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| Sermon  |
| Year C , 2nd Sunday of Trinity 22nd June 2025 |
| **Sermon…. Insiders and outsiders? Finding God in the most unexpected places.** I don’t know about you but in today’s readings from the lectionary I found a challenging set of passages. With the Old Testament passage from the prophet Isaiah declaring words of God, that for the original hearers, must have been difficult to hear and certainly difficult to apply to themselves. And the gospel according to Luke telling of the exorcism of a demon, a story that feels so alien and uncomfortable to our 21st century ears, that might more readily want to consider mental health difficulties. And finally a letter to the early Christian church seeming to ask them to put down all that they know about the world, and to come together because of their new faith in Jesus. But there is a theme across the three that is full of hope, and that speaks of God working with and through the most unexpected of folk. Those whom society would call the outsiders; the gentiles, the slaves, the women (!), those possessed with demons. In the reading from Isaiah we hear of the rejection of God by those God called his own. Of those who God says were, ‘deluding’ themselves, wrapped up with rituals, yet calling themselves ‘holy’; whereas they had lost the ability to recognise true holiness, and so to recognise God. Yet there is hope for humanity, God speaking of the remnant of Israel, says there is still some good fruit there, and still blessing in his people. And for them, God will not destroy the whole nation. But in verse 1 we hear something truly remarkable, as the prophet speaks of God’s promise to reveal Godself to the gentiles. The NIV translation puts it like this: ‘I was found by those who did not seek me. To a nation that did not call on my name I said, “Here am I, here am I’.’ In the gospel reading we hear of Jesus, out in the region of Gerasenes, a largely gentile region to the east side of the lake of Galilee. And Jesus was met by a man described as having been possessed by many demons. Who, when he saw Jesus, he fell at his feet shouting at the top of his voice, “what do you want with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God”. It's not the first or the last time Jesus, or one of his followers, is recognised by a person with demon possession. And we hear time and time again in scripture, of those on the fringes of society having a profound sense of God’s presence in Christ and (whilst that doesn’t happen here) coming to Jesus for healing. Whilst not all those who meet Jesus embrace him with open arms; indeed the people of Gerasene, after seeing what Jesus had done, were overcome by fear, sending Jesus away. But the capacity for those without hope to see IN Jesus just that, hope and healing, redemption and love, is profound. Jesus tells us that he comes to seek and save the lost, and it is clear in both the reading from Isaiah, and throughout scripture that is BOTH the faithful remnant of Israel AND the gentiles for whom Christ has come to make God known. People like you and me, and people too on the fringes of society, the criminal, the homeless, the poor, those who shout as a means of communication (like our friend Legion), those whom society considers unsavoury, even whom the church might consider unworthy of God. And in Christ, there is transformation, the man who called himself Legion goes from one who is chained up, is violent, shouts, runs around naked. Finding himself sat at the feet of Jesus, dressed and in his right mind, and reconciled with his fellow man. Able to go back to his hometown, into society and told by Jesus to ‘tell them about what God has done for him’. Paul says, in his letter to the Galatians, that if you have faith in Jesus, you are God’s child. And God’s children are all equal, the barriers of race or nationality, social status, and gender cease to exist in God’s eyes. ‘If you belong to Christ then you are Abraham’s seed’, and heirs according to the promise. And so the readings today challenge us to really think about what barriers there are in our community, to prevent those on the ‘outside’ coming to faith. Barriers that were transcended by Jesus, who touched the leper, restored the possessed and ate in the homes of sinners. The same Jesus to whom we proclaim our faith here today in our worship; the same Jesus whom Paul reminds us, we are clothed; and who lives in us, his faithful people. And who reveals God to nations who don’t even know him and cries out ‘Here am I! Here am I!’. Heavenly Father, we pray that with Christ living in us, we do not tire of looking for holiness all around us. And may we never fail to see God at work in our lives and in our community, even in the most unexpected places and with the most unexpected people. Let us pray that we never lose sight of you because we are wrapped up in ritual and our own perceived holiness. And open our hearts to all that you want to show us today. Amen**Notes:** |