



# SUNDAY SCHOOL JUNE 22, 2025

Prayer:

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

**Old Testament .....2**

**Isaiah 65:1-5 ..... 2**

        The prophet sent to a rebellious people ..... 2

        Overview ..... 2

        Biblical Context..... 2

        Historical / Non-Biblical / Political Context ..... 2

        Historical Timeline / Biblical Timeframe..... 2

        Scholarly Metaphorical Interpretation With Modern-Day & GRANT COUNTY Context ..... 3

        Summary ..... 3

**Gospel.....4**

**Luke 8:26-33 ..... 4**

        Jesus casts out demons ..... 4

        Overview ..... 4

        Biblical Context..... 4

        Historical / Non-Biblical / Political Context ..... 5

        Historical Timeline / Biblical Timeframe..... 5

        Scholarly Metaphorical Interpretation With Modern-Day & GRANT COUNTY Context ..... 5

        Summary ..... 5

**Addendum .....7**

**Glass Half-Full ..... 7**

**Victim Mentality ..... 8**



## Old Testament

### Isaiah 65:1-5

#### THE PROPHET SENT TO A REBELLIOUS PEOPLE

I was ready to be sought out by those who did not ask, to be found by those who did not seek me. I said, “Here I am, here I am,” to a nation that did not call on my name.

I held out my hands all day long to a rebellious people, who walk in a way that is not good, following their own devices;

a people who provoke me to my face continually, sacrificing in gardens and offering incense on bricks; who sit inside tombs and spend the night in secret places; who eat the flesh of pigs, with broth of abominable things in their vessels;

who say, “Keep to yourself; do not come near me, for I am too holy for you.” These are a smoke in my nostrils, a fire that burns all day long.

#### OVERVIEW

Isaiah 65:1–5 depicts God’s response to a rebellious people. Though God is willing and eager to be found (even by those not seeking) His people persist in provocation through idolatrous practices and spiritual arrogance. **The tension between divine grace and human stubbornness is at the heart of this passage.**

#### BIBLICAL CONTEXT

This passage opens the final divine response to the communal lament of Isaiah 63:7–64:12. It belongs to *Third Isaiah* (chapters 56–66), likely written in the post-exilic period, and distinguishes between the faithful “servants” of God and those who defile worship with syncretism (a combination of cultures and religions). **It pivots from lament to judgment, explaining why full restoration is delayed: the people’s sins and pride.**

#### HISTORICAL / NON-BIBLICAL / POLITICAL CONTEXT

**Written after the return from Babylonian exile (late 6th or early 5th century BCE), Isaiah 65 reflects internal divisions in Judah (under Persian rule). Tension existed between returnees and those who remained, with disputes over who truly followed God. Accusations of idol worship, necromancy, and dietary impurity reflect both literal and rhetorical charges meant to denounce rival religious practices. Persian tolerance allowed for temple rebuilding but also exposed the community to cultural influence and competition.**

#### HISTORICAL TIMELINE / BIBLICAL TIMEFRAME

- **586 BCE:** Jerusalem and the First Temple destroyed by Babylon.
- **539 BCE:** Cyrus of Persia conquers Babylon; Jews allowed to return.
- **515 BCE:** Second Temple completed.
- **Post-515 BCE:** This passage likely composed as restoration efforts clashed with disunity, exclusion, and moral critique—setting the stage for prophetic reflection on who truly belongs in God’s renewed people.



## SCHOLARLY METAPHORICAL INTERPRETATION WITH MODERN-DAY & GRANT COUNTY CONTEXT

Scholars often interpret this as a metaphor for religious arrogance and intra-community division. The phrase “Keep to yourself, I am holier than you” reflects prideful exclusion that can emerge in religious circles. In modern terms—including in rural or small-town America like **Grant County** ... this might apply when churches or groups look down on others, whether due to tradition, lifestyle, or political difference.

The passage asks: Are we truly faithful, or just claiming spiritual superiority? It challenges modern churches to reject self-righteousness and avoid labeling others as outsiders. It’s a reminder that God is found by the humble—not necessarily those with the loudest religious voice.

## SUMMARY

Isaiah 65:1–5 is a sobering confrontation between God’s patient grace and His people’s pride. While He stands ready to be found, they engage in provocative, impure worship and look down on others. The message remains relevant today: spiritual pride and exclusion hinder God’s renewing work. For churches in places like Grant County, it’s a call to humility, openness, and a rejection of the “holier-than-thou” mindset.



## Gospel

### Luke 8:26-33

#### JESUS CASTS OUT DEMONS

Then they arrived at the region of the Gerasenes (JAIR-uh-seens), which is opposite Galilee.

As he stepped out on shore, a man from the city who had demons met him. For a long time, he had not worn any clothes, and he did not live in a house but in the tombs.

When he saw Jesus, he cried out and fell down before him, shouting, at the top of his voice, “What have you to do with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I beg you, do not torment me,” for Jesus had commanded the unclean spirit to come out of the man.

(For many times it had seized him; he was kept under guard and bound with chains and shackles, but he would break the bonds and be driven by the demon into the wilds.)

Jesus then asked him, “What is your name?” He said, “Legion,” for many demons had entered him.

They begged him not to order them to go back into the abyss.

Now there on the hillside a large herd of swine was feeding, and the demons begged Jesus to let them enter these. So, he gave them permission.

Then the demons came out of the man and entered the swine, and the herd stampeded down the steep bank into the lake and was drowned.

#### OVERVIEW

**Luke 8:26–33** recounts Jesus' encounter with a demon-possessed man in the region of the Gerasenes. This man is tormented by many demons, self-destructive, and living among the tombs. When Jesus approaches, the demons recognize Him and beg not to be sent into the abyss. Jesus casts them into a herd of pigs, which then rush down a steep bank into the lake and drown.

#### BIBLICAL CONTEXT

This passage is part of a series of miraculous acts in **Luke 8** showing Jesus' power over **nature, demons (this story), illness and death**. Each miracle reveals different aspects of Jesus' authority.

- **Power over nature:** *Jesus calms the storm with a word, showing His authority over creation itself (Luke 8:22–25).*
- **Power over illness:** *Jesus heals a woman with a twelve-year hemorrhage by her faith, revealing His power to restore what others declare unclean (Luke 8:43–48).*
- **Power over death:** *Jesus raises Jairus' daughter from the dead, demonstrating His authority even over life and death (Luke 8:49–56).*

**Synoptic parallels (Matthew, Mark & Luke):** The story is also found in **Mark 5:1–20** and **Matthew 8:28–34**, with slight variations in geography and detail (Matthew mentions **two** demon-possessed men instead of one).

- Theologically, this story affirms:
  - Jesus' power over unclean spirits
  - The restoration of human dignity
  - The clash between spiritual authority and societal norms



## HISTORICAL / NON-BIBLICAL / POLITICAL CONTEXT

- **Geography:** The “region of the Gerasenes” was part of the **Decapolis**, a group of ten Greco-Roman cities largely populated by Gentiles east of the Sea of Galilee.
- **Gentile territory:** The presence of pigs (unclean to Jews) reinforces that Jesus is in non-Jewish territory, making this healing a **cross-cultural mission act**.
- **Demons and Rome:** The name “Legion” was a **Roman military term** (6,000 soldiers). Scholars believe this might not be accidental—it suggests an image of **oppression and occupation**. For early listeners, this could metaphorically represent **Rome’s oppressive presence** in the region.

**Social insight:** The man lived in tombs and chains, rejected by society, foreshadowing how ancient communities often **isolated those with mental illness or spiritual afflictions**, sometimes with violent restraint. Jesus upends this by restoring and reintegrating the man.

## HISTORICAL TIMELINE / BIBLICAL TIMEFRAME

- **Setting:** Late 20s to early 30s CE, during the Galilean ministry of Jesus.
- **Authorship of Luke:** Most scholars date Luke’s Gospel around **80–90 CE**, written for a Gentile audience, possibly after the destruction of the Temple in 70 CE.
- **Roman backdrop:** Roman power was unquestioned in this period, and local regions (like Gerasa or Gadara) were under Roman oversight—making the “Legion” reference even more politically charged.

## SCHOLARLY METAPHORICAL INTERPRETATION WITH MODERN-DAY & GRANT COUNTY CONTEXT

### Metaphorically, this story explores:

1. **Inner torment and fragmentation:** The man represents the chaos and suffering within a person isolated from community, mentally tormented, and spiritually lost.
2. **Social exclusion:** He is chained and cast out—mirroring how modern society can treat the mentally ill, addicted, or those seen as “unclean.”
3. **Jesus’ restoration as a model of holistic healing:** He not only casts out demons but returns the man to himself—**clothed, in his right mind, and sitting with Jesus** (Luke 8:35).

### Grant County Application:

In a rural and tight-knit area like **Grant County**, the story echoes:

- **The isolation of those with addiction, mental health issues, or homelessness.** How are they treated? Are they “chained” metaphorically by stigma or literally through incarceration?
- **Fear of change or loss:** Like the herdsmen who lose their pigs, modern communities can resist healing movements that challenge the status quo, especially if they come at an economic or emotional cost.
- **Call to action:** The local church can be like Jesus ... willing to **cross boundaries**, confront demons (addiction, trauma, depression), and **restore individuals** to community, even when it’s uncomfortable.

## SUMMARY

Luke 8:26–33 tells of Jesus’ confrontation with a tormented man possessed by many demons, named “Legion.” The man is isolated and chained, living among tombs. When Jesus arrives, the demons plead not to be cast into the abyss and instead enter a herd of pigs, which drown. The passage reveals Jesus’



divine authority over evil, the restoration of broken humanity, and the discomfort such healing brings to surrounding communities.

In today's context—especially in communities like Grant County—this story challenges us to confront the “demons” that plague individuals and societies alike: stigma, exclusion, systemic neglect, and fear of change. It calls faith communities to act with compassion, courage, and inclusivity, even when it disrupts norms or economic comfort.



## Addendum

### Glass Half-Full

The saying “**glass half full**” comes from a common metaphor used to illustrate a person’s **perspective on life**, especially how they interpret **ambiguous or neutral situations**.

While the **exact origin is unclear**, but it’s said to be rooted in an **age-old philosophical question** used to determine whether someone tends toward optimism or pessimism:

#### "Is the glass half full or half empty?"

This question doesn’t have a right or wrong answer — it’s a test of **outlook**:

- If you say “**half full**,” you’re focusing on **what is present** — an **optimistic** view.
- If you say “**half empty**,” you’re focusing on **what is missing** — a **pessimistic** view.

#### Possible Influences:

- **Stoic philosophy** often dealt with **perception and framing** — how we choose to see circumstances.
- **19th–20th century psychology**, especially with the rise of **positive psychology** (e.g., Carl Jung, later Dr. Norman Vincent Peale), began to explore how perspective shapes well-being.
- The saying gained traction in **self-help and pop psychology** in the mid-to-late 1900s.

#### Scripture Tie In:

The “glass half full” metaphor can powerfully tie into both **Luke 8:26–33 (Jesus healing the Gerasene demoniac)** and **Isaiah 65:1–5 (God’s lament over a rebellious people)**.

#### Luke 8:26–33 – The Man with Demons and Jesus:

From a “**glass half empty**” perspective:

- The man is hopeless: **possessed, naked, outcast, violent**, living among tombs.
- Society has given up on him: **shackled, isolated**, and feared.

But Jesus sees him “**half full**”:

- He sees **someone worth saving, someone restorable**.
- Jesus **restores his identity** and brings him back to community and purpose.

Jesus doesn’t see us as “too far gone.” He sees the “half full”—the part **still redeemable**, even if hidden under torment or sin.

#### Isaiah 65:1–5 – God Reaches Out, but People Turn Away:

Here, God expresses sorrow: “I was ready to be sought by those who did not ask...”

From a “**half empty**” view:

- God’s people are **stubborn, defiant, idol-worshipping**.
- The focus is on rejection and rebellion.

But **even here**, there’s a “half full” whisper:

- God is still **available to them**.



- He still offers **relationship**, even when ignored.

Even in their rebellion, **God remained available** — His arms open, His presence not withdrawn. He didn't force them to return, but He never removed the possibility of reconciliation. When we reject God, His **outstretched hand remains**. The “half full” part is **His mercy**, constantly inviting.

### Grant County Tie-In:

In rural Indiana, we often focus on what's been **lost** — industries, families moving away, changing culture. A “glass half empty” mindset is easy. But:

- Can we see what's still **present**?
- Can our church be like Jesus — **seeing potential**, not just problems?

### Closing Reflection:

- Do we see ourselves as “too far gone” — or do we let Jesus restore us?
- Do we see others as hopeless — or as **half full**, waiting for healing?
- Do we act like the people in Isaiah — rejecting God's approach — or do we let God fill the empty part?

**Challenge:** This week, practice “glass half full” theology: See **hope**, even in spiritual wreckage. See the **image of God**, even in broken people. That's what Jesus did.

### Victim Mentality

**Victim mentality** is not about being an actual victim (which many people are at times) — it's about **staying stuck** in that identity:

- “This always happens to me.”
- “No one understands.”
- “There's nothing I can do.”
- “God doesn't care.”
- “I'm too broken to change.”

### It often includes:

- Blaming others (or God) for all suffering
- Rejecting responsibility
- Resisting healing or change
- Dwelling on hurt rather than hope

### Luke 8:26–33 – Victim Mentality in the Gerasene Story

The possessed man could easily have embraced victimhood:

- Society feared him → He was cast out
- He hurt himself → He lived in isolation
- He seemed beyond help → No one dared come near

But when **Jesus intervenes**, the man doesn't say: “Leave me alone — this is just who I am.”

Instead:

- He lets Jesus speak authority over his life.





- He allows himself to be **changed**.
- He becomes a **witness** — not a permanent victim.

He went from **possessed to restored**, from **victim to evangelist**.

### Isaiah 65:1–5 – Victim Mentality in God’s People?

God’s expression is essentially: “I reached out — and you turned away.” He did this in a sorrowful way, not an “I told you so” tone.

The people:

- Cling to **rituals and rebellion**
- Justify themselves (“I’m holier than you” – v. 5)
- Assume **God is distant**, yet **they are the ones withdrawing**

Victim mentality here shows up as **spiritual entitlement** or **blame-shifting**: “We’re suffering — and it’s someone else’s fault.”

God’s people refused accountability. They chose spiritual victimhood over repentance.

### Holier than Thou

The people being addressed are saying, in effect: “Don’t touch me. I’m too righteous to associate with you.”

This is **spiritual arrogance** — they see themselves as superior and set apart in a **self-righteous** way, not a holy way. These individuals are engaging in **pagan rituals**, sacrificing in gardens, and breaking God’s commands — yet they still believe they’re spiritually superior.

“Holier than thou” becomes a defense mechanism — *I don’t need to repent, because I’m already above correction.*

This line exposes the **danger of pride** in religion:

- It creates **division**: us vs. them.
- It **excludes** others rather than drawing them into restoration.
- It **blocks humility**, which is necessary for receiving grace.

Jesus calls out this same spirit in the **Pharisees** (see Luke 18:9–14 — the Pharisee and the tax collector). The proud one talks about himself; the humble one beats his chest and asks for mercy.

In Isaiah 65:5, God’s response is severe: “These are a smoke in my nostrils, a fire that burns all the day.”

- Their spiritual arrogance isn’t just annoying — it’s **offensive** to God.
- Pretending holiness while harboring sin and judgment **defiles true worship**.

In today’s terms:

- This could be the person who **knows all the right verses** but weaponizes them.
- Or the one who thinks church is only for “people like us.”
- Or even the one who’s **suffered** and uses their pain to **invalidate** others’ pain — “You think that’s hard? Let me tell you what I’ve been through.”

Have you ever encountered a “holier than thou” attitude — in yourself or others? How does it shut down restoration, conversation, or compassion?



## Modern-Day Tie-In (Especially in Rural Communities)

In Grant County or similar communities:

- “Nothing ever changes.”
- “We’re too poor, too small, too ignored.”
- “They [outsiders] are the problem.”
- Even in churches: “We’ve lost people and we can’t do anything about it.”

These are **real hardships**, but a **victim mentality** can keep a church or a person **stuck** — unable to heal, rebuild, or hope.

## Theological Framing:

- **Jesus doesn’t feed victimhood** — He **liberates** people from it.
- **God offers restoration**, but expects us to respond (not wallow).

## Moving Forward:

- Where do we see victim mentality? In ourselves?
- How do Jesus’ actions show us a way forward?
- Are there places where we’re saying “God, You’ve forgotten us” when we’re really the ones turning away?