MEDITATION 44

Mark 5: 14-17

The reading today is a continuation of last week's reading: "**14** 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. **15** They came to Jesus and saw the man possessed by demons sitting there, clothed and in his right mind, the very man who had had the legion, and they became frightened. **16** Those who had seen what had happened to the man possessed by demons and to the swine reported it. **17** Then they began to beg Jesus to leave their neighborhood."

Who or what have you pushed away at some point in your life because you were afraid?
Sometimes it's something new we haven't tried before that scares us…
Sometimes it's something new someone introduces to us and it frightens us even if it may promise good things to us…
Sometimes it's someone new who wants to come into our lives and we are inclined to be cautious or mistrusting rather than open…
And sometimes we're so used to a situation or relationship being what it is, even if it's not good or healthy, that any potential change in that, as good as it may be, is also scary…

What is it about the situation in the gospel story that causes fear among the residents of the region? Jesus has just healed a man who was deeply tormented by many demons called "legion." Last week's meditation touched on this more specifically. The word legion would suggest the people of this region were terrorized by a large force of Roman soldiers who had crushed what would probably have been a resistance movement or rebellion of some kind. The amount of loss and terror this would have caused must have been staggering. Are the people afraid of what Jesus will bring to the surface again by engaging the demonic among them which they prefer to remain buried? Is the man tormented by his memories and acting out the violence he suffered and witnessed among the tombs where no doubt loved ones have been buried, and who has now been released of his torment now become a threat to the people because it brings up their pain in need of healing too?

We can never totally eliminate the need in any of us to touch those places of pain, suffering and fear, as a necessary part of our healing journey… If healing matters to us at all, it must touch the pain and get to the source of the pain… For Jesus, all illness and suffering is caused by the demonic which is evil and rooted in a source in his world named: Satan. God is at war with the Satan and the demonic, and Jesus is the frontline leading the charge… His weapons are compassion and a powerful gift of healing energy he possesses and transfers through the Spirit moving in and through him…

But this particular excerpt of the story today challenges each of us to reflect on why we can sometimes be afraid when healing is possible in a way that requires change in us and change in a

relationship in our lives. Maybe we've been a caregiver. Maybe we've been a recipient of care. Have we become dependent and needy in a relationship in a way that is not ultimately lifegiving?... Maybe we've long buried a hurt in our past and yet, maybe the effects of that hurt are still affecting the way we relate and engage in our lives today. It's one thing to do what we need to do to survive. But Jesus is trying to stir up in people a desire to do more than survive. What if it's possible to really thrive in your life no matter how buried you may feel in your current circumstances or challenges? Where have you yet to thrive?...

But of course, this means facing the fear that blocks you from seeking more than mere survival. And maybe for all the good in your life, there may be parts of you that are still in survival mode you're not even aware of that can thrive if explored with openness and trust in what can yet be.

What fear needs to be named in your life?... What fear needs to be exorcised? Do you have the courage to allow it to come to the surface and name it openly before God with all the emotion that may stir up too?...

PRAYER: Thank you, O God, for meeting me where I am,
with all my fear for all my courage,
with all my worry for all my faith,
with all my questioning for all my certainty,
and with all my resentment for all my gratitude…
Thank you for meeting me where I am…

If I am sad right now, give me comfort in the assurance that goodness and blessing can still arise in me…
If I am mad right now, give me grace in all the ways I can yet engage my frustrations…
If I am glad right now, give me humble thanksgiving in my heart and may my gladness energize and raise up in me a desire to make others glad…

May whatever is buried within that weighs me down come before you, O God… Do with it what you will and lead me in ways I can not only survive but thrive… You can do all things, O God… Work in me… In Jesus' name, Amen.