

Gospel lesson

We move over now to the Gospel of Luke, to journey along with Jesus on His countryside ministry.



picture from <https://www.freebibleimages.org/photos/lumo-jesus-demoniac/>; Courtesy of Lumo Project Films - www.lumoproject.com

Luke 8:26-39

(NRSV)

²⁶Then they arrived at the country of the Ger'-a-sēnes, which is opposite Galilee.

²⁷As he stepped out on land, a man of the city who had demons met him. For a long time he had worn no clothes, and he did not live in a house but in the tombs.

²⁸When he saw Jesus, he fell down before him and shouted at the top of his voice, "What have you to do with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I beg you, do not torment me"--

²⁹for 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.)

³⁰Jesus then asked him, "What is your name?" He said, "Legion"; for many demons had entered him.

³¹They begged him not to order them to go back into the abyss.

³²Now 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.

³³Then the demons came out of the man and entered the swine, and the herd rushed down the steep bank into the lake and was drowned.

³⁴When the swineherds saw what had happened, they ran off and told it in the city and in the country.

³⁵Then 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 were afraid.

³⁶Those who had seen it told them how the one who had been possessed by demons had been healed.

³⁷Then all the people of the surrounding country of the Ger'asēnes asked Jesus to leave them; for they were seized with great fear. So he got into the boat and returned.

³⁸The man from whom the demons had gone 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.

The Word of God for the people of God

<Children's time>

<Hymn "He Touched Me">

UMH #367>

Message: Now That Faith Has Come



picture from

<https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/worship-planning/dear-children-of-god-omg/second-sunday-after-pentecost-year-c-lectionary-planning-notes/second-sunday-after-pentecost-year-c-graphics>

Please pray with me?

Renewing and restoring Lord,

as we take time now to further consider today's scriptures, please

- speak Your words through my mouth,
- open our ears to hear Your message, and
- abide in our hearts,

That as our perspectives change, we may better share Your grace with all people. Amen.

The colors around us are green. We have entered a new season and have a new sermon series to go with it, based on phrases from the epistle lessons. If Apostle Paul were alive today, what might he be texting?

"Dear Children of God: OMG!"

"Today, the surprise of Pentecost and the glory of Trinity Sunday propel us toward...Ordinary Time.

This is always the way of it in the liturgical year and in the Christian life, this juxtaposition of extraordinary and mundane, the shocking revelations and the ordinary question of "What do we do now?"



picture from MMMS collection

Summer is officially here. How many of you are enjoying the heat? <Let them respond>

How are you going to deal with the heat wave of the next few days? <Let them respond – need to open cool church?>

Extreme heat aside, what makes summer different than other seasons? <Let them respond; warmer, more sun>

Plants grow and produce fruit more abundantly in this season. What do you do differently in the summer season than in other times of the year? <Let them respond>

Since Pentecost happened, the Holy Spirit is officially here. How does that affect our faith and our spirits? <Let them respond>

Have you ever felt burned by an overwhelming amount of God's presence? (Is it possible to have too much of God's love in our lives?) <Let them respond>

Overwhelming experiences aside, what does having the Holy Spirit in our lives mean for us? For society? <Let them respond>

The natural world is renewed with God's grace. I was heartened to hear of fungi in Australia that breaks down plastic that is difficult to recycle, which may

be a huge help in reducing global pollution. What do you think helps most in reducing people's toxicity to one another? <Let them respond>

With the political world getting more and more chaotic, how are you going to deal with the increasing opportunities for sharing God's grace? <Let them respond>

No matter how passionate we are about different issues, I think violence not the best answer because violence begets violence.



picture from <https://www.freebibleimages.org/illustrations/dg-joshua-3/>;
credit: David & Goliath (DG)

Ancient Israel lived in a time when battles raged constantly between groups venerating different deities (not really so different today, sadly). Prior to today's reading from 1 Kings, Jezebel killed nearly all the prophets of God to empower Baal's priests; after a demonstration of God's power, Elijah had all those priests killed and then had to flee for fear of Jezebel's revenge.

God did take care of faithful Elijah, but note that in the theophany we read about today, God neither appeared as a warrior nor instructed Elijah to be a warrior. God did not even appear in the midst of mighty chaos as was traditionally expected, but in silence – in the stillness where Elijah's heart was not full of fear, but calmed and open to the Lord.

The psalmist today reminds us to "Hope in God." It

sounds to me that if we want to encounter God, we need to take time out to [set aside our worries about the world and focus on the Lord]. When God is present with us, our faith is renewed.

Paul wrote about how “before faith came, we were imprisoned and guarded under the law.”



picture from <https://www.freebibleimages.org/photos/Lumo-jesus-demoniac/>;
Courtesy of Lumo Project Films
- www.lumoproject.com

Certainly that was the case for the poor possessed man of the Ger'asēnes, “kept under guard and bound with chains and shackles.” When he encountered the Lord, he was freed from his demons, no longer to be “imprisoned and guarded under the law.”

Faith had come to him – so what was he to do next? He wanted to stay with Jesus, travel with Him when the Ger'asēnes asked Jesus to leave. But Jesus told him what? To return to his home – to those who knew and loved him – and declare what God did for him.

In other words, when we have encountered the Lord and we have faith, we are to tell others what God has done for us. As Paul wrote to the Galatians, it does not matter what their nationality, their social status, or their gender are: we are all one in Christ, all children of God. So how do we communicate God's grace as people of Christian faith?

I think helping others where they have need is a good place to start. We are blessed in unexpected ways when we open our hearts in that way.



*image screencaptured from
[Google Maps \(picture taken
August 2021\)](#)*

I drove Paul Carson to an appointment in Cooperstown on Friday when the ride he had planned on fell through. Since I am not used to driving there from where he lives in Norwich, I used GoogleMaps on my phone for driving directions.

At one point, it said to go straight through an intersection and continue for some miles. However, the intersection had a traffic light, and it was red. I had to stop, wait for the light to turn green, and assess traffic conditions before continuing as the app said to do.

It struck me as similar to moments in our faith journeys - while the end goal is important and we should always stay focused on Christ, sometimes we need to rest in the Holy Spirit and assess what others are doing, that we may all proceed safely in what the Lord calls us to. Barging ahead without regard for others can result in injuries that prevent one or both of us from ever reaching the faith destination God has prepared for us.

Do you know anyone who has been hurt by a person of faith, such that they have turned away from God or are very wary of religious gatherings? There is pain there, a wound in need of healing. Maybe you have even experienced such a period in your life.

Where do you feel trapped, stuck, or angry? Ask God

for help, listen for the guiding of the Holy Spirit, and follow the teaching of Jesus.



picture from

<https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/worship-planning/dear-children-of-god-omg/second-sunday-after-pentecost-year-c-lectionary-planning-notes/second-sunday-after-pentecost-year-c-graphics>

Give God thanks for the blessings you have already received – we all have many, given that we are breathing, we were able to get here today, we are generally able to think and move for ourselves, we have adequate clothing to wear. I expect we have each been blessed with renewal, healing, and/or freedom in some way. Tell others how God has blessed you.

Look for those who are still trapped, stuck, or angry. Connect with them via God's grace, paying attention to indicators of what might help versus cause problems. Seek for all to have a safe and healthy faith journey to the Lord. Let the Holy Spirit show the love of Jesus through you.

And in all things, **now that faith has come**, be vigilant in worshipping God and in paying attention to the situations around you, that we may be more effective in bringing God's kingdom to this earth.

.