

Fringe Benefits_Wk3_Wanted Miracles, Rejected Healer

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Scripture: Mark 5:1 - 6:6 NIV

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In the world of politics we get to observe and also participate in a process where new policies - or the enforcement of existing ones - are in some ways, influenced by the candidates we have to choose from.

Every election season we hear candidates declare what they are for and who they are against - and most of the time it's very difficult to discern between the helpful information we need to make a wise choice and the name-calling, slandering, and deceitfulness we witness.

But every candidate in one way or another is making a claim: as your person, I will implement these changes, bring back those laws, fix the economy, and keep America safe...or something like that.

There are promises made, claims made - and then we have to wait to see if both parties can cooperate in some way to make them reality.

It's almost like a candidate is promising a better kingdom if they were put in charge.

But when we read the message of Jesus - he doesn't talk about fixing an existing world system as if he were some political candidate, he says that he is starting a brand new kingdom with a system of operation that is different than any other form of government.

The Kingdom of Heaven that Jesus said he is establishing is one of power and one of presence.

This is the Kingdom that you and I - if you have life in Christ - are called to live in. But it is also the Kingdom that we are called to participate in growing.

When we focus solely upon the birth and death of Jesus we fail to learn from his life - his life and teachings cannot be overlooked or ignored. It is in the life of Christ that we observe his power and sense his way of being present - or connecting with - the people he was sent to serve.

Last week we heard from Jesus as he described the different conditions that people find themselves in in terms of their capacity to receive this new kingdom way of life and let it grow to produce fruit. He used the analogy of seed and soil - a very vivid way to help us see why the kingdom of Heaven flourishes in certain people and not in others.

This week Jesus invites you to experience this new Kingdom reality...this heaven on earth redemptive work.

But I need to give you warning: This Kingdom of heaven reality isn't something that happens by wishing it into existence. It's not something that happens when we define the love of God by simply

making everyone happy all the time. In fact, the Kingdom of Heaven...**does everyone understand what I mean when I say that?** What I mean is that Jesus established a new heavenly reality on earth as he fulfilled the promises of God and unleashed the defining nature and characteristics of what God's heart for humanity really is. **The Kingdom of Heaven confronts the realities of the world system and creates tension.**

Listen, the Kingdom of Heaven is a Kingdom of Power that releases the Presence of God among people.

And in fact, the Kingdom of Heaven among us should be, at least in part, demonstrated through signs and wonders - the Supernatural evidence of Jesus' very presence among us.

Today - we get to join Jesus on some ministry opportunities that may leave you in disbelief, but they nonetheless are something that we can believe happened...because they still happen!

PRAY HERE - You, your neighbor, me

Mark 5

They went across the lake to the region of the Gerasenes. **2** When Jesus got out of the boat, a man with an impure spirit came from the tombs to meet him. **3** This man lived in the tombs, and no one could bind him anymore, not even with a chain. **4** For he had often been chained hand and foot, but he tore the chains apart and broke the irons on his feet. No one was strong enough to subdue him. **5** Night and day among the tombs and in the hills he would cry out and cut himself with stones.

What do you focus on when you read this? What gets your attention?

Is it the evil spirit? That's kind of odd. We don't talk about those much unless we're watching a movie or something.

Is it the strength he demonstrated as a result of being possessed? Again, noteworthy. He broke chains. Nobody was strong enough to subdue him.

Is it the agony that he was in? This draws our attention off of the manifestations of the evil spirit and onto his humanity.

Is it the fact that the man approached Jesus? Why would this demon possessed guy run up to Jesus?

All of these details are revealing.

6 When he saw Jesus from a distance, he ran and fell on his knees in front of him. **7** He shouted at the top of his voice, "What do you want with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? In God's name don't torture me!"

It's as if Jesus made this trip across the sea of Galilee for the sole reason of confronting these evil spirits and comforting this tormented man.

In fact, that is exactly what happened: In chapter 4:35-41, Jesus invites his disciples to go out on a boat ride across the lake. The reason they go across the lake is to bring freedom to this man!

SLIDE: The kingdom Jesus is establishing is one of spiritual power, for the purpose of bringing eternal hope to the hopeless.

Jesus entered into this demonic situation with power and presence and brought freedom and healing. Check it out...

8 For Jesus had said to him, "Come out of this man, you impure spirit!"

9 Then Jesus asked him, "What is your name?"

"My name is Legion," he replied, "for we are many." **10** And he begged Jesus again and again not to send them out of the area. **11** A large herd of pigs was feeding on the nearby hillside. **12** The demons begged Jesus, "Send us among the pigs; allow us to go into them." **13** He gave them permission, and the impure spirits came out and went into the pigs. The herd, about two thousand in number, rushed down the steep bank into the lake and were drowned.

I just need to take a minute....JOKE ABOUT the loss of good bacon!

14 Those tending the pigs ran off and reported this in the town and countryside, and the people went out to see what had happened. **15** When they came to Jesus, they saw the man who had been possessed by the legion of demons, sitting there, dressed and in his right mind; and they were afraid.

The presence and power of Jesus is not something to ignore. Those who follow Jesus reside within a reality that is not defined by human limitations or understandings, but instead it's defined by a reality that we may not be willing accept...sort of like this story that I'm going to share with you...it may be hard to believe!

ILLUSTRATION:

Recently, while at a denominational meeting, there was a pastor who shared about something that happened within her church family - confirmed by multiple witnesses. One of her team members who served faithfully and regularly was married to a man who was very disinterested in church. He would come around a little, but not consistently. One day though, he did come to church. He sat near the back. As the pastor tells the story, she remembers watching him writhe in discomfort in his seat. He was so restless...so unsettled. Being filled with the Holy Spirit and attune to the nature of spiritual opposition, the pastor had a sense that this man was occupied by some kind of evil spirit. The behavior of the man could not be described in any other way. Initially she was going to address the man earlier in the service, but she felt God tell her to wait. Near the end of the service, or maybe it was after the service was over - the man who had been so obviously unwell cried out for help. The pastors of the

church, along with other members of the church, gathered around this man and began to pray over him. They prayed intensely and they prayed for an extended period of time - I don't know all that they prayed, but they prayed what they knew to pray based on the prayers and teachings of Scripture - and at a certain point, after laboring in prayer...the man began to be and act totally different. This wasn't some crazy movie-like exorcism with foaming mouths and all that...

But the moment this man's countenance changed, they all heard the back door of the church open and close...but nobody was there...inside or outside.

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The ministry of Jesus that we read about in Scripture is not ministry that only happens in places or at times when there is a lack of mental health care, or in an impoverished place somewhere on the globe, the ministry of Jesus in bringing freedom to captives is something that still happens today!

16 Those who had seen it told the people what had happened to the demon-possessed man—and told about the pigs as well. **17** Then the people began to plead with Jesus to leave their region.

18 As Jesus was getting into the boat, the man who had been demon-possessed begged to go with him. **19** Jesus did not let him, but said, "Go home to your own people and tell them how much the Lord has done for you, and how he has had mercy on you." **20** So the man went away and began to tell in the Decapolis how much Jesus had done for him. And all the people were amazed.

SLIDE: The power of personal testimony contains the potential to create spiritual hunger in those far from God.

In other words - your story of how Jesus has brought you to new life in him has the power and potential to create spiritual hunger in someone stuck in a hopeless situation.

SLIDE: Question: Do you know your story? Do you tell your story?

It doesn't have to be as seemingly outlandish as being freed from an evil spirit, but it might be that you were freed from bitterness, freed from the habit of deceit and dishonesty that you had developed, maybe you were freed from hatred, racial or religious bigotry...your story has the power to elevate Jesus to the place of honor in your life, but also to point those who listen to you to the one who freed you.

PERSONAL ILLUSTRATION:

Part of my story is that little by little Jesus is reducing the power of the anger within me. I used to live with so much anger - but I denied it and did a lot of pretending that I wasn't angry - but then I would leak anger out on people I love and it would be terrible. It was bad enough that I began to hate myself for being angry because I didn't want to be angry anymore...

Sometimes Jesus frees us from the trappings of our human nature and of sin over the course of time. It might not be a sudden change. It might not be shock and awe, but instead a slow peeling away of the habits and attitudes and character flaws that prevent you from being fully free to pursue Christlikeness.

Let's continue on with a day in the life of Jesus...

21 When Jesus had again crossed over by boat to the other side of the lake, a large crowd gathered around him while he was by the lake. **22** Then one of the synagogue leaders, named Jairus, came, and when he saw Jesus, he fell at his feet. **23** He pleaded earnestly with him, "My little daughter is dying. Please come and put your hands on her so that she will be healed and live."

24 So Jesus went with him.

Again - the Kingdom of Heaven - this new reality that Jesus introduced to the world is not some ethereal concept that has no bearing among people...

For Jesus, his purpose was far more comprehensive than to be born so that he could die - it was to teach the values of a new reality to a people who were longing for so much more. To do that, he came to us. It wasn't all just a bunch of people writing down what they heard God speak to them and then us reading those words and believing solely on their writings, **it was Jesus coming to earth to show us what heaven on earth can look like.**

Let's keep going...

Jairus is a religious figure - someone who was small town famous - and the people of that town not only knew of his situation but they were also very curious about what Jesus would do...

A large crowd followed and pressed around him. **25** And a woman was there who had been subject to bleeding for twelve years. **26** She had suffered a great deal under the care of many doctors and had spent all she had, yet instead of getting better she grew worse. **27** When she heard about Jesus, she came up behind him in the crowd and touched his cloak, **28** because she thought, "If I just touch his clothes, I will be healed." **29** Immediately her bleeding stopped and she felt in her body that she was freed from her suffering.

30 At once Jesus realized that power had gone out from him. He turned around in the crowd and asked, "Who touched my clothes?"

31 "You see the people crowding against you," his disciples answered, "and yet you can ask, 'Who touched me?' "

My family went to Knoebles theme park yesterday. We spent some of our time waiting in lines with other people...the lines aren't terribly roomy and I was being touched by people I didn't know - a lot. So you can relate to the disciples question...Jesus, are you serious? C'mon man!

While on the way to go and minister to one man's family Jesus was approached by a woman longing for healing after all of her other efforts had come up short.

Out desperate hope she reached out to Jesus - and Jesus brought healing to her!

Anyone here desperate? Like genuinely desperate for Jesus? Maybe you need physical healing like this woman did. Maybe it's a deep emotional wound and you need profound healing. Maybe it's a situation in your heart or soul that is so complex and so overwhelming that you need the touch of Jesus upon your life to bring you back to life.

Reach out toward Jesus...pursue him.

32 But Jesus kept looking around to see who had done it. **33** Then the woman, knowing what had happened to her, came and fell at his feet and, trembling with fear, told him the whole truth. **34** He said to her, "Daughter, your faith has healed you. Go in peace and be freed from your suffering."

Prince - Blindness, cancer

Shue - infection

Stein - debilitating allergies...

Newton - man with disfigured limbs restored completely

Misciagna - shoulder

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35 While Jesus was still speaking, some people came from the house of Jairus, the synagogue leader. "Your daughter is dead," they said. "Why bother the teacher anymore?"

36 Overhearing what they said, Jesus told him, "Don't be afraid; just believe."

37 He did not let anyone follow him except Peter, James and John the brother of James. **38** When they came to the home of the synagogue leader, Jesus saw a commotion, with people crying and wailing loudly. **39** He went in and said to them, "Why all this commotion and wailing? The child is not dead but asleep." **40** But they laughed at him.

After he put them all out, he took the child's father and mother and the disciples who were with him, and went in where the child was. **41** He took her by the hand and said to her, "*Talitha koum!*" (which means "Little girl, I say to you, get up!"). **42** Immediately the girl stood up and began to walk around (she was twelve years old). At this they were completely astonished. **43** He gave strict orders not to let anyone know about this, and told them to give her something to eat.

Jesus performed many miracles...but the point of the miracles wasn't just to show off - it was to reveal something about his heart and about his kingdom...

The kingdom of God is a kingdom - an earthly reality - where...listen:

Where the king of the kingdom goes to the outcasts and the rejects and invites them...

Where the dirty and hopeless and sick aren't kept out of the presence of the king because of fear of their uncleanness - but instead where they are welcomed and healed and restored...

Where the desperate are viewed as over-the-top, but as those who real need of relief...

The kingdom of God is not like so many of us...it's a safe place for the unwell and a dangerous place for those deceived into thinking they are okay.

Mark 6 Jesus left there and went to his hometown, accompanied by his disciples. **2** When the Sabbath came, he began to teach in the synagogue, and many who heard him were amazed.

"Where did this man get these things?" they asked. "What's this wisdom that has been given him? What are these remarkable miracles he is performing? **3** Isn't this the carpenter? Isn't this Mary's son and the brother of James, Joseph,^[a] Judas and Simon? Aren't his sisters here with us?" And they took offense at him.

4 Jesus said to them, "A prophet is not without honor except in his own town, among his relatives and in his own home." **5** He could not do any miracles there, except lay his hands on a few sick people and heal them. **6** He was amazed at their lack of faith.

Mark introduces tension after describing how Jesus begins to establish a new reality...

Mark describes what happened in Jesus hometown as a rejection by those closest to him. They were - hear this - they were so familiar with Jesus that they were unwilling to experience him for who he was as the Son of God.

So we have two dynamics in play...

On one hand we have the amazing, miraculous, powerful, life-changing presence of Jesus among people willing to trust him and seek him and surrender to his authority over sickness, spiritual oppression, nature, and so forth...these people were blessed and transformed.

On the other hand we have the amazing, miraculous, powerful, life-changing presence of Jesus among people so familiar with him that they fail to see their need to trust him, seek him, and surrender to him...and because of their rejection of him...these people forfeited their opportunity for blessing.

There's a tension.

Do you feel it?

