



19 JUNE 2022

Welcome to worship

Welcome to church this morning, we hope you enjoy worshipping with us. A special welcome to Rev Geoff Stevenson who is the chairperson of Parramatta-Nepean Presbytery and who will be leading our service this morning and celebrating Holy Communion with us.

Lectionary Readings

This week June 19, 2022

1 Kings 19:1-4, (5-7), 8-15a
Psalm 42 & 43
Galatians 3:23-29
Luke 8:26-39

Next week June 26, 2022

2 Kings 2:1-2, 6-14
Psalm 77:1-2, 11-20
Galatians 5:1, 13-25
Luke 9:51-62

Liberating Love & Compassion – For All Luke 8:26-39

This week's reading is both strange and challenging. It is about a man, who lived on the other side of the lake in Galilee, the Gentile or pagan side. It represents the 'other side' wherever we are and the people who inhabit those places. Maybe it is a physical place where people who are very different live and have free reign. Maybe it is a place of emotional or psychological illness or perhaps it is a place of physical illness or disability that limits and oppresses a person. There are many, in our world, who are oppressed in poverty or slavery, trapped in a world of relentless desperation and struggle. There are also those who are suddenly engulfed in the chaos of crisis – a sudden illness, the death of someone close, a sudden loss of relationship, job or something significant – they are thrown into a different world, crossed over into a different place and exist in a place that is strange and lonely.

The man in the story is described as being out of his mind, daemon-possessed is the phrase used and probably incorporates a plethora of conditions. He is isolated away from people, alienated and excluded out of fear and his inability to live normally amidst people. The man cries out, is naked and often chained up. In his desperate state he breaks chains and causes havoc. He lives in tombs – a man who is essentially dead lives amongst the dead. The townspeople avoid him as he runs amok in his lost, lonely and desperate world.

The experience of this level of desperation isn't mine, but I have sat with several who are in this place, such as people struggling with schizophrenic episodes and living in a confused world of voices and strange aberrations of the mind. I have sat with people living with deep loss and pain. They feel different, with many associated emotions from grief to guilt to anger to inconsolable pain.

.....continued over page



Greystanes Uniting Church

Cnr Cumberland & Eldridge Roads (P O Box 5064)

Greystanes NSW 2145

Office

Phone: 9636 3245

Email: office@greystanesuniting.org.au

Website:

www.greystanesuniting.org.au

Liberating Love & Compassion – For All - continued

In the story, Jesus journeys to this ‘other side’ where he meets this man. He doesn’t recoil or turn away. Jesus went to the man and saw him not as a madman, scary and dangerous, someone to be locked away but as a human being who was suffering and oppressed. He saw a man who was alone and lost. He saw a man who needed liberation and love. He saw a man – where others saw someone mad, crazy, dangerous, daemon-possessed, different... Jesus saw a human being, one in need of love and acceptance.

This man was used to being avoided, shunned and pushed away. He was chained up when he was at his worst. He was not normally used to anyone stopping and talking to him, asking him who he was. As is typical, he answered out of the daemons within him, that which controlled his mind or emotions – angry, fearful, unsure. It is the same with anyone who is from the ‘other side’ and mistrusts those who come close. What do they want? What do they represent? Those who have been oppressed do not respond favourably to anyone who comes close, fearing what they really are going to do. Jesus came close and the man begged to be left alone – was it the man or the daemons speaking? What did the man, in his deepest being desire, want and need? What did he feel or think or want?

When asked his name, the man replied ‘Legion for there were many daemons in him’. The name of this man offers two levels of understanding for the story – the personal story of a man oppressed by the daemons of life and mind and being and a larger understanding of oppression in the world. This second understanding comes from the recognition that the language and feel of the story has military underpinnings. Jesus commanded and the name ‘legion’ are military connotations. A legion was a basic military unit of the Roman army and comprised 4-5000 soldiers. The particular legion based in Galilee had the boar’s head as their symbol, hence the interesting element of the swine. The casting out of the daemons and into the swine represents the liberation of the man from personal bondage and re-engagement with a community of people. It also represents, at a different level, the Reign of God over and against the powers of the world that oppress peoples and nations. The swine running into the sea conjure images of the story of liberation under Moses when the Egyptian army were engulfed in the Red Sea as they followed the Hebrews slaves escaping Egypt – God delivers is the message and the Reign of God is freedom, peace, liberation, wholeness and well-being.

The mission of Jesus was to those on the ‘other side’ and he reached out where others ignored, responded out of fear or shunned. He responded to those who were lost, fearful, trapped and oppressed and he brought the liberating love of God. We are invited into this ministry of liberation, peace, reconciliation, love and healing. We are invited to create communities of God’s grace and love for the sake of the world.

I am challenged in this story as I ponder those I have not seen or heard, the people on street corners of in hidden places crying out. I am challenged around those who are named as different and excluded, those who I have not reached out to – because of uncertainty, fear or ignorance. This story holds up a different way in the world, as way of inclusive love that brings healing, liberation and life. This way of Jesus is a way of liberating love for everyone. What might our world be like if people were included and their voice heard and celebrated? We are invited to let go of our fear and prejudices and open ourselves to those who are different, struggling and lost. There is liberation, life and love for all people – in God! - *Rev Geoff Stevenson*