

A Spiritual Spring for the Week

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Sermon Text: Mark 5:1-43

Sermon Title: "You Get to Speak from Where Jesus Touched You"

Morrow Presbyterian Church, Morrow, GA

February 20, 2011

Have you ever wondered why, in certain places of the Bible, Jesus tells people not to speak? In certain places in Scripture, especially in Mark's Gospel, Jesus tells a number of people to not say one word about what happened.

Let's take the healing of a leper in Mark 1, for example. A man with a terrible skin disease falls on his knees before Jesus. He begs Jesus to cleanse him of his disease, because he has suffered so long with it. He's desperate for a cure. "If you are willing," the man allows Jesus room to choose, but he really hopes Jesus is willing. Jesus is moved with compassion, says that he is willing, and removes the man's burden. He then strictly warns the man by saying, "See that you say not a thing to anyone; go, rather, on your way, and show yourself to the priest, and he will bear witness to the healing according to Moses' laws." Mark tells us that the man ignores Jesus, and goes blabbing to anybody who would hear. The news of his healing spreads across the town, so that Jesus cannot

go anywhere without being mobbed. He has to leave and minister in deserted places.

Now, we might think this is the reason for why Jesus doesn't want people to say anything about him. If you go blabbing, you're going to hinder Jesus and his effectiveness to heal and teach. People will crowd in on him, and he will be succumbed by all the requests coming at him from all directions. But even after Jesus leaves a town with one ex-leper in it, he doesn't hide under a rock for the rest of his time on earth. He keeps his light burning high on a hill by visiting more towns, and teaching in more synagogues, and healing more people on hillsides. The reason for Jesus not wanting people to say anything has nothing to do with wanting to keep his ministry a secret, so there has to be another reason.

Let us turn to Mark 5. Jesus and his disciples across the Sea of Galilee to a place called the Gerasenes. They are no longer in their familiar Jewish land, but now have crossed over to Gentile territory. Almost as soon as they exit their boats, a strange man confronts them. He has shackles and chains hanging from his wrists and ankles, and they make a haunting noise as they rattle. The man is clearly out of his mind: his hair is oily and pointing in every direction, his skin is dirty and marked with cuts, and his clothes

are barely hanging on his frame. This man lives in the local cemetery, because nobody can have him around; and because he lives in the cemetery, he has become the freak show for the local townspeople. He is that monster who lives in a haunted place, whom the little kids dare each other to go and visit. When they get a glimpse of him, he roars and flails, and those litt'uns tear from the creepy cemetery, screaming and crying their eyes out.

The monster visits with Jesus and his disciples. Actually, the crazed man sees Jesus from a distance, and is compelled to run and worship him. With his usually loud voice, he says, "What have I to do with you, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I swear to you by God, do not torment me." Jesus can plainly see why this man is such a mess, and has become such a joke among the townspeople. He is obviously demon-possessed – the demon within has made him a freak, an outcast. Jesus calls the demon out of the man and asks for its name. The demon is many demons called Legion, so Jesus sends Legion into a herd of pigs, who are so crazed that they drown themselves in the nearby Sea of Galilee.

The man is no longer a freak show. Kids aren't going to visit him for a late-night scare anymore. He is one of us: sane, peaceful, blessed. He is clothed and he gets to rest.

Jesus calls for his disciples to go back across the Sea, but the man wants to come with them. He wants to be a disciple with them. Wherever they go, he wants to be next to Jesus. He doesn't allow the man to come, but he also doesn't tell the man to remain silent. Jesus wants him to spread the message as a disciple in his own Gentile land. "Go home to your friends," Jesus says to him, "and tell them what great things the Lord has done for you, and how he had compassion for you." There are no strict orders to say not a word. Why this time? What makes this situation any different from the healing of a leper? This man gets to talk, while others had to stay quiet.

We move to the next story, the one that occurs on the Jewish side of the Galilean Sea. People are there to greet Jesus as they usually do, and among those in the crowd is one of the rulers of the synagogue. His name is Jairus, and because he is named in the story we know this guy is very important. Notice that Jairus approaches Jesus and falls to his feet, just like the man in the Gerasenes, who had a legion of demons in him, did. Both men cry out to Jesus, asking him to do something for them. Both Jairus and the man from the Gerasenes are public figures: Jairus is a popular figure for his contribution to the religious life of the town, and the other man was popular for being the

local monster; but no more.

Jairus makes a request of Jesus to heal his daughter who is very sick – he hopes the daughter might live after Jesus visits her. The man from the Gerasenes, however, made no such request. He didn't ask for a healing, but asked Jesus to leave him alone. "In the name of God, I beg you not to torment me," is what he said. In both cases, Jesus causes good things to happen, whether he is requested to heal or not.

Jesus is delayed by a woman in the crowd who touches him, and he says that her faith in him has made her well. But then a group of people from Jairus's house approach Jesus and tells him the daughter is dead. There is no need to bother the Teacher anymore. What is done is done.

We can only imagine what is going on in Jairus's head. If only he had approached Jesus sooner, if only that woman in the crowd didn't delay Jesus, if only, if only. Jesus tells the synagogue ruler that not all is lost. Something still can be done. "Don't be afraid; believe," Jesus says. Fat lot of good that's going to do. Does faith really heal a person? Faith just healed a woman from 12 years of chronic bleeding. Can Jesus make the impossible possible? He just healed a demon-possessed man, who is now the Gentile version of Jesus' disciples. Whereas Jairus's household and

Jairus himself have given up, Jesus does not give up.

He takes Peter, James, and John with him, and they step into the house, where the space is filled with loud wailing and rivers of tears. A child has just died. Hope has left the building. Courage is hiding under a rock. The good times are gone. There is nothing to do but give yourself over to the pain and despair.

Jesus tells everybody that the daughter is not dead but only sleeps. Although everyone in the house is wailing bitterly, they now laugh nervously. They ridicule Jesus for such heartless words. "What can he do, since death is the final destination of us all? Is he ridiculous? He should cry as we do." Since nobody understands what Jesus is saying, he kicks everybody out of the house, except the mother and Jairus himself. Everyone else can continue to mourn and wail uncontrollably outside, but inside hope is about to be invited back. Courage is going to be restored, and the daughter will live to see another day.

We can see Jesus bending over the child, and saying ever so softly, "Little girl, get up, arise. It's okay, your family is here to see you." And the daughter opens her eyes. And the family is in shock, when they see her walking across the floor. And Jesus commands them strictly to let no one know what happened.

What is the difference between a demon-possessed

man and a little girl who has been healed? Why is one allowed to speak and the other not?

At the moment the group from Jairus's home comes to announce that the daughter is dead, all focus of the story leaves Jairus, the popular figure of the town. All focus shifts to the daughter. In Mark 5:35, the daughter now becomes the main figure in the story. Her death affects the entire family, but it is the daughter's death alone. She is the one who experiences death, not the family, not well-known Jairus. And when Jesus approaches the little girl lying in bed, she is the only one who will experience new life. Yes, the entire family and even the whole town are affected by this rebirth, but they may only experience rebirth through the daughter. The daughter's healing is her own, so to speak, given to her by the Son of God. Because it was her death and her resurrection, she is the only one who will get to speak. She is the only one who will get to tell the story, when the time is right to tell it.

Jairus is not allowed to blab to everybody about his wonderful daughter, parading her around like a gold prize he just won in a contest. Jairus doesn't get to become the main character again, by sitting with the other rulers of the synagogue and beaming about

his daughter's miracle, saying, "What a happy man I am," and letting everybody pat him on the back for his success.

Jesus gives strict instruction not to say a word, not because he is punishing them for their unbelief, not because they lacked faith and allowed themselves to bawl uncontrollably. They say not a word, because it is the daughter is the only one allowed to speak. She is just like the man from the Gerasenes, who is evangelizing on the other side of the Galilean Sea. It was his healing. It was his miracle. He gets to blab, because when he blabs, it's going to be about Jesus. He will blab to family and friends and acquaintance and strangers without taking focus away from Christ. He will give all glory to God for what God has done through him, and for what God is doing through him as an evangelist in the Gerasenes.

When the other rulers of the synagogue approach Jairus and say, "What happened? Tell us," all he can do is say, "Come, see my daughter for yourself." All he can do is bring them to her, and let her share the news.

And how will she share her news? Right now, it occurs through the eating of bread. The first thing she does after being healed is eat. From then on, every time she sits at the table with her family for a meal,

she will tell her own story by taking a bite of bread, or fish, or any other food. The family, Jairus and his wife, will watch their daughter eat in silence, and they will just know. The story of her resurrection does not come out in words, but will overwhelm people with warm feelings, encouraging thoughts, a broad smile, a fast-beating heart, blood rushing to the face.

We get to speak from where Jesus touched us. We might not say it is a long conversation – we might not say it at all. We might shrug our shoulders and just say, “I don’t know how it happened, but it did. God touched me. The Holy Spirit healed me. And all I can really say is, ‘Once I was lost, but now I am found’.”

The Assurance of Pardon:

Hear the good news! Christ Jesus lives and reigns in heaven above, holding the keys to death and death's dominion. Christ reigns in power with God the Father as Lord of all creation, and he tells us to not be afraid. God our Father forgives all sin, large and small, secret and revealed. We are saved from death, and life is our reward. Believe this good news. You and I are forgiven through Christ our Lord. Amen.