

“From the Overflow of the Heart the Mouth Speaks”

Luke 8:26-39

As most of you know, we just got back from Florida. We went to Universal Studios and had an amazing time. Apart from the mind-blowing technology behind the rides, the most interesting thing about being somewhere like that is “people watching.” We had a four-day pass to the park and, on any given day, we saw thousands of people with whom we will probably never see again in our lifetime. These are people with their own history – with families and jobs and stories of celebration and tragedy.

How easy it would be to sit on a bench as the people go by, look around, and think that you have a pretty good handle on who would be a likely candidate for heaven and who definitely is not going to be joining us in the heavenly realm? Oh, we saw some characters – and I’m not talking about Sponge Bob.

Beyond the way some of these people were dressed, the words which were coming out of their mouths spoke volumes about their, shall we say, sanctification. What better way to help us to “separate the sheep from the goats.” Jesus says, “From the overflow of the heart the mouth speaks.” And it is true that we are to produce good words.

When you read the previous verses in Luke chapter 8, Jesus tells the parable of the Sower. We know this one too well. Some seed falls on the

path, on the rocks, in the weeds, and on the good soil. The seed is the Word of God. The Word of God sown on the good soil produces 30, 50, 100 fold. What does “seed” produce? It produces more seed. A kernel of corn is a seed that produces more corn (but only when it gets planted – as many farmers are faced with the reality of this year). A grain of wheat is a seed that produces more wheat. The Word of God is a seed that causes the Word of God to spring forth in you so that from the overflow of the heart the mouth speaks.

But even with the greatest of words or the worst of words coming out of someone’s mouth, it is still not my job or your job to separate the sheep from the goats. My job and your job is to plant that seed.

Which brings us to the Gentile region of the Gerasenes. Jesus and the disciples step off the boat and are met by the last guy anyone would want to meet. He ran around naked, lived outside of the city and hung out in the caves where they buried their dead; we learn in Mark’s Gospel that the local people had tried to bind him with chains and shackles, but he just broke them off.

He is possessed by demons and is strong and dangerous. This is the last guy anyone would think has a place in the kingdom of God (except for these two guys I saw at Universal Studios – I’m just kidding. Our vacation was not spent sitting on a bench judging people). When Jesus met this very scary man, he did not have a place in the kingdom of God. He was possessed, controlled by demons.

Jesus immediately commands the unclean spirit to come out of him, and the demon offers an interesting assessment of the situation. He acknowledges Jesus as the Son of the Most High God and begs Jesus not to torment him and cast him into the abyss. The demons know who Jesus is, and they know what is going to happen to them. Remember that hell is Satan's prison; it is not his kingdom. The demons know that they are already judged, and they will be cast into the abyss of hell, but they are loose in the world for a short time.

Then the demons ask if they can go into the herd of pigs (notice that they have to get permission). No matter how chaotic the world seems to be, Satan is not in control – God is. And the pigs run down the hill into the water and are drowned. And all the local people freak out and ask Jesus to leave – except for the man from whom the demons had departed.

He begs to go with Jesus. Jesus gives him a simple command, "Return to your home, and declare how much God has done for you." From the overflow of your heart, let your mouth speak. The seed of the Word will produce more seed.

This man who was despised and dangerous is now filled with faith and he cannot hold in the words. Jesus told him to go and "declare how much God has done for you." And he went into the city and told everyone "how much Jesus had done for him." Because Jesus is God. And this once despised and dangerous man has been completely changed. There is every reason to believe that he has faith and will be with the other faithful for all eternity.

It is just like with the sinful woman at Simon the Pharisees house who responded to Jesus' words and in her sorrow for her sin could not hold in her tears. Jesus says to her, "Your faith has saved you; go in peace." That is the end of Luke chapter 7.

In between those words spoken by Jesus to the sinful woman and Jesus healing the demon-possessed man, Jesus and disciples take a boat ride. The crazy demon-possessed naked man wasn't the first scary event of the day. On the boat ride, a fierce storm erupted, and Jesus was sleeping in the back of the boat. We all know the story. The disciples freak out, wake Him up and say, "Master, we are going to die!"

Jesus calms the storm and says to them, "Where is your faith?" The sinful woman has faith – saving faith. The disciples see Jesus calm the storm and they ask, "Who is this that even the wind and the waves obey Him?" Jesus is God, and even the crazy naked man knew this once the seed of the Gospel was planted in him and he was filled with the abundance of what that seed produces.

If all you could see was a snapshot of this part of Luke's Gospel, who are the sheep and who are the goats?

Separating them is not our task. We see the result of that seed being planted. Regardless of your background, your past history, whatever sinful baggage you might think was too much for Jesus to carry to the cross, remember your Baptism. "Your faith has saved you; go in peace." Go and declare how much God has done for you. From the overflow of the heart the mouth speaks. Amen.