**4 Pentecost, June 23, 2013, 1 Kings 19: 1-15; Ps 42; Gal 3: 23-29; Luke 8:26-39**

We love scary movies don’t we? Horror movies are big box office hits. Did you know that there have been nine sequels of the original SAW movie produced in 2003? Although these modern day horror movies are really scary, I think the old “Night of the Living Dead” with those zombies coming out of the cemetery was the scariest of all.

In today’s Gospel, there is a modern day horror scene for the apostles. It begins right after they have already been through a really scary experience with the raging storm on the Sea of Galilee. Jesus takes them at night to a cemetery where there is a guy as creepy as zombies. This was truly a scary scene, and unlike a horror movie this was real – the disciples were not sitting in a comfortable theatre seat, instead they were with the demoniac! The tormented naked demoniac, Legion, lived in in the tombs bound with chains because he was so wild. But guess what? He broke those chains! What was Jesus doing to the disciples here, exposing them to this frightening guy in the cemetery? It was a lesson – an important one, and He knew this would get their attention! He was teaching them a lesson about having faith -- faith in the power of God, the power of God over all other powers. The evil power of the demons was no match with God’s almighty power then or now. Jesus drives the demons out of Legion into the pigs, who then plunge into the lake. Wow. Jesus came to this impossible situation and redeemed it with his power.

Jesus is in the midst of our scary times as well, and He redeems them too – if we trust in Him. We are in a culture that teaches us to be gripped by fear for all kinds of things. Nowadays, it is common for people be driven by fear—to make decisions based upon fear. Back in the time of the apostles, this happened too – and Jesus knew it! Jesus was training the apostles to be ambassadors for Him in the world, they were to be the people who would be starting the Church! If they functioned from a place of fear, they could not do what they were made to do – it would not work! They needed to be trusting in God, filled with God’s Spirit of courage. In today’s Galatians reading Paul captured this when he said, “***you are all children of God through faith…..you have clothed yourselves with Christ.***” When they and we are clothed with Christ, when we live into our role as children of God through faith, then we live as God intends.

Now, this does not mean that God wants us to do stupid things, like not looking both ways before we cross a street or go off hiking in an area full of Grizzly bears without bear spray. Having faith in God does not mean we are to take stupid risks—God gives us our brains to use, and we are to use them wisely. Last week, in the Jackson Hole Weekly newspaper, there was an article about a new book about billionaire Ted Turner by Bozman journalist Todd Wilkinson. In the article, there was discussion about something that Turner had said a while back. He had said that “**Christianity is for losers.”** It turns out that Turner is a Christian! The article quotes Turner saying that his problem with Christians is that some don’t use their brains in making decisions. Indeed, God intends for us to use our brains—God gave us our brains to use, and use wisely.

As we make decisions using our brains we are to trust in God, listen to God, be strengthened by God when things get tough or scary. As we go through our lives, we do get scared when we share our faith with others, when we attempt to live into our faith in all kinds of situations – and God is with us. Jesus name at birth was **Emmanuel** which means, “***God with us***.” God wants us to have faith in Him more than anything in the world, to live even through scary times knowing that Christ is with us and His power is greater than all other powers. In the book of Romans (8:38-39), there is a powerful Scripture passage that reinforces this message: “***For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”*** Nothing can separate us from God’s love – nothing! So, if we live our lives with this knowledge, we will boldly go out into the world (as the apostles learned to do) in faith, using our brains, clothed with Christ, sharing His message of love.

A while back when I used to work at Los Alamos National Lab in New Mexico, I went through a three day ropes course as part of management training. Each day we faced different challenges—all scary, although we had harnesses: there was a tall climbing wall, a zip line that took you over a river canyon hundreds of feet down, a 15’ high tree stump you had to climb on top of with nothing to hang onto, and something they called the “faith fall.” The “faith fall” looked like a piece of cake compared to the rest, for all you had to do was climb up on a platform a few feet high, and when everyone was ready down below, you just fell backwards into people’s arms. But when it came time for my team to do this, there was way more fear than for the other seemingly more dangerous parts of the course. Why? Because it involved trusting that others would hold you up. We all succeeded, but it was not easy trusting in others to catch you.

With Jesus, it is not easy to trust either. Faith is falling into the hands of God, in spite of our fears, trusting that God will catch us. Faith is trusting that our sins are truly forgiven and washed away. Faith is living knowing that God has a plan for you and it is a plan for good. Fall into the arms of Jesus with trust in His divine power, clothe yourself with Christ, live as a child of God. Will you chose to live this way?

Our Collect for the day is a helpful prayer to remind us to live this way. Let us pray together the prayer for today written at the top of your insert, as a reminder of today’s Scripture message: “**O Lord, make us have perpetual love and reverence for your holy Name, for you never fail to help and govern those whom you have set upon the sure foundation of your loving-kindness; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.”**