

Isaiah 65:1-9
Psalm 22:19-28
Galatians 3:23-29
Luke 8:26-39

Sermon June 19th, 2022

Jesus' Healing Changes Things

In our gospel this morning, Jesus encounters a person who is spiritually and mentally unwell. As Jesus takes a good look at this person, he notices that this person has broken free from restraints. And is now living among the tombs. Living among the dead.

Jesus shows compassion for this person, and chooses to heal him.

When the pig farmers see what happens they run and tell the people living in the town what they have witnessed. Partly, because this person, who they spent years fearing, is now healed. But, also, because they bear the cost of this healing. They lose all their pigs. Their income. Their lives have changed.

When the towns people come out to meet Jesus, we, the listeners await the praise and thanksgiving that normally accompanies such an event. Instead, their response is somewhat shocking. They ask Jesus to leave.

Now, I say "somewhat shocking," because if we take a moment to absorb what we just witnessed, we see that the people have gotten used to living with this person who is unwell. They have gotten used to dealing with the challenges that come with living in a community with someone who suffers from spiritual and mental unwellness. They have gotten used to living as a community that is unwell. And even though Jesus' act of healing will make not only this person well, but also the community well. They want none of it.

Likewise, this person has gotten used to living with his unwellness. This person has gotten used to living in a community that is unwell. For those of us who have a loved one who struggles with mental unwellness, we know that their unwellness impacts themselves greatly. But, their mental unwellness also impacts the people around them. Especially, when left untreated. So, the person is unwell, but so is the community.

Yet, we need to find compassion and love for our loved ones who struggle with mental unwellness (**Image**). We need to try and help them find the supports they need so they can function well. We need to be empathetic, and do our best not to marginalize them. Unfortunately, we often struggle to do this.

What we see in our gospel this morning is a community who has marginalized this person with chains. Who has created the kind of environment where the only place this

person can go to escape the chains is where the dead dwell. The community becomes an inhospitable place. Or in other words, the community's unwellness grows by the way they treat this person who is spiritually and mentally unwell.

So, the person is unwell. The community is unwell. And yet, this person too resists Jesus at first, when Jesus offers to heal him. "I beg you, do not torment me." Or in other words, "leave me alone Jesus."

I say only "somewhat shocking," because how often do we get used to living with this unwellness?

When we find ourselves living in an unhealthy environment where unwellness reigns, it can hurt a lot for the first little while. But eventually, we kind of get used to it. In fact, we can become comfortable in this environment. We can become comfortable with our unwellness (**Image**). We adapt. We develop coping mechanisms. Some healthy. Some not so healthy. To live with the unwellness.

When we decide to seek out opportunities to heal, we quickly come to the realization that with healing comes change. Our lives as we know it gets flipped on its head. All those coping mechanisms we used to deal with the current situation crash down all around us. The wounds become fresh again as we try to properly cleanse them. We find ourselves walking in uncertainty. Confused. Wondering what this new life will look like. Feeling anxious and afraid.

For example, when someone is in recovery from addiction, we see a big impact on their relationships with loved ones. We rejoice that this person is able to live in recovery. But we also have to redefine our relationships.

For the person who is in recovery they often change a lot internally. Their thoughts, beliefs, mannerisms, personality. They are no longer wearing the masks that come with being addicted to something.

For the support people, they have to adjust too. They have to get used to not being needed all the time. They have to learn to live in a much more predictable environment than what they became accustomed to living in. They have to have to redefine how they behave towards the person in recovery.

Unfortunately, with these changes sometimes comes the breakdown of intimate relationships. We see a lot of couples get divorced when the person who has struggled with addiction is in recovery.

A lot of change comes when we experience God's healing and new life. Some of it costly. And though it seems like a great time to rejoice, it is also an anxious time of uncertainty.

We become comfortable living with our unwellness.

For the towns people, they don't want Jesus to heal their community. They have become comfortable with their unwellness, and are afraid to live in this uncertainty that comes with healing. They also see that with Jesus' healing comes cost, and they don't know if they can deal with this cost. So, they welcome their continued unwellness, and ask Jesus to leave.

For the person who is healed, they too, fight this healing at first. It is only after Jesus is asked to leave that this person really sees the joy in their new found liberation from their unwellness.

We become comfortable living with our unwellness. We sometimes find ourselves asking Jesus to leave us alone. We sometimes find ourselves resisting help from those that Jesus sends into our lives to help.

In response to our reaction to Jesus' healing, Jesus doesn't push too hard. Jesus respects the community's decision, and leaves. But Jesus doesn't abandon the people.

Remember, Jesus has healed this person, and now this person wants to go with Jesus, and be an active participant in Jesus' healing ministry. In response to this person's exuberance, Jesus invites them to stay. So, that this person can go throughout the community and tell everyone what Jesus has done. Continuing Jesus' healing ministry.

Jesus has left his mark on this community through healing this person (**Image**).

And whether they like it or not. They as a community are healing from their unwellness. Yes, things will change. Yes, this change will come with some anxiety and fear. But they will see once they detox from what was, that this new life will bring them peace and love. And allow them to be all that God created them to be. A welcoming healthy community.

Let me say this one more time: Once they detox from what was, they will experience God's peace and love. Becoming a welcoming healthy community.

Part of our healing journey is that period professionals like to call detox. We often use this term when dealing with addictions, but many are now using this term to talk about healing from any unhealthy environment/unwellness someone finds themselves living in/dealing with.

According to professionals, the first stage is to remove ourselves from this environment or seek help for our unwellness. Then comes the detox stage, which can be anywhere from a couple of months to years. This is the hardest stage, because it is where the uncertainty and anxiety is felt in its fullness. This is where many of us find ourselves returning to the unhealthy environment or accepting our unwellness, because we can't

spiritually, mentally, or physically handle the detox. This is why in the detox phase Jesus patiently walks with us, inviting the people we need into our lives to help us through this transitional stage.

Then comes the final stage where we experience God's peace and love. Where we see the life enriching joy that comes with living as a welcoming healthy person and community (**Image**).

Everyone of us who is touched by Jesus' healing. Everyone of us who is able to endure the detox phase of this healing. Everyone of us who has become a welcoming healthy person/community through this healing, becomes called and empowered by this healing, to bear witness to what happens to our community and our lives when we finally find ourselves on the other end of the detox phase. So, that those who continue to live in unwellness find hope in our witness to walk this healing journey themselves. With our help.

Because everyone of us who has experienced Jesus' healing full circle have bore witness to God's kingdom: a place where hospitality, forgiveness, healing, peace, and love reign. A place where we rejoice, because it is a place where we can be all that God created us to be.

Let us pray, loving God, heal us from our unwellness. Be patient with us when we detox from this unwellness. Give us what we need to get through this detox. And inspire us through this healing to walk with others in their healing. **Amen.**

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