

Crying out to God for help!

From desperation to salvation and transformation in Jesus.

SPRINGLINE PARISH – DIOCESE OF LINCOLN

Nine Churches, One Parish, Following Jesus

Trinity 1 – The Word of God:

Isaiah 65.1-9, Galatians 3. 23-29

Luke 8.26-39

Prayer

1.

Have you had a profound experience of God this week?
Would you like to share what God has done for you?

2.

The story that we have heard in the gospel of Luke this morning is a unique story/event in the public ministry of Jesus. This time we are not hearing a story of physical healing but spiritual healing par excellence, shows what Jesus can do for you if you go to Jesus, if you cry out to him for help. In the story that we have heard, the gospel writer Luke makes strong contrast of the healed man before he met Jesus and after he met Jesus.¹

Before he met Jesus he was ‘outside the city’ (verse 27); *after he met Jesus* he was ‘inside the city’ (verse 39).

Before he met Jesus he was ‘living in the tombs’ (verse 27); *after he met Jesus* he was ‘living in a house’ (verse 27, 39).

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“In this awesome exorcism Luke redacts Mark 5.1-20 in such a way as to make explicit Mark’s implicit contrasts: outside the city (8.27) inside the city (8.39); living in the tombs (8.27) living in a house (8.27, 39); unclothed (8.27) clothed (8.35); demented (8.27) of sound mind (8.35); living in the desert (8.29) living in a house (8.39). These contrasts involve transfers, transfers from destructive isolation to nurturing human community, transfers which Luke identifies as “being saved” (8.36) and which are effected by Jesus, “Son of the Most High God” (8.28). Even the pigs, whose presence in this exorcism is at first blush puzzling, contribute to Luke’s Christological teaching: not only the demon world but also the powers of pagan religion and Roman rule, symbolized by the pigs, are subject to Jesus’ authority. It is he and not they who restore human beings to wholeness of life.” (cfr The JBC, pp698, Geoffrey Chapman 1994 London)

Before he met Jesus he was ‘unclothed’ (verse 27); after he met Jesus he was ‘clothed’ (verse 35).

Before he met Jesus he was ‘living in the desert’ (verse 29); after he met Jesus he was ‘living in a house’ (verse 39).

These powerful contrasts bring home to us the absolute transformation that happened in the life of the possessed man after he met Jesus – from destructive isolation and loneliness to a normal, nurturing home and community.

In other words, we have here a powerful example and testimony of what it means being healed or “being saved” by Christ! (see verse 36)

Even the pigs symbolizing the powers of pagan religion and Roman rule are subject to the authority of Jesus. **It is Jesus alone who can truly restore human beings to wholeness of life!**

*The transformation is so complete that we see the healed man who previously was ‘living in the tombs’ is now sitting ‘at the feet of Jesus clothed and in his right mind’ (verse 35^{c,d}). This is the posture of a true disciple of Jesus. We remember the story of Mary and Martha; Martha was busy preparing things for Jesus while Mary was at the feet of Jesus listening to him. When Martha complained to Jesus, Jesus told her, “Mary has chosen the better part.” *In other words, the demented, demon possessed man is in complete relationship with his community and with God!**

He indeed becomes one of the first apostles of Jesus! What a change for a demon possessed, demented, mentally sick person!

“Return to your home, and declare how much God has done for you.” So he went away, proclaiming throughout the city how much Jesus had done for him. (Luke 8.39)

The demon possessed man becomes an apostle of the “good news” of Christ and His Kingdom. He is totally whole and healed and completely re-inserted into his family and community.

3.

The story of the healing/exorcism of the possessed man is the story of total, complete salvation that Jesus offers anyone who comes to him.

It is the story of what transformation the Lord Jesus can effect in a mad man’s life.

From destructive isolation and loneliness to nurturing human community and to his home and city where he can “belong” once again which is in fact what “being saved” and “healed” is all about.

It is the story of how even people who are mentally sick can find healing, wholeness and holiness in Christ.

‘The demoniac, though in a particularly disturbed and deranged state before his healing, is likewise a symbol for all of fallen humanity, enslaved by the powers of destruction and death. His transformation into someone “clothed and in his right mind” prefigures the new creation won by Jesus’s paschal triumph, into which we are incorporated by baptism into his suffering, death, and resurrection.’ (Angus Ritchie, *Not too late for a U-turn*, *Church Times* 21 June 2019, p 19)

We all have our demons –

our character flaws

our psychological, mental, emotional flaws,

our addictive habits that we cannot get out of ... and these dominate our lives; these inner demons possess our lives and make us live outside of our true and genuine selves as God created us; like the man possessed by demons we are not free, we don’t belong, we don’t know what we are searching, we are in utter doubt and confusion, we feel lonely and isolated

Like the demon possessed man, and like many others like him, when we have reached such a point of despair, a point of no return, confusion and doubt, we also must cry out to Jesus in our desperation. We must cry out to God, “Lord help me! I need you! Save me!”

When we discover that we don’t have the answers for our questions and our problems and recognize that we need help outside of ourselves and when we surrender ourselves to Christ and accept him as our Saviour, the demons disappear and we re-possess our lives. We are healed; we are saved; we see the light at the end of the tunnel.

There was a time when I needed that light and that answer and I got it when I turned to the Lord! Jesus Christ is our Answer!

Prayer

[ST Mattapally]

