

## Daily Devotional, October 27, 2020 Peace During Uncertain Times

<sup>26</sup> ***They sailed to the region of the Gerasenes,<sup>l</sup> which is across the lake from Galilee. When Jesus stepped ashore, he was met by a demon-possessed man from the town. For a long time this man had not worn clothes or lived in a house, but had lived in the tombs. When he saw Jesus, he cried out and fell at his feet, shouting at the top of his voice, "What do you want with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I beg you, don't torture me!" For Jesus had commanded the impure spirit to come out of the man. Many times it had seized him, and though he was chained hand and foot and kept under guard he had broken his chains and had been driven by the demon into solitary places. Luke 8:22-29 (NIV)***

When 2020 first began, I was really looking forward to it. Laura and I had begun talking about a trip out west to northern California and Oregon in the summertime and possibly a potential trip to China the next year to visit my son while he is still residing there. How does the quote go? *The best laid plans of mice and men....*

Needless to say, everything changed. Mere days into February, the government announced all U.S. citizens returning from various countries would be quarantined because of the Covid-19 pandemic. Soon, as we know, cities and states began shutting down everywhere. Our vacation plans changed. Our world changed. Since then, my son announced his engagement to the young lady he had been dating in China these past few years. It now looks as if though the trip to China we had hoped to take will not be a possibility due to travel restrictions and quarantine regulations. The joy of his wedding will most likely take place without us.

This has not been the year that I (or anyone else) had hoped for. A pandemic, the ensuing collapse of our economy, racial injustice, and cities on fire after George Floyd's death, have caused great anxiety and unrest. Life has changed radically this year and we are now traversing our way through this new normal way of living and praying for release. Many of us dislike change, let alone such radical swings, and we seek out ways to bring peace and stability into our lives at all cost. Yet, life is always about change and how we adapt to it.

I find true hope in my belief that Christ comes to bring us a sense of peace and acceptance even in the midst of chaos and agony. A story that illustrates this is found in three of the Gospels. It is the story of the Gerasene Demoniac. In Luke chapter 8, Jesus tells his disciples, "Let us go over to the other side of the lake." There had been huge crowds coming to hear Jesus teach and perhaps he was just worn out and needed a break from the people pressing in on him. This lake was actually the Sea of Galilee and on the other side was the region of the Gerasenes, inhabited by pagan, non-Jewish people. I'm sure the disciples were not excited about going there, but Jesus had said 'let's go', and go there they did. Their worries were only magnified when on the way there, a storm brewed over the lake and the disciples thought they were going to drown. They had to wake Jesus over their alarm and at once, he stilled the storm.

Tired and wet, they finally arrived at the other side, alongside a graveyard. We can imagine that from a distance, the disciples could hear and see a man in the cemetery who was screaming incoherently at them as they got close to shore. Jesus insists they dock near the man. It's almost as if he had an appointment to see him. Could He have known this man would be there?

The people of the region knew all too well who this man was. It was believed he was possessed by demons. He roamed the cemetery naked. He had no home. Chains had bound the man, but he broke free and terrorized the countryside. To the residents, he was a monster. Jesus approaches the man and casts out the demons. In the next scene, Luke reports that the residents of the region came to see what had happened and found the man sitting at the feet of Jesus, "clothed and in his right mind." This man had finally found a sense of peace in his life.

In this ever-changing world bereft with uncertainty, Jesus comes to give us peace. He will not be deterred. Jesus and the disciples braved a storm on the water; they traveled out of their comfort zone to go to a region occupied by pagans and landed in a graveyard where they find the Gerasene Demoniac. It's as if Jesus went to this place seeking out this man. I think Jesus does precisely that in seeking us out today, even in the middle of a pandemic. Jesus fearlessly comes to fight off our demons and brings us peace.

***Prayer: Lord Jesus, please grant me peace of mind and calm my troubled heart. My soul is like a turbulent sea. I can't always find my balance so I stumble and worry constantly. Give me the strength and clarity of mind to find my purpose and walk the path you've laid out for me. I trust your Love, Jesus and I know that you will heal this stress. Please bring me clarity with your love lighting the way. In your name I pray, Amen.***