



Banishing Fear– Touchpoint for June 18, 2025

Galatians 3:23-29 (NRSVUE)

There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus. And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to the promise.

Luke 8:26-39

Jesus and his disciples arrived at the country of the Gerasenes, which is opposite Galilee. As he stepped out on land, a man of the city who had demons met him. For a long time, he had worn no clothes, and he did not live in a house but in the tombs. When he saw Jesus, he fell before him and shouted at the top of his voice, "What have you to do with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I beg you, do not torment me" -- for Jesus had commanded the unclean spirit to come out of the man. (For many times it had seized him; he was kept under guard and bound with chains and shackles, but he would break the bonds and be driven by the demon into the wilds.) Jesus then asked him, "What is your name?" He said, "Legion"; for many demons had entered him. They begged him not to order them to go back into the abyss.

Now there on the hillside a large herd of swine was feeding; and the demons begged Jesus to let them enter these. So, he gave them permission. Then the demons came out of the man and entered the swine, and the herd rushed down the steep bank into the lake and was drowned.

When the swineherds saw what had happened, they ran off and told it in the city and in the country. Then people came out to see what had happened, and when they came to Jesus, they found the man from whom the demons had gone sitting at the feet of Jesus, clothed and in his right mind. And they were afraid. Those who had seen it told them how the one who had been possessed by demons had been healed. Then all the people of the surrounding country of the Gerasenes asked Jesus to leave them; for they were seized with great fear. So, he got into the boat and returned. The man from whom the demons had gone begged that he might be with him; but Jesus sent him away, saying, "Return to your home, and declare how much God has done for you." So, he went away, proclaiming throughout the city how much Jesus had done for him.

Amen

Grace and Peace from the mystery in whom we live and move and have our being

The man oppressed by demons was part of a community that witnessed his oppression. He would sometimes be seen naked and running wild. He would willingly sleep near the tombs among the dead. It was safer for everyone I would imagine. It must have been impossible for him to explain to others. Though he was not always a danger to himself, he spent much of his time chained and guarded because they were afraid of him. They were a community of fear.

I don't know much about demons that may or may not have the power to possess a human being or harass a community. I have no reference point for what the demons in this story or any story represent. I've not had an experience with a walking talking demon to be able to respond, "ah yes, I hate when that happens." But what I can relate to is fear. I've known fear all too well. It appears; in this story there is a collective oppressive fear going on. A community of fear.

You see, communities that live in fear need hosts for their fear. When overtaken by fear, there needs to be a reason for the fear to make sense to validate the fear. It could be a person, place or thing. We call them phobias.

A scenario acted out in our mind could also be considered a host for our fear. We call those thoughts “what if’s...” For example, I might begin a thought loop that says, “What if we have an accident when we drive through the pass on our vacation next summer. Instantly, I’m transported to a scene Pixar would be proud of. My mind loops and my body sweats.

Apparently, whole communities can invent these scenarios and then create elaborate ways to make themselves safer. But for some reason no matter what the fortress, the fear never goes away. It just seems to find another host.

Fear can damage the soul. It can become as destructive as a demon. It can become hate filled rhetoric. It sometimes imposes isolation on the chosen host of my fear.

When fear needs a host to survive, rumors and innuendo help to fuel a fear rally. A host can be a person of different ethnicity, religion, or chosen lifestyle. It can be another’s point of view, geographic region or be as simple as a Sun Devil or Wildcat.

Jesus released the man in the gospel story from hosting demons. No wonder this man didn’t want to leave the side of Jesus. His community was still afraid of him. But when they saw he was fitting in normally, their fears needed a new host. The host for their fear became Jesus who displayed power over those demons. The community probably played out scenarios where Jesus cast them into swineherds. Maybe they feared him because they acted like pigs when they were afraid.

So, they asked Jesus to leave their community.

The man wanted to go with Jesus. But Jesus wanted the man to stay in his community and show them who God is. The healer of people with fears. Jesus knew if they would get to know this man and the God who healed him, it might make a difference in their willingness to follow the God of compassion, instead of the god of fear.

No wonder Paul said to the Galatians, There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus.

As William Barclay said, “Only one thing can wipe out the ever-sharpening distinctions and separations between people; when all are debtors to God’s grace and all are in Christ, only then will all be one. It is not the force of man but the love of God which alone can unite a disunited world.”

But like the man who was healed by Jesus, we must be a testimony to this love in the middle of our community’s chaotic fear.

Richard Rohr says regardless of our points of entry no matter how diverse, “the object and goal of all spirituality is finally the same for all genders: union, divine love, inner aliveness, soul abundance, generous service to the neighbor and the world...”

our True Self is our intrinsic identity given to us by God and is superior to any issues of gender, culture, or sexuality.”

There is no one “intrinsically disordered.”

This is why All intrinsically belong. This intrinsic belonging is what is referred to as being “in Christ.”

“God is love...our standing in the world is identical with Christ’s. There is no room in love for fear. Well-formed love banishes fear. Since fear is crippling, a fearful life—fear of death, fear of judgment—is one not yet fully formed in love...” **1 John 4:18 The Message**

Opening Song

Be Still

(London Fox Taize Choir)
Be Still, know that I am God.

You Lord Are In This Place (Keith Duke)

You Lord are in 1) ... this place. 2)...my heart. 3)...my mind. 4)...my life.
Your presence fills it. Your presence is peace.

Bible Passage

(A passage takes us from one place to another)

Touchpoint

(Where God's story touches our life story)

In the Arms of God

(Tony Alonso, Marty Haugen, Michael Joncas)

Refrain: Come and rest in the arms of God. Leave your worry and fear. Make your home in the heart of God. God will dry every tear. For the burden you carry will fade within God's care. Come and rest in the arms of God.

1) Gentle is God's way and humble is God's heart. God's love will light the way that leads to peace. Surely you shall see God's goodness and God's grace. Rest now in God's embrace. *Refrain*

2) Do not be afraid. God heals the broken heart. Through grief and disbelief God remains. God and God alone will be your soul's true rest. Fall in the arms of God.

Refrain

3) You are not alone, for God is always nearby. Come place your doubt and fear within God's care. God will give you rest and soothe your weary soul. Dwell in the heart of God.

Refrain

The Meal

The Lord's Prayer (Our Father)

(The Scottish Festival Singers)

Benediction

Sevenfold Amen

(The Emmanuel Quartet)

Amen.