

Sermon Draft

Text: Luke 8:26–39

Sermon: “No Longer Chained”

If you have been listening carefully up to now in our service today, you’ll notice chains and shackles coming out of our ears! In today’s Collect, we prayed to the Lord to set us free from “sins and evil desires.” We all experience in life those chains that bind us at one time or another. We know there is no heavier chain than when those things torment us inside.

In the Old Testament Reading, we heard how God was bound and determined to save and bless his rebel-people, whose wrongdoing had taken them captive. We heard St. Paul in the Epistle tell his friends how they were once slaves to the “elementary principles of the world.” Chains all over the place! Chains of sin! And our chains come in different forms.

Now in our Gospel, Jesus comes to set free a guy who was shackled on the outside with an iron chain, and on the inside by a pile of demons out to destroy him.

But we don't focus on this event just to remember something Jesus did long ago and far away. God brings this to our ears today so that we will treasure the fact that Jesus sets us free from those chains.

The man in our Gospel was chained in more ways than one! He was shackled with an iron chain that tried to restrain him. He was shackled because people in the area were trying to protect themselves. They were afraid. Fear can be a chain that binds us. He was shackled because, in a deeper way, an evil spirit had seized him. He was chained and held back in many areas.

The demon-possession kept him away from a healthy life in the community. Chains can even cause us to harm ourselves. In Mark's account of the man in our story he tells us that ***“Night and day among the tombs and on the mountains he was always crying and cutting himself with stones.”*** (5:5) He was powerless against it, since the demon even hijacked his mind and voice.

We too are powerless against the chains of sin that bind us,
powerless on our own!

Watch as the One who sets people free works in this man's life. Jesus aimed God's power at this devilish spirit. He did not merely request but commanded the demon to leave its victim. Wondrously enough, the demon confessed who Jesus is. ***“When he saw Jesus, he cried out and fell down before him and said with a loud voice, ‘What have you to do with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God?’”*** It reminds us of Philippians 2:9-11; ***“Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”***

The demon was reduced to begging and was willing to leave the man. The demon knew what everyone will know on that last day! And thanks be to God we already know thanks to the wonderful gift of our faith.

So, Jesus set the demoniac free. He permits the demons to enter a herd of pigs. The pigs run and plummet off the cliff. The pigs' "suicide" shows how the evil one seeks to destroy God's good creation.

Jesus now gives himself to each of us as our liberator. His death in our place shows what he did to the evil one; **"Now is the judgement of this world; now will the ruler of this world be cast out."** (John 12:31). And his death also shows how he wants to be your Savior; **"And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself."** (John 12:32).

He is able to set people free from many things the evil one uses to enslave them: besetting sins, despair, selfishness, the temptation to see troubles as a punishment, and so on. And then He gives us good news to share!

The chained man now set free would not let go of the Jesus. He figured he had to do something extraordinary, like leave his homeland, loved ones, and friends, and go live with Jesus full time.

Jesus directed him to stay in that area God had placed him, telling relatives and neighbors how God's freedom had come to him in Jesus. The man likely spoke simple words and was not obligated to persuade anyone, but simply to tell freely what he knew.

The same is true for us our liberator Jesus can use us this way too. We need not be a professional theologian, pastor or missionary. The Lord opens doors all the time so that we can speak in simple words of what Jesus has done for us and the truth he has revealed to in his Word. We're free in all of this, since it is not our obligation to convince anybody, but simply to testify to what we know.

What came of the message the longtime demoniac spoke in his town and among his neighbors? We don't know! The Bible doesn't say! Did God use it to plant faith among others who heard this man? The response does not matter so much, since the praises of Jesus are always a glorious thing, even if many people choose not to listen to them.

The big thing is to hold before your eyes today the reality of the evil one, the way he seeks to destroy us and others in both body and soul, and to rejoice with all our might that Jesus has conquered him for our sake.

Christ covers over with his own blood the wrongs we have done, for every time we have given in to the devil. He brings the good news of forgiveness into our lives through the word he speaks, lays hold of our hearts, and gives us faith to trust him. In the power of his Spirit, he makes us strong to overcome the damage the evil one may have done in our lives, and to resist him in any new attack he tries to launch against us.

Jesus has freed us from chains of sin that have bound us and mad us slaves and now through him we are bound together in love and hope and faith.

Amen