

**TWENTY-THIRD SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST, OCTOBER 22/NOVEMBER 4, 2007**

**EPH 2:4-10**

**ST. LUKE 8:26-39**

by

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*Gospel: And they arrived at the country of the Gadarenes, which is over against Galilee.*

*And when He went forth to land, there met Him out of the city a certain man, which had devils long time, and ware no clothes, neither abode in any house, but in the tombs.*

*When he saw Jesus, he cried out, and fell down before Him, and with a loud voice said, What have I to do with Thee, Jesus, thou Son of God most high? I beseech Thee, torment me not.*

*(For He had commanded the unclean spirit to come out of the man. For oftentimes it had caught him: and he was kept bound with chains and in fetters; and he brake the bands, and was driven of the devil into the wilderness.)*

*And Jesus asked him, saying, What is thy name? And he said, Legion: because many devils were entered into him.*

*And they besought Him that He would not command them to go out into the deep.*

*And there was there an herd of many swine feeding on the mountain: and they besought Him that He would suffer them to enter into them. And He suffered them.*

*Then went the devils out of the man, and entered into the swine: and the herd ran violently down a steep place into the lake, and were choked.*

*When they that fed them saw what was done, they fled, and went and told it in the city and in the country.*

*Then they went out to see what was done; and came to Jesus and found the man, out of whom the devils were departed, sitting at the feet of Jesus, clothed, and in his right mind: and they were afraid.*

*They also which saw it told them by what means he that was possessed of the devils was healed.*

*Then the whole multitude of the country of the Gadarenes round about besought Him to depart from them; for they were taken with great fear: and He went up into the ship, and returned back again.*

*Now the man out of whom the devils were departed besought Him that he might be with Him: but Jesus sent him away, saying,*

*Return to thine own house, and shew how great things God hath done unto thee. And he went his way, and published throughout the whole city how great things Jesus had done unto him.*

After rebuking the waters of the Sea of Tiberias,<sup>1</sup> the Lord and His disciples arrived in the Gadarenes country. Remember in this test of their faith and discipleship, the disciples failed to exhibit perfect faith. For, had they perfect faith, they would have known that, being with Christ our Saviour, nothing could harm them! He rebuked the winds saving them at the height of the fury of the storm. It is very significant that he did not save them *before* the power of the storm reached its zenith.

The fierce storm confronting the disciples foreshadows the image of the Lord's Crucifixion in Jerusalem. The lake is an image of the land of Judea, the storm's fury descends against the Lord, the disciples forsake Him and flee, Christ rises from His sleep (after His Crucifixion, he rose from the dead), the disciples are calmed recognising His great power because He *is* God and the Son of God.<sup>2</sup>

#### Christ's Church

is a ship which finds itself on the sea of life in this world; it has its sailors, the clergy and the faithful, who have Christ ever with them. Nevertheless, fierce tempests often befall it; numberless waves of woes dash this holy ship...<sup>3</sup>

Christ allows us to be buffeted most severely by the ill winds challenging our faith before He intervenes to calm the storm. Notice the similarity of the Lord's method between His calming of the waters only at the height of the storm and His allowing the demons to remain on earth to contest and fight for our souls. Christ allows us to be severely tested. As Bl. Theophylact states:

The Lord permits them (the demons) to remain upon the earth in order that they might fight and contend with men and thus make men tested veterans. For if man had no adversaries, there would be no struggles and contests; and, if there were no contests, there would be no crowns of victory.<sup>4</sup>

We must understand that our demons (temptations) are defeated by our steadfastness of faith. Demonic power only succeeds against those who "separate themselves from God: these they push to their perdition".<sup>5</sup> If we wear our garment of holy Baptism, we dwell in Christ's house, His Church, and avoid the "tombs, that is, in the inns of deadly deeds..."<sup>6</sup> We overcome the "tombs of iniquity".<sup>7</sup>

The swineherds' flight could have been the spiritual vehicle for the salvation of the Gadarenes, but they failed to seize the opportunity. Instead, they rejected Christ, seeking that He leave because they feared another loss like losing the swine. They let fear block their salvation. Notice that when they rejected their salvation, the Lord *left*: "He went up into the ship, and returned back again."

"Where (men lead) a swinish way of life, and *reject the good*, there Christ does *not* remain (emphases supplied)".<sup>8</sup>

Contrast their 'faith failure' with the man Christ healed from the demons. His mind is healed, evidenced by the "fact that he now recognizes Jesus and begs his permission to be with Him".<sup>9</sup> Christ's healing knows no physical boundaries. His healing is good everywhere, so it was not necessary for the cleansed man to go with the Lord. The Lord's grace protects us no matter where we are!<sup>10</sup>

Brethren, take up the mantle of Christ, believe and follow. If we do, Christ's grace shields us from evil anywhere we are in this world because we are following the Royal Path, which is *not* of this world. Do good, and when we do, follow the Lord's example of humility by attributing any and all of our 'spiritual improvements' to God, not to ourselves. Do not publish your good deeds; let the recipient of the good do so. If *you* are the beneficiary of such good, show your gratitude by telling it to others.<sup>11</sup>

+ In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

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<sup>1</sup> St. Luke 8:22-25.

<sup>2</sup> Hieromonk German Ciuba (tr. from the Slavonic into English; translated from the Greek into Slavonic in the year 6851, in the 11th Indiction), *The Gospel Commentary*, Russian Orthodox Church of the Nativity of Christ (Old Rite), Erie, PA, 2002, pp. 485-487.

<sup>3</sup> *id.*, p. 487.

<sup>4</sup> Bl. Theophylact's *Explanation of the Holy Gospel According to Luke, Vol. III* in the series, Bl. Theophylact's *Explanation of The New Testament* (tr. from the original Greek by Fr. Christopher Stade, Chrysostom Press, House Springs, MO, 1997, p. 88.

<sup>5</sup> Ciuba, *The Gospel Commentary, op. cit.*, p.490.

<sup>6</sup> *id.*

<sup>7</sup> Bl. Theophylact, *op. cit.*, pp.88-89.

<sup>8</sup> Ciuba, *The Gospel Commentary, op. cit.*, p. 491.

<sup>9</sup> Bl. Theophylact, *op. cit.*, p.89.

<sup>10</sup> *id.*

<sup>11</sup> *id.*, pp. 89-90 and Ciuba, *The Gospel Commentary, op. cit.*, p. 492.