**6/22/25**

**Restoration & Unity**

**Vicar Vince Piekarski**

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

Welcome to each and every one of you out there on the conference call and out there in the pews. It is good to be back following a very fun and busy week of vacation time in Williamsburg, Virginia. Now, don’t get me wrong, I was thankful and blessed to be able to be away and take a bit of a break and be able to recharge. I was happy to spend time attending a Worship Service, and sit in a pew for a change to just take everything in. I was also happy to spend time with family taking in various sights and sounds, riding various rides, eating various food, clanking glasses while imbibing, playing several competitive games of Uno, enjoying free hotel ice cream, and so much more. I was also happy to have more time to commit to my Seminary Studies before I head off to Gettysburg, Pennsylvania later today for my three summer intensive classes. However, as the week went on, I also came to realize that I really missed my home right here with all of you. I missed being up here preaching and doing what I was called to do. So, thank you for having me back, and with all that being said, with all those good memories, my friends and my church family, let’s get to work right here this morning. Before doing so let me extend “Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.” (2 Corinthians 1:2, NRSVUE) (2) **Amen.**

Okay, if you really think about this reading, and just maybe if you had a little more time to sit back with it and let it digest, then you might have actually found it rather interesting and rather complex. You might have even found some varying things in it that you did not catch you on that very first hearing, that very first glance, or even that very first read through. Well, believe it or not, various Theologians, Biblical Scholars, Pastors, and other folks have grappled with this very same text time and time again and have not managed to come up with one concise interpretation of it. That may very well explain why I have actually been struggling to find a precise point or two for the better part of several days now as well. To be honest with you all, my first actual attempt at composing this sermon on Wednesday came to a screeching halt as I realized that the two and a half pages that I had typed needed to go directly in the trash. I just could not get my mind completely wrapped around this story the way I had hoped in order to help us all unfold it together. So, as I have learned over the years, and as I came to the very realization that I must commit to doing what I preach, I actually walked away and digested it a little bit more. I let all the thoughts mix together for a while and marinate. Then, thankfully I came across a few more sermon helps, did some additional research, and finally got some clarity and confirmation on my thought process.

 As I came back to this very Sermon I could not help but think several different things. So, let me pose some of those very questions out loud here… Why in the world would Jesus even travel over to this region in the first place? Why do we not hear a single thing about a disciple being with Him? Was Jesus just trying to get away from the multitudes of people that He had been spending time with healing and restoring, and actually take a vacation Himself? or…. Was it that Jesus was led here for a specific purpose and reason? Was it that Jesus had a job to do that only He could do? Was this story about pigs, a man, demons, misguided people, or something completely else? Was this story perhaps another **restoration and unity** story that we may have simply missed had we only paid attention to all the mi--nute details that are given to us?

Phew, that was a lot of questions even for me! Can you now see why this sermon has been getting at me for days? Can you now see why it is vital to ask questions and grapple with things to get to an explicit point or two to further help ourselves along on our faith journeys? Can you now see why I say time and time again that Sermon creation is not just a book report, and you really need to allow time for the Spirit to move?

With yet more questions posed, it is my job and my purpose, to remind you, and even myself at times, that there is simply nothing that we can’t come to our Triune God and ask for help for! Of course, we may not get the very answer or the help that we perceive we need or desire, or we may not get it at the very moment or place that we wish; but I guarantee you one thing, we will get it precisely as this man has in our story today. We will get the help, the guidance, the strength, the blessing, and we will have no other interest than to go out there and tell others about it precisely as this man is commissioned to do at the very end of our Gospel Reading. Christ is calling him, and each and every one of us every single day, to that very **restoration and unity** that we witness here in this story.

Now that I have gotten a little excited, now that I have gotten a little preachy, now that I have asked so many questions that I have scrambled several of your brains, let’s go ahead and slow down a little bit in order to speed up. Let’s break this story down and let’s really digest this together. Let’s explore why I even threw in the words **restoration and unity** in the first place.

First and foremost, we get told the stories of Jesus’ travels so that we come to realize that He was out there helping several people. He was not just helping people in his hometown, people from his own group, or for that case people that even expected Him to show up. Jesus was out and about precisely as he calls and commissions each and every one of us to be. The presence of his friends and family was great, and it was necessary for a recharge, but there was work to be done with those people out there and all over. That is often why I say that our faith is so much more relatable because Jesus did the very work that he expects us to go and do; to even put it more plainly and simply, He rolled up His sleeves and got his hands dirty!

Now, that maybe we have answered some of those questions that I threw at you before, let’s take a crack at a few other ones. Jesus was called to do this work, to relieve this man of all of these demons because no one or nothing else could help him or hold him down. The disciples may have very well been around in the background, but they just did not stand a chance against what was going on within this man. We even hear that shackles and jail cells could not hold him, that support and friends could not help him, heck we even hear that he could not even be restrained by clothing or a house. This man named Legion was out wandering around naked and living in caves because he had been led away by all the demons, and over time he had even been cast away by his friends and family. He had become less than, and even undesirable to be with or around. Legion had even become something of an example for all the bad there could be within a person. He was even one that would probably get a lot of blame deflected his way from time to time. That was until Jesus arrived! Jesus steps on the scene and the demons are like wait a minute here… Who tagged this guy in? We hear the demons practically begging to be left alone. We even hear the demons begging to be given some type of alternative treatment. Talk about knowing who is in charge! Then of course the demons within this man actually think that Jesus is foolish, and they request something and think that they are so tricky that they will be afforded the opportunity to live on and conduct their dirty work for a continued amount of time. However, that is not how Jesus handles matters, or more simply put, that is not how Jesus operates. He follows their wishes to a degree, but these demons are so short sighted that they cannot see that they have just actually signed their death sentence! They don’t even get the opportunity to see that the man they had taken hold of for so long would be set free, that he would be provided the opportunity for **restoration and unity** with the very community they kept him from for so long. In an instant, like the snap of my fingers, it was all over for them. Dashing over a hillside to their demise.

So, why the pigs Vicar Vince? Why could Jesus not cast out these demons into the very caves that they had been pulling this man into and making him live all this time? Because that would not be enough folks! Just for a little background here, pigs were not seen as a very favorable animal back then in regards to the customs of Jesus’ community. So, He allowed these demons to see these very pigs as an escape that quickly became their demise. It was not because He did not love all of creation, but because He had to do something so random and so miraculously awkward that people would be shocked into talking about it. Jesus had to not only have these demons come out of this man, but he had to extinguish these demons and not allow them to go into another person. Jesus had to extinguish these demons and have people come to realize that through Him he could handle all things to the point that they, and even ourselves, really need to quit living so comfortably at times. Unfortunately, that very creature comfort, that very way that society and ourselves go on with each day can also come to a screeching halt just like my sermon did earlier this week. We can even get so comfortable that we are as uncomfortable as the people back then, and we can simply ask Jesus to leave.

So, as we close things off here, we come to together and realize that this story is about the very realization that Jesus can come on the scene in a split second and all things that we knew, all things that we had grown comfortable with, all things that we liked or desired, all things could be forever changed or gone. That is for good and for worse, and that is precisely the very calling we have on our lives when we come to realize that our Triune God is continually calling us into a life of **restoration and unity** with and in His very presence. There is nothing greater, and there is nothing more amazing than what our Triune God has set before us should we all come to the very realization that we need to die daily to ourselves as our very baptisms elicit, and live a life to and for Christ so that each and every person out there can be drawn to and desire to live. We need to continually ask for and pray for the continuous **restoration and unity** that only our Triune God can provide, and then go out there and offer it to others. We need to help set the captives free, for Legion does not rule here, but Christ reigns forever and always.

**Amen.**

**References & Study Points**

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 Preaching

 Year C 2025

 June 22nd, 2025

 Day of Pentecost

(2) BibleGateway.com

(3) The Four Pages of The Sermon

 Revised and Updated

 A Guide to Biblical Preaching

 Paul Scott Wilson

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 Abingdon Press

(4) WorkingPreacher.org

 Second Sunday after Pentecost

 Jesus sat with the man who had been isolated for so long

 June 22, 2025

 Commentary on Luke 8:26-39

 Chelsea Brooke Yarborough

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 Second Sunday after Pentecost

 At first glance, Luke’s version of Jesus’ encounter with the Gerasene demoniac

 simply portrays Jesus as a healer sent by God.

 June 23, 2019

 Commentary on Luke 8:26-39

 Judith Jones

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 Fifth Sunday after Pentecost

 Groucho Marx once famously observed that he would never want to be a part of a

 club that would accept him as a member.

 June 19, 2016

 Commentary on Luke 8:26-39

 Lucy Lind Hogan

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 Fifth Sunday after Pentecost

 Gospel stories of demon possession are difficult to preach, because we don’t

 experience demons as described in the Bible.

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 Commentary on Luke 8:26-39

 Michael Rogness

(8) Luthermatrix

 The blog of a lutheran pastor, writer, and political animal.

 Friday, June 20, 2025

 Sunday's sermon today: Freed from Demons, Stuck with Neighbors

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

Jesus’ mission includes foreigners and his authority extends to the casting out of demons. Some who witness Jesus’ work are seized with confusion and fear, but the man who was healed is commissioned to give testimony to God’s mercy and power.

26 Then [Jesus and his disciples] arrived at the region of the Gerasenes, which is opposite Galilee. 27 As he stepped out on shore, a man from the city who had demons met him. For a long time he had not worn any clothes, and he did not live in a house but in the tombs. 28 When he saw Jesus, he cried out and fell down before him, shouting, “What have you to do with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I beg you, do not torment me,” 29 for Jesus had commanded the unclean spirit to come out of the man. (For many times 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 wilds.) 30 Jesus then asked him, “What is your name?” He said, “Legion,” for many demons had entered him. 31 They begged him not to order them to go back into the abyss.

32 Now there on the hillside a large herd of swine was feeding, and the demons begged Jesus to let them enter these. So he gave them permission. 33 Then the demons came out of the man and entered the swine, and the herd stampeded down the steep bank into the lake and was drowned.

34 When the swineherds saw what had happened, they ran off and told it in the city and in the country. 35 Then people came out to see what had happened, and when they came to Jesus, they found the man from whom the demons had gone sitting at the feet of Jesus, clothed and in his right mind. And they became frightened. 36 Those who had seen it told them how the one who had been possessed by demons had been healed. 37 Then the whole throng of people of the surrounding region of the Gerasenes asked Jesus to leave 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 out 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.” So he went away, proclaiming throughout the city how much Jesus had done for him.