



My Beloved Ones,

In this Sunday's Gospel, we read of a man who has been imprisoned by the Evil One and abandoned by his community; but who ends as a grateful servant of God, alone singing his praises, while his friends and neighbors have all fled away. Though this week's Epistle refers to stewardship of the Church, it is no accident that he begins by saying, "*Brethren, he who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly...*" (2 Corinthians 9:6) This weekend the Evangelist and Apostle seem to ask, who will we choose to be?

Jesus is passing through the region of Gadarenes when He encounters a man possessed by demons. St. Luke tells us that this man approached Jesus from among the tombs, and we know from Christ's encounters with other demoniacs that such unfortunate persons were often expelled from their homes into cemeteries and chained. This was done

for the safety of the community, but looking deeper, we can see also a lack of compassion on the part of his family and neighbors. This demoniac may be under the sway of the Evil One's influence, but who among men is not tempted, or spiritually untouched by weaknesses?

Unlike the selfishness shown by the townspeople, Christ shows no fear of the demoniac, though the legion of demons clearly fear the God-Man. Christ approaches the man and sensing that Christ will free the man's soul of this great burden, the demons ask to instead be expelled into a herd of swine. The rest of the Gospel is well known: how the swine perished by drowning in a nearby lake; and how the townspeople rushed out to see the former demoniac, now sitting near Jesus, clothed and in his right mind. However instead of reacting with wonder or amazement, the townspeople were terrified, and begged Christ to depart. This miracle was a strange thing, but we should ask ourselves: are we like the townspeople, who cast off their troubled fellow man, and then fearfully beg God to depart; or will we instead recognize the miraculous opportunity we have to be made spiritually whole ourselves?

Only through fasting, prayer, and sincere repentance will we be less like the crowd of townspeople, and more like the grateful man, who followed Christ's instructions: returning to his home, thanking, and praising God. Though in his mission to proclaim Christ, he may have been as alone as he was when he was outcast, he had the satisfaction of knowing that he was now surrounded by the angels and saints. May we too choose to be as brave and fearless, not turning away from God, but instead, "reaping bountifully...", praising Him for all the blessings He has brought us in our lives.

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