

The Second Sunday after Pentecost – 2025

Isaiah 65:1-9

Galatians 3:23-4:7

Luke 8:26-39

“People are strange when you’re a stranger. Faces look ugly when you’re alone. Women seem wicked when you’re unwanted. Streets are uneven when you’re down. When you’re strange – faces come out of the rain. When you’re strange – no one remembers your name. When you’re strange.” Those are the haunting lyrics of a song by The Doors. It was written in 1967 by Jim Morrison. It’s about alienation; it’s about being an outsider. The Bible tells us about demon possession. I never looked Richard Ramirez in the eyes. Richard Ramirez was a mass-murderer, the felon known as the Night Stalker. Was Richard Ramirez possessed? He certainly seemed to lose his humanity. Looking into his eyes must have been like looking into a shark’s eyes – soulless, mechanical yet maniacal. Richard Ramirez’s background reads like a formula for how to build a sociopath. At his trial, Ramirez displayed a pentagram drawn on his palm and said, “Hail, Satan.”

I’m not sure that I’ve ever seen someone who was demon possessed. I’m not sure that I haven’t. How could I know? I’ve met plenty of liars and adulterers and some people whose first impulse is to solve problems by resorting to violence. Are such people possessed? It wouldn’t take any of us very long to find hellish things on the internet. A Pride parade seems demonic. The Pro-Palestine demonstrations that I’ve seen aren’t laudable examples of virtue, but are they demonic? Are we jaded? Have we experienced the demonic so frequently that we are no longer scandalized? Is Tren de Aragua a demonic legion? Is MS-13 a demonic legion? The account of the man living among the tombs is vivid. For a considerable time, he wore no clothes. More animal than man, he doesn’t live in a house. The demon possessed man takes up residence where jackals abide, among the dead. Pity; this man’s humanity is under duress and our first reaction is either fear or revulsion. But pity, compassion, and the means, the effort to deliver this man from his oppressors is the thrust of what St. Luke writes.

Pity is defined as the feeling of sorrow or compassion aroused by the suffering and misfortunes of others. The man’s fellow man had had pity on him. Using the resources that they thought were best, the man’s fellow man attempted to help. Their help was in the form of restraints. An archaic form of a straitjacket – chains and shackles – were used to control his outbursts. Superhuman strength cast off these restraints and the man was led by a demonic horde *away* from the light, *away* from community, *away* from help. Comes now Jesus. Comes now Him who is the Light of the world. Pity, authority, and the wherewithal to rectify this man’s duress are all present in Christ. It is the demon horde that speaks first. *Through* the beleaguered man, the demonic speaks. Note the simpering tone: “What have you to do with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I beg you, do not torment me” (Luke 8:28). What does this tell you? It tells us that the demonic recognizes holiness, recognizes divine authority, recognizes God in human flesh. Satan *knows* what his end is. The demons *know* that the abyss awaits. The demons *know* that their consignment to hell is a certainty. The sands in God’s hourglass is the only thing that delays their wretched end (Revelation 20:10). Destruction, torment, and eternal despair – the demonic see it on their horizon; they can’t escape it, and they hate it; they dread it.

The Lord Christ's asks its name. "Legion" is the reply. A Roman legion was a military force, an occupying force of up to 6000 soldiers. A legion was known for its brutality. The reply of "legion" should send shivers down your spine. That poor man! That poor soul! How he must've suffered! Wretched spirits who hate what is good were occupying a defenseless son of Adam and the demons were merciless, turning his life into a nightmare. And Jesus comes to that place. Jesus goes to the most unclean of the unclean and He brings light, He brings liberation.

Are you afraid of the demonic? I can understand that – the demonic is present and powerful. It does seem to be more difficult to find complete sanctuary away from evil. To be sure, we are sinners. Sadly, we flirt with what is contrary to God in varied measure. Sinners play with fire. A healthy awareness of the demonic is wise. A paralyzing fear, a defeatist fear, a "woe-is-me" fear is not a Christian's bearing. Why? Because "He who is at work in you is greater than he who is in the world" (1 John 4:4). St. John wrote that. Believers in Christ possess a power that swamps the satanic. Christ is at work *in* you, *around* you. The Holy Spirit is at work in you. There is a Light that no darkness can overcome; it is present, it is powerful, and it is shining! (John 1:5). This is God's world. He redeemed humanity by the blood of His Son. That is the power that will see us through this life. A very real death and resurrection was Satan's undoing (Colossians 2:15). On the cross, as He suffered, Jesus crushed the serpent's head (Genesis 3:15). Jesus' death is Satan's eternal demise, and Satan knows it. He is angry about it. He can't undo it. Christ's Word carries that authority. Wherever God's Word is taught in its truth and purity there the demonic is in retreat.

This church is a fortress of Light. "Walk about Zion, go around her, number her towers, consider well her ramparts, go through her citadels that you may tell the next generation that this is God, our God, forever and ever. He will guide us forever" (Psalm 48:12-14). That bit from Psalm 48 describes Christ the King Lutheran Church. Here children are baptized and learn the name of their Lord, learn the truth of the cross, learn of grace and love and forgiveness. Here the women of our LWML tend the needs of the forlorn with Christlike compassion. Here the elders serve the saints with their fidelity to Christ's Word and sacraments. Here Sunday school teachers give of themselves to the children in their care, using the Word of God to fortify young people's souls. Here the choir sings the glory of God and thereby lift the hearts of their listeners. This church is a fortress of Light, Christ's light. Here darkness has no room for entry. Here the church council considers the gifts that God has given us and how best to use them faithfully, use them to His glory. Here the preschool gives youngsters extraordinary love, the Love of Christ, and teaches them the wonder of Christianity. This church is a fortress of light.

The unholy legion was cast into a herd of swine and they were drowned. Christ's Word has authority. Jesus gave a command it was obeyed, executed. The man was restored, clothed, in his right mind and sitting at Christ's feet. Good Friday and Easter prevailed at the shore of the Gerasenes. A victorious cross and an empty tomb prevail here. That man, sitting at Christ's feet, became a disciple, a follower of the Light. Of course he begged to stay with Jesus. The Lord had another plan. "'Return to your home, and declare how much God has done for you.' And he went away, proclaiming throughout the whole city how much Jesus had done for him" (Luke 8:39). If the Lord Christ can deal with those demons, restoring this man out of his turmoil, what can the Master do for us? In Baptism, we have been clothed in Christ's righteousness (Galatians 3:27). In this Divine Service we sit at His feet (Luke 10:38-42). The Lord Himself sends us out

into the world to declare the praises of Him who brought us out of darkness and into His marvelous light (1 Peter 2:9). What a joy it is to live in the Light. What a joy it is to live in Christ's kingdom. How many has He set free?