

Lectionary Gospel Commentaries

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Based on the Lectionary Pericope Covering:

SOLA-LSB (Lutheran Service Book):
RCL (Revised Common Lectionary):

Luke 8:26-39

Year C - Proper 7, Text: Luke 8:26-39

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In the lead up to today's pericope (Luke 8:22–25), we read of Jesus asking His disciples to take Him by boat from the west coast to the southeast coast of the Sea of Galilee. Without a doubt, the disciples are disturbed.

The region to which Jesus wishes to go is not Jewish. Gentiles live there, and they have pigs. However, they set sail. But along the way they experience a windstorm, awaken a sleeping Jesus, and beg Him to save their lives. Jesus stills the storm, and all is well. However, the disciples wonder who this Person is who can calm storms at sea!

Verse 8:26: When the travelers arrive at their destination in the region of the Gerasenes, only Jesus gets out of the boat!

Verse 8:27: As soon as Jesus disembarks, He meets a man who is possessed with demons. The man is naked and lives, not in a house, but among the tombs.

Verses 8:28–29: As soon as the man sees Jesus, he falls down before Him and shouts at the top of his voice, "What have you to do with me? Do not torment me!" In doing this, he addresses Jesus in a remarkable way: "Jesus, Son of the Most High God." Amazing! Although this man is a Gentile and demon-possessed, he addresses Jesus in a way that even the disciples do not "see" at this point in the narrative.

It is significant that in Mark's narrative, the first thing that Jesus does when beginning His ministry to the Jews is that He casts a demon out of a man in a synagogue (Mark 1:21–28). And the first thing that He does when beginning His ministry to the Gentiles is to cast a host of demons out of a man (Mark 5:1–20).

In Luke's narrative, when Jesus begins His teaching ministry among the Jewish people, He has to deal with fierce opposition from His hearers in a synagogue and with those who are demon-possessed (Luke 4:16–31). And the first thing that He deals with when beginning His ministry to the Gentiles is described in the present pericope.

The man had been having a bad time for a long time. An unclean spirit had seized him many times, and he was kept under guard. Although he was bound with chains and shackles, he would break them and the demon would then drive him out into the wild.

Verses 8:30–31: When Jesus asks the man for his name, he replies, "Legion," indicating that he knows that he is possessed by a host of demons. These demons beg Jesus not to order them to go back into the abyss — the place where demons dwell.

Verses 8:32–33: The demons plead with Jesus to allow them to enter a large herd of pigs on a nearby hillside. Jesus grants them permission to do that. The demons then leave the man, enter into the herd of pigs, rush down the steep bank into the Sea and drown!

There are parallels between this incident and the Exodus from Egypt under Moses. In the Exodus event, the enemies who drown are Egyptian soldiers. In this healing miracle, the enemies who drown are demons — the real opponents of Jesus' Messianic Kingdom!

Verses 8:34–36: There are other swineherds in the vicinity. When they see what is taking place, they run back to their homes and villages to tell others what they have seen. People go to where the exorcism had occurred, see both Jesus and the man whom Jesus healed sitting at Jesus' feet, clothed, and in his right mind. And they are afraid! The herdsmen who had witnessed Jesus' exorcising of the man tell the new arrivals what they had seen Jesus do.

Verse 8:37: The members of the crowd beg Jesus to leave their region. (Little wonder that the people who live in the region are disturbed; they have lost their pigs — their source of income!) So Jesus returns to the disciples' boat, and he returns to the vicinity of Capernaum on the west bank of the Sea of Galilee.

Verses 8:38–39: Before Jesus and the disciples set sail, the man begs Jesus to let him remain with the

One Who has healed him. However, Jesus tells the man to return to his home and tell everyone what God has done for him. Indeed, God carried out the healing, but this God was present in the flesh-and-blood Person of Jesus.

The man does what Jesus asks him to do. He returns to his home city and proclaims to all who live there what Jesus has done for him. And so, Jesus' ministry to the Gentiles gets underway! A little later (Mark 8:1–10), Jesus feeds 4,000 Gentiles in this same region — Gentiles who gather around Jesus. Did they come as a result of the witness of the man Jesus healed?