

Matthew 8:28-34, Mark 5:1-20

The Challenge of a Jesus Interruption

A few weeks ago I preached a sermon that spoke of divine interruptions. Divine interruptions occur when people can come into our lives and change the course of our plans. As we see these interruptions as being from God we see them as an opportunity to help someone and to grow ourselves spiritually in some way.

This morning's passage has several good teachings but the one that stood out to me is how do we handle ourselves when Jesus comes into our life and interrupts us. When He comes in and challenges us to follow Him and maybe change the course of our life.

Our passage is found in Matthew 8. This story is related in three of the four gospels, Matthew, Mark and Luke. Each story has a few different facts and as we look at what occurred through each gospel, we get a fuller view of the event.

We are not going to take the time to read this story in its entirety but we will pull passages and events from each of the gospels. I think I have it lined it out enough this morning so you can follow it with me.

Let's begin in Matthew. Read with me.

Matthew 8:28, "When He (Jesus) came to the other side into the country of the Gadarenes, two men who were demon-possessed met Him as they were coming out of the tombs. They were so extremely violent that no one could pass by that way."

If you have been following along in Matthew you know that Jesus and a hand full of His disciples loaded up in a boat and in the process of crossing the sea of Galilee, ran into a tremendous storm.

The disciples were scared for their lives but in a great display of power, Jesus rebuked the storm, calmed the sea and wind and they went on their way. Now we see they had landed in the country of Gadarenes where two men, the gospel of Mark says only one, met them.

For simplicity sake let think as Mark did and speak of only one man. Scholars don't understand why there is two men mentioned in Matthew and only one in Mark. But lets not get hung up in this detail and miss what occurred.

Look at this picture while I read from Mark about this man.

Mark 5:2-5, "When He (Jesus) got out of the boat, immediately a man from the tombs with an unclean spirit met Him, and he had his dwelling among the tombs. And no one was able to bind him anymore, even with a chain; because he had often been bound with shackles and chains, and the chains had been torn apart by him and the shackles broken in pieces, and no one was strong enough to subdue him. Constantly, night and day, he was screaming among the tombs and in the mountains, and gashing himself with stones."

Can you imagine how tormented this man was? Can you imagine how wild and crazy he was? Probably nothing we have ever been exposed to. But here he comes, running up to Jesus and the disciples. I am sure the disciples were taken back, probably scared again, but not Jesus. Jesus knew who was controlling this man and Jesus also knew who He was and the authority and power that was resided in Him.

Two things we are going to see occur here.

1. The demons knew who Jesus was
Look with me at verse 29 of Matthew 8.

Matthew 8:29, “And they cried out, saying, ‘What business do we have with each other, Son of God? Have You come here to torment us before the time?’”

The demons inside of this man knew Jesus was the Son of God. They had probably saw Him in heaven before they were cast to the earth. It is also interesting to note that they questioned Jesus as to if He was going to torment them before the time.

What time do you think they were speaking of? The end of days when every knee shall bow and every tongue confess that Jesus is the Son of the God. The end of time when

Revelation 20:10, “the devil and his kingdom of demons will be thrown into the lake of fire and brimstone where they will be tormented night and day forever and ever.” (paraphrase)

The demon, demons actually, knew who Jesus was and they knew the judgment that was coming their way. So they feared Jesus but somehow they understood it wasn't time so they asked to cast into a herd of swine.

I know I am making some broad swipes at this story. You can read this story in its entirety in the different passages I have listed in your outline to get a full sense of everything that occurred.

But I think now, for us, the important thing to note is...

2. Jesus had compassion on the man who was possessed

Jesus saw how the demons had tormented this man and caused him untold pain. Jesus knew what this man had been through. In fact, some scholars have wondered if this was the main reason Jesus landed the boat on the shores of Gadarenes. Just to heal this tormented man.

At the end of this story we read that after Jesus healed this man He got back in the boat and left, doing nothing else. It seems like healing this man was His sole purpose for coming to Gadarenes .

Do you know the same thing is true for each one of you. Jesus sought you out and came into your life at just the right moment. You might have been tormented, screaming inwardly or even outwardly. You might have been possessed or overcome by any number of evil spirits who led you into a self-destructive lifestyle.

The man in this picture is an extreme example of what can occur when someone is possessed or overcome by an evil spirit. Now we know that a person who has accepted Christ cannot be possessed by an evil spirit but we do believe they can be oppressed by an evil spirit meaning.

If we, as Christians, are not walking in the light, power and protection of the most holy God. If we are walking our own path in life, then there is the possibility of the darkness of this life getting on us, overcoming us, bringing us down to the place where we begin to live self-destructive life.

The demons had complete control of this man and it led to a tormented, destructive life. Look what happened when the demons were cast out of this man.

Matthew 8:31-32, “The demons began to entreat Him, saying, ‘If you are going to cast us out, send us into the herd of swine.’ And He said to them, ‘Go!’ And they came out and went into the swine, and the whole herd rushed down the steep bank into the sea and perished in the waters.”

The swine, pigs, now being possessed by the demons, rushed to destruction.

3. What happens to people when Satan or a demon grabs ahold of them either in a dramatic way like the swine or like the man mentioned here? A swift run to destruction.

I have seen this played out in my life and in the lives of those around me. You may have seen it as well. Maybe in your own life but also in the life of your family members or people around you. You have seen it in the dramatic ways of alcohol or drug abuse. Or in the more subtle but no less destructive ways of insecurity, anxiety and depression. Or even in a even less subtle way, a pursuit of riches, material goods or selfish pursuits.

Some subtle, some dramatic but a rush to destruction none the less. A possible destruction of life may occur but certainly a destruction of the ability of the Kingdom of God to form within that person and to work through a person for the development of God's kingdom here on earth through them.

But there is good news isn't there? There is good news that just as Jesus saw the plight of this man who was filled with demons, Jesus sees our plight as we wrestle with our demons and He is willing and able to come to our rescue and set us free.

Jesus's mercy and compassion is shown to us here. His power and authority over evil is also shown and it can be shown in the lives of any who come to Him to be set free.

But the story doesn't end here. As dramatic, as wonderful as the casting out of this man's demons was, not everybody saw it this way. Look with me.

Luke 8:34-37, "When the herdsman saw what had happened, they ran away and reported it in the city and out in the country. The people went out to see what had happened; and they came to Jesus

and found the man from whom the demons had gone out, sitting down at the feet of Jesus, clothed and in his right mind; and they became frightened. Those who had seen it reported to them how the man who was demon-possessed had been made well. And all the people of the country of (Gadarenes) and the surrounding district asked Him to leave them, for they were gripped with great fear; so He (Jesus) got into a boat and left.”

This is one of the most tragic phrases of the this story. They asked Jesus to leave their country. Why were they so frightened that they asked Jesus to leave? Hadn't Jesus had miraculously healed one of their own? Yet they were still wished to be rid of Him.

I wonder if it might have been for a couple of different reasons. First, because...

4. Jesus' power and presence challenged the way they were used to seeing life

Jesus' power and presence challenged what they were used to in life. They had a certain way of doing things, a certain way of living, a certain way of looking at things and here this guy shows up and upsets their apple cart. Everything was fine and fit in a nice comfortable box until this guy comes along and challenges their reality.

I wonder if they wanted to keep the status quo? They wanted to live the way they wanted to live. They weren't ready for someone to come along and say that is not the real way to live. There is a better way, a more truthful way, a more everlasting way.

But that is what Jesus does isn't it? He challenges people's reality. His teachings are so unique, so seemingly different than the way the world thinks that it challenges people to look more deeply at the way they think and do life.

There is a series of commercials on tv right now. I think they are a car commercials, and they make the statement question everything.

Question everything. That is what happens when Jesus shows up on the scene isn't? His presence makes people stop and question everything they knew about life, everything they knew about themselves.

And in reality, not everybody wants to go there. Sometimes we don't want to go there do we?

When Jesus is near us, when His eyes are upon us we know our life is not our own. When Jesus is near we know we are to serve unselfishly both our neighbor and our enemy. When Jesus is near we know we are to look out for others more than ourselves.

Some if not most of people in this story had monetary loss when the pigs ran over they cliff and they weren't prepared for it. Sometimes, when Jesus is near in our lives, we know there is a monetary commitment and maybe even a loss financially. When Jesus is near we know we may be asked, like the widow with her only coin, to give it to someone in need.

When Jesus is near we begin to question everything. Is this what you want me to do Jesus. Is this how you want me to be, to act, to speak. Is this how You want me to spend my time, spend my money, live my life.

What was true of the people of Gadarene is true of us.

5. When Jesus is near, He challenges every part of our life

The question we must ask ourselves this morning is this. Am I inviting Jesus to come further into my life or, like the people of Gadarene, am I in effect, asking Him to leave?

We may not be consciously asking Jesus to leave like the people of Gadarene did but the results can be the same if we are not fully given over and following Jesus.

Look again at vs. 37, **“And all the people of the country of (Gadarenes) and the surrounding district asked Him to leave them, for they were gripped with great fear; so He (Jesus) got into a boat and left.”**

Jesus didn't argue with the people. He didn't plead with them. He didn't say look what I have done, I can do this for you. No, I think He quietly and softly got back into the boat and left.

The same is true of us. Jesus only comes to the one who asks, seeks and follows. He never presses Himself on anyone. He can only do miracles where He is wanted. The door must be opened for Him to enter in.

If we are wise we will see the interruption of Jesus into our lives as a prison door opening up. We will see the One who is stronger than our jailer come and who will set us free.

When we invite Jesus to stay, two great things occur.

Luke 8:35, “The people went out to see what had happened; and they came to Jesus and found the man from whom the demons had gone out, sitting down at the feet of Jesus, clothed and in his right mind...”

This man, who for years before Jesus had showed up, was crazy out of his mind, who was led into a life of self-destruction, this man was now sane, clothed and sitting at the feet of Jesus.

What a miracle amen. To be delivered by Jesus and made right in your mind and to have a hunger to sit at the feet of Jesus.

When Jesus was preparing to leave in the boat the following occurred.

Mark 5:18-20, “As (Jesus) was getting into the boat, the man who had been demon possessed was imploring Him that he might accompany Him. And He did not let him, but He said, ‘Go home to your people and report to them what great things the Lord has done for you, and how He had mercy on you.’” And he went away and he began to proclaim...what great things Jesus had done for him; and everyone was amazed.”

This man now had a testimony. He had a testimony to the goodness and mercy of the Lord and Jesus said go and share this. He did, he couldn't keep it to himself and when he did everyone was amazed.

That is what happens when someone is delivered by Jesus from the demons that plague them. They are set right in their mind. They are clothed in the righteousness of Jesus and they share it with everyone they come in contact with.

This is waiting for each of us today. We might not be plagued with terrible, self-destructive demons like this man was but the things we deal with are real and destructive in their own way aren't they. And guess what? Jesus knows. Jesus knows the demons, the things that plague each and everyone of you. And like the man in this story, He will have compassion on you and He will deliver you if you seek Him.

When we are delivered, when we sit at the feet of Jesus our minds are set aright to the truth and in the truth we find the way to life as God intended for us.

Sitting at the feet of Jesus. In a right mind, clothed in Jesus' righteousness. It really doesn't get any better than that. The question I think we need to ask ourselves is this. When Jesus comes to interrupt your life are you inviting Him to stay or to leave.

Jesus wants to set you free and He wants to give you a life that is full of peace, full of blessings, full of Him.

Let's pray