

SERMON FOR JUNE 23, 2019

TEXT: LUKE 8:26-39

THEME: WHAT WILL YOU DO WITH JESUS?

²⁸When 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." ³⁸The 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.

In the name of Jesus:

My sainted mom used to have a saying when she was exasperated with me. When she was frustrated and at the end of her rope with me she would exclaim, "Honestly, what am I going to do with you?"

A similar question can be posed to every one of us today. God has every right to be frustrated with us. He has blessed each of us beyond belief, He has been our ever-present Help in times of trouble, and He has sent His only Son Jesus to redeem us from sin, Satan, and death. God has placed us in a wonderful Christian congregation, with brothers and sisters in Jesus who love the Lord. And yet, each of us fails to recognize and give thanks to God for His blessings bestowed on us. God has blessed us with physical blessings yet we want more. He has gotten us out of jam after jam, but we worry and become anxious and afraid of

what may happen next. Jesus has saved us, but we take advantage of His love and forgiveness by loving the things of life more than Jesus. Our hearts can be cold and indifferent to the needs of others. God blesses us and we forget to give Him thanks. What should God do with us? He should punish us, leave us alone and forsake us, but He doesn't, He loves us with an everlasting love, continually forgiving, renewing, and strengthening us. Seeing what a wonderful, great, merciful God that we have, a better question for us today is what shall we do with Him? How will we submit to Him, allowing His love to change us? What are we going to do with Jesus, today, and in our lives going forward?

It is a question that underlies the storyline in our text, the Gospel lesson for today. Luke records that Jesus and His disciples sailed around the Sea of Galilee to a place called the Gerasenes, a region inhabited by Gentiles. The populace was considered unclean and not worthy of being called the people of God. The Jews had little to do with these people. Jesus' boat landed ashore and when He stepped on land a demon possessed man confronted Him. This man who had the demons had them for a very long time, and he would be considered the worst of the unclean. In order to keep this man from hurting himself and others, he was usually in chains and other types of restraints. The whole region

lived in fear of this man. He came to Jesus wearing no clothes, which was how he was normally dressed, or undressed, as the case may be. No one wanted anything to do with this fellow, so he made his open in a cemetery, living among the tombs.

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. ³⁰ Jesus then asked him, "What is your name?" And he said, "Legion," for many demons had entered him.³¹ And they, that is, the demons in the man, begged Jesus not to command them to depart into the abyss. Now there happened to be a large herd of pigs, considered by the Jews to be unclean, nearby feeding on the hillside. The demons begged Jesus to let them be cast into the pigs.

Now in a strange twist, the demons are allowed to go into the pigs, freeing this man from his demons, and now this formerly demon possessed man now has the opportunity to live a changed life, without chains, restraints, he is considered healed and normal and allowed to reenter society. This, you would think, would be cause for a celebration. But think again.

The herd of pigs runs down the hill into a lake. Pigs can't swim, so this herd now is destroyed. When the herdsman saw what had happened, they ran and told the people of the region. When the people saw what had took place, that this demon possessed man was now healed, sitting in his right mind with all of his clothes on, they didn't rejoice. Instead, all they saw was the destruction of the herd of pigs. They thought having Jesus around would be bad for business. So they all asked Jesus to leave. So Jesus got into the boat and returned to the other side. But this man, who was now gifted by Jesus with a new lease on life, he was thankful. He begged Jesus to stay with him, but Jesus sent him away, telling him, ³⁹“Return to your home, and declare how much God has done for you.” And that man went away, proclaiming throughout the whole city how much Jesus had done for him.

Did you notice the different reactions of the people? The populace lived in fear of this demon possessed man. They did everything they knew how to deal with him, restraining him when he was a threat to them. But when the demons were cast out, and this man no longer a problem, there was no rejoicing. The pig farmers, who now suffered a loss, were more concerned about their business than some formerly crazed lunatic. They banded the town's people together, and they all

asked Jesus to leave. They wanted nothing to do with Someone who had power over the Devil and the demonic. They wanted nothing to do with the One who had power over all, who could not only heal the sick, raise the dead, but also could feed thousands with a few loaves of bread and some fish. What did they want to do with Jesus for all that He had done and could for them? They didn't want anything to do with Him.

How would you answer? What do you want to do with Jesus? Again, look at all He has done for you. He has purchased and won you from all sin, from death and the power of the devil, not with silver or gold but with His precious blood and innocent death on Calvary's cross. Look at how He has blessed you. He has helped you in your time of need. God has given you all that you need to support you in this life. He has guarded and protected you, answered your prayers, and He promises to work all things out to your good and the glory of God. And this is solely flow from God's heart. He loves you with an everlasting love!

How will you respond? By complaining about what you don't have? By placing Jesus off to the side of your life, only to pull Him out when you need Him, like some good luck charm? Or will you be thankful for what He has done for you? Remember what Luther wrote

in the Small Catechism, how God richly gives you all things, and now it is your duty to thank and praise, serve and obey Him?

This is what this formerly demon possessed man sought to do. He wanted to follow Jesus all of His life. And what did Jesus tell him to do? “Return to your home,” Jesus told this man, “and declare how much God has done for you.” And so he did, he went away, proclaiming throughout the whole city how much Jesus had done for him. May it so be with each of us, that we might give thanks and praise to Jesus, by proclaiming to others how much Jesus has done for us!

Amen