

"Your Enemy Is Legion; Your Ally Is One"

Text: Luke 8:26-39

May God the Holy Spirit fill you with the sort of confidence and faith that never knows a moment of doubt that Jesus Christ is your Lord and Savior – and that you have and need no other. Amen.

Fellow Servants of the Triune God:

I would imagine that you have all had real life or movie "moments" where you heard something that truly shocked you; something that just made your jaw drop or sent a sort of a shiver up your spine. The babysitter who gets the crank calls where a man repeatedly asks, "Have you checked the children?" She finally takes the calls seriously and calls the police – who then trace the calls and find that they are being made from an extension in the house where she was babysitting. That sort of thing.

This morning's text ought to do that same sort of thing to us. We tend to fool ourselves that the spiritual enemies we face are manageable and therefore rather non-threatening – until we listen in on Jesus' conversation with a demon. That disturbing conversation is part of our text for this morning, found in the Gospel of Luke, the 8th Chapter:

NKJ **Luke 8:26-39** *Then they sailed to the country of the Gadarenes, which is opposite Galilee. ²⁷ And when He stepped out on the land, there met Him a certain man from the city who had demons for a long time. And he wore no clothes, nor did he live in a house but in the tombs. ²⁸ When he saw Jesus, he cried out, fell down before Him, and with a loud voice said, "What have I to do with You, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I beg You, do not torment me!" ²⁹ For He had commanded the unclean spirit to come out of the man. For it had often seized him, and he was kept under guard, bound with chains and shackles; and he broke the bonds and was driven by the demon into the wilderness. ³⁰ Jesus asked him, saying, "What is your name?" And he said, "Legion," because many demons had entered him. ³¹ And they begged Him that He would not command them to go out into the abyss. ³² Now a herd of many swine was feeding there on the mountain. So they begged Him that He would permit them to enter them. And He permitted them. ³³ Then the demons went out of the man and entered the swine, and the herd ran violently down the steep place into the lake*

and drowned. ³⁴ ¶ When those who fed them saw what had happened, they fled and told it in the city and in the country. ³⁵ Then they went out to see what had happened, and came to Jesus, and found the man from whom the demons had departed, sitting at the feet of Jesus, clothed and in his right mind. And they were afraid. ³⁶ They also who had seen it told them by what means he who had been demon-possessed was healed. ³⁷ Then the whole multitude of the surrounding region of the Gadarenes asked Him to depart from them, for they were seized with great fear. And He got into the boat and returned. ³⁸ Now the man from whom the demons had departed begged Him that he might be with Him. But Jesus sent him away, saying, ³⁹ "Return to your own house, and tell what great things God has done for you." And he went his way and proclaimed throughout the whole city what great things Jesus had done for him.

These are God's Words, perfect in every way. May God the Holy Spirit grant you the grace to trust that these are God's Words and to hear and learn from them accordingly. To this end we pray, "**Sanctify us through the Truth, O Lord. Your Word is truth.**" Amen.

Sermon themes can sometimes be more difficult than the sermon itself. The Word of God is always new and fresh, which means themes and sermons should always be new and fresh. Sometimes it takes effort to resist the "cute" and to go with that which actually builds up and teaches. So also I once read a theme for our text this morning: "The Nude, Rude, Crude, Lewd Dude with a 'Tude." Clever, maybe, but clever isn't much help when the devil comes calling. In such cases "clever" usually turns and runs.

Pretty safe to say that everyone here has heard his or her fair share of cute or clever sayings over the years – clichés that deal, more or less, with our general topic this morning. How about these: "When the going gets tough..." You can finish on your own, can't you? "...the tough get going." "It's not the size of the dog in the fight; it's the size of the fight in the dog." "Live to fight another day." "If we don't hang together, we will all hang separately." The list is long, to put it mildly.

The problem, again, is that "cute" and "clever" tend to minimize the actual threat. Dump a little raw fear onto cute and it melts like cotton candy in the rain. Given what we know about our spiritual enemies, cute just won't do it.

What will? When we are talking about Satan and his minions, only sober truth will do. So it is that you don't hear Peter making cute when he talks about the devil. He says things like: **"Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour."** Not cute at all, but very sobering; and the result is very effective.

The line in our text that ought to both chill and sober us is the demon's response when Jesus asks its name: **"And he answered, saying, 'My name is Legion; for we are many.'"** (Mark 5:9) Add to that the fact that these demons had entered or "possessed" this man and that by their power he was given super-human strength and an animal ferocity, and we quickly see there is nothing cute about this situation. Nothing at all.

That's the first message of our text – a frank and candid look at just what Christians (now as then) are up against.

When I visited a death row inmate in the maximum security prison in Starke, Florida I saw firsthand what no Hollywood actor could ever accurately portray: convicted, hard-core criminals who had no pity, no remorse, no compassion, and – worst of all – nothing to lose. As I've mentioned to some of you before, it's in the eyes. You can't fake that; you can't "act" that. The man I visited was next door to Ted Bundy. I stopped visiting the man when he got violent during one of our meetings. He was there because he had robbed, assaulted, and then stabbed a woman between 14 and 20 times. Just before his execution in 1990 he said in a letter to the State that his only regret was that the woman's husband hadn't also been home at the time so that he could have killed him as well.

The point is that there are absolutely, thoroughly bad people in the world. And yet as bad as human beings can get, they are as nothing compared to Satan and his evil angels. As evil, brutal, and remorseless as human beings can be, the spiritual forces that oppose us are infinitely worse. They truly have nothing whatsoever to lose. For living human beings, there is always a chance – which is why I went to visit this man in prison. The malefactor crucified next to Jesus was saved at the 11th hour. No hope remains for the fallen angels. Theirs is a wickedness beyond our comprehension; an evil that cannot be measured in human terms. They have no hope, only hatred. The Bible tells us that they are reserved only for the fires of hell.

You can hear that in the demon's response to Jesus, can't you? Listen again to their answer, recorded in a parallel account in Matthew 8: **"What have we to do with You, Jesus, You Son of God? Have You come**

here to torment us before the time?" That's the point, isn't it? The demons have nothing to lose because they know with a dreadful certainty that nothing and no one can ever help them, ever rescue them. They know only helplessness, bitterness, and hatred for God and everything he loves. More than just "death row," they sit on "eternity row" – awaiting only the fires of hell for all eternity.

In our text we see a dramatic contrast, for just as the possessed human being was powerless against the demons, so also we learn how powerless the demons were against Jesus. Not that that stops their hatred or brutality. They just look for a new target, a new victim or victims – which means you and me. They are already judged and condemned, so they seek only to destroy the living. Knowing that Jesus would never allow them to enter other human being, they beg permission to enter a herd of pigs. Other than the fact that the raising and eating of pigs was forbidden to Jews at that time, we have little understanding of such things. Did the pigs essentially commit suicide when they felt the presence of the demons? More likely is the idea that the demons simply sought to kill, to destroy whatever they touched. Jesus allowed the unclean to enter the unclean, but only the swine perished. The demons remain.

Dark and rather frightening scene, isn't it? That, however, is the reality of the world in which we live. Our enemies, though unseen, are every bit as real as the seat in which you are sitting, and their unrelenting intentions are more evil than anything we can fully imagine.

That's the bad news. The good news is that that is exactly why Jesus came to earth. We don't have to defeat such incredibly powerful and evil forces because Jesus did it for us – in our place and as our Substitute, our Champion. He understood both the depth of the evil and the purveyors or authors of that evil. He also knew that you and I were simply incapable of ever succeeding against such things. Luther captured the truth in his famous hymn, A Mighty Fortress: *"With might of ours could naught be done, soon were our loss effected. But for us fights the Valiant One – Whom God himself elected. Ask ye, 'Who is this?' Jesus Christ it is, of Sabaoth Lord and there's none other God; He holds the field forever."* Nor was Luther ignorant of just what we were up against. From the third verse of that same hymn: *"Tho' devils all the world should fill, all eager to devour us, we tremble not, we fear no ill, they shall not overpower us. This world's prince may still scowl fierce as he will, he can harm us none, he's judged; the deed is done; one little word can fell him."* That "word," of course, is Jesus.

If you are anything like me you will admit – as I do – that you tend to lose sight of the true nature of the struggle that we are in and the danger that we face. And if that is true, then it is also true that you and I also therefore lose sight of just how desperately we need our Savior and just how indispensable and magnificent a champion he really is. The man in our text was helpless in the face of such power, such evil. He had no ability, no inner strength to rid himself of the demons that possessed him.

It's the same way with sin. You and I had (and have) no power to rid ourselves of sin, and it was our sin that had separated us from God and excluded us from God's heaven. Our sins had made us the playthings of the demons. As the demons held the man of the Gadarenes in their grip, so our sins held us in an iron grip from which we could never hope to break free.

But that is exactly what Jesus came to do for us – it is exactly what he *did* do for us on Calvary's cross. He met evil head-on, and prevailed. He did so by consistently resisting all demonic temptation - keeping God's holy law perfectly – and then paid our sin debt for us by offering his perfect life as a blood sacrifice on the cross. In so doing, the power of the demons was broken, shattered, destroyed. The evil against which we were powerless was crushed, broken. The penalty for our sins has been paid in full.

The war has been won, but don't miss the ending in our text. There are still many who refuse Jesus' victory. The people of the Gadarenes, for example, promptly drove Jesus from their region. They essentially traded him – together with eternal life – for pigs. My guess is it doesn't look much different today when human beings discard Jesus and Christianity for something like money, pleasure, or earthly fame and power.

Yet not all rejected, did they. Here, as elsewhere, there always seemed to be a remnant that was saved. So we hear that the man from whom the demons were cast became a disciple. Though he wanted to join Jesus' entourage, God had other plans for him. He, like most of us here today, was sent home – to be Jesus' witness there. Our calling is the same – simply to tell our neighbors ***"what great things God has done for you."*** To do so, you and I have to first come to understand those "great things." Our text for this morning helps to open our eyes. Our enemy *is* Legion – a countless hoard with power and evil beyond our comprehension. Yet our one Ally is Jesus Christ, who is more than enough to give us the victory. Amen.

Scripture Readings

^{NKJ} **Isaiah 65:1-9** "I was sought by *those who did not ask for Me*; I was found by *those who did not seek Me*. I said, 'Here I am, here I am,' to a nation *that* was not called by My name. ² I have stretched out My hands all day long to a rebellious people, who walk in a way *that is* not good, according to their own thoughts; ³ a people who provoke Me to anger continually to My face; who sacrifice in gardens, and burn incense on altars of brick; ⁴ who sit among the graves, and spend the night in the tombs; who eat swine's flesh, and the broth of abominable things is *in* their vessels; ⁵ who say, 'Keep to yourself, do not come near me, for I am holier than you!' These *are* smoke in My nostrils, a fire that burns all the day. ⁶ "Behold, *it is* written before Me: I will not keep silence, but will repay -- even repay into their bosom -- ⁷ your iniquities and the iniquities of your fathers together," Says the LORD, "Who have burned incense on the mountains and blasphemed Me on the hills; therefore I will measure their former work into their bosom." ⁸ Thus says the LORD: "As the new wine is found in the cluster, and *one* says, 'Do not destroy it, for a blessing *is* in it,' So will I do for My servants' sake, that I may not destroy them all. ⁹ I will bring forth descendants from Jacob, and from Judah an heir of My mountains; My elect shall inherit it, and My servants shall dwell there.

^{NKJ} **Galatians 3:25-4:7** But after faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor. ²⁶ For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. ²⁷ For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. ²⁸ There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. ²⁹ And if you *are* Christ's, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise. **4:1** Now I say *that* the heir, as long as he is a child, does not differ at all from a slave, though he is master of all, ² but is under guardians and stewards until the time appointed by the father. ³ Even so we, when we were children, were in bondage under the elements of the world. ⁴ But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, ⁵ to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons. ⁶ And because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying out, "Abba, Father!" ⁷ Therefore you are no longer a slave but a son, and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ.

ST. PAUL EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

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Fourth Sunday after Pentecost— June 20, 2010

The Opening Prayer by the Pastor

The Opening Hymn -#5- (Red Hymnal)

"Lord Open Thou My Heart to Hear"

The Order of Service – Supplement page 12ff. (Brown Hymnal)

The Scripture Lessons: (Printed on the back page of this bulletin)

The Old Testament Lesson: (Isaiah 65:1-9) The common thread that runs through both Scripture lessons and our sermon text for today is "frustration." In our first reading we learn of God's frustration with his chosen people, the Jews. Though God longed to bless, protect, and prosper his chosen people, they continually rejected him. Most remarkable is the fact that God's patience never ran out because of his promise to send the Savior through the Jewish race.

Psalm of the Day: Psalm 100 (Brown Hymnal page 35)

The New Testament Lesson: (Galatians 3:25-4:7) The element of frustration in our second reading has to do with the frustration of trying to earn heaven through the keeping of the law. Paul compares it to a young heir who is frustrated because, though rich, he can possess no true wealth until he comes of age. Faith in Jesus Christ is that which delivers us from our bondage to the law and opens heaven to us.

The Confession of Faith -

The Apostolic Creed – page 15. (Brown Hymnal)

The Pre-Sermon Hymn -#317- (Red Hymnal)

"Alas, My God, My Sins Are Great"

The Sermon – Text: Luke 8:26-39 (Printed on the back page of this bulletin)

"Your Enemy Is Legion; Your Ally Is One"

The Offertory – (Supplement page 16 insert)

The Post-Sermon Hymn -#392- (Red Hymnal)

"Blest Is the Man, Forever Blest"

The Offering

The Prayer followed by the Lord's Prayer

The Benediction

The Closing Hymn -#531- (Red Hymnal)

"Come Ye Disconsolate"

Silent Prayer

Welcome! - We warmly welcome any visitors who might be with us this morning and invite you to join us every Sunday at this time. St. Paul is a congregation in fellowship with the Church of the Lutheran Confession (CLC) – a conservative Lutheran synod with churches and missions throughout the United States, as well as Canada, India, and Africa. We are glad you are here. Thank you for letting us share the Word of God with you. Please record your visit in our Guest Book, and come again!

Attendance - Last Sunday (66) 2010 Average (53)

This Week at St. Paul:

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| Today | -10:00 a.m. | – Worship Service |
| | -11:15 a.m. | – Fellowship Hour |
| Mon-Fri | - CLC Convention in Eau Claire | |
| Next Sunday | -10:00 a.m. | – Worship Service w/Holy Communion |
| | -11:15 a.m. | – Fellowship Hour |
| | 11:30 a.m. | – Church Council meeting |

CLC News – Pastor Paul Nolting is considering the call to Fond du Lac. Pastor Todd Ohlmann is considering the call to Loveland. Pastor Joel Fleischer is considering the call to Red Wing. Bethel Lutheran, Spring TX, has called Pastor Matthew Hanel, Dallas, TX. Berea Lutheran of Inver Grove Heights MN, has terminated the call of its Day School Kindergarten teacher, Mary Ann Klingenschmitt, because of a doctrinal difference in the area of church fellowship. The CLC Convention is scheduled to convene tomorrow in Eau Claire and conclude on Friday.

Planning Ahead – Midweek summer services are scheduled to begin June 30. We are also scheduled to host Missionary Dave Koenig on July 18. Please remember that these services will be offered as you make your summer plans.

Pastor Out of Town – In addition to the Pastor, St. Paul will be represented, God willing, by Delegates Paul Blumhardt and Scott Schiermeister at next week's CLC Convention in Eau Claire. Pastor Roehl can be reached on the church cell phone while away (701) 425-5483.

VBS & Men's Retreat – Vacation Bible School for this summer has been scheduled for Thursday and Friday, July 22-23. Please see Sandy Roehl for further details, and consider whether you might be able to lend a hand. Men please take a look at the sign-up sheet on the entry table for this year's Men's Retreat.