



Daily Reflections

THE STORY BEHIND THE HEADLINE

By Sr. Katherine "Kit" Gray, CSJ

For Consideration

How succinctly can you describe the public ministry of Jesus?

Mark says, "After John (the Baptist) had been arrested, Jesus came to Galilee proclaiming the Gospel of God" (1:14).

Matthew says, "Jesus went around all of Galilee, teaching in their synagogues proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom and curing every disease and illness among the people" (4:23).

In the Acts of the Apostles, Peter says, "God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and power. He went about doing good and healing all those oppressed by the devil, for God was with him" (10:38).

Today's reading is one story behind those "headlines," the healing of the Gerasene Demoniac. As you read this passage, focus on Jesus and the man "who had been dwelling among the tombs."

Today's Gospel

Jesus and his disciples came to the other side of the sea, to the territory of the Gerasenes. When he got out of the boat, at once a man from the tombs who had an unclean spirit met him. The man had been dwelling among the tombs, and no one could restrain him any longer, even with a chain. In fact, he had frequently been bound with shackles and chains, but the chains had been pulled apart by him and the shackles smashed, and no one was strong enough to subdue him. Night and day among the tombs and on the hillsides he was always crying out and bruising himself with stones. Catching sight of Jesus from a distance, he ran up and prostrated himself before him, crying out in a loud voice, "What have you to do with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I adjure you by God, do not torment me!" (He had been saying to him, "Unclean spirit, come out of the man!") He asked him, "What is your name?" He replied, "Legion is my name. There are many of us." And he pleaded earnestly with him not to drive them away from that territory.

Now a large herd of swine was feeding there on the hillside. And they pleaded with him, "Send us into the swine. Let us enter them." And he let them, and the unclean spirits came out and entered the swine. The herd of about two thousand rushed down a steep bank into the sea, where they were drowned. The swineherds ran away and reported the incident in the town and throughout the countryside. And people came out to see what had happened. As they approached Jesus, they caught sight of the man who had been possessed by Legion, sitting there clothed and in his right mind. And they were seized with fear. Those who witnessed the incident explained to them what had happened to the possessed man and to the swine. Then they began to beg him to leave their district. As he was getting into the boat, the man who had been possessed pleaded to remain with him. But Jesus would not permit him but told him instead, "Go home to your family and announce to them all that the Lord in his pity has done for you." Then the man went off and began to proclaim in the Decapolis what Jesus had done for him; and all were amazed.

MARK 5:1-20



Selective focus photography of chains during golden hour

Photo by Joey Kyber

Reflection

This section from Mark's Gospel follows a description of Jesus calming a storm at sea and I see some connections with this reading. In the midst of the storm, Jesus says, "Quiet! Be still!" The wind ceased and there was great calm. In today's reading, Mark describes the scene with the demoniac in violent terms: "no one could restrain him even with a chain"; "the chains had been pulled apart and the shackles smashed"; "he was always crying out and bruising himself with stones"; the unclean spirit was "crying out in a loud voice." In this chaos, I can imagine Jesus saying calmly and firmly, "Unclean spirit, come out of the man!" with the result that the people of the town found the man "sitting there clothed and in his right mind."

When and how has Jesus calmed a storm or brought harmony out of chaos in your life?

The story concludes with the "man who had been possessed" pleading to remain with Jesus. "But Jesus would not permit him but told him instead, 'Go home to your family and announce to them all that the Lord in his pity has done for you.' Then the man went off and began to proclaim in the Decapolis what Jesus had done for him; and all were amazed." Jesus restored the man to his family and community and the man became a witness to the power and presence of Jesus.

What do you proclaim—in words or deeds--about what God has done for you?

For Prayer

How many are my foes, LORD!

How many rise against me!

How many say of me,

“There is no salvation for him in God.”

But you, LORD, are a shield around me;

my glory, you keep my head high.

*With my own voice I will call out to the LORD,
and he will answer me from his holy mountain.*

I lie down and I fall asleep,

[and] I will wake up, for the LORD sustains me.

*I do not fear, then, thousands of people
arrayed against me on every side.*

Salvation is from the LORD!

May your blessing be upon your people!

PSALM 3:2-7, 9

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