

Grace, mercy, & peace from God our Father & our Lord Jesus Christ.

Someone clearly did not get the memo.

Have you ever been that person? The one who for whatever reason didn't know vital information that everyone else already knows. You know, like asking someone about a party they weren't invited to; or asking about a coworker's loved one, only to discover that they've filed for a divorce or worse died. Or being the person who asks someone about their job only to hear that they've recently become unemployed.

Most of us have embarrassed ourselves once or twice because we are operating on the assumptions that are no longer true because we lack a vital piece of information. In most cases it's simply embarrassing to both parties, but sometimes the piece of information that's missing changes everything.

In our gospel reading morning – perhaps the oddest account we have about Jesus ministry – the legion of demons clearly lack a crucial piece of information regarding Jesus' power when they request that Jesus let them enter the herd of pigs, and then rush headlong into the Sea of Galilee.

People – and apparently demons – in the ancient world universally believed that large bodies of water were places chaos and evil had the upper hand. Even the Jewish scriptures attest to the belief that God alone has the power to control the water and what's in it.

*So in this narrative we have Jesus, a Jewish rabbi, crossing over into gentile territory beyond the borders of Jewish influence – a place of peril for a Jewish person. **The issue at hand – whether Jesus has authority and power***

in such an unholy place – is put to the test immediately.

Upon arriving, Jesus encounters a raving, naked, maniacal man possessed by a host of demons. *Interestingly, though Jesus own disciples can't figure out who He is when he stills the storm on the way over, the demons recognize Jesus right away. They know He has authority over them even on that side of the sea*, and they are afraid. They beg Jesus not to cast them into the abyss. *The legion of demons suggests an alternate location for themselves*, “Send us instead into this herd of swine.”

Pigs are unclean, unholy. Therefore it should make no difference to a Jewish rabbi if they reside there. But that is not their intended final destination. The demons want to get to a place beyond the bounds of Jesus’ dominion. *That’s why the moment Jesus grants them permission and they enter the herd of swine and head right for the lake.*

Honestly; that bit of the story has always been a huge “Huh” for me. I mean, what’s the point of a bunch of pigs rushing into the lake to drown? I once thought that Jesus double crosses the demons, to get them out of the man, and then causes them to drown themselves. But Jesus casts out demons all the time without having a herd of swine handy. So it just never made sense to me.

The only thing that seems to makes sense is that the legion of demons want to get to the water. Those pigs certainly weren’t headed that direction before, but once Jesus allows the demons into the swine – wham – it’s into the water they go. Even that doesn’t make much sense until you recall that folks in Jesus’ day believed that large bodies of water were placed where chaos ruled. So the demons think that the water is beyond Jesus’ control – a place where chaos, darkness and demons are welcome, tolerated, safe.

So into the water they go – *into the chaos – the place they think is beyond even Jesus' power and authority. They are sly, thinking that they are negotiating a way to escape from Jesus' power into an area outside of his control. For there in the chaos they assume they will be free to do as they wish again. But they didn't get the memo containing the vital information readers of Luke's gospel have just read.*

But the “Aha!” which both the reader and writer of Luke’s gospel understand is that on the boat ride over, immediately before this incident, Jesus has demonstrated his power even over the watery chaos by stilling the storm. Jesus controls the places of human brokenness, the demons, the powers of nature, even death itself. Evil can run, but it cannot hide.

Meanwhile, the man possessed by the demon has been restored. He is clothed, in his right mind, and peaceful sitting at the feet of Jesus. *He has found the place of healing, peace, and wholeness – in Jesus’ presence.*

This man doesn’t seek Jesus out. Jesus enters the scene it is enough to bring about healing and wholeness.

By this time, the swineherds have gone and spread the word of what has happened. People from city and country alike come out to see this Jesus. Frightened by this Jesus who disturbs their accommodation of the demons – actually He pretty much disturbs everything – they ask him to leave. *They also didn't get the memo* and understand who Jesus is, but Jesus gets back in the boat to depart.

The man who has been healed begs to go with Jesus, but Jesus says, “*Return to your home, and declare how much God has done for you.*” Understandably, the healed man’s desire is to stay with Jesus, but *Jesus wants him to remain on that side of the Sea of Galilee as a daily reminder*

that the God who controls the demons and the deep has all things in his hands. We who have entered into the mercy of God through Christ are called to do the same – living out our lives as a witness to God’s power to overcome evil, redeem from brokenness, and defeat even death itself.

Luke’s message for us and the world: Jesus has dominion over all places – Galilee, the chaotic sea, the land of strangers. In all places far and near, familiar and foreign Jesus word commands.

Truth is brothers and sisters, we find ourselves in many places in this life where everyone assumes are beyond God’s control: physical sickness, mental illness, darkness where evil has the upper hand, the loss of a loved one, in a war zone. But the clear message from Luke’s gospel is that we need not be frightened, because none of these places fall outside of Jesus’ control. In each case Jesus stands with us to defeat sin, death and the devil.

Evil cannot escape his control, and sending him packing does not make the place any less Jesus’ territory. *Even being found in the places that seem beyond God’s reach do not place any of us outside of God’s love. There can be healing here for Jesus is here, and we can live under Christ’s authority and his reign of love.*

We know to whom we can go – whether it be here in Spanaway, across the ocean, or in Galilee, or in the land of the Gerasenes, or even to the bottom of the deep Sea – Christ has dominion.

No matter how it may seem, or what we may personally want to believe, Jesus Christ has dominion. As the Psalmists reminds us today:

²⁶ *All the ends of the earth shall remember and turn to the LORD,* and all the families of the nations shall bow before God.*

²⁷*For dominion belongs to the LORD;*

AMEN !!!