

SERMON - Casting Out the Demons from the Gadarene - Sunday, Oct. 27, 2019
Luke 8:26-39

I'm reading a book called "Caught in the Revolution" by Helen Rappaport. The book is based on the eyewitness accounts of foreign diplomats who were in St. Petersburg at the time of the Russian revolution of 1917 & 1918. In one scene, the majority of sailors of Kronstadt murder the highest ranking Admiral of the Russian Navy and then all of the Russian Naval officers. The sailors come in the thousands to St. Petersburg which was the capital of Russia at the time. They indiscriminately shoot into the crowds of people, murdering anyone, man, woman, or child, that happened to be on the street at the time. The streets, alley ways, and hallways of hotels and places of business are filled with streams and pools of blood. The corpses of the murdered innocent people pile up in the street and no one is safe. The revolutionaries begin a rampage of massive destruction. They smash windows of hotels, restaurants and businesses, looting, killing and destroying. Anyone wearing a policeman's uniform is brutally murdered by the mobs. The worst and most dangerous criminals are all released from the prisons. Factory workers make unrealistic demands about wages and work hours and there is a massive work stoppage. Productions practically comes to a halt. Garbage and human refuse pile up in the streets. The water is unsafe to drink and filled with the disease of cholera. Food is unavailable and people begin to starve. Personal property and automobiles are all confiscated by the Bolsheviks in the name of the revolution and public transportation practically ceases to exist. What was once one of the most beautiful cities in the world turns into a living Hell. Bolshevik provocateurs incite the masses to riot and protest, most of the rioters not even knowing what they are protesting or rioting about. Anyone caught in a military officer's uniform is murdered. When I visited Russia, I saw many churches that had been desecrated and destroyed by the Bolsheviks, only the shells of once magnificent cathedrals and churches remaining. In the cemetery at Novo Devichii Women's Monastery in St. Petersburg, every single mausoleum was destroyed and the graves opened. God knows what the Bolsheviks did with the corpses and to this day all the mausoleums remain in this smashed up state, silent witnesses to the wild and indiscriminate frenzy of the Bolsheviks. When I read today's Gospel, I am seeing in my eyes the Bolshevik revolutionaries all filled with legions of demons. It was as if the very worst evils, passions and hate lurking within mankind was unleashed like a Pandora's box, Satan and his host of demons, through these revolutionaries, engaging in a frenzy of malice against all that was good and decent and against all human beings, property and art, and anything that represented the best of humanity. The story we hear in today's Gospel is not some ancient story to be read like a curiosity or perhaps even like a myth. It is a very real story of possession by demons in our very own times. There is a magnificent book called "The Master and Margarita" written by Mikhail Bulgakov between 1928 and 1940, written during the brutal purges by Stalin, because for many many years Russia continued to be a living Hell ruled by Satan and his demons. Bulgakov's book finally appeared in print in a censored version in 1966-1967. If you read this book, you will understand the power of Satan and the demons and how they could take over a once magnificent empire like Russia. If I were only told about this story or only read about it in a book, i would find it very hard to believe that this could happen. However, the truth and reality of recent history has too many eyewitnesses and there is too much of evidence available for anyone who cares to verify the accuracy of Russian history from 1917 up until the collapse of the Soviet empire, what Ronald Reagan called "the evil empire." Satan is a very serious matter, and we should not treat Satan in a lighthearted manner, or as if he were only a figure of mythology. It is impossible to believe in the existence of God as a reality and not also acknowledge the existence of Satan. World War I took a terrible toll on the Russian people. It was a war for which Russia was ill prepared, and there is a strong argument that there was nothing for Russia to gain by waging war against Germany. The so-called allies for whom Russia entered the war later abandoned Russia when Russia needed their help. However, in spite of all the hardships of life, "if only we were to keep in mind all the good things which we have received and are receiving from the Lord, there would be no ungrateful people

among us; there would be no transgressors of His holy will, nor would there be people who do not love Him more than all else.”¹ Sadly, instead of turning to the Lord in times of difficulty, Russia chose to turn to Satan, and they paid a great price for it. It was like the Hebrews who turned away from God and instead worshipped the golden calf, abandoning the Law of God for vice and immorality. And for this they also paid a great price. “We must belong to the Lord with our whole soul, fulfill His will in all things, and glorify His most holy name—especially in our life and deeds [so that we do not become possessed like the Gadarene], who later became so wise that he became an example worthy of everyone’s imitation.”² Amen.

1. St. Theophan the Recluse, “Thoughts for Each Day of the Year,” page 242.
2. St. Theophan the Recluse, “Thoughts for Each Day of the Year,” page 242.