

**August 30, 2020**

## **Great Mercy**

**Mark 5:1-20**

Christopher Vane opened the Little Bear Sanctuary in honor of his mother. Little Bear is a no-kill, no-cage sanctuary for farm animals in Punta Gorda, Florida. The sanctuary is home to more than 120 farm animals, including sheep, cows, horses, and pigs. “[My mother] was my biggest supporter,” Vane said. “She taught me compassion. She always loved animals.”<sup>1</sup>

Vane’s mission is to show compassion and mercy to animals who have been abused and rescued from slaughter. He says it’s the hardest job he’s ever had, but it’s also the most rewarding. The animals come to the sanctuary from a variety of environments, none of which is healthy or secure. Vane and his team work hard to provide them with a safe haven where they will never be abused and will never suffer again.

In this week’s focal passage, Jesus drives the unclean spirit from a man in the Gerasenes. That man went on to proclaim the good works of Jesus in his home, among his neighbors. The compassion and mercy shown to him by Jesus became his testimony. “ ‘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’ ” (Mark 5:19). Mercy is taught; compassion is learned. When we live these characteristics and show them to others, they spread out into the world exponentially.

Christopher Vane learned compassion from his mother. He spreads that compassion out into his community by rescuing animals who cannot fight or care for themselves. They come to the sanctuary broken and are allowed to live out their lives in safety. God does the same for us. The student book author writes, “Jesus is not afraid to confront our hurt. The Lord sees our torment and calls it out by name. Jesus looks at the broken heart and commands peace in the midst of the storm.”<sup>2</sup>

1. How have you been taught or shown mercy? By whom?
2. What are some ways you can show compassion to others this week?
3. How has God mended a “broken” part of you?

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<sup>1</sup>From [msn.com/en-us/news/good-news/man-opens-sanctuary-for-abused-farm-animals-you-cant-be-depressed-here/ar-BB17HyQd](https://www.msn.com/en-us/news/good-news/man-opens-sanctuary-for-abused-farm-animals-you-cant-be-depressed-here/ar-BB17HyQd).

<sup>2</sup>From *Adult Bible Studies*, Summer 2020, by Robert Gardner (Cokesbury, 2020); page 136.