



GROUPS

DISCUSSION GUIDE

Series: Mark Part One - Week 6, Nov 26, 2023

Scripture: Mark 5:1-9, Mark 5:22-28, Mark 5:34 (NIV11)

Message Summary: We wrapped up the series by looking how the stories of healing in Mark encourage us to seek and offer grace to those far and near in our lives.

- **The other side** With crossing to the other side, Gerasenes, Jesus and the disciples end up in the region of “cast out ones” (a Jewish play on words), the part of land occupied by Rome, with Jewish population living in gentile cities. When they are greeted by a demon-possessed man who dwelled among the tombs, cut himself, and was naked, we see almost comical piling up of layers of separation between Jesus and this man. Socially, politically and ritually, this man represents “the other”, in v 19 we see that he was also a gentile. Jesus crosses our made up borders here.
- **What’s in a name** In the story of Jesus casting out “Legion” into a herd of pigs that then rush into the water and drown, the following things are important:
 - Legion is a uniquely Roman term that had a very specific meaning: 5600 infantry, 200 non-citizen soldiers, and probably 600 cavalry, depending on the needs. It was an occupying, hostile force taking up residence in space where it was not welcome.
 - Wild pigs - unclean animals in Jewish culture. Jesus sends Legion, that hostile force, into the herd of pigs, they fall into water, and are

consumed by the chaos of the waters that Jesus just stilled on the way to Gerasenes.

- Fretensis (the image of a wild boar) was the symbol for the tenth Roman legion that camped out on the Mount of Olives and conquered Jerusalem a couple decades after Jesus’ death, around the time the gospels are being written.

There’s more going on here than just an exorcism story with pigs. It is a parable that confronts us with the reality that we all need to learn to love out neighbour better.

- **Talking to the president** (Mk 5:22-24) Jairus, president of the synagogue, the first person with whom Jesus interacts on the Jewish side of the lake when they cross back from Gerasenes. He’s a total opposite from the man they met across the lake, and he is seeking help for his daughter. And Jesus is good to him, but it’s a misdirection, because there’s a woman who steals a healing by touching Jesus’s clothes.
- **All our daughters** (Mk 5:26, 28) She suffered from bleeding, was likely defrauded by many doctors, and believes in the mythology that said that the Messiah will bring healing on the edges of his clothing. When the woman comes forward, Jesus calls her daughter, which elevates her status to the status of the powerful man’s daughter. Then Jesus heals Jairus’ daughter. “It’s almost as if Jesus is saying, Do you remember that mind-blowing, boundary-expanding grace you saw on the other side of the lake? Well, all of that, is just as necessary here, in

your backyard too. There is love overflowing for when you are Jairus, and for when you are struggling to be noticed. And when we can learn that, when we can embody the way of Jesus in the world, both there AND here, then we might actually start to see good news.”

Connect: What are some of the ways you will be marking Advent this year?

Share: Look at the three encounters in this chapter, the demon-possessed man, the president of the synagogue and his sick daughter, and the ceremonially unclean woman who steals her healing. What are you taking away for yourself from these three stories when it comes to divine (and human) grace, and when it comes to inclusion? How do these stories challenge you or expand your imagination?

Reflect: What do you think about the possible interpretations of the story with the demon-possessed man in Gerasenes? Do you agree that there’s more than just a surface reading of exorcism at play here? Which interpretation are you drawn to?

How does Jeremy’s approach resonate with you?

“However you want to make sense of this story, whether you believe that Legion was a literal demon that Jesus exorcized, or whether you believe that Legion is a metaphor for the way that Jesus frees this man from all that bears down on him, I think if you’re taking Mark seriously, you’ve got to admit that more is going on here than just a random porcine encounter. This is a parable.

A parable about the way that political and military occupation can crush people.

A parable about the way that social and religious isolation can compound that.

A parable about the way our language and names for each other can convince us that someone else—another human being— is our enemy — rather than the forces that separate us. A parable about how those that live by the sword— and their military might — will eventually inevitably be swallowed up the chaos of they own violence.

A parable about how Jesus steps calmly, confidently, peacefully into our mess and disarms all of our us-vs-them narratives.”

Engage: How do you interpret Jesus’ words, “Daughter, your faith has healed you. Go in peace, be freed from your suffering”? (Mark 5:34) Why do you think it is significant that Mark uses the language of daughterhood here? How does it connect to the rest of the chapter and healing stories? What does it mean to you personally?

Take away: What did you particularly enjoy about this series and why?

Pray:

God of good stories,

Stories told,

And stories lives,

Stories filled with purpose and meaning and lessons for us to metabolize and draw strength from,

Would we slowly learn to embrace our vulnerability,

To turn to those who love us,

To lean on those you have demonstrated their trustworthiness,

To believe that you are on our side — always — in gracious love.

Might that awareness help us know that our lives are littered with good news,

Scattered into every corner waiting just for us to notice,

And when we do —

When we are that good soil — even for a moment—

Might that awareness then move us toward your way with more grace and more peace,

More compassion and more action,

Toward the world you dream of.

And so as we turn our hearts toward your advent,

May our trust become joy,

And our joy celebration,

And our celebration good news for someone new.

In then strong name of the risen Christ we pray, Amen.