

WORDS FROM THE BACK

**Today Is the Day that God Has Made!
What Will We Do With This Day
For God and For Others?**

**People of Faith...
Let us worship God together
in this hour, in this space!**

SCRIPTURE OF THE DAY

Luke 8:26-39

Jesus frees a demon-possessed man

26 Jesus and his disciples sailed to the Gerasenes' land, which is across the lake from Galilee. 27 As soon as Jesus got out of the boat, a certain man met him. The man was from the city and was possessed by demons. For a long time, he had lived among the tombs, naked and homeless.

28 When he saw Jesus, he shrieked and fell down before him. Then he shouted, "What have you to do with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I beg you, don't torture me!" 29 He said this because Jesus had already commanded the unclean spirit to come out of the man. Many times it had taken possession of him, so he would be bound with leg irons and chains and placed under guard. But he would break his restraints, and the demon would force him into the wilderness.

30 Jesus asked him, "What is your name?"

"Legion," he replied, because many demons had entered him. 31 They pleaded with him not to order them to go back into the abyss. 32 A large herd of pigs was feeding on the hillside. The demons begged Jesus to let them go into the pigs. Jesus gave them permission, 33 and the demons left the man and entered the pigs. The herd rushed down the cliff into the lake and drowned.

34 When those who tended the pigs saw what happened, they ran away and told the story in the city and in the countryside. 35 People came to see what had happened. They came to Jesus and found the man from whom the demons had gone. He was sitting at Jesus' feet, fully dressed and completely sane. They were filled with awe. 36 Those people who had actually seen what had happened told them how the demon-possessed man had been delivered. 37 Then everyone gathered from the region of the

Gerasenes asked Jesus to leave their area because they were overcome with fear. So he got into the boat and returned across the lake. 38 The man from whom the demons had gone begged to come along with Jesus as one of his disciples. Jesus sent him away, saying, 39 “Return home and tell the story of what God has done for you.” So he went throughout the city proclaiming what Jesus had done for him.

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RESPONSE TO ... STORY

One Day as Jesus Traveled

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("Lead On, O King Eternal"; "Rejoice, Rejoice, Believers")

One day as Jesus traveled to places wild, untold,
He met a man unraveled by evil's awful hold.
The demons that possessed him saw Christ and screamed in fear;
They knew, in their resisting, their days were numbered here.

That man knew only suffering, a life of grief and pain;
He could not yet imagine that he'd be whole again.
The demons cried to Jesus, "Just send us to those swine!"
When evil faces goodness, it seeks a new design.

When goodness meets great evil, when faith encounters sin,
The field is never level, for God's great love will win.
Yet legions cry in anger while clinging to their days;
They seek to trouble longer, to harm in other ways.

**When churches seek to practice the faith with which we're blessed
By seeking love and justice and helping the oppressed,
So often there is tension that tears the heart and soul,
A struggle, a resisting of all that makes us whole.**

**The demons cried to Jesus, "Just send us to those swine!"
Yet soon those pigs stampeded right down a steep incline.
For things that bring destruction will one day fall away;
And God is surely bringing a new and joyful day.**

Biblical References: Mark 5:1-20; Luke 8:26-39; Matthew 8:28-34

Tune: Traditional Welsh melody, from Daniel Evans' Hymnau a Thonau (Hymns and Tunes), 1865 ("Lead On, O King Eternal"; "Rejoice, Rejoice, Believers") (MIDI)

Alternate tune: AURELIA, Samuel Sebastian Wesley, 1864 ("The Church's One Foundation") (MIDI)

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Luke 8:26-39 Cotton Patch Version

26. They sailed on over to Gerasa County, Alabama, which is across the lake from Georgia. When he got out on land, he was met by a city man who had a "demon." For a long time he had worn no clothing and wouldn't stay in a house but in a cemetery. When he saw Jesus, he stood in front of "him and yelled and shouted at the top of his lungs, "What you got against me, Jesus, you God's holy boy? I warn you, don't you put the screws on me." (For Jesus was telling the mean spirit to come out of the man, because it frequently convulsed him, and he had to be placed under guard, shackled and handcuffed. But he broke loose and was driven by the "demon" into the back woods.)

So Jesus asked him, "What's your name?"

He said, "Multitude," since a whole slew of demons had entered him.

Then they started begging him not to order them into exile. Now, there on the hillside a large herd of hogs was being fed, so the demons begged him to let them go into them. He permitted them, and the demons rushed out of the man and into the hogs. When they did, the whole herd went tearing down the slope and into the lake and were drowned. When the herdsman saw what had happened, they ran like mad and told it to both farmers and city people. Everybody flocked out to gawk, and they came to Jesus and found the man from whom the demons had departed, sitting at Jesus' feet, fully clothed and completely sane. It just scared the daylights out of them, especially when the herdsman kept telling them how the demon-man had been cured. So all the people in that part of Alabama asked him to go away and let them alone, because they were so scared they were shaking all over.

38. When he got into the boat to leave, the man from whom the demons had departed asked to go with him. But he turned him down and said, "Go back home and tell them about all that God has done for you." So he went through the whole city, speaking on what Jesus did for him.

- Excerpt From: Clarence Jordan. "Cotton Patch Gospel: Luke and Acts." iBooks. <https://itun.es/us/2-6Rz.l>

MEDITATION

God Offers Us Wholeness

This Bible story for today is a strange story—maybe even a bit scary.

There was a man who was sick.

The man was very afraid of everything.

He was so afraid that he ran away from home and lived in the cemetery.

He thought his friends and family were trying to hurt him.

His family was worried that he might hurt himself.

They tried to keep him home—they even tied him up!

But he always broke away.

It seemed to his family that evil spirits had gotten into him and were making him think untrue things.

Today we would say that the man had a mental illness.

He was living a terrible life, and so were the people who loved him.

Then Jesus came.

Jesus healed the man and made him well.

It was amazing!

It was wonderful!

All the people and the man's family came to see him.

The man was fine; he had put on clean clothes, he was thinking real thoughts, smiling and listening to Jesus.

- If you were that man's family member, what would you be thinking?
- How would you feel if your loved one was talking normally—making sense-again?
- Best of all he was not afraid any more.
- He was calm and sensible.
- This man was made whole.

But something strange happened — as this man became whole, the people who knew him and loved him treated him different.

- All the other people were afraid—they were even afraid of Jesus!

- The people had seen how much power Jesus had over the evil spirits.
- They were afraid of anyone so powerful—so they asked Jesus to leave!
- The healed man was the only person who was not afraid.
- He wanted to go with Jesus.
- But Jesus said "No".
- The man's family had missed him for a long time.
- They needed to have him back.
- Jesus told the man to tell the people in his own town how good God is, and happily the man started telling everyone in town how good Jesus was.

This story has a happy ending.

It reminds us that God loves all people, no matter what troubles they have — and that God desires that all of us become whole.

God extends to us wholeness — And this story reminds us that one day all people will be well.

Now that is good news!

Such Goodnews that we are tell others of times in our lives when God made us whole...

A Personal Witness...

James 5 says this...

“Are any among you suffering? They should pray. Are any cheerful? They should sing songs of praise. Are any among you sick? They should call for the elders of the church and have them pray over them, anointing them with oil in the name of the Lord.”

...

“The prayer of the righteous is powerful and effective.”

When I was 7 — 8-years-old, I had severe migraine headaches that led to vomiting and then almost passing out.

Almost nightly, I would curl up in a ball, in the bathroom, on that old avocado green-shag carpet-- anyone remember that carpet ...

This happened quite regularly.

My parents were concerned and not only did they consult our family Doctor; but they sought spiritual help as well.

The fundamentalist community of faith that we were dancing with, practiced Biblical Healing and other forms of remedy for spiritual and physical ailments.

So, as a 2nd or 3rd grade elementary student, I was first the center of a Healing service; and that seemed to not work, SO I WAS CONFUSED AND A BIT BRUISED SPIRITUALLY AND EMOTIONALLY OVER THIS PRACTICE OF BIBLICAL HEALING.

In fact, the only thing that this childhood experience did do was to give me a false sense of anxiety and fear over such practices that are clearly Biblical in nature.

To be honest, because I was forced into these practices as a child, I feared them and had no faith in them as an adolescent, young adult and even into early adulthood.

I struggled to put any faith in the practice of Biblical Healing.

Over the last 20 plus years, however, I have come to two revelations —

- ONE, my headaches and vomiting are the result of a medical condition that was not even diagnosed until my mid-40's;
- and TWO, my comfort level and my understanding of Biblical Healing needed to change and grow -- my relationship with the God who heals and transformations needed to HEALED.

So I started to STRUGGLE with the Biblical passages that dealt with Healing — not as a child in fear; but as an adult seeking a stronger understanding and a deeper faith.

I also had to struggle with where I was as a child in relationship to faith, relationship to illness, and where I am now, as a child of God, at 50-years of age in relationship to my spiritual journey and my faith development.

It has included some hard work and some repressed tearful feelings and memories, that needed to be dealt with; but I have grown — and I hope and pray that I am not through healing, transforming.

I discovered that Healing occurs in many different ways, Healing happens on God’s time, and that we can and do need to seek God’s presence in matters of healing.

I didn’t mean for this to turn into a IP/CPE session; no, I wanted to give you all a baseline as to where I started, where I have been and where I am now in relationship to the beauty and hope found in the elements of Biblical service of Healing and found in a transforming, Still Speaking God, that only wants each of us to seek wholeness.

Healing is a Godly theme throughout the sacred texts and throughout the history of God’s people.

Healing is an action verb necessary to reach wholeness.

Healing is a process by which we and the presence of God's Spirit work towards transformation.

Healing or wholeness is prayed for in all matters and in all areas of life:

- relationship statues’s;
- physical illness or pain;
- spiritual illness;
- matters of emotional or behavioral health;
- character or ethical violations;
- addictions or denial of addictions;
- violence in our society;
- domestic violence in our homes;
- racism;
- dysfunctional and destructive politics;
- We can seek Healing for an ending in our lives or for a new beginning;
- We can seek healing in matters of financial disease and overwhelming debt;
- We can seek peace and healing for nations, for ethnic groups and tribes;
- We can seek healing for Creation and for the war and violence that litters our world...etc...

Healing can be sought for by—

By an individual,

By a family unit,

By a friend,

By a community, a state, a nation,
By a local community of faith,
● and for the greater and wider church.

Healing, as found in the ancient texts, is corner-stoned in four ways:

- God’s Invitation to us -- for us -- to seek Wholeness and Transformation;
- Our recognition of cracks in our vessels; — remember just a few moments ago Joan read these words -- “*Only what is broken endures.*”
- Our seeking Wholeness is also a step of growth in our life of faith and faithfulness;
- and the act of Human touch in the act of Healing recreates God’s creative Presence right in our midst.

Let us revisit and restate those corner-stones:

- ONE — God’s Invitation for Wholeness, for Healing, Transformation is offered to all of God’s Children -- and God shows no partiality;
- TWO — Our first step, as God’s Children seeking Wholeness and Healing/Transformation, is to recognize the cracks in our own own vessels;
- THREE — Take a leap of faith, take a step forward in spiritual growth to ask for and receive the Healing Touch and be bathed in Healing Prayer;
- FOUR — Be present with another person as the act of Human touch recreates God’s creative Presence in our midst.

Those who desire to be anointed [to have hands laid on them] for spiritual healing may come forward in a few minutes.

If you wish ONE OF US to come to you, raise your hand or ask your neighbor to identify you for us.

- You may come for yourself.
- You may come as family unit.
- You may come representing a church family.
- You may come representing a very broken nation.
- You may come as a channel of God’s healing power for someone else.

We have Balm.

As you approach the Healing Station, please indicate a safe body space for healing by offering your hand or indicating your forehead.

During the anointing, [and the laying on of hands,] we invite all present to make silent prayers for each person who seek God’s healing, here today.

If you desire wholeness, if you seek God’s healing touch, anointing and prayer, please come forward as Janet plays, and after Bob shares this prayer with us...

SERVICE OF HEALING

PRAYER FOR HEALING PRAYER

Holy Love, you see us as we are. What others see as imperfections, you see as beautiful possibility. You love us in our differences and in our uniqueness. We see your image reflected in our diversity and in our solidarity with one another.

Today we come before you. Imperfect. Rejoicing. Confused. Strong. Lonely. Ready. We seek your vision. Help us to see each other and all of your creation as you see us.

We call to you now. Some of us are in pain in our bodies, our hearts, our minds, or our spirits. Some of us have family or friends who feel broken or isolated. There are also those who we have never met and yet care for because they too are created in your love.

We call forth your power to heal and to transform. Guide us now as we pray with one another.

Amen.

Amen.

Sources:

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THE ACTIVITY OF LAYING ON HANDS PRAYING WITH EACH OTHER / ANOINTING WITH OIL

THE LORD’S PRAYER