



©2020 Ginger Hertenstein

SERMON TITLE: **Miracle in the Cemetery**

Walking as Disciples of Jesus Series

SCRIPTURE: Mark 5:1-20

DATE: March 1, 2020

Check out the service at www.fpcd.org.

Read also Psalm 107:10-15. Check out the service at www.fpcd.org

Looking back at your life, do you ever recall the things the Lord does for you? Sometimes that can be the most important reminder of God's love in your life. How much has the Lord done for you? Are you encouraged when you look back?

We talked about some of the answers to prayer here in this church last week.

I keep a journal about those things and sometimes I go back and randomly read it. Nothing is more encouraging than to recall what the Lord has done, especially when you encounter, difficult, trying circumstances or people in your life.

Those memories of God's helping you can also be the easiest way you can share your faith with someone else who needs the Lord.

The disciples were always coming upon people with tremendous need when they were going around with Jesus. How did they not become overwhelmed with the problems?

- ~ There was a man with an unclean spirit at church
- ~ Peter's mother-in-law was sick with a high fever
- ~ There were people in the streets that had various diseases
- ~ There were people with mental illness
- ~ There was a man with leprosy
- ~ There was the man who was paralyzed

And that was just in the first week they were with him! (see Mark 1-2:12) So what kept the disciples encouraged?

Immediately before today's Scripture story the Lord did something extraordinary for the disciples. It is one thing when you watch someone else get healed or receive an answer they need, but you still might wonder about your problem, will God do that for me? Is God aware of my need? Does God care about me?

Problems in life naturally bring us to that place and rare is the person that does not wonder about God's mercy and love. Today we consider how to raise our trust that God indeed loves and cares enough to act on your behalf, that God sees your problem and wants to help you.

This is what the Lord did for the disciples the night before our story begins.

- a. The disciples were out at sea
- b. It was evening
- c. A windstorm came up
- d. Their boat was being swamped
- e. Jesus was in the stern asleep
- f. The disciples woke him—*don't you see we are perishing here?*
- g. He got up. I don't even know if he stood up or just raised a groggy head. He looked around and said **"Peace! Be still!"**
- h. The wind ceased
- i. There was a dead calm . . .
- j. He looked at them and said, "What's the problem?" (Actually he said, "Why are you afraid? Have you still no faith?")

He seems to be clearly saying you do not have to be so anxious about God's care. God wills to take care of you.

Let's hear what happened the next morning. Read Mk 5:1-20

After landing and disembarking on the far side of the sea at Gerasenes, which is Gentile territory, they were immediately met by a madman. The man came from the cemetery where he stayed. He stayed there because the townspeople were unable to handle his problems. They had tried to confine him—by chaining his wrists and putting shackles on his legs, but he violently tore them off. No one could subdue him. He became unwelcome, and don't you know the pain it caused his loved ones.

This man is in chaos—a terror to himself and to others. He roamed among the tombs and howled day and night like an animal. He cut himself repeatedly. This man was extremely ill mentally. I doubt you have ever seen anything like this but it must have been terrifying. I have once—a young lady who continually cut herself on the thigh until her entire thigh was covered with scars. It was horrifying.

The man ran to Jesus and bowed down before him and shouted at the top of his lungs, "Why are you interfering with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? In the name of God, I beg you, don't torture me!" For Jesus had already said to the spirit, "Come out of the man, you evil spirit."

When you are thinking of your problem, remember this story, because Jesus overlooked the fact that this man caused his family and his whole town great stress and no one could subdue him. That basically means no one could talk him into sanity. No one

could help his situation. He was so violent they could not handle him at all. Yet to Jesus, he was someone who needed help and Jesus was willing to help him **even before the man came to Jesus.**

Jesus did not care how bad the man's behavior was; even though he caused great pain to the town and no one could subdue him. That word subdue means no one could calm him, no one could soothe him, no one could change him. But even before the man approached Jesus, Jesus commanded the evil spirit to leave the man.

Jesus had authority over the spirit, "What is your name?" he demanded.

"My name is Legion, for there are many of us inside this man."

Legion is a military term for the largest unit of the Roman army—about 5,600 soldiers. This man's personality was not simply schizophrenic; he had a shattered personality condition.

There happened to be a large herd of pigs feeding on the hillside nearby. "Send us into those pigs," the spirits begged. So Jesus gave them permission. The evil spirits came out of the man and entered the pigs, and the entire herd of 2,000 pigs plunged down the steep hillside into the lake and drowned in the water.

The man who had been possessed was freed. He sat there before Jesus perfectly sane. His formerly torn, non-existent attire was replaced by decent clothes. Everyone was afraid because they had never seen anything like this. They asked Jesus to go away.

Have you pushed Jesus back at times out of fear? Fear causes loss of blessing. Those people could have had Jesus with them as the man reentered his family and the lives of the townspeople.

Perhaps fear interferes in your times of trouble. We are afraid that Jesus does not love us, or is not pleased with us, or has not heard our prayers and so that fear paralyzes us.

When things go wrong and you need prayer or after praying, your prayer does not seem to be answered, *it is because God is doing a greater thing in and for you.* Do not give up! Press in for help always, even when all looks "dead or done!"

Perhaps some of these townspeople had prayed for this man for years, probably out of great frustration of not knowing what to do with him. Surely his relatives prayed for him. But when the answer finally came, the townspeople were afraid.

Why? They had never seen anything like this. Would he really be a new person? Could they trust that he would not return to his old messed up self?

Better to just ask Jesus to leave.

This town, had they not been afraid, might have experienced the greatest of hope in seeing this man released from bondage.

Think about it. Their neighbor who was so disturbed that no one could deal with him sat before Jesus clean, dressed, and in his right mind. **The townspeople should have been ecstatic.** Not only were the man's debilitating troubles over, but the town had regained a sound citizen. So we are given the challenge to accept people who have gained healing through Jesus.

The man asked Jesus to go with him. Perhaps the man wanted to go with Jesus because he feared deep down that he would not be accepted, even with this transformation. Perhaps that's why Jesus said, "No, go home to your family, and tell them everything the Lord has done for you and how merciful he has been." Jesus wanted that town, that group of neighbors to learn to embrace the grace of God. So the man's first call was to be the new creation he now was in front of his neighbors.

How are you at telling others everything the Lord has done for you and how merciful he has been? As you tell your story, then you yourself will live into the miracle.

And so the man who had been set free returned to his town. He returned to his people, and then he began to go to all the Ten Towns in that region and proclaim the great things Jesus had done for him. In doing that, he lived into the miracle in front of family and friends; the freedom that Jesus had given him.

And everyone was amazed at what he told them.

Are you accepting those whom Jesus has given a second chance? Are you praying for a miracle in your own worst nightmare?

AMEN