

Title: THE TROUBLES WE KNOW, LUKE 8:26-39
(Chatham, NJ; 06/26/16, AM) [Pc – Topical]

Theme: The people who saw Jesus cast out the demon into a herd of swine were afraid and asked him to leave because they preferred the troubles they knew over the change they didn't know.

Purpose: To demonstrate Jesus' power over demons and evil, to explain the price we sometimes have to pay in order to change, and to demonstrate the need to fill our souls with good things once we have cleaned it.

Introduction:

1. "We prefer the troubles we know to the changes we do not know."
2. Jesus says the darkness avoids the light for fear that its deeds will be exposed: we have accommodated ourselves to the darkness and have become comfortable with it.
3. In this episode it appears that the community sought to control the demon-possessed man by guarding him, chaining him, and accommodating themselves to his presence, especially when he would retreat to deserted places, 29.
4. Life could proceed somewhat comfortably if they continued to ignore or avoid him.
5. Jesus upset the equilibrium by healing him.

I. The Power of Change

A. Fear characterizes this episode

1. First, the demons feared Jesus: "Do not torment me."
2. They "begged him not to command them to depart into the abyss," 31
3. They weren't afraid of shackles or guards, but Jesus' appearance struck fear into the hearts of this "legion" of demons
4. Second, the release of this man from bondage and the destruction of swine caused everyone to be "seized with great fear," 37: more puzzling even than Jesus' power to cast out demons
5. Why don't they think, "This poor soul who was tortured for many years is now healed and in his right mind; this is great! We are so glad for him."
6. Recently some people mourned the loss of a gorilla rather than celebrate the salvation of a child.

B. The Finger of God

1. Later, people criticize Jesus for being in league with Beelzebul, 11:15
2. Jesus shatters this notion with solid logic: a divided kingdom can't stand
3. Demons don't drive out other demons
4. The next logical choice is that the finger of God has done this
5. That indicates the presence of the Kingdom of God
6. Ironically, this is the real source of fear: God

C. Fear misplaced

1. Jesus addresses this in Matthew 10:26-31
2. People feared the wrong things: intimidated by people, social pressure, etc.
3. People should fear him
4. Fear him for his power, but remember he cares for you
5. In Luke people feared change because they preferred the troubles they knew
6. Jesus also threatened their whole social and religious system
7. An appropriate fear of change should bring joy not fear

II. The Price of Change

A. Intimidation by evil forces

1. How did this poor soul feel that none of his neighbors cared for his healing?
2. People seemed put off by seeing him “clothed and in his right mind,” 35
3. It has been my experience that when a person “gets religion,” others become very uncomfortable
4. They are intimidated by the young person who decides on a life of purity more than the one who sows wild oats
5. Best explained by John 3 – people fear their deeds coming into the light because their own souls are possessed by darkness

B. Changes in the man's life

1. Jesus is not put off by the community's desire to ask him to leave
2. He has a ready advocate for the power and love of God
3. The man is sent back to his home to tell how much Jesus had done for him
4. Could he now have a real life? Get a job? Buy a home? Get married?
5. Imagine the discussion his fiancé might have with her father: do you know who it is you want to marry?
6. What changes might have resulted in his community because of his testimony?
7. This may have been another means of opening up a mission to the Gentiles since this territory bordered on it.
8. How do we influence our family, our workplace, and our community?

III. The Purpose of Change

A. The inherent danger of cleaning house, Luke 11:24-26

1. Cleaning out the house without filling it leaves us open to becoming worse
2. This is why the New Testament not only focuses on putting off bad behavior but also on putting on good behavior, Colossians 3 and Ephesians 4
3. Without filling up our souls with good things we run the risk of what Jesus describes here, cf. Phil. 4:8

B. Changed behavior, not just changed doctrine

1. Romans 2:12-24 addresses another inherent danger: possessing the right teachings but not putting them into practice
2. Note especially verses 17-24
3. A changed life is not just a change in religious perspective; it is a change in behavior

Conclusion:

1. We should be more afraid of a society that seeks to enforce the rules and comfort of darkness rather than one that welcomes change.
2. Perhaps it is afraid of change not because it is unknown but because it is known.
3. God's ways challenge the world to change.
4. He passes judgment on human behavior.
5. If we are to fear anything, we should fear him.
6. We know he cares for us, so the changes will ultimately benefit us.
7. The Gospel is about a changed life; accept it today.