

Part 8: 'I am Many'

Choose a reader if it was not arranged last week and begin with silence and a short prayer. Share some of your experiences of silence from the week. In looking at risk, how did you feel – drawn, frightened, . . . ? (15 minutes)

'I am Many'

We have been reflecting on the basic risk involved in looking at ourselves and our lives in perspective. We take courage from each other, and from God's promise that nothing can separate us from God's love, though at present we may feel little comfort.

If we were to look at ourselves as a wardrobe of various outfits or masks, we would see ourselves as wearing a different one for each situation we find ourselves in. What outfit would we have on now, for example? Possibly our 'religious' or 'spiritual' outfit. Maybe not quite the same as the one we wear in church.

What part of ourselves do we take to work? What part of us shouts at the dog when he's chewed our slipper? What part of ourselves do we show to a society snob?

We are many different parts inside too. When we're being reprimanded by our boss for some stupid mistake, we may feel like a hurt child. When we scold our child for messing up something yet again, we're the self-righteous parent who has done everything possible to teach this child the right way to do things!

So, who are we really, and whom do we bring to God?

The conflict of all these identities and pressures creates a 'war' within us; a constant undercurrent of clashing desires and fears. We want to be thought well of, and at the same time we fear being found out and rejected. Underneath it all is the deep hunger just to be ourselves and to be loved as we are.

We try to live with this confusion by pretending it doesn't exist, but the more we strive, the more we fail. The irony is that for us as Christians, the confusion is complicated by having to make further allowances for what little-known God may want of us.

The beginning of healing is realising that we are sick.

The inner pain and confusion that many of us live with is well portrayed in the story of the Gerasene demoniac. Whatever we believe about demonic possession, this story is a helpful analogy to our inner life. Read Mark 5:1–20. As we look at him, consider where we can identify with his living among the tombs; where our life seems dead, wrapped up in securities, where former pleasures leave us cold and our response is lifeless.



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Do we understand what it is to 'cry out and cut oneself' with bitterness and resentment at what others have done to us, or what we have done to ourselves, or the agony of not feeling forgiven, or of not being able to forgive others?

Are we like this man in being 'legion', with many different names, habits and attitudes, each dependant on mood and situation?

Do we see in ourselves the double movement of wanting to come to Jesus on the one hand, and yet fearful that he will punish us on the other? Spend 15 minutes reflecting on Mark 5:1–20.

What does this story tell you about yourself?

Can you accept your inner conflicts?

Where are you moving with them?

Write up your journal and then share in the group. (30 minutes)

At home

Further reading and reflecting on this theme:

Matthew 23:13–28

Colossians 2:20–23

1 Corinthians 7:17–24.



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