

## "In the Tombs"

Isaiah 65:1-9 & Luke 8:26-39

June 20, 2010

**It seems to me that there are more and more occasions when we are faced with so many things going on that there are multiple emphasis that would be very good to think about. We have great scriptures to consider with demons, healing and a call to be faithful to God. It is World Refugee Day and it would be both good and appropriate to remember the struggles around the world that have left so many without a place to call home. We do have our missionaries with us and it is fascinating to hear about the world and the church in far away places. And it is always appropriate to think about national holidays like Father's Day and consider what that might say to us. And of course we might ponder the world of county fairs and rain and wind and those things that might be very much in the fore front of our thinking this weekend. In the midst of it all, I wonder what it is that God wants us to hear today.**

**As I thought about all of these things, the one thought that jumped out at me from the scriptures seemed hard to incorporate into all these varied things. Interestingly this unlikely thought or phrase is in both our first reading and our Gospel text - perhaps that is the reason it stood out in my mind. In both scriptures we find people gathered 'in the tombs'. In the TO scripture it seems as though a religious ritual that the Israelites were involving themselves in during their exile in Babylon involved sitting inside tombs. In the Gospel text a man tormented by demons had resorted to living among the dead in the cemetery outside the city. It is not exactly a happy thought on a day when we would rather have the skies clear so that the rain might go away and we could rush over to the county fair for hamburgers heavily laden with fried onions and some of that great potato salad.**

**Yep - that is where we would like to be .... But we find ourselves in the tombs. I found myself feeling that way as I tried to prepare for this morning. I suppose that such is often the case. We want things to be sweetness and light and yet, we keep running into the darkness and death of the world. We want the sweetness of a fair stand hamburger but we are confronted with nothing but the onion breath that follows.**

**It is Father's Day and as I have often done before I went in search of some great stories that might help us to celebrate the gift of fathers. Unlike Mother's Day when you can find tons of great sentimental and love filled stories of mothers and mothering, Fathers Day does not offer the same hopeful, loving stories. .... I did enjoy the one story that seemed to connect to the image of the demons in our Gospel text while at the same time lifting up the theme of fathers. The story involved two first graders who were overheard talking about their lesson as they left their Sunday School class one day, "Do you really believe all that stuff about the devil?" asked one. The other replied without hesitation, "No, I think it's like Santa Claus. It's really just your dad."**

**It is somewhat funny ..... Unless you begin to read some of the negative things that are predominate among the articles concerning fathers. Certainly there are some positive articles about fathers but so often it is the absent fathers with all of our human failings that the articles talk about. Over and over the articles that I read spoke of the father who works too much and pays too little attention to his family. The failures were lifted up until I found myself feeling like I was living in the tombs and desperately searching for just one good and positive article.**

**Do you really believe all of this stuff about the devil .... Is it really just dad? No .... Absolutely not. But I do believe that even fathers find themselves living among the tombs .... Tormented by demons of so many different sorts that they could easily be called 'Legion'. There is too much to do, too many pressures pulling them in too many directions - too many human failings that stand in the way of being the kind of father he might long to be .... Too many demons. Too often we are all overwhelmed by the demons and we can not get a hold of our right mind ..... And so we live among the tombs.**

**World Refugee Sunday ..... What a great thing to recognize that we have been able to welcome so many refugees from around the world into the United States through organizations like Lutheran Social services. What an exciting thing it is to be in touch with our brothers and sisters in Christ on the other side of the world and know that we have had some small part in touching their lives through the missionaries that we have been able to go out where we could not or would not be able to go. People are being cared for and ministered too. But what it means that we have to send missionaries to distant parts of the world is that there are places and people who live in desperate need of the gifts that we can offer. What it means that we have a World Refugee Sunday is that there are places and people who live in the darkness of fear and need ..... people who live in the 'tombs' and need someone to come to their aid.**

**One of the things that is interesting in the reading of our first lesson and our Gospel text today is that in one case, living in the tombs happens through no fault of the person ... the demons that have overcome him have left him helpless to do anything but exist in the tombs. In the first lesson, the people make the choice thinking that the tombs are the place to be. In both cases God does not abandon them. God comes to call them to life in Him. Though there is suffering in the world there is also hope and renewal. It amazes me how consistent that message is throughout the scriptures. It does not matter how divergent the situation is, the Word of God constantly holds out hope and the possibility of life.**

**One of the interesting articles that I read this past week noted the fact that the word 'evil' is actually the word 'live' spelled backwards. God calls us to live. Too often we find that we turn away from the life God has called us to live and end up in the midst of evil. The theme that we emphasize mostly during the Lenten season calls us to turn around away from evil and live in the arms of life.**

**Today we say thank you to fathers for all of the love and nurture they give. Thank you to all of the refugee agency and all of those who open their arms to those that need to run to life. Thank you to our missionaries who carry the word of life in our loving God to distance**

**and sometimes dangerous and difficult places in our world. Today we say thank you to God, our ever loving Father, who does not leave us to exist in the tombs, controlled by the demons that torment us, but comes to us so that we might really live.**

AMEN