

## Worship Service “*Crossing the Line* “

Pentecost 3, Year C,

19th June, 2022

Isaiah 65:1-9 NIV / Luke 8:26-39 NIV

### Prelude

### Opening Music [\*O How Good It Is\*](#)

written and performed by Martin Ball, CCLI SONG #1908660, 1996  
Integrity's Hosanna! Music (Admin. by Integrity Music), posted to  
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### Welcome Guests / Announcements

### Pass the Peace

### Opening Hymn (Lyric Video) [\*Holy Spirit, Come With Power\*](#) 26

text by Anne N. Rupp, music attributed to  
B.F. White, performed and posted to YouTube  
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### Call to Worship

When we are down, God lifts us up. When we are proud, God grants us humility. When we are lost, God searches until we are found. When we gather to worship, We know we are not alone, For God is always present with us.

### Invocation *(from 1 Kings 19:8-15a)*

O God, you come to us not in the chaos of the whirlwind, not in the roar of the earthquake, not in the crackling heat of the fire, but in the sound of sheer silence. Quiet our minds, bring peace to our hearts and stillness to our bodies that we might meet you in that silence. Help us to listen for your still, small voice. Give us the courage to go wherever you lead us, trusting that you will prepare the way. We pray this in the name of our Companion on the journey, Jesus the Christ, Amen.

## Words of the Prophet - Isaiah 65:1-9 NIV

“I revealed myself to those who did not ask for me; I was found by those who did not seek me. To a nation that did not call on my name, I said, ‘Here am I, here am I.’

All day long I have held out my hands to an obstinate people, who walk in ways not good, pursuing their own imaginations—

a people who continually provoke me to my very face, offering sacrifices in gardens and burning incense on altars of brick;

who sit among the graves and spend their nights keeping secret vigil; who eat the flesh of pigs, and whose pots hold broth of impure meat;

who say, ‘Keep away; don’t come near me, for I am too sacred for you!’ Such people are smoke in my nostrils, a fire that keeps burning all day.

“See, it stands written before me: I will not keep silent but will pay back in full; I will pay it back into their laps—

both your sins and the sins of your ancestors,” says the Lord. “Because they burned sacrifices on the mountains and defied me on the hills, I will measure into their laps the full payment for their former deeds.”

This is what the Lord says: “As when juice is still found in a cluster of grapes and people say, ‘Don’t destroy it, there is still a blessing in it,’ so will I do in behalf of my servants; I will not destroy them all.

I will bring forth descendants from Jacob, and from Judah those who will possess my mountains; my chosen people will inherit them, and there will my servants live.

**Hymn** (Lyric Video)

**[A Mighty Fortress is Our God](#)**

**165**

written by Martin Luther, performed by Grace Community Church, Sun Valley, CA, posted to YouTube by Martijn de Groot

**A Time of Prayer**

**Joys and Concerns**

**Pastoral Prayer**

Out of our ordinary, everyday lives, you have gathered us here, Holy God, to this time of worship, to this time of praise.

We join with angels and archangels and all the company of the saints to bless you, to listen for your Word, to immerse ourselves in your grace, in your love.

Open our eyes, our hearts, our minds to your presence with us.

Take the chaos of the world that has found its way into our hearts — speak your Word and give order and form and new creation.

Take the failures and defeats, the guilt and the shame that bind our spirits — speak your Word and set us free.

Take our longings for your goodness to shape our lives, this community, the hurting world — speak your Word and infuse us with your courage and your hope and your love. Then, awaken us to your Holy Spirit who is making all things new, even us.

We ask in Jesus' name who sends us out to speak love and mercy and grace to those who are waiting longing, hoping for a sign that they are not alone, that you are a God of love, that you are a Saviour who knows their name, that the Holy Spirit is leading them home. Amen.

## **Gospel Reading                      Luke 8:26-39 NIV**

They sailed to the region of the Gerasenes, which is across the lake from Galilee.

When Jesus stepped ashore, he was met by a demon-possessed man from the town. For a long time this man had not worn clothes or lived in a house, but had lived in the tombs.

When he saw Jesus, he cried out and fell at his feet, shouting at the top of his voice, "What do you want with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I beg you, don't torture me!"

For Jesus had commanded the impure spirit to come out of the man. Many times it had seized him, and though he was chained hand and foot and kept under guard, he had broken his chains and had been driven by the demon into solitary places.

Jesus asked him, "What is your name?" "Legion," he replied, because many demons had gone into him.

And they begged Jesus repeatedly not to order them to go into the Abyss.

A large herd of pigs was feeding there on the hillside. The demons begged Jesus to let them go into the pigs, and he gave them permission.

When the demons came out of the man, they went into the pigs, and the herd rushed down the steep bank into the lake and was drowned.

When those tending the pigs saw what had happened, they ran off and reported this in the town and countryside,

and the people went out to see what had happened. When they came to Jesus, they found the man from whom the demons had gone out, sitting at Jesus' feet, dressed and in his right mind; and they were afraid.

Those who had seen it told the people how the demon-possessed man had been cured.

Then all the people of the region of the Gerasenes asked Jesus to leave them, because they were overcome with fear. So he got into the boat and left.

The man from whom the demons had gone out begged to go with him, but Jesus sent him away, saying,

“Return home and tell how much God has done for you.” So the man went away and told all over town how much Jesus had done for him

## Message

## *Crossing the Line*

Rev. Glenn Brumbaugh

What comes to mind when we think about a boundary? Images of walls, fences, lines are probably some of the first things that we think of when we hear that word. We imagine some sort of barrier that divides one thing from another, or a line that shows where one thing ends and another begins. At the heart of our definition, is the concept of separation: a boundary separates one thing from another. Boundaries help us define our world. They show us where our property ends and our neighbor's begins. They help us organize and govern ourselves, because we know where our community ends and the next one begins. Boundaries as barriers, like the many walls that surround houses in Seattle, can help us keep “bad” things out or “good” things in.

I've talked before about how our brains are hard-wired to put information we receive into boxes or categories. We don't like the uncertain or unknown, we like the security that boundaries provide. However, while we may view boundaries as something necessary and positive, the undeniable fact is they inherently also lead to separation. Something is always kept inside boundaries, while by definition other things are kept outside. There is always an in and an out. Boundaries can be physical such as walls and fence, but they also can be within our own minds. We can separate ourselves from others based on religion, on ethnicity or race, economic status, or any other hypothetical criteria we can imagine. Everyone can be a “them” from our own individual perspective. With boundaries, “I” can be here, and “they” are over there.

Jesus, in our gospel lesson this morning, leaves “here” to journey over “there.” He leaves Jewish Capernaum and travels across the sea to Gentile Gerasene. He leaves the safety and security of the familiar for the strangeness and potential chaos of the foreign. And he finds strangeness and chaos right off the bat.

Virtually the minute he steps on shore, he encounters a man who is in torment. A man possessed by not one demon but many, so many they are called “Legion.” The demons of his world pushed him beyond the boundaries of what his own people could tolerate. They tried to constrain him within their walls, but he broke those restrictions repeatedly and found himself relegated to being naked and alone in the desolate parts of his world.

Yet Jesus doesn't hide behind the walls where it's safe and secure. He intentionally steps across the boundaries created by people for themselves. He meets this poor man where he

is, and helps him deal with the demons that plague him, the demons that recognize the threat that Jesus represents, the one who is not afraid to confront them. He lifts this man out of his dilemma and restores him to wholeness. But such action, unfortunately, does not come without cost. The swineherds that bore witness to these events suffered a catastrophic economic loss. Their entire herd was sacrificed in the process. They feared Jesus. His actions had consequence for them, so much so they ask him to leave, despite the fact they now know who he is.

Would our reaction be any different, or is our action any different? We too, live in a world beset by our own sort of “demons.” Demons that lead us astray and consume us. Forces of chaos out of our control that impact our lives like: oppressive greed, addiction, prejudice and discrimination, repression, mental illness, violence, the list goes on and on. We too, have our own “demoniacs”, those who suffer from the demons of today: the homeless, the refugee, the addict, the poor and hungry. People who don't fit within our boundaries and find themselves on the outside, in the desolation without.

Our world has its own “legion,” that palpable evil that can be found possessing many. We see evidence throughout history and now: concentration camps in Germany and internment camps here, the ever present mass shootings that sometimes seem to be an almost weekly event, and the faces of families in refugee camps from Europe to the Middle East.

It should not be surprising that we want boundaries that keep evil out, but the question is, does it keep it out, or does it keep it in and allow it to grow? The demons of this world are largely of our own making. When we have a society based on greed and consumerism, the logical result is trying to accumulate more and more, to satisfy a lust that is never satiated. And in a world of limited resources, that means that when some have much more, others have much less. When our solution to violence is to employ more violence, the net result is not peace. Those walls and boundaries we erect do not give us the security we seek, nor do we go without loss in the process.

In ancient China, the people desired security from the barbaric hordes to the north, so they built the Great Wall of China. It was so high they knew no one could climb over it and so they thought that nothing could break it down. They settled back to enjoy their security. During the first 100 years of the wall's existence, China was invaded three times. Not once did the barbaric hordes break down the wall or climb over the top. Each time they bribed a gatekeeper and then marched right through the gates. The Chinese were so busy relying upon the walls of stone that they forgot to teach integrity to their children.

The very demons that are the greatest threat are already among us. But to confront those threats involves risk. Like the swineherds in our story, we risk keeping our piece of the pie. We risk being outside our comfort zone and being in the presence of those who are not like us, people who have stripes to show from the demons of this world that we prefer not to think about. Like the Chinese who put their faith in the boundaries they established, we

suffer much more from the loss to our own integrity and souls. Building walls often costs us exactly what we're trying to protect.

The story is told that years ago in Ireland a certain castle was one of the architectural gems of the Emerald Isles. It was called Castle Wray. The structure fell into disrepair and finally was uninhabited. As often happens, peasants from nearby began to scavenge stones from it. The stones had been cut and shaped with great craft, and so they were excellent building materials. Also, the peasants did not have to dig up the stones. So, little by little, Castle Wray was dismantled.

One day Lord Londonbury, the sole surviving heir of this Irish Castle, visited it. He saw that the castle was being scavenged for its stones. So he summoned his agent and ordered him to build a six-foot-high stone wall around the castle. Then he left, feeling that the castle would be safe from trespassers. Three or four years later, the owner returned. He found a six-foot wall, just as he had ordered. But there was no castle. The castle had vanished. It had disappeared into thin air. The owner summoned his agent and asked why the agent had not carried out his order. The agent insisted that he had indeed carried out the owner's order. He had built the wall. The owner asked, "Then where is the castle?" The agent replied, "Ah, is it for me, my Lord, to be going all over Ireland picking up stone when the finest stone in Ireland was right here in the castle?"

He had torn down the castle in order to build the wall. That is the choice we face. Do we stay inside the boundaries we set for ourselves, and wallow idle in the false security they provide, while that idleness and indifference costs us our integrity or do we step across those boundaries, to lift up and welcome those without, those who suffer from the demons we create?

As followers of Christ, idleness is not in our definition. The Great Commission in Matthew calls us to reach the ends of the earth, baptizing and proclaiming the gospel. Since antiquity we have made the commitment in our baptismal vows to combat the evil in the world. In the act of communion, we symbolically join with Christ and each other in supporting his mission in this world.

But as our gospel story shows with the Gerasenes, the good news isn't always perceived as good news. Some are not ready to risk the sacrifice accepting that good news entails. But positive change rarely comes without risk, does it?

To rid ourselves of the demons that plague our world comes with potential cost. Are we willing to join with Jesus and step across those boundaries, to go out into our neighborhoods and communities, and lift up those on the outside who suffer? Are we willing to reach out and restore the demoniacs of today to wholeness and identity, whatever identity that may be? Will we get in the boat with Jesus, or will we choose to stay safely on the shore, behind the boundaries we make for ourselves? The choice is ours. May we choose wisely. Amen.

## A Call to Serve

Jesus told the man he had healed to go home and tell everyone how much God had done for him. What if we were to look at our offering as a way to proclaim how much God has done for us? What if we were to share with the same kind of generous love that God abundantly shares with us?

## A Time for Reflection - *Musical Interlude*

### The Prayer of Thanksgiving

Loving God, we share what we have because you share so abundantly with us. May our sharing be an act of thanksgiving and praise for all you have done and all you will continue to do for us. We dedicate these gifts and offer ourselves to your service. Bless us and our gifts, that we might be a source of help, hope, and joy to a world in need. With grateful hearts we pray, Amen.

**Hymn** (Lyric Video)     [\*For We Are Strangers No More\*](#)     **322**

written by Keith I. Morse and Dianne Huffman Morninstar, performed  
and posted to YouTube by the Mennonite Congregation of Boston

## BENEDICTION

Go forth crossing the boundary of this building  
Step out from the safety of your comfort zone  
Take your light into the darkness you find there  
Giving comfort and hope to those without  
May God's Spirit guide us to be who we need to be and where we are needed. Amen.

## Postlude