



PASTOR GWEN'S MESSAGE  
2<sup>ND</sup> SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST  
"PEACE IN THE MIDST OF CHAOS"  
SUNDAY JUNE 19, 2022

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. **AMEN**

Sit back and relax. Are you comfortable? Good. You know that is one of our goals is to make your comfortable. Especially if you are a visitor. After all, you might not come back again if you are not comfortable. And we certainly cannot have that.

But I might suggest that there are different kinds of comfort and discomfort. Have you ever heard a pastor preach about a controversial topic? Those of you who have been here a long time have probably felt me get under your skin once and awhile. And I hope that it was in a good way. After all we are a diverse congregation. We have republicans and democrats sitting here this morning right next to each other. Imagine that. We probably have those with covid shots sitting next to someone who would never think of having such a vaccine. We might even have some folks here that think this whole global warming thing is nothing short of a communist plot. I doubt that one, but you see what I mean. We are diverse in our thoughts, practices, and agendas.

Some of you might drive big cars or huge trucks that guzzle gas even at \$5 a gallon. And some choose littler cars in order to save as much money as possible. And that is the way we want it. Some worry about money, some about pride and some about the environment. You wonder why I have to be careful what I say on Sunday morning. Although, as we discovered last week,

we are all one on Christ's team, the church. We come from all ends of the spectrum, and I surely don't want to offend anyone.

With that being said, I do think there are a few folks here today that are not worried about their comfort. It might be that nothing we say or do here at CTS will change how difficult life is for them already. But they are here today or maybe listening on Facebook to this video, holding out hope that maybe something will be said or done that will bring a measure of relief, some purpose to the pain and suffering they are now experiencing. Their focus is survival, not comfort.

And I think we all get that too. Life is challenging sometimes. The right nor the left, the Democrats nor the Republicans, have all the answers. Problems in life go far beyond what politics can solve. But we all desire to hear a message of hope. Something that will keep us going. Some words that will make sense of the chaos in the world around us.

Well, our Gospel story, if it does nothing else this morning, shows us where Jesus operates and what Jesus does best. Jesus plunges into the messiness of life and brings calm and peace. And even if we are not currently struggling to survive in the world today, I think we can see how Jesus comes to offer peace in the midst of life's chaos.

The subject of our story today is a man possessed with demons, the Gerasene Demoniac, as he is sometimes referred to. There can be no better biblical story to represent chaos than this man. He is consumed with his own personal demons. He responds to Jesus asking his name calling himself Legion. As you might know, a Legion was a Roman army unit of about 600 troops. And folks that would be a lot of demons inside any one man. He is truly possessed. These demons are so powerful that chains cannot hold them in this man. They feel the power of Jesus approach and what to be set free. They want to get away from Jesus as he is a stronger power than even they are collectively. They see an escape, pigs. And they cry out to Jesus to be sent to the pigs. And Jesus does just that, and the pigs promptly rush down the steep bank and into the sea and drown. If we did not know this was a story from Scripture, who would believe it.

Ah, and then there is more. The people who owned the pigs are upset because their next meal has just drowned. They fear what might be next and want Jesus to go away. And the demonic man is no more. He is properly clothed and sitting calmly, in his right mind at Jesus feet. How could this be? So, what

can we make of this story? I heard a professor talk about his story as the first instance of deviled ham, but this story is not meant to be funny.

Truth be told, there is nothing funny here. There is of course, a lot of symbolism in this story. We all know that the Jews find pork an unclean meat. So, it is odd that there would be so many pigs in the area, even though they were on the Gentile side of the lake. Pigs were actually used as food for the Roman soldiers. In fact, the boar was the logo of the Roman legion stationed in Palestine.

Another symbol is life, it is used here as a word for chaos. Demons are often referred to as the devil, and thought of as living, breathing things. So yes, there is a lot going on in this unusual story behind the scenes. But one thing we can see is that this man, the Gerasene Demoniac is in pain. It is not a symbol for something else, it is very real pain to this man.

The story does tell us that Jesus took away that pain when he let the demons move to the pigs from this man, Legion. And from that we can be assured that Jesus can do that for us as well. Maybe not in such an unusual way, but he will be there for us none the less. Folks, this is what Christ will do in the midst of our own personal chaos. He will offer His divine presence to walk with us, so we are not alone. In a few minutes, Jesus will come to each one of us personally in the bread and the wine. His presence is very real, and it will calm our fears and bring us peace.

In the Gospel of Luke where Jesus encounters this demoniac, he had just come from an incident on the sea where he calmed a storm. He then healed a woman of hemorrhages and resurrected a young girl from death. It is not an accident that our Gospel writer places all these stories together. He, in his writing is telling us that Jesus is so much more than just a teacher or friend. Not only does he talk the talk, but he walks the walk, if you will. Jesus does not just talk a good game, but He delivers. He knows how to bring health and healing to a chaotic world in in our sometimes-mixed-up lives. Jesus came to earth to save us from ourselves. His Father sent him to die on the cross for our sins. He came to give us gracious gifts of forgiveness, abundant and eternal life. And Jesus still wants for us today that abundant life here on earth. He does not want our lives to be filled with chaos, but when they seem that

way to us, He will be there to walk beside us and guide our path and calm our fears if we just believe.

Yes, in the midst of chaos, or maybe I should say in the face of our chaotic lives, Jesus knows what to do for you and for me. He gives us the bread and wine, His presence so we are assured that we are not alone. He will walk with us in all of our trying times. Whether it is stress from a pandemic, a medical diagnosis, a divorce, the stock market tanking, or any other obstacle in our chaotic lives, He will be there and He will know exactly what we need when we need it. We are blessed to have a God that will never, ever leave us alone.

Let's pray, Be with us always Lord. We thank you for coming into our lives when we are in crisis and giving us peace, your peace that is beyond our understanding. Help us to walk with you as your children in this abundant life while clinging to your promise of eternal life with you in heaven one day. We pray this in the name of the One whose presence makes all the difference, Christ our Lord, and Savior. AMEN