



5th Sunday of Matthew

The setting for today's passage is the Gadarenes, a clear indication that Jesus is in foreign territory—a sign that his ministry now reaches out to the nations. And, to no one's surprise, he finds the nations enslaved by the power of death and in need of salvation. All this is symbolized by the two demoniacs. Surprisingly, the demons recognize Jesus's authority over them, and like Pharaoh's army in the Exodus, they drown in the sea. Jesus's teaching, preaching, and healing has become the means of salvation for the world.

Scripture: Matthew 8:28-34; 9:1

Bottom Line: Faith in Christ is a death that leads to new life.

Discussion Questions

1. As mentioned above, the nations were under the power of death. In what ways does death and the other passions control your life? How are they put to "death" so that you can live for Christ?
2. After the town heard about what had happened, scripture says they begged Jesus to leave. Just as the Hebrews were afraid in the desert after God freed them from Pharaoh, these people also were afraid of liberation. What about Jesus do you think made them afraid? What fears do you have about making changes in your life? How can you overcome those fears?
3. The Hebrews were freed so that they could be God's people. The nations also are freed so they can be God's people. This is an important message, one that we are tasked with spreading. How can we improve the way we preach this message? How can your live reflect being a child of God, no longer tied to the concerns of the secular world?

Moving Forward

The drowning of the pigs, now possessed by the demons, probably reminds you of another famous Bible story: the drowning of pharaoh's army in the Red Sea. This idea of death in water is prominent in Orthodoxy Christianity. At our baptism, we are put to "death" so that we can rise a new creation. In confession, we seek to put our passions to "death" through repentance, and our daily ascetical struggle (alms-giving, prayer, and fasting) also renews us. What changes can you make this week to embrace the new life given to you by Christ?

Changing Your Mind

"The swineherds ran off, and on going into the town, they told the whole story about what had happened to the demoniacs. Then the whole town came out to meet Jesus." (Matthew 8:33-34a)