

Life Changing Moments

Sermon February 13, 2022

Scripture Readings: *Psalm 1 & Luke 6:17–26*

Golden Verse: *A large crowd had come to hear him and ... the people all tried to touch Him, because power was coming from him and healing them all. - Luke 6:18-19*

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. - Mark 5:18-20

To this story, which I have just read, we could give the title: life-changing moments.

Guided by the Holy Spirit, I would like to share with you two major messages from this story. First, we will focus on a miraculous healing and, secondly, what the healed person should do after. There are many similar stories in the Bible, when the Lord Jesus healed a person, but perhaps this is the most striking story, when a person went through a wonderful life-changing moment. We will see not only how Jesus helps a hopeless person from his hopeless situation, but also how this person's life will continue.

We see a person, who was estranged from his family, his loved ones, maybe abandoned by his parents, his wife, his children, his friends. It seems he was chased away because of his bad behaviour. Who knows how many times he heard words such as: "go away, we don't want you. You are useless, annoying, and you are disturbing our lives. We are better off without you. Go away and never come home." We can just imagine how hopeless this person was who had to leave the society and had to find a shelter somewhere in the mountains. According to the story, this poor man was in a terrible situation. Because of his behaviour, people knew him as a person who was possessed and tormented by evil, diabolical powers, and demonic forces. This obsession was something more severe than what we would call mental illness today. We don't know how or why but he became a victim of satanic and demonic forces.

I know that most people smile when the Bible speaks of Satan, the devil, hell. "That cannot be possible," they say. "It's all just an idea left to us from the Dark Ages." But let me ask, when racism wiped out millions of Jewish lives during the Holocaust, was that not demonic? When 27 years ago, in South Sudan, one major ethnic group started the genocide war, killing hundreds of thousands of innocent people, cannot that be called demonic? When bombings have destroyed millions, that cannot be called demonic? When today innumerable cartoons are teaching and influencing our 6-7 year old children to go against each other and torture each other, then they shoot and kill each other, is that not demonic? Witnessing the terror around us day by day, are we still smiling at the biblical images of Satan's destruction?

When the Bible speaks of Satan, it means evil, the evil that is more powerful than man, which has supernatural power. Satan does not surround only those who deny God, but also men and women who confess that they are children of God.

Let us not seek Satan somewhere outside, in the world, but inside, within us. There are far more satanic powers in our souls than we think. But we don't have to be afraid of Satan and we don't have to panic about his power. Instead, we have to place our faith in a much stronger way in our Creator and Sustainer, our heavenly Father and our Saviour Jesus Christ. Jesus came to overcome the destructive forces of Satan and hell, as He did in the life of this man, as we will see.

In this story, we see the effect of satanic destructive forces on a person's life. He is acting like a person who lives in the mountain's cave, who is full of anger. He harms himself and attacks anyone who gets close to him or gets in his way. He lost all his moral sense. He wanders back and forth aimlessly, and meanwhile he is suffering terribly. He does not care about law, determination, persuasion, apology, or people's opinions.

Do you think that today there are no people around us who behave like he behaved, feel like he felt? What can put us today in a similar situation? The word has 3 letters. Can you guess that word? The middle letter is I. SIN. Sin does not mean to act out a bit, but it is something beyond our control. Sin is what hurts others. Sin dominates when humans cannot stop doing wrong. They are no longer doing what they want, but what they feel they have to. This man was overwhelmed by some supernatural demonic force.

A lot of this type of humans are still among us today. But please do NOT judge them, because you don't know what is behind their pain and suffering. It is so bad that we are ready for judgment on a hopeless case so soon. If we cannot help them, we should not judge them. Our story shows that, for Jesus Christ, there is no hopeless case. Jesus has come to this world to find these hopeless lives.

Can you imagine that Christ Jesus, who came to find and save hopeless lives, was suffering on the cross alone? He was neglected and forsaken, even by those for whom He gave His life.

When you see a person, who might seem to be lost, confused, or struggling, please do not judge them. Please do not say that he or she cannot change and there is a hopeless case. Even if you don't see any improvement in them, or any changes, they are not hopeless until we can place them into Jesus' hands. Jesus sees in all of us the good side. He can set us free. He is healing people today as he did 2,000 years ago. And the great thing is that He is working constantly. He is still working in you and in me, although we so often resisted Him. Whatever would be our opinion of ourselves, He still has to fix a lot of things in us. Jesus sees in you someone you can become by His love and His power. He sees the child of God in you, the eternal value for which He sacrificed on the cross. He sees Himself in us.

In the presence of Jesus, the fearsome satanic power, that tormented that man started to shrink like a snowman in the sun. No matter how much power sin is in us, Jesus has more power and more love to save us. He is here among us in this world, in His word, to deliver you and me, and to make us into different persons. Let us come closer to Him. Let us be in fellowship with Him. Let us start a quiet spiritual conversation in prayer with Jesus. Let us decompress ourselves from all our pressure in His holy presence.

When Jesus is present, the ropes break, the thoughts and feelings are getting clear, and the devil is fleeing. We can have the changes and we can be the person we wanted to be maybe long time ago. There is a change because Jesus is here. We can barely believe but it is possible because, for Jesus, everything is possible, exactly like here in the story. People could barely believe how the person has been changed in front of their eyes. That man was the same person - and yet someone completely different. The same man, but purified, recreated, healed, redeemed and sanctified.

This healed man asks Jesus to allow him to stay with Him. It seems he feels safe close to Jesus, safe against all demonic powers. He asked Jesus to allow him to follow Him and to be part of those who stayed always near Him.

However, Jesus sent him home: *“Go home to your loved ones.”* (Mark 5:19b) In that sentence, there is much more than simple guidance. Tell them that you met Me, that you were near Me, that you were touched by Me. Tell them that you were liberated from all kind of satanic influences. Testify of Me with your changed life. Show them who you have become. Live your daily life around them as a new person. Jesus sent this man back to his own environment for a testifying life, so that they could see that Jesus changed this life.

“Go home to your family.” Return to those you left behind. Let them see God’s mercy in your life. Be the good news, the testimony embodied, the authentic proof of God, the living message of Jesus.

Imagine this man coming home. Everything he says and acts is living news of the power of God. The whole renewed person is a tangible gospel and great joy. The whole atmosphere changes around him and in that family. His wife is happy, the children are happy, and there is no more fear as before. Everything is so beautiful and good, so incredibly different now than it was. This is the power of Jesus. Amen