

## **“Healed, Clothed, and Set Right by the Son of the Most High”**

**(Text: Luke 8:26-39)**

**St. John Lutheran Church, Massillon, Ohio, June 19, 2022 – Pentecost 2**

I grew up in Coshocton County, about 60 miles south of here. Every hometown has an urban legend that gets told by camp fires and at sleep overs. Growing up, my urban legend was a story about a woman named Mary Stockum. Apparently, she was a witch who poisoned her children. And when you go to her grave at night, which is ironically found in St. John Lutheran cemetery, you will eventually encounter her in some way or form.

I remember one night, after coming home from my cousin’s house, I swore up and down that Mary Stockum was in my closet. It was dark of course and I laid in my bed alone staring in the darkness of my closet. I was for sure that she was in there and I didn’t want to meet her in the least. I ran to my parents’ multiple times that night scared out of my mind.

I don’t know if anyone genuinely has had an encounter with Mary Stockum at her grave or their closet, but in our gospel lesson for this morning, Jesus had a bonified encounter with a man who was possessed by the demonic. The man from the Gerasenes was not only possessed by demons, but he was found to be naked with no clothes and homeless. But it’s as if Jesus seeks out this man in order to heal him. And after it’s said and done, Luke writes that the man was found clothed, in his right mind, and at the feet of Jesus. Jesus saves this man by healing him, clothing him, and setting his mind right. Jesus has made this man one of his disciples. For where else are Jesus’ disciples other than at his feet learning his teachings. And that’s what he has done to you. He has made you his disciple. You are healed, clothed, and set right by the Son of the Most High God!

Luke writes that Jesus encounters a man of the Gerasenes. Jesus sets sail to gentile territory. Not to go on a vacation but to bring healing to the gentiles. Jesus is met by a man from the town who had a demon. Luke begins to describe this man that **“for a long time he had worn no clothes, and he had not lived in a house but among the tombs.”** What a sad description to say the least. No clothes to put on in order to cover up the disgusting filth of the demons. No home to lay his head. He is forced to live among the tombs – the gravesites of the dead. Clearly the legion of demons were in control. And isn't it fitting for demons to go around with out clothes. What would they need them for? And isn't it fitting for demons to be comfortable in deserted, dead, and dark places.

This sets up what is to follow. Jesus encounters a man possessed, naked, and living among the tombs. What a wretched condition. Glad were not possessed, naked, and living among grave yards. Right? Well, lets think for a moment. Have you ever wanted something really bad, and you would stop at nothing to get it? Have you ever felt like you're almost possessed by things of this world? Things that are hard to give up? A lot of people can be possessed by things other than demons. Pornography, food, money, house, bills, youth sports – the list can go on and on. These things can bring havoc, fear, frustrations, health problems, arguments, and much more.

There are people obsessed, and at times almost possessed, with social media. Did you know that Facebook has 2.89 billion – not million – monthly active users? YouTube has 2.29 billion. What about Instagram, Twitter, and Tik-Tok for the younger people. Instagram, 2 billion. Twitter, 330 million. And Tik-Tok, 600 million. We don't have to know any of these social media apps, but we should know how many people are affected by them – good and bad. A lot of people are obsessed, almost possessed, to check each and every day their favorite social media.

Try taking away someone's cell phone. It's almost like they become "possessed." They don't know what to do! They cry out! They cry out and want their life back!

Luke said that the man was found naked. Now, from the looks of it, I don't think any of us are lacking in clothing. But what about spiritual clothing? What are you wearing today spiritually? Are you wearing clothes that you fashioned? Most of us I'm sure have clothes that's made by someone else. But these clothes will not cover you spiritually. These clothes are the clothes of man and woman. They are like filthy rags as one of the prophets say. In our own, spiritual condition, we're like the demon possessed man. We are naked before the Lord. He sees me, you, and all people spiritually naked. He sees right through our self-righteous clothes. It's like the saying, "The emperor has no clothes." It appears that we have clothes on, but God sees us for who we really are.

And each of us has a home to go to after the service. But with out the grace of God, all of us would be homeless. Adam and Eve were thrown out of the house so to speak. God sent them out of the Garden because of their sin. And we too, those who are born of Adam and Eve, have been homeless since birth. We, on account of the things we've done and left undone, we're homeless spiritually.

But though we are possessed by things of this world, spiritually naked and homeless – fear not! Jesus, the Son of the Most High God is mightier than all. He encounters the demons that were possessing this man from the Gerasenes. The demons despair. Jesus has found them out. I find it ironic that the demons beg Jesus not to torment them. Even though they've been tormenting this man for a long time. Though the demons could break the bonds of chains and shackles, they were completely outmatched by Jesus.

Jesus asked the demon what its name was and it said, “**Legion.**” Now, just in case you forgot what this name stands for, remember that it’s referring to a number of how many demons were in this man. The number is between 3-6 thousand. No matter though for the Son of the Most High God! Jesus commands the thousands of demons to depart from this man and enter into a herd of pigs. The unclean entering into the unclean. Now the demons are in a suitable host. Pigs are considered unclean to the Jewish mind. And not only did the demons enter the unclean pigs, but Luke writes that they rushed down the steep bank and into the lake and drowned. What a proper outcome. Demons, through water, are drowned and are no more!

Jesus’ power and authority is on full display! Fear not! For not only did Jesus use water to drown and put to death a legion of demons, but he also used water to drown out your so called demons in baptism. Yes, in the waters, your sin – the sin that possessed you from birth; the sin that has left you naked and homeless – has been drowned! Through the mighty Son of the Most High God, you’re no longer under the control of sin, the world’s many vices, and the demonic. You’re washed clean with the water of the Spirit. You’re healed and are his child.

Now, I don’t want to focus so much on the reaction of the townsfolk. Rather, I want to bring to the forefront of your minds to the new description of the man who was demon possessed. Luke writes, “**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.**” The man has been healed by the mighty hand of Jesus, the Son of the Most High God, and is now at his feet – clothed and in his right mind. And dear friend, this is exactly what God has done to you. He healed you and has clothed you with the robe of his righteousness. The same God that stripped Adam and Eve of their self-made fig leaves, has stripped you of your own man-made clothing and has given you clothing that he has fashioned

together. He stripped you of your self-righteous clothing and has given you his robe that has been dipped in the blood of his sacrifice that was done upon the cross.

Dear friend, this is why it's so important for all of us to begin each and every day in the name that we're baptized in. We begin in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. This name is above all names. This name is above the name that the demon gave. It's in this name that we are healed and clothed. It's in this name that we are baptized and set free from sin. It's in this name that our sins are drowned in the lake of our baptism.

Now that you have been healed, and clothed, you sit at the feet of Jesus. You sit at his feet in your right mind. It's the mind of Christ. It's the mind of a disciple. It's the mind that clings and holds fast to Christ's Word. It's a mind that happily receives the promises that are attached to his body and blood under the bread and wine in the Lord's Supper.

In the end, Jesus sent the Gerasa man back to his home to declare how much God has done for him. We too are called in like manner. But don't think we can do this out of our own desires. Don't think that we can properly clothe ourselves for this work. And don't dare think that we do this with our own thinking. No. Remember, God, and he alone, heals you, clothes you, and gives you a right mind. Through this means, his children, his disciples, declare how much God has done for them. And by the same God, all who call upon the Son of the Most High God will be healed, clothed and set right! In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Pastor Jon Carpenter