

Daily Office Devotional, May 6, 2021
Thursday of the fifth Week of Easter
The Rev. David W. Perkins, Th.D.

Daily Office Lectionary Readings

AM Psalm [70], 71; PM Psalm 74

Wisdom 14:27-15:3; Rom. 14:1-12; Luke 8:26-39

Morning Prayer, Rite 2, page 75, *Book of Common Prayer*

Evening Prayer, Rite 2, page 115, *Book of Common Prayer*

Compline (Night Prayer), Page 127, *Book of Common Prayer*

Daily Office Gospel, Luke 8:26-39

26Then they arrived at the country of the Gerasenes, 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 Gerasenes 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.

David's Reflections

Today's Gospel presents us with the most dramatic case of possession by evil to be found in the Gospels. (See Mark 5 and Matthew 8 for parallel accounts of the same deliverance miracle.) This episode literally brims with motifs and mythological themes prevalent in the literature of that era.

Two observations come to mind. First, beyond our vision and experience lies a vast and mysterious world of spiritual reality. Jesus believed that his ministry involved the fulfillment of the promise of God's rule, which meant conflict with the powers of darkness. He even compared himself to a burglar who had bound the strong man (Satan) and was despoiling him of his possessions (Mark 3).

Second, this man may well have been the victim of collective community violence. His personal pathology had made him vulnerable to being scapegoated by the community. The work of René Girard, retired professor of literature at Stanford University, especially in his earlier work *The Scapegoat* and his later, *I Saw Satan Fall Like Lightning*, delves into that dimension of this story.

Human societies seem almost incapable of admitting their violence and they seem incapable of allowing ongoing punishment of those who do express that violence. They target scapegoats who function like lightning rods to draw away the volatile charge that would otherwise draw the society into convulsive conflict.

The village binds this man with chains but not chains so strong that he cannot break them. He finds himself forced out into the tombs bearing the collective madness of the community but kept alive as a constant scapegoat. The pigs suffer the fate usually assigned to scapegoats.

This Gospel reminds us of our own tendency to displace our emotional violence on the marginalized among us and to treat them as other and, often as pathological. That heightens their struggle with the forces of darkness within and without. We see in them the emotional violence we refuse to see in ourselves. This story offers us a vivid reminder of the healing power of Jesus. No malady, no caughtness, no possession can ultimately resist his healing love.

We can brave the ministry of deliverance from evil with the assurance that Jesus has defeated every dark power in his death and resurrection and that he engaged in deliverance during his ministry. No spiritual force can resist the power of Jesus' healing and delivering love. If you sense the need for deliverance prayer or

know someone who does, please consider inquiring in your area for those gifted in this kind of healing ministry and seeking their assistance.

Collect of the Day, Fifth Sunday of Easter

Almighty god, whom truly to know is everlasting life: Grant us so perfectly to know your Son Jesus Christ to be the way, the truth, and the life, that we may steadfastly follow his steps in the way that leads to eternal life; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen.* (BCP, 225)

Collect of the Weekdays of Easter

Almighty God, you show the light of your truth to those who are in error, to the intent that they may return to the way of righteousness: Grant to those who are admitted into the fellowship of Christ's religion that they may avoid those things that are contrary to their profession, and follow all such things as are agreeable to it; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

A Collect for Protection

O God, the life of all who live, the light of the faithful, the strength of those who labor, and the repose of the dead: We thank you for the blessings of the day that is past, and humbly ask for your protection through the coming night. Bring us in safety to the morning hours; through him who died and rose again for us, your Son our Savior Jesus Christ. *Amen.* (BCP, 124)

For Peace

Almighty God, kindle, we pray, in every heart the true love of peace, and guide with your wisdom those who take counsel for the nations of the earth, that in tranquility your dominion may increase until the earth is filled with the knowledge of your love; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. *Amen.* (BCP, 258)

In the Evening

O Lord, support us all the day long, until the shadows lengthen, and the evening comes, and the busy world is hushed, and the fever of life is over, and our work is done. Then in thy mercy, grant us a safe lodging, and a holy rest, and peace at the last. *Amen.* (BCP, 833)

A Collect for Mission

O God, you manifest in your servants the signs of your presence: Send forth upon us the spirit of love, that in companionship with one another your abounding grace may increase among us; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.* (BCP, 125)