**Luke 8:26-39 June 19, 2022**

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Our text for this morning comes from our Gospel lesson, Luke chapter 8 here re-reading these words. “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.” This is our text.

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Hear again the situation of this man that we find in our Gospel reading for this Sunday from Luke chapter 8. Walks around nude, lives among the tombs. The demons seize him and he thrashes his body around on the ground which means that he is imprisoned due to the disruption he brings upon this community only for him to break free and roam again in the desert and wilderness. He is a man who doesn’t have a singular problem he has a legion of demons destroying his life. He is far from the perfection that God created humanity in. If you were to compare the peace of Eden and the relationship between God and His creation to what we see from this man it would be a very drastic difference. A similarity is that both he and Adam were nude and didn’t care. Adam dwells in a garden of life, imagery that we find all throughout the Scriptures and even in Song of Solomon where the beloved Shulammite, the bride of Solomon, is described as a garden of beauty and life. Adam is filled with the breath of life breathed into him from God. Adam lives in the center of life, this man lives in the tombs and is surrounded by death. Adam has full control over his body while this man is seized and restrained. But we do find both of them thrown out into the wilderness, into the desert, exiled and sent away. Adam from the garden of Eden due to the disobeying of God’s Law concerning the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, and this man driven by the demons away from those who sought to capture him and keep him restrained.

It’s a picture of our own lives as both saint and sinner. We who are forgiven and dwell in a house of life this day, coming to God’s house to be refreshed and given comfort, still dwell in a place that has many images reminding us of death, especially the death of our own beloved Savior Jesus Christ. But we aren’t filled with demons, seizing on the ground, nude and ostracized from our communities. Yet we are corrupted….corrupted with a legion of our own, a legion that shows itself at the end of our reading for this morning. Corruption is a very sneaky sort of thing. Sometimes it’s obvious. I’ve driven in many different places on highways and backroads in many different states from Texas to Wisconsin and just about everywhere in between. Sometimes you get to see corruption very easily, like how everywhere you go you see old buildings just deteriorating away. It’s not different here in our own community. You see Barns…houses….old businesses. Back in fields and hidden sometimes in the forests next to highways you’ll sneak a glimpse at a dilapidated barn or shed and see the rot in the wood. There’s no restoring something so far gone as that building, it’s corrupted to the core. Someday it may be torn down or it may fall down from the wind but you can tell there’s no hope. But the sneakier corruption could very well be happening right now. In your own home. Where a pipe has been slowly leaking without you knowing, and it’s eating away at the integrity of the walls of your house, or something got loosened or damaged on your drive to Church this morning in your car, and you don’t even know it. But oil is leaking, or coolant, or something…and you won’t know until it’s a huge disastrous problem. Even in our own bodies something may have changed, something is wrong, something is being worn out or corrupted and hurt and we don’t even know. It doesn’t hurt and it’s not giving off any signs. That sort of corruption isn’t seen like an old barn or shed or some other building. It doesn’t have huge signs. It’s sneaky, but it’s there.

This man’s corruption though was right before everyone’s eyes. The fact is this man had a notoriety in his community almost like he was some sort of super villain you’d find in a movie. He was a problem the people couldn’t fix, even trying to just chain him up and keeping him restrained didn’t work. But then Jesus comes, Jesus comes and brings healing and destruction upon the cause of the corruption. The problem was huge, a legion of demons, it’s hard to really even imagine such a horrendous demonic influence in our world today, but that’s not to say the demons have all gone off to the abyss. Demon possession is still prevalent, just perhaps not as out in the open as we find it in the Gospels. But for this man to have such a large number is astounding, and a problem only the Son of God could fix. Jesus comes and expels them, sends them out into a herd of pigs who immediately drown themselves. There is a greater imagery here that may be lost on us that the demons, the personification of sin are sent into swine which are understood by the Jews on account of the ceremonial laws of the Old Testament to be unclean animals. So the sinful corruption is sent into the unclean swine who immediately are drowned. That’s what Jesus does, he destroys the unclean, the corrupted, he restores us back to the life that is found in the Garden of Eden by restoring the relationship between us and God our Father. Like a barn that is completely hopeless being restored to it’s former glory Jesus doesn’t tear down and give up, Jesus brings restoration from the corruption and saves even this poor man, whose life had been a nightmare and whose reputation had been that of a villain and restores him and saves him from the legion of demons who had corrupted him to the core.

Which should very well be the end of the story. This man has been saved! Praise be to God. After all the villains in the movies get vanquished, they fall down into the fire or the waters or are destroyed in some sort of way, well the really bad ones do, but the others are fixed. We see that story a lot too. The bad guy was really just a good guy who had something go wrong, some sort of corruption in technology or something bad that had turned them against society but then they were shown the error their ways. They were restored and they get welcomed back to be a productive and happy member of society again. But that’s not what we see here at all, which shows the second corruption. The first is obvious, a man who lives among the tombs with a legion of demons, we all can see the problem there. But the second is subtle, it’s below the surface, and it’s really the corruption that we must face in our own lives and in our own hearts, to see ourselves in this story and ask if we would have done the same thing. Jesus expels the legion of demons and they are driven into pigs who are drowned. The herdsmen who take care of the pigs see what happens and flee, going into the city and the surrounding country and telling everyone what had happened. This brings the people out to see what’s going on, and they find Jesus with this notorious villain, this menace to society, but now he’s sitting at the feet of Jesus, wearing clothes and in his right mind. He has been restored! And the corruption is gone and Luke records that they were….afraid. He is wearing clothes and not crazy anymore and they are afraid! And here it is my dear friends in Christ, here is the corruption on full display of people in that community, the subtle corruption of their hearts and the true picture of their own fallen nature and sin. This man, who is now restored, is asked to leave their community AFTER being restored because the people were seized with great fear.

They wanted nothing to do with him in his brokenness and corruption, which makes sense how could they fix him? He was nude and living among the tombs, he was seized, he wasn’t in his right mind. But once his past was behind him and he was alright, and he was restored, and Jesus had shown his great power in destroying sin’s corruption, they still didn’t want anything to do with him. Oh how often do we do the same things? We can think of those we know in our lives who are going through their own trials, their own problems, their own hard times where something has brought them low and we don’t know how to fix them. But then we can also think of those who have a past full of problems, who are on the right track, but we still wish for them to go away. This church isn’t for them, what if they were to steal something, or take advantage of our generosity. We see someone walk into Church that we don’t know and we assume the worst of them. This man was in his right mind again! There was no evidence of corruption or demonic possession or anything. He was alright! And Jesus was there, and witnesses who could speak about what had happened, and yet they still wanted him to just go away. That’s the difference. Jesus finds people in their brokenness and wants to be with them in their struggles, but we don’t. We shy away from the broken and the hurting and even if things get better for them on account of their struggles we still send them away. That’s our own corruption. That’s our own sin that we need to be forgiven of and that’s our own need for restoration that comes only from Jesus Christ just as it did for this man.

So the man isn’t wanted in this community, and he asks Jesus to go with him. They don’t want me? I don’t want them. Time for a new start. But that’s not what Jesus tells him to do. “Return to your home, and declare how much God has done for you.” He is made a witness in that community, and the people may be afraid of him then, but over time he will go from being a notorious villain, to a redeemed hero of God. He is a walking witness. “Hey aren’t you that crazy guy who lived among the tombs?” You can imagine the questions. The story he can tell of how Jesus came and restored him and the witness he will be to those who are broken themselves and just don’t realize it. This man, goes from being the problem in the community, to the solution.

But in truth it’s not him, it’s not what he does, it’s what God does through Him and the witness he is of Jesus Christ. Jesus is the only one who can fix the problems, both the obvious and destructive ones that we see in this man’s life and demonic possession, and the subtle hidden corruption that is eating away at our souls. Jesus is the answer. Jesus is where forgiveness and healing come from. So we take Jesus with us. Out on the road where we see a homeless person in a desperate situation. At the grocery store where we bump into someone we haven’t seen in a long time and who certainly hasn’t been coming here to Church. We take Jesus and we are made His witnesses. To speak to those who we may be uncomfortable talking to, and wanting to be with them in their brokenness and their problems and not exiling them from our family of faith just because of mistakes in the past. For we all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. Instead we see the redemption and restoration that comes only from Jesus and we rejoice that we have been saved through His death and resurrection. That’s where the healing comes from. That’s how the corruption is destroyed and the restoration is ours. May God bless you and keep you in the forgiveness of your sins and your corruption as God makes you his witness wherever you go and to whoever you meet.

Amen.

The peace of God which surpasses all human understanding keep our hearts and minds through faith in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Amen.