



GPS GUIDE: AUGUST 15, 2021

Grow. Pray. Study

Twelfth Sunday after Pentecost

Sermon: Go and Tell

Mark 5: 1-9, 14b-15, 18-20 (CEB)

Jesus and his disciples came to the other side of the lake, to the region of the Gerasenes. As soon as Jesus got out of the boat, a man possessed by an evil spirit came out of the tombs. This man lived among the tombs, and no one was ever strong enough to restrain him, even with a chain. He had been secured many times with leg irons and chains, but he broke the chains and smashed the leg irons. No one was tough enough to control him. Night and day in the tombs and the hills, he would howl and cut himself with stones. When he saw Jesus from far away, he ran and knelt before him, shouting, "What have you to do with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? Swear to God that you won't torture me!" He said this because Jesus had already commanded him, "Unclean spirit, come out of the man!" Jesus asked him, "What is your name?" He responded, "Legion is my name, because we are many." People came to see what had happened. They came to Jesus and saw the man who used to be demon-possessed. They saw the very man who had been filled with many demons sitting there fully dressed and completely sane, and they were filled with awe. While he was climbing into the boat, the one who had been demon-possessed pleaded with Jesus to let him come along as one of his disciples. But Jesus wouldn't allow it. "Go home to your own people," Jesus said, "and tell them what the Lord has done for you and how he has shown you mercy." The man went away and began to proclaim in the Ten Cities all that Jesus had done for him, and everyone was amazed.

Monday: Read Genesis 12: 1-9

God's word to Abram begins with a command, "Go from your country and your kindred and our father's house." God commands Abram to leave all that he knows, all that he is comfortable with, and go to a new place that God will show him. God calls Abram to a loyalty and commitment that transcends even his family ties, the most important of all relationships in the ancient world. But this command comes with a powerful promise. God promises to Abram and Sarai that "in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed." God's chosen people never exist in isolation. They are called to a wider mission than just self-preservation. They are never allowed to claim an exclusive hold on

God's concern. God remains committed to blessing all creation and all humanity through the work of those God sends. Genesis 12 draws Abram and Sarai into a journey that leaves behind an old life and looks forward to a future not yet seen. Have you ever put your trust in God to guide you into a future you couldn't imagine? How have you followed God's command to leave behind what was comfortable or safe in order to be a blessing to others? What old commitments and burdens might you need to let go of so you can be set free to journey into new territories, new promises, new hopes, and new life?

Prayer: Lord, even as I pray, "Where you lead me I will follow" I realize it is so easy to say yet so hard to live out. Give me courage to go where you send me that I may be a blessing in your name. Amen.

Tuesday Read Exodus 3: 1-15

After being called by God to go confront Pharaoh and secure the Israelite's freedom, Moses asks God, "Suppose I go to the Israelites and tell them all this great news and they're a tad skeptical, you know, to the point of asking just who this God is who sent me. What shall I tell them?" What I find most interesting here is that Moses isn't asking for a calling card, he's trying to wile the name out of this divine being because to know its name is to have a certain power over it. Which is what makes God's answer so perfect: "I AM WHO I AM!" I love God's answer because through it God is saying, in a sense, "Don't box me in, Moses!" Significantly, the divine name, Yahweh, has a future cast to it as well, rending it even more elusively, "*I will be who I will be.*" Which means, I think, that what God is actually saying is that you can't really know who God is unless you're willing to sign on for God's mission in the world. Which is what Moses ultimately does. Moses learns who God is only by following God on the path God set for him and thereby learning first-hand the nature, purpose, and truth of this God. I suspect that this is the way it always is, even today. To know God, you have to go with God. Faith is a full contact, participation sport. You just can't sit back and expect to really know God, you have to get up and get in the game, take a risk, try something marvelous, reach for something you thought unachievable. God called Moses to go set God's people free. Where do you believe God is calling you? What task might God have set for you? What mission are you called to? Maybe right about now you are saying that you are not a person who would be called by God to go and do such important work. Most of us don't see ourselves as the stuff of which faith-heroes are made. But that's probably because we haven't been reading our Bibles very carefully. After all, few of the characters God employs — including Moses — are the stuff of heroes. And yet God uses frail, fallible, ordinary people, over and over again, to do extraordinary things. So, I'll ask you to think about it again: Where do you believe God is calling you? What task might God have set for you? What mission are you called to? How might God be using you to do God's work in the world?

Prayer: I want to truly know you, O God. Help me to listen for your call and then strengthen me to go in faith, knowing you will guide my way as I do your work. Amen.

Wednesday: Read Jonah 1:1-3; 3:1-5; 4:11

Reluctant, withdrawn, stubborn. Never quite ready to go to Nineveh. All over the Bible, people are getting up and going. Abraham and Sarah move out on a promise and a prayer. Moses heads for Egypt with nothing but a shepherd's crook and Aaron to write

his sermons. Elijah stands defiant, facing four hundred and fifty Baal prophets. But not Jonah. Jonah stands on the dock with tickets for Tarshish. We can relate to Jonah, can't we? We are all to willing to follow God as long as we can set the parameters, as long as God doesn't expect too much, as long as we don't have to go there or do that. Off Jonah goes to Nineveh, but he drags his feet all the way. He goes reluctantly, half-heartedly, sure of the futility of this endeavor. But God's grace and mercy have the last word. What might God be calling you to do this week? How is God inviting you to share mercy and grace? How can you say yes to God?

Prayer: Holy God help me to get up and follow you wherever you might lead, even, especially, when I don't want to go. Amen.

Thursday: Read Mark 5:24-34

That first step is always risky. It can be frightening to know, wholeheartedly, what you need, particularly when what you need can (and will) change your life. And it's always harder when you are isolated and alone. Imagine the courage it took for this woman to push through the crowd, to reach out her arm and grab hold of her own healing. If only we had that kind of courage in our own lives. Courage to reach out for help, search for a new job, ask for a raise, set boundaries, get clean, pursue a dream. That kind of courage takes faith and faith is a curious thing. It is not naive to the fear of listening and responding. Faith holds space for that which frightens us, but also nudges us to that which we know to be true. "I know if I touch his clothes I will be healed," the woman thought, reaching out in faith for what she needed most in life: to be healed and restored. "Daughter, your faith has healed you; go in peace, healed from your disease," Jesus responded. Restored in health, in life, in community, in purpose; this woman now finds the strength to live. We have the chance to follow in her footsteps. So, ask yourself, what is it I need? How can I reach for it, in this moment? How can I take a small step forward today, knowing that tomorrow will be another opportunity for the next step?

Prayer: Healing God, give me the faith to seek what I need to be healed and the courage to take a step in my journey toward wholeness. Amen.

Friday: Read Acts 9:1-20

They heard the voice but saw no one. What a dramatic scene, right? We know this as Saul's story but the folks around him are on this roller coaster of a journey too. The men with Saul heard the voice telling Saul to "GO," but saw no one. His companions now must take the lead on this unknown journey. And then the story turns to the faithful Ananias. He hears a voice too. But he has no need to see someone. He knows the voice. Presumably, he has heard this voice before. The Lord says, "Go." And Ananias goes. Despite his worry, in the face of his fear, Ananias goes. And in his going sets the stage for the birth of the Church around the world. It's not just Saul's story. The story is about two worlds colliding because people listen for voices, hear voices, and follow voices. Sometimes we find ourselves in strange places... and sometimes God's voice is most clear when we're uncomfortable and disturbed. In what ways can you relate to Saul? The men with Saul? Ananias? How might God be calling you to respond to disruption or discomfort in your life? What will you do about it?

Prayer: God, open my eyes that, like Paul, I might see you and go. Help me to step in faith, like Ananias, despite my fear or anxiety. Amen.

Saturday: Read Matthew 9:9-12, Hosea 6:6

This is a story familiar to many of us: the calling of the despised tax collector. A man who was shunned as little better than a swindler or murderer. And who were these other “sinners” with whom Jesus dined? That’s not particularly clear, but Jesus is clear as to his purpose, “It is not the well who need a physician, but the sick.” But then Jesus, as usual, does something unexpected. Matthew’s gospel, appealing to a Jewish audience, quotes Hosea when he says, “Go and learn what this means, I desire mercy, not sacrifice.” Some Pharisees and scribes had defined religion by sacrifice, obeying Jewish law at the expense of so many who were marginalized and excluded. It’s interesting here that the ones who Jesus tells to “Go and learn…” are probably the most knowledgeable and educated in that room. I wonder how we as Christians become like these Pharisees, dogmatic and rigid in our beliefs? In what ways do we let our ideas and traditions become more important than mercy and compassion and love? What is it that we (that you) need to “Go and learn” today?

Prayer: Jesus, teach us the way of mercy, love, and compassion that we might follow in your footsteps every day of our lives. Amen.



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