

Early Summer - Cycle C - Revised Common Lectionary
Pentecost through Proper 10
May 27, 2007 - July 15, 2007

We remain Easter people, now with the wind of the Holy Spirit in our sails. Our task for the months ahead, in this season of Ordinary Time, which extends to the end of November, is to look at what Jesus so tenaciously taught his disciples and see what is in these teachings for us, as we carry out the work we have been given to do. Jesus promised his disciples a helper, an Advocate, who would stand with them making the work possible. This same helper, the Holy Spirit, hovers over us, still eager to quench the fire of fear and replace it with the powerful energy of love.

Proper 7
June 24, 2007
Luke 8: 26-39

A notation for this week's Gospel

Demons. Not a likely topic for a meeting of psychiatric medical professionals. And the prescription — tossing demons onto the back of pigs and subsequently driving the pigs off a cliff — equally unlikely. Yet who among us has not been taunted by a demon in some other disguise? ("I am not qualified, I can't do it, it is too hard." etc.) And, oh, the delicious relief when the wind blows the demons away.

Lesson Plans for Older Children

Theme: Demons blown away.

Before Class. You will need a package of an Alka-Seltzer type product — generic if you can find it — sufficient for at least one tablet per child (No! They are not going to ingest them, but watch them dissolve!) and a large clear bowl filled with water.

Beginning. Tell the children that today's scripture talks about the damage demons can do. Demons grab people's attention, make them think lies about themselves, and can make people very miserable. Share a demon you can resonate with: I didn't think I could learn to ride a bike, and finally I got rid of the demon that was keeping me from learning and I learned to ride my bike. Or, I thought I was not smart enough to get into 6th grade, but I did. Whatever rings true for you.

Some things we cannot change: I am not a good enough baseball player to be invited to play for the New York Yankees. But the demons we will look at here are demons we can get rid of. Some demons we are OK talking about, and some of our fears we would not want to share with each other — but God waits for us to share them with God.

Opening Prayer. Thank you, Jesus, that you want us to be who we are and not be afraid. Amen.

The Scripture. Luke 8: 26- 39. Here is a way to divide up the reading:

Verses 26-31 a narrator, the voice of the demons, and Jesus.

Verses 32-33 one voice

Verses 34-37 one voice

Verses 38 and 39 - the narrator and the voice of Jesus

Some Questions.

What is the condition of "the man" in this story? (Pretty grim. So consumed by demons that he even tears his clothes off!)

What do the demons say to Jesus? (Verse 28b)

What did Jesus do about this? (Verse 29a)

Why didn't the demons want to get out of the man? (They were having a wonderful time making the man miserable — that is what demons do.)

What did the demons propose as a solution? (Verse 32)

What did the people taking care of the swine do? (Verse 34)

What did the man who was cured of the demons do? (Verse 38)

Why do you think Jesus told the man to go home and not follow Jesus? (Maybe Jesus realized that this happy, healed man could help other people get rid of their demons.)

Ask the children if they think the solution Jesus came to in today's Scripture would be one he would use in our town today? (Even if we had a herd of swine and a cliff, would the owners of the herd be so understanding?)

Activity. Ask the children to think about "demons" that hold them down. They do not have to share — just think about them. Then ask them to think about how much more energy they would have if these demons were not bugging them.

Option. Since we do not have a herd of swine in our classroom, let alone a cliff to drive them over, we can try something else. Show them the big bowl of water and the Alka Seltzer tablets. Tell the children to, one by one, take one of the tablets, think about a demon you want to let go of, put the demon on the back of the alka-seltzer and drop it in the water. Watch what happens to the tablet! Then invite another child to do the same. Keep going until each child has "drowned" a demon, also taking a turn yourself also.

Getting Closure. Ask the children what they think they could do the next time they meet something that looks a lot like that drowned demon? Could they tell the demon: "Sorry, you have no more power over me. I drowned that demon in a bowl of water in the summer of 2004. Get away!"

Closing Prayer. You tell us not to be afraid, God. Thank you that you help us get rid of our fears.
Amen.