**Cross And Crown Christian Outreach**

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**Do Not Chase Him Away.**

**The demons begged Jesus, “If you drive us out, send us into the herd of pigs.”**

Matt. 8:31 NIV

Going by the record kept by Matthew the disciple, who was formerly known as Levi the tax collector, about the activities of Jesus Christ after coming down from the Mount, where he had delivered the sermon that not only declared blessing on a number of the people but also listed out what seemed to be the policy guidelines for his then fledgling ministry, one of the major actions of his that revealed the immense supernatural power that he possessed is the core of today’s devotion. Jesus, according to Matthew had arrived at the region of Gadarenes when two violent demon possessed men who had come out of the tombs met with him – Matt. 8:28.

Although they were reported to have been so violent that that no one could confront them, their reaction was different when they met Jesus. Identifying him as the son of God, they questioned him on what he wanted from them, going further to ask whether he had come to torture them before their appointed time – Matt. 8:29. Seeing that there was a large herd of pigs feeding nearby, the demons pleaded, in the scripture that is the foundation of today’s devotional, that Jesus Christ send them into those pigs, a request which he granted. The demons came out of the two men and went into the pigs and the pigs rushed down the steep bank into the nearby lake and drowned – Matt. 8:32. The people tending the pigs also ran into the town to report the incident and the people of the town in their reaction approached Jesus pleading with him to depart from their region – Matt. 8:33-34.

This event although like a normal day for Jesus Christ, reveals many points of interest for the Christian today some of which are listed below:

1. It is possible to have many demons occupy an individual at the same time.
2. Excessive violence can sometimes be the evidence of the presence of demons in an individual.
3. Demons are able to recognise and differentiate between different people based on the spirit in them.
4. No matter the spiritual ability of the demons, they still submit to the authority of a higher spirit especially the Holy Spirit.

What is however most shocking is the reaction of the people to the demonstration of power and superiority by Jesus Christ over the demons and the subsequent saving of the men from oppression by the demons. They immediately requested that he departs from their region. Anyone would have thought that the deliverance of the soul of the two men from the oppression of the demons would have been a source of joy to the people of the town but that was not their reaction. If anything, it seems they were more concerned about the loss of revenue due to the drowning of the large herd of pigs. Some may want to argue that the reaction of the people was their recognition of their spiritual state which made them feel unworthy to have him in their midst but even then that will be a wrong reaction to being presented with an opportunity to access the greatest and the best power in the universe. It will also project them as a people who will rather remain in their darkness rather than embrace light.

Similar scenario seems to be playing out amongst Christians today. Though they may not be openly and physically asking Jesus to depart from their lives or worse still from the church, the actions and reactions of Christians and their leaders to events and situations are such that can make Jesus Christ stay away from individual lives or the Church in general. This is because so much priority has been placed on the acquisition of material gains which to them signifies prosperity at the detriment of the maintenance of spiritual standards. Decisions taken by Christians and Church leaders today indicate a willingness to have Christ out of the system, should that be the action that will prevent any threat to their material acquisition or its retention. Winning of souls over to Christ no longer matters as long as the Church population is large and offerings are on the increase. Whatever needs to be done for the church population to increase will be done, irrespective of the drop-off in Christian standards that will accompany such aspirations. The increase in population is not desired because of their interest in winning more souls over to Christ but because of the human praise that presents the church as a big one and the accompanying potential increase in material possessions that is likely to follow such increase. Biblical standards are compromised all in the name of having very large congregations and in the process many are been deceived and led into hell as the true position of the Almighty God on Christian living is hidden from them and so they cannot repent and change from their evil ways. This is not to say that people who seem to have fallen short should be pushed out of the Church or even that a Church should never have people with character traits that do not meet with biblical standards, but what is expected will be the continuous preaching and the emphasising of the requirements of the Lord with regards to Holy living. The Church should never shy away from this role simply because of the desire to have a large congregation or worse still, desire to boost revenue in the name of Christian prosperity.

Christians must be continually reminded that all these earthly possessions have no eternal value. Like the wisest and richest man that ever lived and will live said, they are all vanity upon vanity – Eccl. 1:2-2:26. Not only were the people in Gadarenes willing to keep the spiritually unclean animals called pigs, they were unwilling to sacrifice them for the salvation of two human souls. Same can be seen amongst some Christians and Christian groups today as they do not seem to mind holding on to uncleanliness in order to retain material possession and anyone who threatens such is regarded as an enemy that should be sent far away from the Church. The main reason for the coming of Christ as stated by prophet Isaiah, which Jesus Christ himself quoted before commencing his homily in the temple reveals amongst other points that he came to deliver those who are under captivity – Isa. 61:1-4; Lk. 4:18-19. Nothing has a greater priority for him than this and everyone who claims to be his follower must have this also as priority. Acquisition of material things is not a crime but where there is the need to make a choice between delivering a soul and acquiring material possessions, the former should always be the choice of the true Christian as any other choice will be similar to sending Jesus Christ away – Mk. 8:37. Christians need to watch the decisions they make and their manner of reaction to issues so as not to be found being involved in this act that will continue to increase the church in numbers but will be reducing the number of those saved from the bondage of the devil as this will always run against the purpose of the Church of Christ. May God guide us all away from actions that will run contrary to His desire for His Church in Jesus name. Amen.