. Then an epic fight would ensue, one that would make Christian Bale as Batman or Tom Cruise as Jack Reacher envious. But in the end Jesus would win out; but just barely. That's the kind of spin these shows put on Good vs. Evil.

But that's not the truth that we have here. When this man who is possessed by thousands of demons comes face to face with Jesus, they fall prostrate before Him in total subjugation, and these thousands of demons beg for mercy. Now note that when they see Jesus they do

not even try to run off and hide. They can't, because Jesus is in complete control. They MUST direct the man to come down to the boat and meet Jesus face to face. They MUST appear before Him, not to do battle, but to receive the punishment Jesus has come to give. They MUST, because Jesus is in complete control.

The demons beg Jesus not to torture them. Now some see this as the demons trying to get a slanderous swipe against Jesus as if to say to anyone within earshot: "He's not the upstanding healer and lover of men that you think He is. He tortures His enemies." But note that Jesus does not tell these demons to be quiet. They have a good reason to be afraid of Jesus. And they have a good reason to fear a day of torture. While love and mercy abound in Christ for even the most evil of men, no mercy exists for the angels who fell away with Satan. There is no future salvation for them. They are condemned to spend their eternity suffering in the place Jesus calls the Eternal Lake of Fire. They know this is their future punishment, and they are afraid that Jesus has come to send them there. On the Last Day when Jesus comes in judgment they will go there, all of them, even Satan himself, and they have no way to stop it from happening. But that day is not yet.

Jesus has not come in judgment. Jesus has come in mercy and love. But not for demons; in mercy and love for mankind, for His fallen creation. He has come to this very shore to save this man from the awful physical, emotional, and spiritual agony that is demon possession. He has come to call this man out of the grasp of Satan and place him firmly and lovingly into His own kingdom.

The demons know this, and they are terrified. They beg and plead not to be sent into the Abyss. The Abyss was seen by people of that time as being deep within the earth or in the depths of the sea. It was the place where evil people went to await judgment. It is described in Revelation symbolically not as a place but as a spiritual state of confinement and torture for the devil and his demons whereby their actions are restricted until the final days before Jesus returns. The demons beg and plead that Jesus would allow them to enter the pigs instead of being sent into the Abyss. They cannot choose to go. Jesus allows them to go. And so they go into the pigs, thinking that they have managed to avoid the worst of it for

another day. But then, once they enter, the pigs run headlong down the slope and into the depths of the Sea of Galilee; into the Abyss.

What we see here is that it doesn't matter how many demons oppose Jesus. It doesn't matter how cleverly they scheme and try to evade His grasp. They can even choose what happens to them and still they will go where Jesus in His reign and rule says they must. As for Son of God who rules over all things, this was the case then, and it's the case now. When Jesus faces off against evil it really is no battle at all. He comes and He wins. As Luther wrote in the great Reformation Hymn "A Mighty Fortress is Our God" when it comes to Jesus squaring off against Satan "One little word can fell him" Whenever Jesus comes to oppose Satan and his demons Jesus always wins hands down.

Jesus came to earth for the same reason that He came to that area of the Gerasene's. He came to save mankind out of the grasp of the devil. He came to save you and to save me. He had to come because while most of us have not been possessed per se, we were born into the kingdom of the devil. Because of the sinful hearts we have from birth and the sinful disobedient actions we committed ever since we were born, we have been under the devil's control and headed to the same eternal hell that he and his demons are headed. But Jesus could not bear for that to be our fate. He came to earth to become one of us, so that in human form He could take on the devil and do what we could never do; win! He came to win us out of the devil's kingdom and make us good enough to be deposited in His Father's Kingdom, His Father's family.

Throughout His ministry on earth He took on Satan: during His 40 days in the desert, through all the demons He cast out, and through His message that has the power to save. But the place where He won the most decisive victory was the place where the devil probably thought he had won. When through his manipulation and lies the devil encouraged men to torture Jesus and put Him on the cross. The devil probably thought that with Jesus gone His small group of followers wouldn't be around much longer. But he was wrong. And even if the devil had some inkling that Jesus suffering and death was the Father's will he could not stop it from happening. It was the Father's will. And that death, which looked so much like defeat, was the Glorious Victory that Christ won for you and for

me. All those things that made us deserve to live out our life in the devil's kingdom and then suffering eternally with him; all of those sins have been cancelled! They have been forever removed from your record. And Jesus has given to you and to me what He earned with His life of obedience: right standing with God the Father. Because of what Jesus has done for you and for me on the cross Paul's words are the truth in your life and mine: **Galatians 4:7 So you are no longer a slave (to sin and to the devil), but a son, and if a son, then an heir through God.**" You and I are made heirs of the gift of eternal life that Jesus earned for us. And there wasn't a single thing the devil could do to stop it.

Jesus deposited you into His kingdom through your Baptism. He sent the Holy Spirit into your heart to work the miracle of faith; a miracle just as glorious as Jesus' casting out thousands of demons. As Paul said in our Epistle Lesson: **(Galatians 4:6b) God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, "Abba! Father!"** And the Father uses the Spirit to protect us just as any loving father would. And The Holy Spirit remains with you throughout the rest of your life. He is far stronger than any number of demons or the devil himself. He protects you wherever you go. With the Holy Spirit working and keeping faith alive in your heart you are protected from ever being demon possessed. You are protected from even the worst schemes of the devil. Just as Jesus was in complete control as He faced those thousands of demons, He is in complete control of your spiritual care through His indwelling Spirit.

There will certainly come a day when Christ returns and banishes the devil and all his demons to the Eternal Lake of Fire. And like it or not they WILL go. But that day has not come yet. Evil is still present in the world. It surrounds us here even at Lamb of God. All you have to do is look downtown around the areas where Franklin Mission is to see how busy the forces of evil have been here in Flint. But know this truth: the same control Jesus had over the Legion of demons in our Gospel Lesson He has now, even here in Flint. Just as God used the worst Satan could do against Jesus to fulfill His will and plan for our salvation, He is using Satan as an unwilling tool to fulfill His will here in Flint. Even in your life and mine. That man who was possessed by all those demons became a strong witness to the power of Jesus saving work. In the same way the work Jesus has been doing through Franklin

Mission Franklin has provided an opportunity for the Church to reach out with the love of Christ and the Gospel Message. No matter how things look Jesus is still in control, and the devil and his demons are defeated creatures whose end is eternal damnation.

I realize that for many of you going to work down at Franklin Mission can be an imposing and scary thing. But in that place, when we serve, the Church is there in force. And Jesus is there in force with all His power and might. Through Baptism His Spirit who lives within you is there in force and always at work to protect you. The worst the devil can do to any of us is kill us. But that can only happen when the LORD allows it. And if it does our daily battle against our own sinful heart and the devil is over. We have won through faith in Christ Jesus.

When Jesus saved the demon possessed man, the man begged to go back with Jesus. But Jesus had a different plan for him. **(Luke 8:32) "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.**" He told others how Jesus had come and saved him. Jesus has come and saved you. Jesus sends you out through your vocation, to those places you go every week with the same story of salvation. He sends His Church down to Franklin Mission because that is where He is at work to provide the same salvation He has given to you and to me. I know it may seem daunting and scary. But don't listen to the lies the devil speaks through those Hollywood Movies and those TV Shows. You and I know the truth concerning power of Christ over evil. We have it right before us in our text today. We have His message of forgiveness of sins, salvation from the devil, and eternal life in the Gospel message. And we have His Spirit who works in us a miracle just as great as the one Jesus did. And when we fail to obey His call, out of fear, or out of selfish refusal to give as we should of our time, our talents, and our treasures; that very message of forgiveness most especially applies to you and to me. You and I stand forgiven. And the power of that forgiveness and the power of the Holy Spirit who confirms that forgiveness in our hearts by faith; that is the power we need to go out and be the Church. May the Victory Christ has won for you and given you through faith by His Spirit forever guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.