

## Written Copy: Luke 8:35-39 “Your Chains Are Gone”

2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday @ Pentecost: Proper 7

Sunday, June 19th, 2022

### Text: Luke 8:25-39

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

### The text's intent

To demonstrate Jesus' power over all demonic forces, even when it appears He is outnumbered. Show forth His love for all those chained into the devil's kingdom and his desire and power to save even those who appear beyond saving. He breaks the chains that bind them to the devil's kingdom now and the eternal damnation to come, and brings them by His mighty power into His own reign and rule by granting him faith to believe in Him as his Savior and Lord. Jesus has the power to change him body and soul. And He does this not just to give him a new eternal home, but so that he becomes a disciple, a Gospel witness to those around him who can see most clearly the change faith in Christ has brought.

### Focus Statement:

Jesus came to break the chains of demon possession that bound the man. He came to break the chains of guilt over our sins that we struggle with daily. Faith in Him connects us with His gift of redemption that He earned through His life, death, and resurrection. He still comes as He did for this man, bringing His kingdom forcibly where the devil is ruling to save us from the kingdom of eternal destruction and place us firmly in His kingdom of salvation and forgiveness now, and eternal life to come. His Spirit given in baptism comes to us each personally and throws the devil out and plants Himself in our hearts and minds to continue the work of discipleship and witness as His Church

### Function Statement:

#### Why it's important to know:

We may not be in the chains of demonic possession, but we each have sins and character flaws that we struggle with but seemingly can't overcome. The devil wants us to see these as chains that bind us forever to eternal punishment.

#### What the hearer should do as a result:

Continue to struggle with our sins in repentant faith. But as we do, instead of letting the devil keep us in the bondage of guilt and shame, live in Jesus' continued forgiveness pronounced in the Absolution. Struggle with sin, don't give up, fight, but seek His grace when we do slip. Keep the mindset of I don't want to sin today.

### Subject Sentence: Only Jesus can break our bondage to guilt and shame

## **Introduction: No Perfect Fathers**

Once upon a time there lived a perfect father. He was always there for his kids. He was there for all their sporting events, all their dance recitals, all their afterschool activities. And not only that but he always managed to take them on the perfect summer vacation, year after year, each one bigger and better than the last. He could do this because he worked long and hard to support them, yet he was always able to be home on time for dinner and take time off when needed. He was always happy, patient, and kind, even after a long hard day at work. He was the perfect father that we men all aim to be. But then he turned off his Facebook profile and became one of us again.

Father's Day is to recognize and celebrate the ideal we all aim to emulate. Perhaps some of us do better than others. We would all like to be the Ward Cleaver of fatherhood. But if we are honest with ourselves, we must admit we fall short of that standard in one way or another. And after all Ward Cleaver is a made-up TV character, not a real-life example. So perhaps it's not Ward Cleaver that you set the bar by. Maybe it's a real-life father you know, maybe yours, or maybe a friend or member of the congregation. There was someone from my home congregation that, when my kids were young, and I looked up to as being the perfect Christian father. I wanted to be like him. His kids all did well in school, never seemed to get in trouble, always well behaved at Church. He went to and even sometimes coached their little league and soccer teams, something my work hours didn't allow for. He did nightly devotions with them, and weekly Bible Study at home. I would make an attempt to start that, but then something would come up, and before you know it we were out of the habit before it ever really started.

Because I always seem to fail to live up to this ideal, Father's Day wasn't always the joyous holiday for me, especially when it came to the sermon on Father's Day. I remember one particular sermon where my Pastor was citing the ways modern day Christian men fail at their God-given job of being the head of the household and setting a godly example for their children. Except it seemed to me he was citing all the ways I failed to be the good Christian father. While I'm sure he preached the Gospel, I walked out not feeling forgiven, but feeling low and broken. Sometime later I got up the courage to talk with him about it. He seemed shocked that I felt his message was so pointed so directly at me. He assured me he didn't have me in mind in particular when he wrote it. He confessed that there was a lot of him in that law message too.

That is how the law works. It convicts. But the Gospel is meant to heal. Sometimes in my life, perhaps in your life too, the guilt that I hold on to works to block the relief the Gospel is meant to give. Guilt acts like a chain that prevents me from letting go of my sin. It keeps pointing out to me those failures from my past and present. It would say, "Yeah, you're forgiven (maybe), but the damage is already done. Compare yourself to what God calls you to be; see how far short you fall? Your kids deserved better. You should've given them better. If this has ever been your situation as a father, or a mother, or as a grandparent,

please know God's Word this day has a wonderful message for you and for me. Jesus has come to break the chains of guilt that bind us to our sin, and hold back the joy of the forgiveness God has for you.

## **Jesus Comes to Break the Demonic Chains**

The first thing you should know is the extent that Jesus will go to break the chains that the devil wraps around us through our guilt. Take for example the length Jesus went to in order to break the chains of demonic possession that held the man in our Gospel Lesson. Jesus' ministry had been happening primarily along the western shore of the Sea of Galilee. But as our Gospel Lesson begins, we see Jesus making the disciples cross over to the eastern shore, and into Gentile territory. But He never makes it very far inland before he is met by a man who is being possessed by a "legion" of demons. The term legion was used to describe a large unit of Roman soldiers numbering from 4,000-6,000 men. Unlike previous accounts of Jesus exorcising demons where he faces just one, here He seems to face what appears to be an overwhelming number. And the imagery associate with the term "Legion" would've brought to mind to the people at that time the Roman occupation, and the cruelty with which soldiers would sometimes treat those they ruled over. This fit very well with how these demons treated this man: driving him away from civilization, demeaning him through unkempt and underdressed appearance. They made him behave in such a manner that he would have to be physically chained at times. And the extraordinary strength the demons could muster in him caused him to be able to break any bonds they tried to hold him in. While he could break those chains, the spiritual bondage he was in was something he had no power to break free of.

But Jesus could and did have the power. Those demons should've caused the man to run the other way when Jesus disembarked from the boat. Unlike the people who would be witnesses to these exorcism, the demons knew who Jesus was, and correctly call Him the Son of the Most High God. They may have outnumbered Him, but they stood no chance against Him. They knew He had the power and authority to send them away to eternal torment forever. They feared Him greatly, yet they had to appear before Him and fall down before Him; not in worship but in total subservience to the God who created them and would one day send them to eternal destruction. They beg and plead with Him not to send them away into the abyss, but instead into the herd of pigs. Jesus allows it, and the pigs run headlong into the abyss that was the deep waters of the Sea of Galilee, and the demons host animals all drowned.

And what of the man who had been possessed for so long? He was miraculously, and completely changed head to toe, body and soul. By the time the witnesses to the exorcism and the pig drowning return from the town with curious onlookers, this man who used to be foaming at the mouth stark raving mad was now in complete control and in his own right mind. He is clothed and sitting at the feet of Jesus, the place of a dedicated disciple who loves listening to and being in the presence of His Master. The change that has come over this man is astounding. It is something that should've moved the townsfolk to wonder and celebration. Yet their reaction is quite the opposite. **Luke 8:35 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.** Instead of joy they react in fear over what they can't understand, over what seems impossible, yet there it is before their eyes.

And what exactly had happened to change his life forever? Jesus had happened. Jesus had come and kicked out the demons that were ruling in his life, and replaced them with Himself. Jesus brought His reign and rule to bear on this man's heart and life through the gift of faith. Faith opened the man's eyes to who Jesus really is, His Savior and His Lord, the God who comes to save. That man now knows Jesus as the God who came to pay the ransom price that saved him out of the devil's kingdom and made him good enough to have a permanent home in Jesus' eternal kingdom from that day forward. Faith made him a new man, inside and out.

## **Jesus Comes To Break Your Chains Too**

Jesus loved this man so much He made a special trip across the Sea of Galilee just to deliver him from the domain of darkness into His kingdom of marvelous light. And He loves you and me with that same kind of love.

**Galatians 4:3-5** <sup>3</sup> **In the same way we also, when we were children, were enslaved to the elementary principles of the world.** <sup>4</sup> **But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law,** <sup>5</sup> **to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons.**

As Paul wrote to the Galatians, and by the Spirit's leading wrote to us as well, the law judges us as fathers, mothers, and grandparents to be guilty of not living up to the standard set by Scripture. And we are also judged by the standards of our current society that we fail to live up to. And the guilt we have over these failures are chains that hold just as tightly and seek to condemn us with the same power that bound this demon possessed man. We all have sins that we struggle with and will continue to struggle with throughout our time on this earth. But we needn't let guilt push us back into the chains of slavery.

Jesus came into your life and mine in our baptism. The Holy Spirit brought all that Jesus earned on the cross to remove all the sin from your life: all your parenting mistakes as well as anything else you may feel guilt over. All of them are washed to the cross where they die with Jesus forever. Jesus paid the redemption price to save you out of the devil's kingdom that you were born into. And just as with the man formerly possessed, you and I were raised to a new life, with a new heart, and a new purpose that comes from His gift of faith: the purpose of serving Jesus as His disciple and holding fast to Him as our Lord and Savior. The Father sees us as that new man sitting at Jesus feet right now, clothed with the perfection and righteousness that we receive from Him. By the faith delivered in your baptism, you have been permanently adopted into the Father's family. You are His precious children.

But what about those things we keep failing at? What about those parenting failures that come back to haunt us? They too have been forgiven. All has been forgiven through faith in Christ. Whatever guilt the law brings upon you, look to the cross and the empty tomb as the answer. Let Jesus' blood wash it all away. Your chains have been broken, all of them. Jesus is stronger than them, stronger than your sinful heart, stronger than even the devil and his demons as they try to oppose you. What does He want you and I to do? Keep struggling with these sinful thoughts, words, actions, personality flaws, and parenting flaws. Keep recognizing them for what they are, confess them for what they are, hold fast to the words of the Absolution which have Jesus' power to continue the change He began in you at baptism. He promises to continue to work in you through the faith He keeps alive in your heart. By that faith He will continue to forgive you until the day He calls you home.

### **Breaking the Chains of Fear with the Gospel Witness**

**Luke 8:36-37 <sup>36</sup> And those who had seen it told them how the demon-possessed man had been healed. <sup>37</sup> 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.**

The people saw the change in this man but refused to recognize it as the miracle it really is. They refused to rejoice and be glad for the salvation that had come to him because they couldn't accept it, wouldn't believe it, and were scared by what they didn't understand. Jesus has worked and is working an amazing change in you. And with such a powerful change can come fear, disbelief, and misunderstanding on the part of those around you, your children, even within yourself as you continue the struggle to live the new life Jesus has for you. We want the change right now. We want the complete and perfect change right now. But that will happen according to the Father's timetable, which is what the Spirit works by. Keep struggling and it will happen. The Spirit will bring it to completion on the Last Day

**Luke 8:38-39** <sup>38</sup> **The man from whom the demons had gone begged that he might be with him, but Jesus sent him away, saying,** <sup>39</sup> **"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.**

The formerly demon possessed man wanted to leave with Jesus, wanted to stay in His physical presence. Sometimes in my struggles, when guilt is eating away at me, I wonder why Jesus has left me here to flounder, to exhibit the shortcomings I have both as a grandfather and as a follower of Him. But Jesus says to me and to you the same thing He said to that man: **"Return to your home, and declare how much God has done for you."** Return to your daily occupation and life. Show how much God has done for you by struggling with those sinful things, by asking forgiveness from God and one another for them, and then confessing and praising how great is the salvation you have in faith toward Jesus Christ.

## **Conclusion**

As you celebrate Father's Day today remember that none of us are the perfect parent, grandparent or even the perfect children. That Christian father I once idolized, I saw him one time after Church sitting and waiting rather impatiently in the car, instead of coming in and helping the rest of his family clean up after Fellowship hour. Remember: none of us is perfect. But remember also that each one of you has been perfectly forgiven. Allow the Gospel of Jesus Christ to break the bondage that guilt tries to bind you with. And as you declare through word and action how much Jesus has done for you, know that the Spirit is at work in the lives of your children, and those around you. He has Jesus' power to change them, the way He has changed you. And He will continue to work at it until the day He returns or calls them home. Amen.