

March 8th Sermon notes

Text: Mark 5:1-20

This man becomes a living testimony of God's mercy. **Before he ever does anything for God**, He is chosen, restored, clothed, and seated - pure grace. And all of us who know Jesus have been given this same privilege. The Scripture puts it like this: *1 John 4:10 Herein is love, not that we loved God but that He loved us.* *1 John 4:19 We love because He first loved us.*

“Paid in Full” illustration. I checked my account for something I was paying off and I saw three powerful words that instantly brought a smile to my face: **‘Paid in Full.’** Furthermore it said this: **Because you have a zero balance you cannot schedule a payment.**

- Jesus paid off our sin debt in full and because we have a zero balance we cannot schedule another payment. There is nothing we can add to what He has already done.
- This man was freed from a bondage neither he or anybody else could release him from and Jesus redirected His life to simply tell what God had done.

When I think of how I came to be where I am and as I am in Christ, I can confidently say, *Herein is love, not that I loved God but He loved me.* And I love because He first loved me. That's part of the privilege.

Jesus commissions him in verse 19: *“Go home to your people and tell them what the Lord has done for you and how He has had mercy on you.”*

- Jesus sent him first to his family and those who knew him before the torment them, then, on his own, he went on to proclaim his story in the Decapolis
- He becomes a part of something bigger than himself. He became a part of Jesus' story by proclaiming God's excellencies in his story.

Each of us in Christ are part of something bigger than ourselves. Partners with Him simply through His touch on our lives.

- We are part of the wonderful works of Jesus.
- To be partners with Christ we don't need to be students of mounds of scholarly materials, we don't need special training, all we need is our story, all we need is to be students of God's work in us.

- And our story doesn't have to be that dramatic; it just has to be ours, which we proclaim to one another and to others as God gives opportunity.

Eternal life is a relationship with Christ that begins on the inside, overflows to the outside and encompasses us on every side. The fuller we are the greater the spillage.

This man's story becomes the first gospel witness in that region. He becomes part of a story that reaches far beyond his village and through the centuries. When Jesus returns later, the Decapolis crowds welcome Him, no doubt in large part **because of this man's testimony.**

No one saw this coming

I like behind-the-scenes stuff. There is a behind the scenes reality for everything.

- The way you all are so nicely dressed this morning.
- That delicious meal you're going to have today for lunch or dinner.
- Basketball players don't just show up on the court.
- The beautiful Christmas decorations at Marlowe and Flemma's home.
- The snacks we enjoy every Sunday after church in the hospitality area.
- In the same way, behind the scenes of our lives **God** has been doing the work for where we are today.
 - While we were otherwise engaged God was at work.
 - While we were sleeping, God was at work.
 - While we were yet sinners, Christ dies for us.
 - And He who began a good work in you will bring it to completion.

We need to trust where we are, give from where we are, and speak from where we are.

And trust the work that God has done and His ability to multiply whatever we lack. And not just the stories of great triumphs and happy endings.

[View from My Place] *...excellence in Scripture isn't about polish; it's about truthfulness. It's about living in a way that lets Christ be seen as He is, not me as I want to be seen. And the real Jesus displayed His work not in the polished, but in those who were tarnished, dented, broken, and discarded. ... The kind of excellence I want to display isn't forced; it radiates. Not from my impressiveness but from my authenticity. So I'm continually learning to accept the naked truth about myself and to resist the instinct to*

dress the mess before anyone walks in. With the Lord's blessing and help, I'm moving away from "I'll make myself presentable" to "I'll let myself be seen..."

So whether we are in a place of Triumph or Trials – our story is still part of His story.

1 Peter 3:15 "Always being ready to give and account for the hope that is in you." About how you are navigating your life in the ups and downs of it.

This man, despite the miracle of new life still had some challenges.

Happily ever after is happily ever after until we get to heaven.

We are not salespeople for a joyride Christianity. We are witnesses to a Savior who meets us in reality, walks with us in suffering, and transforms us from the inside out. We are partners in His mission because He has made us His own. And the world needs the honest, grace-soaked stories only we can tell.

God has been doing a great work in us through our lived experiences. He's used all of it to bring us to where we are, to fuel the inspiration that leads us to keep asking, seeking and knocking, to keep pursuing, to keep gathering, to keep hoping, to keep desiring more of Him. And it's from the well of all of that that he wants us to dip into and offer a drink to a parched world around us.