

5TH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

Dear Brothers and Sisters!

Today, we listened to the Gospel of the Apostle and Evangelist Matthew, which shows what man's obsession with the evil spirit is and testifies to how strong God is.

The Savior has not yet spoken the words, and the evil spirit, already tormented by God's presence, cries out through the mouths of these unfortunate people: "What have you to do with us, Jesus, Son of God? Did you come here to torment us prematurely?" (Matthew 9:28). This devil, the evil power that sat in these people, could not stand before God. He was afraid and trembled before the Lord, and no one dared to walk this path, because the demons were fierce.

Why did Christ travel to Gadarenes?

At the time of Christ, this area was not a place of pilgrimage or an attractive tourist center. No apostle came from there, and the vast majority of the local population were pagans. At the same time, the Savior got there, not by chance, and carried out his plan: he freed the demons and communicated with the local population.

In the synagogue of Nazareth, Christ defined the essence of His service to men, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed" (Luke 4:18). During a brief visit to Gadarenes, the Savior preached deliverance to the captives and set the martyrs free. He radically changed the world of demons, returned them to families and society and freed the demons from power. For the sake of these two pagans and foreigners, Christ crossed the sea.

Nowadays, many say that the devil, spirits of malice, and cunning do not exist. But they exist, and commit iniquities and fight for the priceless treasure - the image and likeness of God, the human soul. According to St. John Chrysostom, "the devil convinces many that there is no hell to take us there." It is he, the cunning and vile spirit, who by his temptations tries to destroy Christian souls. Prot. P. Sokolov testifies, "Satan blinds a person in order to lead him to sin, and then opens his eyes to cast into despair." And sad to say, the cunning succeeds.

Sin is cast in by evil spirits, it grows with great force, and metastasizes. Each of us who went on pilgrimages to the Holy Places of Churches and Monasteries could really see what obsession is. As the wicked restrain the movements of men, as from the creation of God, the child of the Lord becomes like a beast. It is no longer man who speaks, but the evil spirit, no longer guided by his will, but by satanic action.

The Reverend Neil of Sinai says to us, "The prayer of the believer is a great torment and a terrible terror for evil spirits." The same words are reinforced by Abba Job, "The name of Jesus is stronger than steel, harder than granite, no stronger shield, no better weapon in the spiritual struggle than the prayer of Jesus."

One young man, who decided to become a hermit, came to an old monk and began to complain of temptations. The old man comforted him and promised, in his prayers, to ask God to help him. But after a while, he came again and said that the devil always tempted him in the same way. The monk still sent him away with pleasure, and he knelt down and began to ask God to reveal to him the reason why Satan is so stubborn. At that, the Lord allowed the holy monk to see the cave of this good man in the middle of a prayer - he was lying quietly by himself, with his hands folded on his chest. Now the monk understood the point. He called the young hermit to him and told him that the reason for his temptation was spiritual indifference. After that, he began to get up in the morning, think about his soul and spiritual exercises, and the devil later retreated from him.

Seeing the death of all the pigs and their material livelihood, the people of Gadarene did not even argue with Jesus, but silently drove him out of their neighborhood. This is what Christians do when they do not reflect on the spiritual significance of life's problems, and when they do, they complain about God because of life's adversities, instead of praying and working patiently to solve them. And when they turn to God for help, they often insist in prayer on the fulfillment of their needs, their will.

No wonder we heard today, the words of the apostle, "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever" (Heb. 13:8). The same. It is as if He is here with us, as if He is standing here, and we turn to Him, each with his own need, with his own thought, with his own heartache, joy, or gratitude. Every such movement of our soul is a kind of prayer addressed to the Lord.

So, dear believers, you see that the words of people who have turned to the Lord can teach us a lot. Some of us will support the faith. Lord! Help my unbelief, the second will teach to give thanks, the third will teach to ask the Lord about the mysteries of life and the way, and the fourth, like the words of the Gadarenes, will warn us not to miss our moment, our time, and when the Lord sends us His gift, to accept his whole heart.