

## Pentecost 5, 23/6/2013, at Holy Trinity

## Luke 8:26-39

Luke is really 'on a roll' in this part of the Gospel narrative.

Immediately before this morning's reading we are told how Jesus stilled the storm.

Then in this reading it tells how Jesus defeated the power of the abyss.

This is followed by telling how Jesus raised a girl to life and restored a mature woman to live in community.

In all of these incidents it is power against power: the power of Jesus against the power of nature in the storm: the power of Jesus against the power of the demonic world: the power of Jesus against the power of death and the power of Jesus against the power of ill health.

In other words, these incidents are signs of revolution and change.

They are signs of the difference Jesus makes.

But before we translate this into our life's struggles, we need to look at what they would have been saying to those who first read of them when Luke's Gospel was first available to the early church.

First, to Christians who had a strong Jewish background, it took place in Gentile country and not holy land.

Secondly, it involved pigs who were regarded as unclean by Jews.

Thirdly, cemeteries were the place where spirits lived and were avoided in darkness.

"Legion" was a term used in the Roman army for a unit consisting of between four and six thousand soldiers, in other words, the occupying army.

Jesus, then, was turning the Jewish set of values upside down by defying the forces of the Gentile world and exorcising Gentile land.

This was a meeting of the holy and the unholy. It was a confrontation of evil powers with the Son of God.

Evil powers oppress people, Jesus came to bring liberation.

The Jews thought of liberation as from the occupying army whereas for Jesus it was caring for people with terrible difficulties, for the poor and hurt of the world.

He was showing that God's love extended to outsiders, like the gentiles and, for us, those of a different religious faith, those of no faith, those stricken with poverty, disease and famine, the homeless, the refugees throughout the world and those coming to our shores, those who are different and those who are outcasts and marginalised in our communities.

Luke is telling us that Jesus intended inclusiveness.

The gentiles also belong.

So what are we to do?

I suggest that each of us find our sacred space, a place where we can listen to God's voice in the silence.

God's voice will be there and we can open our hearts to the needs of those who are right there beside us and who we don't usually see as we go about our daily lives.

They are there all right: God will show them and their needs to you.

Be part of their liberation and give thanks and live out your own liberation through Jesus where you are, in your household and in the community in which you live and work.

Remember also Paul's words: "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."