

"Legion vs 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'm guessing a solid majority of us have been fooled by click bait – those internet headlines that promise "*shocking new revelations*" and "*bombshell breaking news*." While those sorts of promises are seldom kept, you've probably all had moments where you heard something that actually *did* shock or horrify you; something that just made your jaw drop, your skin crawl, or that sent a shiver down your spine. If you're like me, you find it harder and harder to be "shocked." We've become numbed to it all by the media's never-ending quest for attention. They've long known that the more appalling and salacious the news, the more viewers they tend to get and the more money they thereby rake in.

There's a spiritual danger here that we need to recognize. The greater our desensitization, the more likely we are to downplay or ignore the real and terrifying dangers that actually *do* threaten us on a daily basis. Satan is behind all of this, as he is behind the trivializing of things like hell and demons.

This morning's text serves as an effective test as to just how successful the devil has been in desensitizing you, personally, to that which is *truly* terrifying. Trivializing the spiritual enemies that threaten us is not healthy. Our text accomplishes this self-test by allowing us to listen in on Jesus' conversation with a demon. Many demons really. A whole legion of them. One, against a legion. The encounter ought to provide sobriety, but also afford tremendous hope. Our text is found in the Gospel of Luke, the 8th Chapter:

ESV (Luke 8:26-39) Then they sailed to the country of the Gerasenes, which is opposite Galilee. ²⁷ 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. ²⁸ 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." ²⁹ For he had commanded the unclean spirit to come out of the man.

(For many a time it had seized him. He was kept under guard and bound with chains and shackles, but he would break the bonds and be driven by the demon into the desert.) ³⁰ Jesus then asked him, "What is your name?" And he said, "Legion," for many demons had entered him. ³¹ And they begged him not to command them to depart into the abyss. ³² 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. ³³ Then the demons came out of the man and entered the pigs, and the herd rushed down the steep bank into the lake and drowned. ³⁴ When the herdsmen saw what had happened, they fled and told it in the city and in the country. 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.

This is God's Word, and therefore perfect in every way. May God the Holy Spirit grant you the grace to trust that these are *God's Words*, and to be thereby protected and comforted by the power of these words continually. To that end we pray, "**Sanctify us by your truth, O Lord. Your Word is truth.**" Amen.

I once read a theme for our text this morning: "*The Crude, Lewd, Rude, Nude 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. "*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.

The problem, again, is that "cute" and "clever" tend to minimize the actual threat. Dump a little raw fear and panic onto cute and it melts like cotton candy in the rain. Given what we know about our spiritual enemies, cute just won't cut 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 intended to be 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 said, 'Legion,' for many demons had entered him."** 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 that 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.

If you've ever had occasion to look into the eyes of death row inmates, you've seen firsthand what no Hollywood actor could ever accurately portray: convicted, hard-core criminals who have no pity, no remorse, no compassion, and – worst of all – nothing to lose. It's in the eyes. You can't fake that. You can't "act" that. I've seen that only once, when I visited a death-row inmate at a maximum security prison in Florida. The man was on death-row 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 we reach out even to death-row inmates. 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 you to do with us, O 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, bitter frustration, rage, and absolute 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 beings, 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, or did the demons simply seek to kill, to destroy, whatever they touched? Jesus allowed the unclean to enter the unclean, but only the swine perished. The demons remain.

A dark and terrifying 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 building you occupy and the seat in which you are sitting, and their unrelenting intentions are more evil than anything we can fully imagine. And their number is Legion.

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 this 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 – the One.

Christians 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 no power to rid ourselves of the condemnation of our sin, and it was our sin that had separated us from God and excluded us from God's heaven. Our sins had enslaved us, and had made us the playthings of the demons. As the demons held the man of the Gerasenes in their grip, so our sins held us in a tempered steel grip from which we could never hope to break free.

But that is exactly what Jesus came to do for us – that 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 freeing us from our slavery to demonic forces 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. Legion, defeated by One.

The war has been won, but don't miss the ending in our text. There are still many who, refusing Jesus' victory, are enslaved to evil. The people of the Gerasenes, for example, drove Jesus from their region. They essentially traded their Savior for pigs. I doubt it looks much different today when human beings discard Jesus for something like money, pleasure, or earthly fame and power – eternal life, traded for "pigs."

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, and a witness. 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 Friend and Ally is Jesus Christ, who has both fought for us and has credited his victory to us. It is enough, for this One can and will continue to protect us from that terrifying Legion of eternal destruction. Amen.

ESV (Isaiah 65:1-9) I was ready to be sought by those who did not ask for me; I was ready to be 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 spread out my hands all the day to a rebellious people, who walk in a way that is not good, following their own devices; ³ a people who provoke me to my face continually, sacrificing in gardens and making offerings on bricks; ⁴ who sit in tombs, and spend the night in secret places; who eat pig's flesh, and broth of tainted meat is in their vessels; ⁵ who say, "Keep to yourself, do not come near me, for I am too holy for you." These are a smoke in my nostrils, a fire that burns all the day. ⁶ Behold, it is written before me: "I will not keep silent, but I will repay; I will indeed repay into their lap ⁷ both your iniquities and your fathers' iniquities together, says the LORD; because they made offerings on the mountains and insulted me on the hills, I will measure into their lap payment for their former deeds." ⁸ Thus says the LORD: "As the new wine is found in the cluster, and they say, 'Do not destroy it, for there is a blessing in it,' so I will do for my servants' sake, and not destroy them all. ⁹ I will bring forth offspring from Jacob, and from Judah possessors of my mountains; my chosen shall possess it, and my servants shall dwell there.

ESV (Galatians 3:23-4:7) Now before faith came, we were held captive under the law, imprisoned until the coming faith would be revealed. ²⁴ So then, the law was our guardian until Christ came, in order that we might be justified by faith. ²⁵ But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a guardian, ²⁶ for in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith. 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 no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. ²⁹ And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise. **ESV Galatians 4:1** I mean that the heir, as long as he is a child, is no different from a slave, though he is the owner of everything, ² but he is under guardians and managers until the date set by his father. ³ In the same way we also, when we were children, were enslaved to the elementary principles of the world. ⁴ But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, ⁵ to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons. ⁶ And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, "Abba! Father!" ⁷ So you are no longer a slave, but a son, and if a son, then an heir through God.

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The Second Sunday after Pentecost– June 19, 2022

The Opening Prayer by the Pastor

The Opening Hymn – 536 *(Red Hymnal)*
"Awake My Soul and with the Sun"

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

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

The First Lesson: (Isaiah 65:1-9) Our first reading communicates God's love for man, in the face of man's rejection of God. Our reading also makes clear that such rejection will certainly not go unpunished. God does not make idle threats. Yet note also the gospel promise with which our reading concludes: a remnant will be preserved, and from that remnant the Messiah would come. It is in that Messiah that we place our faith, our confidence, and our eternal lives.

Psalm 91 (Supplement page 33) *(Brown Hymnal)*

The Second Lesson: (Galatians 3:23-4:7) The Law was given to maintain order until the time was right for God the Father to send his Son. The Mosaic Law, given to fallen mankind, was never intended to save. It was intended to preserve the Jewish race until that race could give birth to Jesus Christ. As Old Testament believers were not saved by keeping the law but by faith in God's promise to send the Savior, so we too are now saved through faith in that same Lord Jesus, who has paid our sin debt.

The Confession of Faith -

The Apostolic Creed – page 15 *(Brown Hymnal)*

The Pre-Sermon Hymn – 371 *(Stanzas 1-2, 6-7) (Red Hymnal)*
"Jesus, Thy Blood and Righteousness"

The Sermon – Text: Luke 8:26-39 *(Printed on the back of this bulletin)*
"Legion vs One"

The Offertory – (Supplement page 16 insert)

The Post-Sermon Hymn – 387 *(Stanzas 1-4) (Red Hymnal)*
"Dear Christians, One and All, Rejoice"

The Prayer followed by the Lord's Prayer

The Benediction

The Closing Hymn – 387 *(Stanzas 6-7) (Red Hymnal)*
"Dear Christians, One and All, Rejoice"

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 and around the world. 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 – Sunday (34) Average (30)

This Week at St. Paul:

Today	-10:00 a.m.	– Sunday Worship Service
	-11:00 a.m.	– Fellowship Hour
	-11:15 a.m.	– Church Council Meeting
Thur-Sun	-CLC Convention in Eau Claire	
Next Sunday	-10:00 a.m.	– Sunday Worship
	-11:00 a.m.	– Fellowship Hour

CLC News – Pastor Samuel Naumann has returned the call to Ascension of Tacoma. Pastor Michael Gurath is considering the call to Immanuel or Winter Haven. Redemption of Lynnwood has called Pastor David Pfeiffer. Pastor-elect Zach Sippert is scheduled to be ordained and installed as pastor of Redemption of Bowdle and Zion of Ipswich in a 4pm service in Bowdle on July 10th. A fellowship meal will follow. The congregation is invited. Mrs. Ann Koch, wife of Professor-Emeritus Paul Koch, was taken home this past week.

CLC Convention – The biennial CLC Convention is scheduled to begin this Friday in Eau Claire. In addition to the Pastor, St Paul will be represented by delegates Mark Johnson and Phil Pfennig. Most of the meeting will be live-streamed. See Pastor Roehl for details.

Pastor Out of Town – Pastor Roehl is scheduled to leave early this week for a family reunion, followed by the CLC Convention. A lay service is scheduled for next Sunday.

Confirmation Sunday and Communion Change – Sunday, July 3rd, has been designated as this year's Confirmation Sunday. Our confirmand this year is Lydia Schiermeister. A fellowship meal is planned following the service. Since Pastor Roehl is scheduled to attend the CLC Convention on June 26th, communion has been moved from June 26th to July 3rd.

Daily Rest – Subscriptions for the devotional Daily Rest are due. Payment can be dropped into the offering box and need not be specially marked.