

Second Sunday after Pentecost
June 18/19, 2022

It seems as though the habit of self-reliance is being shattered in our culture. It seems as though we are turning to the government to be our savior. Over the past one hundred years, our culture has shifted dramatically. It is not that self-reliance itself is the best thing, but it is better than what we see now with rising anarchy. It is not just in the streets out there, but also in our hearts. We need to be cleansed again and put on the purity of Christ, growing into His image.

Before the revelation of grace through Christ, the law was over the heads of the faithful. The law is still there, but it is not over our heads, it is to be in our minds and in our hearts. No longer are we to live in the fear of retribution, thinking that whenever we sin we stand the chance of winding up in hell. Fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. This does not mean being afraid of the Lord, but understanding the respect He is due and starting there. The law is good, but we are not under the law. We are to learn to obey the law, but its power to condemn has been crushed by Christ.

What has happened? The law is a foundation. Christ has fulfilled the law for us. We no longer need wrestle in fear that we can lose our salvation. Reject it, yes, we can do that, but lose it? Christ is our assurance. We have been enabled to walk this world by faith. This faith we have been given tells us that our Lord is preparing us. Either we are willing to be prepared, or else we live as though our faith is some kind of insurance policy.

In years past it was sometimes difficult to talk about wickedness. "Pastor, we do not want to hear that." These days, sadly, it is easier because even the most positive of thinkers have a hard time putting a positive spin on the wickedness of our world. Simply put, there is evil in the world. The wicked one seeks whom he may devour. There are those who are possessed by the devil. Our modern world wants to dismiss these things as antiquated fairy tales, but if our Lord encountered a man possessed by demons, who are we to dismiss this? Not all evil is demonic, but there are plenty of demonic things going on. But, I do not want to talk about the devil.

Jesus set foot on the east side of the sea of Galilee. There he met a demoniac. So violent that he was able to break the chains that were used in an attempt to bind him. We fear evil. Most of the time, rightly so. But greater is He who is in us than He who is in the world. Do we rightly fear the One who is able to cast the demons out? Do we trust and have faith, knowing that all authority and power belongs to the Lord?

The demoniac was bent on destruction. See how much destruction there is in the world. We live peacefully and then others come along and steal, kill, and destroy. Jesus has come into the midst of this and has rightly called out asking, "Who are you?" "Legion," they reply. For a season, the Lord allows them to continue on. The day is coming when the wicked ones will be separated from the righteous, but that time is not yet. We drink the cup of suffering in this world. The Lord's purpose shall be fulfilled. Sometimes the worst day becomes our best day because of the character the Lord shapes through our experience.

Scripture reminds us that we are to test every spirit. If it is the Lord, we know that we are directed to stand on the foundation He gave us, knowing that God's law is good, and we strive to do what is right. The optimal word here is strive, for we know we need grace. We also know that our Lord has commanded us to love one another. Love others and do what is right. This is at the heart of combating the evil around and even in us. Do not worry about the outcome, but look to the Lord who has the assured outcome of the salvation of our souls in His hands. Put into

practice what you say you believe. In fact, this is belief. Faith tells us it is true and belief is the action of living knowing these things are true. He is Lord of lords and king of kings. He will accomplish what He has set out to do. It is a reliance upon Him. Has He not told us to abide in Him and He in us?

Like the disciples and village folk the day of our story, we too can sometimes simply treat Jesus as a mere man. Even so, look at what He did. He casts out the demons. They may plead and enter into the pigs of this age, but see the truth. Evil seeks destruction. Good builds and evil destroys. Where is God building the good in your life? Where is evil pressing in to destroy? To what are you listening? Where is your heart? Are your thoughts on the things of the Lord, or on the things of this world. I do not mean to make light of this, for we all are in a struggle between these two places. You know where your salvation lies. It does not depend upon your getting things right, but upon the One who has gotten it right so that we might be forever reconciled to God our Father.

The Lord is Lord of all creation, but He is not the creation. All we see is not God, but God made all we see. There is a common thread in human history where we are trying to figure God out. We become zealous in our idea of things and want what we want. The call on us all is to receive the Lord as He is and to come into compliance with the way He has made things to be. He had us figured out before we were created. But we live in an age of choices. We can follow the call of our Lord, or else meander through life trying to figure things out on our own. One way leads to eternal life and the other to destruction.

You have received the call of the Lord. Through the water of your baptism, God put His claim on you. He desires for you to walk with Him now and forever. Yes, even to be zealous for the things of the Lord. Temptations will come. Many will give way and the demons of this world who seek to fill our hearts, minds, and souls with garbage. Look at what Jesus did. He not only kicked the demons out, but when others came to see the man formerly possessed, they saw that he was in His right mind. Yes, this is what Jesus will do for all who come to Him in faith. He will restore us to being in our right minds. Those who do not follow the Lord are crazy. They are loved, but to reject the Lord is to reject life. That is crazy. This world is crazy and we have fallen into the craziness of this world.

Jesus brings healing for our souls. Too many, it seems, would rather pretend than be actually be healed. Think of the townsfolk who ushered Jesus out rather than rejoicing in the healing. The true healing is a gift which is offered by grace to all who receive the faith given by the power of the Holy Spirit. The healing process is what the journey of becoming a disciple of Jesus is all about. We know we have sin. We know that Jesus died for our sins so that we would be made right before our righteous and just God. He calls to us and asks us to follow Him. In His name, which literally means, "God's salvation." But like Mary at the tomb, we are not to cling to Him as someone helpless. The man from whom the demons were cast out wanted to stay with Jesus, but Jesus gave him instructions to go out into the world and tell others. He did the same with His disciples. He does the same with us.

We are not just to gather in worship once a week and that's it. We are to take what we have received and share it with others. Share your life in Christ in thought, word, and deed. Share what Christ has done for you. Our Lord is building His kingdom one person at a time. In our day, where it seems so many are unconcerned with the reality of the presence and purpose of God, we do well to follow Him, humble ourselves, and live the life in Him which we have been given. Amen.