

LUKE 8: 26-38

26. And they arrived at the country of the Gadarenes, which is over against Galilee.

27. And when he went forth to land, there met him out of the city a certain man, which had devils long time, and ware no clothes, neither abode in any house, but in the tombs.

28. When he saw Jesus, he cried out, and fell down before him, and with a loud voice said, What have I to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of God most high? I beseech thee, torment me not.

29. (For he had commanded the unclean spirit to come out of the man. For oftentimes it had caught him: and he was kept bound with chains and in fetters; and he brake the bands, and was driven of the devil into the wilderness.)

30. And Jesus asked him, saying, What is thy name? And he said, Legion: because many devils were entered into him.

31. And they besought him that he would not command them to go out into the deep.

32. And there was there an herd of many swine feeding on the mountain: and they besought him that he would suffer them to enter into them. And he suffered them.

33. Then went the devils out of the man, and entered into the swine: and the herd ran violently down a steep place into the lake, and were choked.

34. When they that fed them saw what was done, they fled, and went and told it in the city and in the country.

35. Then they went out to see what was done; and came to Jesus, and found the man, out of whom the devils were departed, sitting at the feet of Jesus, clothed, and in his right mind: and they were afraid.

36. They also which saw it told them by what means he that was possessed of the devils was healed.

37. Then the whole multitude of the country of the Gadarenes round about besought him to depart from them; for they were taken with great fear: and he went up into the ship, and returned back again.

38. Now the man out of whom the devils were departed besought him that he might be with him: but Jesus sent him away, saying,

39. Return to thine own house, and shew how great things God hath done unto thee. And he went his way, and published throughout the whole city how great things Jesus had done unto him.

There are two things that really stand out in reading this Gospel passage. The first thing is the sobering reminder to us about the reality of the existence of the archenemy of humanity, the demonic forces. The most frightening thing that the father of lies, as the Savior calls Satan, has accomplished is to convince many people that he does not exist. The bit less frightening but equally dangerous deception is to make the people who do recognize his existence to think that

he is harmless. Maybe a bit peculiar, but harmless. When people doubt his existence, he, hidden from their consciousness, is able to tempt them into committing the most heinous crimes imaginable. When he is seen as peculiar but harmless, people use his image in all kinds of interesting and even seemingly funny ways. We vacuum our home with a dirt devil. We send our children to an university whose mascot is the Sundevel. We eat deviled eggs. We use his evil name in so many ways that we get comfortable with it and completely forget what evil stands behind it.

It is spiritually vital to never underestimate how evil and deceitful the devil is. We must never let our guard down and accept any thought that distracts us from understanding who this beast truly is. We must never stop fearing him and his angels. He is so arrogant that he even attempted to tempt the Son of God, Himself, to bow down to him and accept his dominance over Him. The demons' undisguised appearance is so revolting that the Mother of God asked Her Son to personally receive Her most-holy soul as it left her body in order to prevent them from being present. That is how terrifying their true appearance is. Even the swine could not tolerate them, but frantically and blindly bolted to run away and fell off the cliff.

The devil is an implacable enemy of God and God's highest earthly creation, man. He will stop at nothing in his quest to try and wrest away from God every single human soul. He takes great perverted pleasure in inflicting as much pain, suffering, and terror on his victims as he is able to. And the only defense that we have against him was given to us by the Savior when He warned us that this kind does not go out except by prayer and fasting (Matt. 17:21). This is why we must pray. This is why we have to fast.

The second thing that stands out while reading this Gospel is in some way connected to our discussion of last week. It concerns the question of our attachment to material things. The people of Gadarene were so attached to their material wealth that they asked the Savior to leave them. They saw Him as a threat to their wealth and their way of life. This, even after witnessing an act of great mercy when He freed their countryman from vicious demonic possession. They valued their swine more than what the Savior could offer them. Attachment to material things may start in a small way, but if left uncontrolled, it can enslave a person. Then, anything threatening that attachment, even God, will be rejected.

My dear brothers and sisters in Christ, we have a wonderful loving Father, our Savior. He should be the most precious possession that we have. If we let Him be that, we have nothing to fear. Living in close communion with Him and according to His commandments protects us from all evil and opens to us a glorious and most blessed eternity. Nothing on earth can match that in any way.

With Much Love in Christ,

Archpriest Serge Kotar