

Sermon for Proper 7C  
Sunday, June 19, 2016  
“Ditch your demons”

Text: Luke 8:26-39

I speak to you in the name of the one true God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Amen.

There is a saying: When life gives you lemons, make lemonade. When the Sunday lectionary gives us demons, what do we do? We just heard the story of Jesus and the Geresene demoniac. It is a story that appears in the three synoptic gospels—Matthew, Mark, and Luke. It is a story told in the middle of three other stories: the calming of the storm on the Sea of Galilee, the healing of the woman with a hemorrhage for twelve years, and the raising of the daughter of Jairus, a leader of the synagogue. All four stories are testimonies of God’s power, through Jesus the Christ, over the physical body, natural cosmic forces, and even death itself. Whenever I hear this story, I am reminded of that movie from the 70s, *The Exorcist*. I can’t help picturing the man with the demons with his head spinning around as he taunts Jesus. I’m surprised Hollywood hasn’t picked up on it yet. So, what do we do when the Bible presents us with demons? I’ve heard all kinds of theories as to what these demons might have been. Perhaps the man was psychotic. Perhaps he had a brain tumor. Perhaps he was experiencing some degree of mental breakdown. And maybe he was possessed by an evil force that was so keen that it even recognized Jesus for who he really is. The bottom line is that Jesus confronted this man’s demons and he cured him; he cast out a legion of demons and made them possess the swine. Jesus showed that God is indeed in control of the situation.

Demons are real. Demons are the minions of Satan that plague the world. They may not look like horned gargoyles with tails. They may not inhabit human bodies, cause the head to spin on its axis, or make growling noises, but demons are real. Demons are those things that somehow pull us down, stress us out, make our lives miserable. Demons are those things that help distract us from recognizing God and doing his will. This past week, we saw many demons. We saw the demon of terrorism in Orlando, Florida. 49 people lost their lives and 53 more were injured at the hands of a gunman whose own demons caused the deadliest mass shooting by a single gunman in US history. We saw the demon of hate, and in the aftermath, we’ve seen more demons of hate, homophobia,

and insensitivity. We've seen the demon of political animosity as our nation is divided as to what it means to have the right to bear arms. We see demons in the violence, racism, inequities that continue to plague our communities. We see demons in the economic disparity between rich and poor, the privileged and the disadvantaged. We see the demons of fear of people who are different from us and the insensitivity toward people who have come to this country or want to come to this country to make a better life for themselves and their families.

Demons are real, and we all have demons in our lives. Demons can take many forms. Demons of addiction, demons of insecurity, demons of physical illness, demons of mental illness, demons of hatred toward our neighbor, demons of intolerance, demons of depression. Some of us have demons of children who hurt us, spouses who turn violent, spouses who are emotionally distant, infidelity. Some of the demons in our lives are so deep and so personal that they plague us and tear us apart, and some demons are so difficult to deal with that we feel we can't talk to someone else about it. There are many demons constantly around us, sometimes it may even feel overwhelming with all the demons that present themselves in our lives—those demons that derail us and rob us of our happiness, pull us away from God. Those demons that prevent us from communing with God.

But the Gospel showed us that Jesus Christ was able to come on the scene in the midst of the most terrible demons and send them on their way. Despite all of the demons that invade our lives and our very being, God is still in our midst, ready to cast out any demons that plague us and bring us down, ready to quell any demons that come between us and him. That is the only way we can vanquish the demons of our lives, because when the demons overwhelm us and make us feel like we can't cope or overcome them, it is only through the help of God that we can. The Gospel tells us just how powerful God is. He can tell the demons to leave and they will go into a herd of swine. Whatever the demon is that is terrorizing your life, your body, your soul, give it over to God and let him tell the demon to go away. Keeping God at the center is the only way we can begin to deal with the demons.

What demons are consuming your life? What demons are controlling you, manipulating you, tearing you down, making you sad or

angry, allowing you to hurt others, or creating a barrier between you and God? We will never be rid of demons, not in this world at least, hopefully in the next. We will never be rid of the demons, but the gospel here, the good news in the midst of all of the demons around us is that God can help us ditch our demons. God can help us overcome them, just like Jesus drove the demons out of the man from the land of the Gerasenes, and show us that ultimately he is in control. It is only through the help and power of God that we can. Let us all pray that God will fell the demons that plague our world, our universe. Let us pray that God will remove demons from our path. Whatever demons you're dealing with, say to them, "I'm not dealing with you anymore. God help me. God take this demon out of my life." Let God help you ditch your demons. Amen.

### Resource

*Feasting on the Word* for Proper 7 (Year C, Volume 3).

"Name your demons," <http://us6.campaign-archive2.com/?u=dbffd2070718c7bb6a1b9b7e0&id=3977e81585&e=9d753c1a09>