

Marks

of Discipleship

Daily Prayer ■ Weekly Worship ■ Bible Reading
Giving Time, Talents & Resources ■ Spiritual
Friendships ■ Service In & Beyond the Church

June 18, 2023

Day 1: Mark 5:1-2

They came to the other side of the lake, to the country of the Gerasenes. And when he had stepped out of the boat, immediately a man out of the tombs with an unclean spirit met him.

After the dramatic crossing of the Sea of Galilee the disciples are treated to another example of Jesus' power. He is going from one example of dealing with chaos to another. The entire event of the healing of the young man with demons is an example of how Jesus brings order out of chaos. Jesus will bring order and meaning to our lives but chaos is very powerful and will constantly be looking for ways to disrupt our life. Jesus, in verse 19-20, gives us a way to deal with chaos when it comes again and to keep order in our life.

Question: What do you think the area of the tombs looked like?

Challenge: Have you told your friends and family how much Jesus has done for you and how God has been merciful to you?

Scripture: Mark 5:21-42

Day 2: Mark 5:3-5

He lived among the tombs; and no one could restrain him anymore, even with a chain; for he had often been restrained with shackles and chains, but the chains he wrenched apart, and the shackles he broke in pieces; and no one had the strength to subdue him. Night and day among the tombs and on the mountains he was always howling and bruising himself with stones.

How alienated must this person be if he prefers the company of dead people to living ones? The effect of the unclean spirits on this man was to disconnect him from his community and from all human contact. He is living the non-human life of a rabid animal.

Question: In modern terms what do you think was this boy's problem?

Challenge: Think about this and be honest without being judgmental - what makes you uncomfortable being around people who are homeless, have addiction problems, or are mentally or physically disabled?

Day 3: Mark 5:6-8

When he saw Jesus from a distance, he ran and bowed down before him; and he shouted at the top of his voice, 'What have you to do with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I adjure you by God, do not torment me.' For he had said to him, 'Come out of the man, you unclean spirit!' Then Jesus asked him, 'What is your name?' He replied, 'My name is Legion; for we are many.' He begged him earnestly not to send them out of the country.

Kneeling before him, the spirit first approaches Jesus as a suppliant, to ward off his power. The spirit then attempts to invoke God's name to drive Jesus away. Jesus now gains control over the evil spirits by demanding the name of the spirit. The name of the spirit gives us an explanation as to why this young man is in such bad shape. He is controlled by not one spirit but by a multitude so that no effort on his part could ever dislodge the spirits' control over the young man. The name 'Legion' brings to mind the number of spirits possessing the young man. A Roman legion had about 6,000 men but the term was also used to describe a battalion (2,048 men), which is closer to the number of pigs referred to later in the account.

Question: How did the unclean spirits know Jesus' identity when those around Him did not?

Challenge: How do people recognize you as a follower of Jesus?

Scripture: Mark 7

Day 4: Mark

5:11-12

Now there on the hillside a great herd of swine was feeding;

and the unclean spirits begged him, 'Send us into the swine; let us enter them.' So he gave them permission. And the unclean spirits came out and entered the swine; and the herds, numbering about two thousand, rushed down the steep bank into the lake, and were drowned in the lake.

In Jewish thinking the sea is the unknown and it can go from calm to dangerous in a moment. Because of its unknown quality and its volatile nature it is used as an image of chaos. Jesus used the forces of chaos to deal with the forces of evil. The spirits ask not to be cast out of the country so, Jesus casts them into the swine. The swine run to the sea and are destroyed. In Revelation there is another lake called the Lake of Fire into which are cast all the demonic powers and even death itself. Jesus is not only healing but showing that God will destroy all evil and that only God can destroy the evil forces of the world and death itself.

Question: Why are there so many pigs so near Jewish territory?

Challenge: The region Jesus went to was called the Decapolis. What does that term mean?

Scripture: Mark 8

Day 5: Mark 5:14-17

The swineherds ran off and told it in the city and in the country. Then people came to see what it was that had happened. They came to Jesus and saw the demoniac sitting there, clothed and in his right mind, the very man who had had the legion; and they were afraid. Those who had seen what had happened to the demoniac and to the swine reported it. Then they began to beg Jesus to leave their neighborhood.

The response of the townspeople (no doubt the owners of the pigs) is to be both afraid and scared of Jesus. His healing is costing them way too much and His power is mighty. They noticed the boy in his right mind and clothed but they only saw the cost, not the healthy person. One of the questions the story forces us to think about is - what is the worth of a person?

Question: Why were they afraid to have Jesus stay in their neighborhood?

Challenge: What would scare people today if we became too Christian?

Scripture: Mark 5:21-42

Day 6: Mark 5:18-20

As he was getting into the boat, the man who had been possessed by demons begged him that he might be with him. But Jesus refused, and said to him, 'Go home to your friends, and tell them how much the Lord has done for you, and what mercy he has shown you.' And he went away and began to proclaim in the Decapolis how much Jesus had done for him; and everyone was amazed.

The mission of the United Methodist Church is "making faithful disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation for the world." Jesus made a faithful disciple in the young man with the unclean spirits, now he was sent home to transform his world through his personal testimony of being touched by the love of God. When we tell (and show) the effects of God's love on us it will amaze those around us.

Question: There could be a lot of reasons why Jesus told the young man to go home. If you were telling the story and someone asked you why, what answer would you give?

Challenge: How are you expressing your appreciation for Jesus calming the storms of your life (giving you salvation) and in what way are you following Him?

Scripture: Acts 8:26-40 Philip was one of the first Deacons. He followed Jesus' call to go and preach.