

The title for today's message is: **Deviled Ham**

Grace and peace to you from God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

My friends the problem with Satan and the demons, has been with us since Genesis chapter 3 when the deceiver made an offer to Adam and Eve that they couldn't refuse.

Today's encounter with the demonic is but another battle in a long war. Now, to further illustrate this, lets go to Luke chapter 8, verses 4-8.

Here Jesus teaches using the parable of the sower stating that some of the seed meaning "The Word of God" fell among the thorns which choked off the good seed.

The good seed, those who hear and accept the Gospel message but are choked off by life's worries and the deceitfulness of wealth and pleasures.

They do not mature as disciples and may eventually fall away. Verse 33 says When the demons came out of the man.

They went into the pigs, and the herd of pigs rushed down the steep bank into the lake and drowning them all.

Now you may have noticed over the years that some bible translations, for example the King James version.

Instead of using the word drowned, it uses the word choked. And in the original Greek the word "choked" is also used instead of drowned.

Now the disciples and readers of the original Greek would have got this connection between the two translations.

They would have seen, in the choking herd, how the world and the distractions of the world often separates us from following Jesus Christ.

Now research tells us that pigs can swim. So obviously the demons here were in complete control. The pigs didn't voluntarily kill themselves.

No, the demons, they chose suicide by swine as their way out. Isn't this what some demon possessed people do when they provoke situations that result in their death, like suicide by cop?

Look, demons, unchallenged, or simply left to run amok, can certainly destroy both body and soul in hell.

Just think of some of the things that act like demons, things that are placed in our lives by such things as alcohol, drugs, and behavioral addictions.

These too can kill both body and soul, causing havoc not only on the victim but also on families and friends.

Luke tells us of other encounters between Jesus and the demonic. In Chapter 4 He tells us about how Satan tempted Jesus in the desert.

He also tells us about an incident in the Synagogue in Capernaum where Jesus cast out a demon from a man. And in chapter 9 Jesus heals a boy with an evil spirit.

There is another incident in chapter 11 where Jesus drove out a demon allowing a man to speak once again.

Luke then proceeds to warn all of us, that when a evil spirit cannot find a home, a place to rest if you will, it returns back to the same person.

However this time it brings along more evil spirits causing the person to be in worse shape than he or she was at the beginning.

So we can see from Luke's writing and other Biblical passages that the demonic forces were quite active in the time of Jesus' earthly ministry.

But, what about their activity now? Its not hard to see the demonic in our world when we see some of the heinous crimes against humanity reported every day.

Demonic possession is the only explanation that I can conceive of for a pilot purposefully crashing a plane loaded with passengers into the twin towers in New York City.

And demonic possession is the only explanation for a person to go into an elementary school, systematically killing small children and teachers.

A British author, professor, theologian, and intellect, C.S. Lewis, now deceased, offers this sage advice regarding demons, he said:

“There are two equal and opposite errors into which our race can fall about the devils. One is to disbelieve in their existence.

The other is to believe, and to feel an excessive and unhealthy interest in them.

They themselves are equally pleased by both errors and hail a materialist or a magician with the same delight.”

Now, C.S. Lewis wrote a book called The Screwtape letters which chronicles the advice of Screwtape a senior assistant to Satan.

The letter was to his young protegee Wormwood as to how he might tempt his “patient”, actually his victim into serious sin and ultimate rejection of Christ.

One of the truths that I was reminded of in the book is Satan works in subtle ways

He doesn't need to turn us all into bad criminals to send us to hell. He doesn't need to have us naked, chained and living in the tombs.

Screwtape writes to Wormwood: "You will say that these are very small sins, and doubtless.

And like all young tempters, you are anxious to be able to report spectacular wickedness.

But do remember, the only thing that matters is the extent to which you separate the man from God.

He said it doesn't matter how small the sins are, provided that their cumulative effect is to keep the man away from the Light.

Murder is no better than cards if cards can do the trick. Indeed the safest road to Hell is the gradual one.

The gentle slope, soft underfoot, without sudden turnings, without milestones, without signposts."

When we rely on our own falsely perceived goodness, rather than the cross of Christ we need to repent. When we defiantly celebrate our sins we need to repent.

When we live "high on the Hog" and fail to adequately support the work of Christ in our local Church with our time, talents, and financial offerings we need to repent.

When we pray like the Pharisee in Luke chapter 18 verse 11 we need to repent. Listen carefully:

The Pharisee stood by himself and prayed: 'God, I thank you that I am not like other people, robbers, evildoers, adulterers, or like this tax collector.

I fast twice a week and give a tenth of all I get.’ “But the tax collector stood at a distance. He would not even look up to heaven, but beat his breast and said, ‘God, have mercy on me, a sinner.’

Now which of these two men went home justified before God? If we examine ourselves we know that the demons want us.

They know our strengths and weaknesses. They know us better than we know ourselves. They want us.

They want to reason with us, they want to share their enlightened view points. They tell us about all of the good things that we deserve.

Their voices of reason tell us that Biblical truths are outdated, the church needs to update it's teachings.

They tell us that only some scripture is the inspired Word of God. Truthfully, they want to grab us by the neck and drop our spiritually dead soul at Satan's feet.

Just like the family cat drags his prey to our door steps. This is spiritual warfare. God is love, and Satan is hate, we can not serve both.

We too can sit at Jesus' feet restored, forgiven for all of our sins because of His atoning death for us on the cross and His glorious resurrection.

Remember the evil demon Screwtape's advice to Wormwood. You can separate your patient from God with little things.

The wickedness does not need to be spectacular. Jesus gave us the best advice when He taught us to pray.

We are to ask God to protect us from the evil one. We are to ask that His will be done. We are to ask to be free of temptation.

We are to forgive freely so that we may be forgiven. We are to ask that His Kingdom come.

We are to ask that His name be hallowed. We are to ask for our daily needs.

The prayer that God answers yes too all the time is that which is in His will. If we pray for His will to be done we will ultimately align ourselves with His will.

And His will is that we deny self, take up our cross daily and follow Christ. Look, Jesus wants committed followers not fans sitting on the sidelines.

Saint Paul, who himself had a messenger from Satan to harass him, tells us to put on the full armor of God.

Paul writes: Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on the full armor of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes.

For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.

Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand.

Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace.

In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one.

Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests.

With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the Lord's people.

Pray also for me, that whenever I speak, words may be given me so that I will fearlessly make known the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains.

Pray that I may declare it fearlessly, as I should. Like a general encouraging his troops, Paul tells us that the victory is certain because Christ has already won the war.

Through our Baptisms we are clothed with Christ. The demons can drown in our Baptismal water.

Christ has promised us living water to further drown our demons. We rely on the strength of Christ. Demonic forces are lined up against the Church and followers of Christ.

This is spiritual war and it must be fought with spiritual weapons not worldly weapons. Amen

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with us all. Amen.