

# ***Reflections from a United Methodist Pastor***

*August 30, 2020*

*Lesson 13*

## **Great Mercy**

*Mark 5:1-20*

By Belton Joyner

One of the many interesting things in this unusual story is that Jesus told this man not to follow him as a disciple (Mark 5:18-19). Wouldn't you think that Jesus would want as many in his troupe as possible? No! All who accept a saving relationship with our Lord are not called (or sent) on the same mission. I am reminded of Ephesians 4:11: "The gifts he gave were that some would be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors, and some teachers" (New Revised Standard Version).

Some are called to leave everything and follow (Matthew 4:19) and some are called to go back home (Mark 5:18-19). This should reassure us that we are still faithful even if our ministry does not look like the ministry of others.

Jesus told the healed man to tell others how he had been shown "mercy" (Mark 5:19; Common English Bible, New Revised Standard Version). Other translation don't use the word "mercy," but instead use the word "compassion" (King James Version) or "pity" (Broadus, NT of Our Lord and Savior) or "kind" (J. B. Phillips). In Greek, the word is *ēlēēō*. Only three times is this word used in the New Testament; ordinarily, the word translated "compassion" is *splagehnizōmai*. What is the difference between these two Greek words? One is the action of divinity; the other is the action of humankind. In this account, Mark wants to make sure that we understand that what Jesus has done is the work of the divine.

Do you see how Jesus and geography challenge us? Look at Mark 5:1. Jesus and his disciples went to the "other side of the sea" (NRSV). His early ministry was in familiar Jewish territory, but as Suzanne Watts Henderson points out, "Jesus deliberately expands the scope of his ministry." To go to a new place does not mean one abandons the old, but, also, to be alive in the old place does not mean that one cannot go into a new territory. Jesus did both. A good question for a local church is: "Where did we go this year that we had not been before?"

And all those pigs (Mark 5:13) were shipped to eastern North Carolina for vinegar-based pork barbecue.....or something like that.

**Prayer:** As you prepare this lesson, let your prayer begin: “Lord Jesus, I come now with my own brokenness and ask to be healed.”

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