Meditation June 12-19, 2022
Luke 8:26-39.

From Outcast to Irrepressible Witness

". . .So he went away, proclaiming throughout the city how much Jesus had done for him." (Luke 8: 39b, NRSV)

Many of those whom Jesus encountered one on one during his earthly ministry were persons without a name. They run the gamut of individual situations, like a girl who was hemorrhaging, a man born blind, a lawyer, and a boy with a box lunch, among others. This week's lectionary features perhaps the most unusual because Jesus and the disciples are in Gentile country – across the sea of Galilee presumably in Gadara. That's where Jesus was confronted by a man with no clothes on, imploring Jesus not to have anything to do with him. Not only was the man unclothed, but Luke indicates he was also homeless, and had to stay among the tombs. For Jewish reckoning he was an outcast. He didn't belong to anyone anywhere. He was "unclean" in the strict sense of the word. It seemed that he didn't even belong to himself anymore. His identity has been taken over by countless, warring identities inside of him.

Jesus' compassion, and his power to heal changed the unnamed demon-possessed man. The man, notorious in the community as the face of scandal was found "clothed, and in his right mind." All of a sudden, the whole community was drawn to him. But he was not so much concerned about how people thought of him. He was more concerned about how much he could show his gratitude and thankfulness to the one who restored him and give him back to himself. He finally experienced what it means to find life meaningful. That's why he wanted to join Jesus' entourage, and asked the Lord Jesus for that privilege. That's when Jesus told him that there was need for him, and a source of meaning, for him to go home and tell how much Jesus had done for him.

In recent days we in America have witnessed the horror of senseless killings of innocent people, including young children perpetrated by persons who seem are devoid of something meaningful, or valuable reason to live for. That anonymous demoniac reminds us that it is not enough to be made whole physically. His capacity for gratitude, and Jesus' challenge for him to go home – as difficult as that might be since he had had no place to call home –and tell people how much Jesus had done for him gave him a restored sense of self. And something meaningful to do with the rest of his life.

The man went around, telling all what Jesus had done for him. The outcast became an irrepressible witness of the power of God to make one whole. It did not say in the story, but the change that took place in him, and his beautiful story, made him a welcome presence wherever he went.

It does not matter who you are, and what you do. It does not matter the time of life we find ourselves. But we are fortunate that each day, or even every significant juncture in our journey, we pause to ensure that our life includes something truly meaningful to live for. John Wesley used to challenge the Methodists of his time by asking them "How is it with your soul today?" Most of those early Methodists were very poor, but found meaning in their lives despite their poverty. It might be challenging for us to do the same in the midst of relative affluence, but the call is for us to be able to have the joy of saying in the Lord, "It is well, it is well, with my soul." AMEN.

Joy and peace!
Pastor Ben

(Rev. Dr. Ben Vinluan)