

3. Satan is obsessed with your destruction. You would think that after his defeat at the hands of Jesus, he would throw in the towel, but he's like a mob rioting after the last game of the NBA finals. The Bible describes him prowling "...**around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.**" He is furious, and he won't quit until you're in his jaws.

Satan is obsessed with your destruction, but he wants you to like it. He wants you to think it was your idea, not his. He didn't stuff the fruit down Eve's throat. He polished it. He advertised it. He let her take the fruit off the tree and sink her teeth into it.

He wants you to destroy yourself. To be certain, he'll laugh and laugh when you take the bait yet one more time and give into temptation again and again. But he wants *you* to be the one to click the link, to crack open the can, to put your foot into your mouth. That way, he has yet one more piece of evidence to bring up against you. That way, it isn't entrapment, is it? He *is* the accuser, after all.

He wants you to sink into your addictions, but not too quickly. The road to hell is a gradual one with a slight incline, without any road signs to mark progress. He's patient. He likes to see the white-collar criminal caught only *after* decades of increasingly severe financial crimes. He wants the adulteress to start slow, the gossip to start with little white lies.

He's the master of setting a temptation before your eyes that's just one step further down the road, so you feel it, but not too much that you'd come to your senses. He wants to harden your heart so the sins that would have shocked you five years ago are a pinprick today.

At the same time, he heightens your sensitivities so that the second someone speaks ill of you or wrongs you in any way, you are infuriated and cannot stand that person and want them out of your sight.

All of this by way of preface to our text today. **"When Jesus had stepped out on land, there met him a man from the city who had demons. For a long time he had worn no clothes, and he had not lived in a house but among the tombs.... For many a time [the unclean spirit] had seized him. He was kept under guard and bound with chains and shackles, but he would break the bonds and be driven by the demon into the desert."**

A 1978 documentary titled *Scared Straight!* Follows the path of juvenile delinquents who spend time behind bars with convicted felons. The felons attempted to scare them straight and convince the teenagers not to live a life of crime.

The devil is obsessed with your destruction, but the likes of the demoniac from Luke 8 scare us straight. This man was a fearful thing to behold: naked, spending time among the tombs, and able to break the chains that bound him. He is

the picture of what the last stop at Sin City looks like. He shows us the last stage of our sinful addictions with the final stage being damnation.

What we can learn from this text is not primarily about the dangers of the occult—but it does have to do with that, too. It is primarily about taking seriously Peter’s admonition: **“Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.”**

Sin is not cute. The devil uses our habitual sins to lure us down a path that will ultimately end in our destruction. The man possessed by the demons—we don’t know his story. But he likely wasn’t born that way. He had a mother and father. On this father’s day we consider: maybe this man even had a wife and kids. What likely started out as a fun diversion became life-destroying for him.

So too, we have compassion on those who are trapped in addictions and sin habits. They are somebody’s son or daughter, brother or sister. Likely they are aunts or uncles, moms or dads, and perhaps they have a husband or wife, if the spouse stuck with them, that is.

We don’t have compassion on the addiction, we have compassion on the addicted. We care for those who are trapped under Satan’s bonds, and we offer them hope. Why?

Because 2. Jesus is obsessed with your salvation. We see Jesus approach this man, and instead of running in fear, Jesus causes the man to cry out in fear. Jesus makes the demons tremble!

“Though devils all the world should fill, all eager to devour us, we tremble not, we fear no ill; they shall not overpower us. This world’s prince may still scowl fierce as he will, he can harm us none. He’s judged; the deed is done; one little word can fell him.” Jesus is the stronger man who binds Satan. He has defeated Satan and because of this the demons are in retreat.

Satan is the accuser, and all he has against you are your sins. They are great, to be certain. But Jesus has acquitted you. Paul writes, **“And you, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses, by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross.”**

Jesus took the list of your sins, addictions, and dirty pleasures, and nailed it to the cross. Jesus threw Satan’s briefcase out the window, and Satan no more has the ability to accuse because your sins are no longer yours. You are forgiven. You are saved. You are declared not guilty. Like the pigs drowned in the lake, your sins are sunk to the bottom of the sea, never to be recovered.

Jesus is obsessed with your salvation. And He will stop at nothing to redeem and reclaim the addicts, the demon possessed, and those trapped in Satan’s jaws.

He drove out the Legion from the demon-possessed man, and He has a plan for you as well.

A behavioral economist Katy Milkman studied the Fresh Start Effect. The work found that “fresh starts” on specific event dates—like a birthday, an anniversary or the beginning of a school semester—can enable people to be more effective at setting and achieving behavioral-changing goals.

Jesus is obsessed with your salvation, and He is the God of fresh starts. You have been baptized, and what that means is that you have been reclaimed for a life of fresh starts. *What does such baptizing with water indicate?* It indicates that the Old Adam in us should by daily contrition and repentance be drowned and die with all sins and evil desires, and that a new man should daily emerge and arise to live before God in righteousness and purity forever. Through baptism, God works in you a daily fresh start to turn from sin and its destruction and turn to Jesus in whom there is light and life.

Through the Lord’s Supper, Jesus works in you a fresh start through the forgiveness of sins. Partaking of Christ’s body and blood makes you more Christlike. Now is the time for a fresh start. Now is the time to seek help for an addiction. Now is the time to turn from Satan’s path of death to return to Jesus’ path of life.

Finally, 1. The saved proclaims Jesus' power over Satan. There’s nothing the devil hates more than indigestion—to have someone he’s swallowed come crawling out, but that’s what happened as Jesus drove out Legion from the man and into the pigs. What was the result?

**“The man from whom the demons had gone begged that he might be with him, but Jesus sent him away, saying, “Return to your home, and declare how much God has done for you.” And he went away, proclaiming throughout the whole city how much Jesus had done for him.”**

This is why we gather for worship, not only for the healing brought about by the forgiveness of sins, but by gathering together, we witness to the world and to one another how much God has done for us.

And as worship strengthens us to go out into the world, the Holy Spirit empowers us to be a walking billboard for all that God has for us. You can get into places and meet with people that I can’t, and nobody can reach certain people better than you can—not me, not your elder, not our Synod president.

What a wonderful thing to have this wonderful gift of salvation. Turn from sin and believe in Jesus. JESUS AND SATAN ARE BOTH OBSESSED ABOUT YOU, BUT JESUS SAVES YOU TO PROCLAIM HIS DEEDS.