Christ and the Two Demoniacs - Matthew 8:28-34
Fr. Thomas Homily - July 5, 2026

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.
Christ is among us. >> He is and ever shall be.

It's nice to be back again. The morning's Gospel (Matthew 8:28-34; 9:1) tells us a story of an encounter that takes place between Jesus and two men who were possessed by demons. Whenever it comes to the subject of demons, I find people find themselves in either one or two or perhaps three groups. The **first** group like to relegate demons and their activities to something in the past, something that took place long ago, but it's kind of removed from the world that we live in today. They hear the scriptures, the story that we just heard this morning. They believe those sayings and they accept them, but they just kind of like to put them as groups of that just happened a long time ago. These people fail to recognize that we're not just surrounded by saints and angels, a cloud of witnesses as St. Paul wrote in the 12th chapter of Hebrews, but we're also surrounded by other malevolent entities, demons.

The story that we just heard in this morning's Gospel as Jesus was entering coming through the the country of the Gergesenes, he is met by two men. These men were possessed by demons. They lived in the tombs. These demons caused these men great torment and suffering. And they brought fear to the people of the village as well. The people were so afraid of the demoniacs that they didn't even want to walk by the cemetery where the tombs were. These men were so terrifying. When their Lord approaches these men, these demoniacs, the demons recognize him right away. They say to him, “Son of God, what do you have to do with us? Have you come here to torment us before the time?” And the Lord recognizes them as well.

I heard an interesting commentary on this. I was listening to a podcast or something and it was an Orthodox priest and he said something that I'd never really considered before. He said that, you know, when the Lord encounters these these two demoniacs, these demons, he recognizes them. He sees the demons because he in fact is their creator. There's actually a little bit a kind of a moment of compassion here that He looks upon these demons who can't stand the sight of Him even though they were created for him by Him to serve him to share you know to to bask in His glory so to speak but now they can't stand the sight of Him so He has pity of them because they've fallen in into such a tortured state themselves.

So the demons say to Jesus goes if you're going to send us away, you know, please don't send us into the abyss, but there's a herd of swine over here in a nearby hill. Let us go into the herd of swine. And so the Lord in a moment of compassion, even though he would rather see them repent and become what they were created to be. He knows that they won't. They've already hardened themselves and determined they will not be that. He says to them, "Go." And so he lets them go into the harvest of swine so that the two men been possessed by them for so long might be free and also to demonstrate to us.

This is important to demonstrate to us that demons are always bent on only one thing and that's destruction.

We need to recognize that we too are subject to the influence of demonic entities in the world that we live in. We might not see them. They might not present themselves as they did in the Gospel reading that we just heard. They haven't gone anywhere. St. Anthony the Great struggled with the demons in the desert. St. Athanasius the Anthonite whose memory we celebrate today struggled with demons in the wilderness of Mount Athos. And in more recent times in the last century, St. Joseph the Hseychast and St. Paisios both struggled fiercely against demons. And if we're going to try to a life that's pleasing to Christ if we're going to try to live a holy life. And we too are struggling against demons whether we realize it or not.

There's a **second** group that I mentioned and these are people who because of demons often times live in real but unnecessary fear of demons. As Orthodox Christians, we are protected. We have baptism, Chrismation, confession, communion, all these things. And we live in the Church. The two men in the Gospel that we heard about this morning did not have these things. Therefore, they couldn't benefit from them. They were not able to do anything really to help themselves. Demons are unable to do anything against the power of Christ. There's a caveat there. I'll get back to that at the very end of my my little talk this morning.

God in his providence has done everything for creation. He cares very much for creation and he's done everything for us. His death, burial, and resurrection has destroyed the power of demons over us. Therefore, there's no need for us to fear demons unnecessarily.

Then I did mention a **third** group who kind of falls between these two groups that I just mentioned. These are people who who tend to want to blame everything that goes wrong in their lives and in the world on demons. Every time something bad

happens, every time they come into some affliction or temptation, it's well it must be demons. Must be demons are attacking me. The truth is is that sometimes the bad things that we see going around us or in our own lives are the result of our own choices or the direction that the world likes to take. My elder has said that sometimes things that happen to us are simply the natural result of the choice that we make **to live our lives apart from God**.

It's true that you know if we look around the world around us that we live in somewhat ungodly times and even though we see a large number of inquirers and catechumans coming into the church maybe reason that they're interested in the church now is because in fact we live in ungodly times. We live in times where love and faith sometimes seem to be in scarce supply. But too often we even we Orthodox Christians who are supposed to be lights in the world fail to make God a priority to make everything but God a priority. We have to do better. We have to humble ourselves and return to the true vision of what it is, who it is that we are called to be. We have to remember that the only real sin is for us to fail to be working towards becoming the human beings that God created us to be. **Whether we realize it or not, we are engaged in a spiritual battle**. Of course, in truth, this battle is already won for us by Christ. But we have to show what side we're on, whose side we're on. We have to declare our allegiance by showing what really matters to us by giving our hearts in the right place. We're fighting against principalities, powers, and demons of darkness. And these, my brothers and sisters, are reality. Our victory is in Christ. He has accomplished everything. So, let us remember the Gospel this morning that he cast out the demons from the men who were possessed. That once cast out the demons did what demons always do. They reap their destruction upon the swine through whatever they can find. Let us remember that we're called to be like the men who are set free. The world by the world I don't mean planet earth but the world that secular system in which we all exist is like the swine that's rushing down to the hill of destruction.

So let us remember that our place is with Christ. There's one more thing that I want to add while I'm on it. Normally I don't add things like this but I felt a little bit compelled to when I looked at the Gospel and was thinking about a little bit occasionally. I've met people who had to deal with people who have found themselves in trouble with demonic powers. It does happen. As I said, it's not something that was relegated to the past long ago or just in certain countries of the world and the lives of holy people. No, it really happens right here in America. I guess I have to say that it seldom happens by accident or just by chance. Although sometimes can be that way indirectly. There has to be some action on the part of the person who begins to be troubled by demons. Something that opens a door,

extends an invitation or shows a willingness to cooperate with demonic powers. Such openings could be as simple as something that seems rather innocent such as I hate to even list these things out loud but I'm going to it could be come from things as simple as Ouija boards, tarot cards, psychics, fortune tellers and mediums. All these things and other more obvious occult practices such as wicca and participating in ancient pagan rituals. All these things open up open us up to malevolent dark spirits who who are only been on disruption. And that's why these things are really forbidden by the Church. So I don't think I have to I should have to say it, but I will. It's just really important. We struggle enough with temptations in our life every day anyway. We're trying to live a Christian life. The demons already know that and so they put little things in our path. But it it's a very dangerous very dangerous and risky thing to deliberately put yourself into contact such as these things that I just listed because when you do, you open yourself up to the influence of demons. Sadly I've I've seen that happen on a couple occasions and it's a long long battle especially if they get rooted in. It's a long struggle for these people to get back to where they were with God.

Glory to Jesus Christ >> Glory forever

Link to Sermon - https://youtu.be/zPGw_4byVqc?t=5549