

“Not my Problem”

Mark 5:1-20

Barb and I went to see the movie Inside Out by Pixar. Its the one that has to do with emotions – five basic emotions we all have as human beings – joy, sadness, disgust, fear and anger. It actually was very well done and would be a wonderful discussion starter on the necessity for all of us to take time to feel and process our emotions as opposed to repressing them and pushing them aside.

Although these five emotions are common to all human beings, all human beings don't experience all the same emotions. I have no idea, for example, what it feels like to have brought a child into the world. And every time I think I might have an idea of what that's like, my wife reminds me that no, I really don't have a clue.

I have no idea the range of emotions that would have been felt by the outcast in the story in Mark's gospel. According to the cultural norms of the people Jesus would have grown up around, this 'demoniac' would have been an outcast among outcasts. Jesus had travelled with his disciples across the sea of Galilee to the 'other side' - the side where the Gerasenes lived. They ate things like pork, making them an 'unclean' people according to the writer of Mark's gospel. And among these 'unclean people' lived a person who was different. They said he was possessed by a demon, which could have meant anything from mental illness, to baldness or anything else that made him 'different'. As such he was ridiculed, laughed at, teased, and excluded by the community. Children would throw stones at him and jeer at him. The 'demon' (or perhaps the ridicule) drove him out of the community to live among the tombs.

The powerful message of the gospel is that Jesus travelled a long distance, across the lake, through the storms of controversy brewing even within his disciples to reach out, to include and to love this outcast among outcasts. To heal him. To say that he too was included in the kingdom of God.

I don't know what it would have felt like for this man whose name we don't even know - who is referred to only as the demoniac. Do you?

Learn to love with all your heart and accept the unlovable side of others.

For anyone can love a rose. It takes a great heart to include the thorns.

I remember talking to a member of the Miskkeegogamang First Nations Community north of Thunder Bay several years ago. He grew up in Pickle Lake and attended a school not on the reserve. Everyone called him a 'dirty little Indian'. But he didn't know why. Why was he a dirty little Indian? In the classroom he sat right behind 'two beautiful white girls in pretty dresses'. That is how he described them to me. They were quite popular in the class and he was always the dirty little Indian. Then one day in class he farted. And was incredibly embarrassed. And everyone laughed. And he thought to himself, "I have never heard these two beautiful white girls in pretty dresses fart, so that's why I must be a dirty little Indian." And he went through the rest of grade school believing that he was a dirty little Indian just because he farted. And every time he farted it reminded him that he was a dirty little Indian.

I have no idea the range of emotions that he went through. I have no idea what it feels like to be outcast, ridiculed, laughed at, discounted, seen as less than human.

You see I live in privilege. I am a middle aged straight white guy. I live in so much privilege that the privilege is normal to me. And those of us who live in privilege sometimes are blind to the reality of those who are outcast, thought of being less than others.

But God is not blind. God knows what it is like to be ridiculed and forgotten. And Jesus knew. And the good news of the gospel is that Jesus did indeed travel a long way breaking through all kinds of cultural barriers to reach out and touch and to heal this man called the demoniac.

It created ripples - ripples of discontent. It upset the status quo and people were not happy. They asked Jesus to leave. But Jesus stayed long enough for the healing to take place.

You and I can't heal demoniacs. But Jesus can. And we are called to be his disciples and to love like he did whether it upsets the status quo or not. You see travelling with Jesus is not comfortable. We may be in for a rough ride.

Thanks be to God