

## On The Road Again

These last couple of months, we've explored the very pinnacles of our faith.

Beginning with Easter, in the astonishing resurrection of Jesus from the dead, we come face to face with God's promise that death does not have the last word.

We are given a glimpse of our common destiny.

The assurance that no matter what, all shall be well, and all shall be well, and all manner of things shall be well.

And then, for 50 days leading up to Pentecost, we spent most of our time with St John, and his deep meditations about the mystery of God made flesh.

The unity that is at once our challenge and our inheritance.

Not only with one another, but with God as well.

Then it was Pentecost!

The unexpected and bewildering coming of the Holy Spirit!

Turning the tongues of simple fishermen into wonders of translation, destroying the divisions of Babel, and setting us on a road to a new openness toward one another.

And all of these marvels were consummated last Sunday, during the feast day of the Holy Trinity.

A feast day in which, if we are quiet, we can hear the bubbling laughter and joy of God.

Not as an old man on a cloud.

But by slowly awakening to the truth that the very nature of God is the beauty and inter-play and joy of intimate relationship.

For two months, we have wandered among and marveled at the heights, at the mountaintops, of our faith.

And here we are today.

Back on the road again!

And while it may feel like a rude awakening, it is a necessary awakening.

Perhaps because we cannot develop the eyes to see the heights, the ears to hear its delightful melodies, unless we have trudged along the roads of despair.

That as much as we often fear or regret those times in our lives when all seems hopeless and lost, being back on the road again with Jesus is a reminder that such times are necessary.

Fear and regret have the uncanny ability to crack us open.

Allowing us to be transformed into who we are destined to become.

And that is where we are today.

Fear and regret seem to run wild today!

Just look at Elijah!

A prophet of God being hunted down by the chaplains of empire.

Afraid and alone, he heads for the desert.

Where a tender God tends to his needs.

A little food.

A little drink.

And his physical hunger is satisfied.

But Elijah's hunger is for something more than just food or drink.

He hungers for that justice that is God.

And so he is driven to a place where he discovers that the voice of God is rarely heard in loud bombastic noise.

He comes to discover that the word of God is most often heard as a sound of sheer silence.

And to hear it, we need to develop the ability to silence ourselves.

To put aside, even if for a few moments each day, our worries and anxieties, our fears and frustrations.

To allow ourselves to simply be — for awhile.

And in that moment of simply being, the Source of all being comes and sits with us.

We are living in times when the ability to sit quietly seems to be almost a lost art.

Whether it's the instinct to pick up the phone and scroll through Facebook or Instagram.

Or tuning in to the never-ending hyperbole of various pundits and podcasts.

Or standing aghast at the ever-increasing divisions between those who think they're losing (what they probably never had) to those who are new to this nation.

Learning to sit in peaceful silence seems a rare gift these days.

Which is why getting back on the road again helps us to get our bearings.

Helps us to become faithful followers of Jesus rather than manipulated slaves of the empire.

And so there is Paul this morning who tells us in no uncertain terms that because of Christ, there are no more divisions between people.

Period.

Paul summarizes a comprehensive list of all the categories of people his world knew 2000 years ago.

And he sweeps those divisions away — as relics of a pre-Christ past.

He tells us, candidly and bluntly, that all human beings are children of God.

That no one stands higher than another.

And no one stands lower.

That our obligation to one another is simply this, that we love each other.

That is the great commandment.

It's what we're required to do.

Whether we like it or not.

Imagine a world in which we practiced this way of life!

Imagine disagreements — without becoming disagreeable.

Imagine being convinced, at the end of the day, that every human person is immeasurably worth-while.

Which is why Jesus brings us to the heart of the dilemmas that we face, back on the road.

Back to our daily lives of work and conflict.

Of worry and anxiety.

Jesus walks smack dab into that world today as he visits the village of the Gerasenes.

There he comes face-to-face with a man who's consumed with demons.

And reading this gospel story, I couldn't help but think of the 30 or so young men who were last week arrested in Idaho, on their way to disrupt an LGBTQ pride parade.

Apparently armed with a smoke grenade, riot shields and other instruments of violence, it seems they themselves are consumed by demons, feeling some horrible need to inflict misery on those who are different from them.

Ironically, many of these homophobes are probably gay themselves, but can't face that fact in their life.

So they strike out against others who are more open about their reality.

We see the demons of those who threaten Civil War in this country – because this country is no longer what it used to be for them.

Meaning, a country where minorities were kept down, where white men rule the day, and those who are neither white nor male are second class citizens.

Or worse.

All of which flies in the face of the justice, compassion, mercy and unity that is the cornerstone of our faith.

What this lesson about the Gerasenes teaches us is that it is not simply individuals who are consumed by demons.

Whole communities are consumed by them too.

And so, while the demoniac, once freed, begs to follow Jesus, Jesus refuses.

Sending him instead as a missionary to his own people.

Hoping that they too may be freed from their own demons.

Freedom, it seems, they don't want, insisting that Jesus leave their town.

Why send Jesus packing?

Because we are so often addicted to our demons!

The January 6 hearings continue to put a fine point on that fact.

Notwithstanding the truth told by his closest advisors, Mr Trump continues to bellow out lies and nonsense about his fate last November.

But it's not only power hungry politicians who are addicted to demons.

I have mine.

Perhaps you have yours as well.

What demons are holding onto you today?

To me?

Sometimes they are old tapes from childhood — hurts, insults and injuries.

Perhaps you're in an abusive relationship that seems impossible to escape from.

And we face national demons.

As we face economic challenges that hurt the poor among us.

Where are the prophetic voices demanding a redistribution of wealth?

Where is the uprising that demands taxing the ridiculously rich in a sufficient amount that monies can then be spread to those who have not enough?

Why do we keep insisting that the way things are — is the way things must be?

Facing our demons takes guts.

It takes climbing out of the boxes that we so neatly construct for ourselves (and for God) so that we might see this world through gospel eyes.

So that we, like the now healed demoniac, might become missionaries to our own people.

Missionaries, with good gospel news!

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