Sermon- Go tell what the Lord has done for you

Scripture: Mark 5:1-20 Sunday, August 6, 2017

This is our final sermon in the BLESS series. I am going to ask you in random order if you remember what the acronyms mean. So today we are going to focus on the last S, sharing the story. Before we focus on S2 I want to bring to your attention that each alphabet in the BLESS acronym is a two way street or a breath in, breath out rhythm. We are Blessed by God and we bless others with the blessing that we have received. Meaningful prayer an opening of our innermost soul to God and listening deeply for what he has to say. With listening, unless you ask the right questions, you will not get the real deep things from the other side. And sometimes you have to give deep things away to get deep things. That is where sharing your story comes in. Eating together is two way too. We can host and we can be hosted. Serving is both giving our neighbors the opportunity to serve God and directly serving them unconditionally. We breath in the blessing of God and we breath out God’s blessing on our neighbors.

Today we are going to focus on telling the story. And to build the Biblical context to this we are going to look at a story from the life of Jesus recorded in Mark 5, the healing of the man possessed by a thousand demons.

Let me recap the story for you. This story has only two characters. A crazy man and Jesus. Let’s start with the crazy man. This crazy man roamed around the region of Gerasenes like a wild animal. He did not wear clothes, did not do what anybody told him and has inhuman levels of strength. And he used his strength to do wild, harmful and embarrassing things. There was only one thing that was consistent about what he did. His actions hurt other people and hurt himself. No amount of people or chains could stop him. And what was the cause of this crazy harmful behavior and super human strength? It was a thousand demonic possessions rolled into one. I will give you a couple seconds to just let that sink in. Now let’s turn our attention to the main character Jesus. Of course you knew that he is the main character in every story. As Jesus is making his way towards the Gerasenes he is coming by boat across a lake. In fact just a hour ago, the boat, Jesus and his disciples were in a great big storm. The disciples thought they were finished. That’s when Jesus calms the storm. The disciples are shocked by his power. Now they are about to see a different kind of storm and be equally amazed. But we will come to that soon. At this point, Jesus pulls his boat to the shore of the Gerasenes region. As he draws near, he senses the presence of a man filled with evil spirits so right there before anybody knows what is happening, Jesus tells the evil spirit to leave the man’s body. Nobody, came to Jesus with this problem and Jesus himself had not yet physically even seen the man. On the other side the demons too sense the presence of Jesus and hears Jesus’ command. The demons also have heard Jesus commanding them to leave the man and they are deeply distressed. They cause the possessed man to run to Jesus and beg Jesus not to torture them. When Jesus sees the man, he simply asks him his name. He says his name is Legion. He tells Jesus we are a group of a thousand demons. These evil spirits then beg Jesus permission to enter the pigs nearby. Jesus gives them permission. You can imagine what it would have looked like at that point. A thousand evil spirits coming out of one human being and jumping into 2000 pigs. If the disciples thought they were in a crazy storm earlier, I wonder what they could make of a super crazy evil spirit storm. At the end of it, those spirits jump into 2000 pigs who themselves go so crazy that they jump into the lake and get drowned. Now don’t ask me what happened to those evil spirits and even the pigs themselves. Because the answer is, I don’t know.

But let’s come back to the man who was healed. Imagine for a moment what the effect would be on this man who was healed. He suddenly has regained his a sense of awareness of who he is. He once again has control of his mind. He has the power to change his own behavior and is free from the demonic forces that were controlling him. To get a sense of what this transformation must have been like for this man, picture yourself having a physical ailment. Imagine you were blind and now Jesus heals you and you can now see. When you are healed you suddenly have this ability that you never had before and you are so excited. Demonic possession I am imagining is like having an ailment of the mind. It is like you cannot control your own thoughts, actions and ability to make decisions. It was like some other force has high jacked your brain and now has the power to remote control you. And not just that but is remote controlling you to do things that will destroy those around you and yourself. And in this man’s case, it was not just one evil spirit but a thousand evil spirits high jacking his brain. He was not even in a position to go to Jesus for help. So Jesus comes to him and heals him without being asked. And suddenly, he feels fully in control of himself again. Now can you imagine how awesome a feeling that is? You may never have been possessed by a demon, but I think all of us can relate to a sense of loss of control. This happens to me. My mind wanders, or I am reading some news articles on the Internet and I go from one artice to the next and suddenly I look at the time and realize that an hour has gone past, and I did not realize it. Anybody can relate to that. And then I tell myself, I wish I was aware of the time flying, I would have done something differently. Well, this man was given control of his mind and body back and he could not be more grateful to Jesus and excited about the rest of his life.

So what does he want to do with his life now? Well, this poor man wants to hang out with Jesus of course. Why not? It is not that he had any friends or an active social circle. But Jesus has different plans for him. Jesus does not want this man to simply hang out with him. He tells the man, you need to go and tell your family the story of what God has done for you and how merciful God has been to him. So he dutifully obeys and becames the Billy Graham of the 10 towns in the region of the Geresenes. Now everybody in the whole region was amazed at God’s work in his life.

All that begs the question, what about us? Yes you and me. We are sitting here worshiping God. And that is great. But what Jesus really wants us to do is reflect on what your encounter with God has done for you. And if it has done something for you, yur mandate from God is to go tell somebody about it.

How to we do that? Well, to help us on our way, I want to point out 3 things about this call to go tell your story that is we get from this story itself.

The first thing is note is, when Jesus asks the healed man to go tell his story, who is he asking him to tell his story to? Well, Jesus is very clear that he wants him to go home and tell his family. He does not tell him to go hire the local amphitheatre and start telling his story to a thousand people. He simply tells him to tell his family what God has done. Why is that? Because his family is the easiest place to start. These people already love him. They know more than anything else what he has been through. They were terribly saddened and embarrassed by what happened in his life. And they would be the first people to be thrilled to see his transformation and they would be most curious about how it all happened. And when they find out how this happened, they are not going to keep quiet about it. They are going to tell their family and friends and the news will spread like wild fire. So the first thing to note from this story is, don’t be stressed about whom you are going to tell your story, tell those whom you are most comfortable telling and your story will develop legs like you won’t imagine.

The next question that may come to your minds is What do I tell. My story is not as dramatic as this. There is nothing interesting about my story. So the command Jesus gives is this. Tell what God has done in your life and how merciful God has been to you. So ya, God is not saying, go and boast about yourself or go and entertain people with fake news or repeat the town gossip. The mandate for you and me is to simply tell the story of what God has done in your life and how merciful he has been to you. This is where we need to reflect very carefully at our own lives. Dust our memories for God’s finger prints. If God has not done anything special in your life, you are saying that you don’t have a special relationship with God. And maybe you don’t. If you don’t ask God to come into your life. Tell him you want to have an encounter with him. He will come in for sure because that is his promise. Call and I will answer, knock and I will open, ask and you shall find. Everyone who walks with God has some testimony of God’s goodness and mercy in their lives. Dust for God’s finger prints and your life. It does not have to be some dramatic miracle, but if God met you while you were in sin and redirected your life to eternity then don’t tell me you have nothing about that story that you can tell somebody about. Dust for God’s fingerprints in your life my friends. When I look back at my own life I can talk about how God has provided for us in miraculous ways, I can tell you stories of how He first got my attention, how he has been transforming me and how He effected 3 big conversions in my life. But I share my stories all the time so today, I have asked Arlis to come and share something of God’s fingerprints in his life. So come on over Arlis.

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Thank you Arlis. When you share what God has done in your life, not only do others see and are amazed at God, it helps us remember and be amazed as well. When you don’t share you forget. You can also write it down. Journalling is a spiritual disciple that I am working at that this stage of my life. When you journal, it saves the story and you can always come back to it. And when you share, it makes God more visible and God is glorified. That should be the test of every action that we take. Is God going to be glorified by this. The man who was healed simply went and told his family what God had done in his life. That story spread to all the ten towns of the region of the Gerasenes. What stories can we spread in this region? Pray, listen, dust for God’s fingerprints, then invite some people over for dinner and share stories. Who knowns what can come out of these simple acts done in obedience to God.

We will be coming back over and over again to the BLESS rythms till they become a habit for all of us, me included. They say is takes about 40 days of doing something over and over again to form a habit. So lets form new BLESS habits together and may God bless us through this journey. Let us pray.