**2 Pentecost 2025**

 I don’t eat a lot of meat. From time to time, I do like a good steak; the Flo’s Filet at Longhorn is amazing! I like a good burger once in a while, as well. The award-winning signature burger at the Railroad restaurant in Linfield called the “St. Lucifer” is the best. Then there’s bacon…in moderation…Help, Lord, help! But my favorite is an excellent pork tenderloin, juicy and flavorful. Yum! My Nana used to say that pork is a “sweet meat.” Indeed.

 Well, our gospel story this morning from Luke is anything but sweet. It’s a wacky, wild and wooly story that shows up in one form or another in all four gospels. On the face of it, it is a story about the exorcism of a demon-possessed man living naked and in torment in a graveyard. The demons ask Jesus to cast them into the swine, i.e. pigs, and run them off a cliff into the lake, which he does. The man is healed, but there was a lot of wasted pork and it wrecked the local economy!

 As a good 1st c. Jew, Jesus did not eat pork. Over and over again, the Old Testament prohibits the consumption of pork for various dietary and symbolic reasons. The New Testament offers a different perspective. In Christ, the dietary restrictions of the Old Covenant are superseded by grace and freedom. While some early believers may have chosen to abstain from pork for personal or cultural reasons, the overarching biblical teaching is that food choices should not become sources of division or judgment within the Christian community. Ultimately, believers are called to honor God with their choices, pursue unity, and focus on the more significant aspects of faith, such as love, righteousness, obedience to God’s Word, and outreach to the poor.

 Back to our story. There are a couple of interesting twists here. The land of the Gerasenes, where Jesus created all the drama that day, was across the lake from Galilee in Gentile territory. By his own admittance, he came to save the lost house of Israel. But sometimes he would wander into Gentile territory and deal with people who were considered to be unclean. This is a foreshadowing of the Good News going to all the world, not just the Jewish people.

 But the real kicker in the story comes when the healed man wants to follow Jesus back across the lake. Well, of course he does, but Jesus tells him to stay and to dedicate the rest of his life to telling people in his own land what Jesus had done for him. In essence, this guy was the first evangelist to the Gentiles, long before Peter and Paul would get into the “act” in the Acts of the Apostles. Pun intended!

 The long “green season” of Pentecost has begun for us and will take us straight through to Advent in December. It is the season of mission and evangelism. The season of planting seeds, watering and tending the plants, and harvesting the fruit that comes from witness to what God in Christ has done and is doing in the power of the Holy Spirit. Our mission field is right here in Gulph Mills, KOP, and the places where we live and work. We are the modern day ministers and missionaries of Jesus who look back to the healed man from the land of the Gerasenes for inspiration and courage.

 I don’t know about you, but I didn’t have a dramatic conversion like the man in our story or someone like Paul. Mine was gradual and over time. But we all have stories to tell about who God is to us and what God has done for us. We all have stories about answered prayer in our lives. We all have stories about how God has used us, sometimes in spite of ourselves, to be the agents of light and love in others’ lives. And we all have stories about how we’ve been on the receiving end of God’s grace and mercy from others that God placed in our lives. And our witness will go on until the day we die, and beyond the grave.

 And so, dear friends, enjoy your favorite food and drink in moderation. Remember that all the meals of our lives are tied to the table of Eucharist and the rhythm between the two. And this day recommit yourself to paying attention to God in your life and sharing the Good News of Christ with others in word and deed. There’s a short prayer I use to begin each day. *My God I give you this day, each word I think and say and pray. Each action and each small step, on the way. I give my life to you this day.* That simple, little prayer opens the door for God to pour out His blessings on us for the sake of others. The prayer is hanging in the Narthex. Write it down or take a picture of it and make it your own, if you’d like.

**May it be so.**