

Sunday Sermon June 22, 2025

“Jesus sent him, 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.”

He went proclaiming how much Jesus had done for him...

That was the last verse of today’s Gospel passage, the healing of the Gerasene demoniac. It’s a dramatic story, filled with many details about a man who was outcast and suffering.

It seems he was afflicted by demons. So he lived alone and naked in a cemetery. Sometimes he was held with chains. Jesus saw him and responded to this child of God with compassion. Jesus even conversed with the demons before sending them into a large herd of pigs. The pigs ran off the cliff into the lake and drowned.

The possessed man was now healed, given his life back, but the swineherds and the townspeople don’t know what to make of all of this, so they ask Jesus to leave. A possessed man chained in a cemetery they could tolerate, but a man who would heal him they couldn’t.

With all of that packed into this story, it’s easy to miss the final verse. The verse where Jesus says to the man given the gift of healing “go and tell, go and live it, use the gift of new life.”

The film *Saving Private Ryan* came out in 1998. It features Tom Hanks as Captain John Miller. Miller is charged to lead a small detachment of soldiers into the French countryside to find a private named James Francis Ryan, whose three brothers have been killed in action. The detachment’s charge is to bring Ryan home as the sole surviving son.

The group encounters many threats along their way to finding Private Ryan, and several members of the detachment are killed.

They finally locate Ryan, whose battered unit is protecting a vitally important bridge.

Ryan doesn't want to leave his buddies, so Miller's group joins them in defending the bridge. While their defense is successful, Captain Miller is mortally wounded during the battle. Sitting on the bridge, he draws Rayn close and whispers: "earn this," "earn it."

The movie ends with a scene from many years later, where now grandfather James Ryan is visiting the military cemetery at Normandy. He stands at the foot of Captain Millar's grave and whispers back: "I hope that in your eyes, I earned what all of you did for me."

I can imagine the man that Jesus healed saying something similar to Jesus. Having been given the gift of a new life, Jesus had sent him back to his home and to his people. Jesus commissioned him to tell it, to live it, to use it. Use the gift of new life to bring healing and life to others.

Don't just keep it to yourself, but let it grow and spread so that others will know the healing, life-saving love of God in Christ, so that others will reach out with love and care to those our world casts aside.

Jesus is telling the now-healed man that God would be at work in and through him, that as he had received God's healing and love, he was now called to be an agent of that healing and love in his little corner of the world.

And the same is true for us. Having been forgiven, healed and love by God, so we are called to use those gifts so that they will grow and spread through us.

Dotty chose a beautiful song for our services this weekend. The song says:

I shall live as one who's been forgiven,
I'll walk with joy to know my debts are paid.
I know my name is clear before my Father;
I am his child, and I am not afraid.
So greatly pardoned, I'll forgive another;

The law of love I gladly will obey.
I then shall live as one who's learned compassion;
I've been so loved that I'll risk loving, too.
I know how fear builds walls instead of bridges;
I dare to see another's point of view.
And when relationships demand commitment,
Then I'll be there to care and follow through.
Your kingdom come, around and through and in me,
Your power and glory, let them shine through me;
Your hallowed name, oh, may I bear with honor,
And may your living kingdom come in me.
The Bread of Life, oh, may I share with honor,
And may you feed a hungry world through me.

That's a wonderful song, a wonderful prayer:

"May your living kingdom come in me"- "May you feed a hungry world through me-"

Having once been blessed, we seek to be a blessing for others. Having been forgiven, we become forgiving people. As one who has been shown compassion, we strive to be compassionate. Having been loved beyond measure, we seek to put flesh on God's love by loving all people generously and fully.

While our experience of new life might not be as dramatic as the Geresene demonic or Private Ryan, I believe Jesus sends us with the same commission as he sent the healed man in the Gospel:

"Return to your home, and declare how much God has done for you." Amen

