

“At the Feet of Christ”

Message by DD Adams

Providence United Methodist Church

4th Sunday After Pentecost

Father’s Day Sunday

June 21, 2015

The gospel lesson for today is taken from the Book of Luke, chapter 8, verses 26 through 39. I’ll be reading from the New Revised Standard Version.

Then Jesus and his disciples arrived at the country of the Gerasenes, which is opposite Galilee. As he stepped out on land, a man of the city who had demons met him. For a long time he had worn no clothes, and he did not live in a house but in the tombs.

When he saw Jesus, he fell down before him and shouted at the top of his voice, “What have you to do with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I beg you, do not torment me”— Jesus had commanded the unclean spirit to come out of the man. (For many times it had seized him; he was kept under guard and bound with chains and shackles, but he would break the bonds and be driven by the demon into the wilds.) Jesus then asked him, “What is your name?” He said, “Legion”; for many demons had entered him.

They begged him not to order them to go back into the abyss. Now there on the hillside a large herd of swine was feeding; and the demons begged Jesus to let them enter these. So he gave them permission. Then the demons came out of the man and entered the swine, and the herd rushed down the steep bank into the lake and was drowned. When the swineherds saw what had happened, they ran off and told it in the city and in the country. Then people came out to see what had

happened, and when they came to Jesus, they found the man from whom the demons had gone *sitting at the feet of Jesus*, clothed and in his right mind.

And they were afraid. Those who had seen it told them how the one who had been possessed by demons had been healed. Then all the people of the surrounding country of the Gerasenes asked Jesus to leave them; for they were seized with great fear. So he got into the boat and returned. The man from whom the demons had gone begged that he might be with him; but Jesus sent him away, saying, “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. This is God’s word for God’s people. Thanks be to God. God bless the reading, hearing, and understanding of your word. Amen.

The disciples must have breathed a sigh of relief when the boat glided up to the edge of the shore. They had just been in a huge storm, and Jesus commanded incredible power over the wind and waves. The boat landed in sight of a road which would lead into the town. The demoniac confronted Jesus immediately as they stepped off the boat and recognized Jesus as the Son of the Most High God. The community had tried to contain the demoniac for years with chains but they couldn’t. He was naked and lived in the tombs. A little higher above the shore was a cliff; this was where the pigs were and the herders who saw everything happen.

The herders saw the boat pull up to the shore that *no one* had pulled up to ever since the demoniac lived there; this was no man’s land. The herders probably expected the men in the boat to get molested and killed, but instead, after a few minutes, the next thing they saw was their herd of pigs jumping into the water. The pigs were their livelihood and now they were all gone.

Jesus had no trouble casting out the demons, but the challenge was the town folk. After the pig herders raced back to town to tell everyone they all came back

and saw the man *who used to be crazy* clothed and in his right mind sitting at the feet of Jesus—and they were afraid. Who knows what Jesus might do next! He'd just commanded hundreds of pigs to jump off the cliff!

What was the demoniac's lifestyle like before Jesus showed up that day? His life had been dehumanized and destroyed by Satan. In this story, the demons destroyed the pig's lives and eventually their own lives. Before Jesus showed up, the demoniac wandered in the desert aimlessly. He cried out without purpose or direction, and he continually bruised himself with stones.

Looking at the town folk, I don't think they wanted anything to upset their day. After all, before Jesus came on the scene, the demoniac was contained and chained—at least some of the time. Fact is most of us don't want to undergo change in our lives. It gets us out of our comfort zone. If everything is going okay, why change it? But when Jesus comes into your life things *don't* stay the same. Now you can resist God if you choose, because that's what the town folk did. But the man that was once controlled by demons, he was sitting at the feet of Jesus listening intently. The demons were silenced, and they'd left. The man's thoughts were clear, and his feelings were calm.

What's the message of hope in this passage of Scripture, and why is it being preached on Father's Day? When we sit at the feet of Jesus, we receive good news that changes our perspective and calms our heart. Our thinking takes a different shape and becomes in us a well that overflows and touches the hearts of others because *our heart has been touched*. God's presence gives us hope. When we listen and receive from Christ, our fears are silenced, our relationships restored, and our families and homes become a place where Christ's name is given prominence and name of Jesus is glorified and exalted.

Fathers who are here today, if Jesus exorcised this man who had 40 demons, he can surely make a profound difference in your family. In the story, the winds, waves, and demons obey Jesus. Wouldn't Jesus bless you as he blessed the man? In order for Jesus to help us we've got to respond and reach out. The man Jesus healed listened intently, and it was at the feet of Jesus where the man was restored.

Fathers, sit with your families and tell them how God has blessed you, and how he's given you insight. Tell them how God led you to speak a positive word of encouragement to someone. Tell your family the difference Christ has made in your life. Allow your family to see how your relationship with Jesus gives you hope and anxieties are silenced and fears are turned into courage and reason is imparted. This is the most precious gift a father can give his family.

Some of you men may not have children, but you might have sisters, or brothers, or friends. You're a father figure whether you know it or not. Seek to be a strong father figure by sitting at the feet of Jesus. Let's pray. As the father of Jesus, you God are the model of perfect love and nurture. We look to you for guidance and direction. We ask you to instruct our fathers to sit at your feet to learn about your perfect love. Teach us all the power of loving interaction and care for those who need encouragement and a positive word. Send us out to our community to declare the wonderful things you've done in our lives. Amen.