

The Other Side – What One Man can do!

Play Hallelujah Chorus

They say these days that we are no longer in the “*Information age.*” We’ve slipped from “*Information age.*” to the “*Entertainment Age.*” The marketing people, I’m told, say it’s now down to “*benefit* and *emotion.*”
What moves you? You’ll buy what “moves you.”

So, what moves you?

- ? A powerful piece of music? (like the one we have just heard –
Hallelujah Chorus? John Val Jon’s prayer for son)
- ? Scenery? (show some photos from balloon ride)
- ? The Care shown by person for another/
- ? The delightful trust of a child?
- ? Fear of something in your life or our world? You know that’s one of the things that stops congregations growing? Fear! Fear of change! We know that if we grow we’ll have to change.

So, what moves, or motivates, you?

All of us are moved – by a mixture of things and only when we are “moved” are we motivated into action.

Let me ask another question:

What moved Jesus; What moved the Father ?

Put simply: love!

John 3:16 Tells us that, “God (in this instance primarily the Father) so *loved* the world that He gave His one and only Son.”

Often we read in Scripture how Jesus “was *moved* with compassion (love & care)

And that gave rise to action – just like the Father!

They are moved by loved for this world that they have made.

People matter to God, in fact people matter *deeply* to God. And that concern gives rise to remarkable action.

Let me try and illustrate.

Turn with me to Mark 4. Here we find some wonderful parables:

- The Sower
- A lamp on a stand
- Growing seed
- The Mustard seed - the tiny seed that grows the large bush!

But I don't want to talk about them! I want to talk about the *context!*

Jesus is in Galilee, as it happens on the western shores.

This particular day, He does what He's been doing quite often lately. He goes down to the shoreline and begins to teach.

But this time the crowd swells – so much so that has to get into a boat and push off from the shore, teaching from the boat.

He has a great day. The people so enjoy the teaching. They hang on his every word. They didn't seem to mind long sermon's, and you're right I'm not Jesus – definitely *not* Jesus.

At the end of this great day, He does something that, to the people of His day and to the disciples, would have seemed really strange! He says, “let's go over to *the other side.*” What's so strange about that, we may ask?

Well in Jesus' day, “*The other side*” was a technical term, not just ‘a different place to where we are now.’

The other side, was what was called, in Jesus' day, the Decapolis – meaning 10 cities (deca: 10; polis: city – polis is where we take our word *politics* from).

Now these 10 cities were not occupied by Jews. They were pagan cities. There was a tradition in Jesus' day, that the people God promised to drive out before Joshua and the Israelites – 7 nations: The Hittites, Girgashites, Amorites, Canaanites, Perizzites, Hivites, and the Jebusites, the 7 nations of Canaan that Paul refers to in Acts 13:19 – settled in this area, the area of the Decapolis.

For this reason, therefore, this was a region which few Jews entered into. But more than that. What was the animal that was anathema to the Jews? That's right, the pig! On *the other side* pigs were worshipped. But even more than this. The Decapolis, *the other side*, was also a centre of Roman power. Rome had one of its Legions based there. A Legion was 6000 Roman soldiers, what in our army would be called a "Division." But that wasn't all. The symbol for that Legion was a Bore's head – the head of a pig!

For most Jews *the other side*, like the desert, was the place where Satan lived! It was dark; it was demonic. Nobody goes to *the other side*, especially not a Rabbi! But one day, one evening, the disciples hear their Rabbi casually say, "Hey guys, let's go over to *the other side!*"

What's going on? What's He doing? Doesn't He know that the Kingdom is supposed to come for Israel!? Why go there? You don't mean that the Kingdom's for more than Israel? Do you!?

So we go to Mark 5

Up to this moment Jesus has been drawing BIG crowds (go back and look at 4:1). But when He gets to *the other side*, only **one** solitary man greets Him – a demon possessed man! What a reception committee! Although it shouldn't be a surprise! Why? Well *nobody* goes to *the other side*!

And this one man was so violent, no one could subdue him (v.3). He comes to Jesus, and his is not a welcome, it's a question:

“What do you want with me...In God's name don't torture me!” (v.7)
Jesus' reply is not to the man but to the evil spirit, and it is a command and a question. He tells the spirit to come out, but before it does so he asks, “What is your name?” Remember? “We are legion, for we are many.”

Legion is a loaded term, remember the Roman Legion. It was a reminder of all that Jesus was up against!

Well these spirits ask Jesus, in fact beg Jesus not to be sent away. They ask Him to let them go into a herd of animals grazing nearby. Remember what the animals were? That's right pigs! A herd of “about two thousand in number.”

Sometimes we might think this is a bit hard on the pigs. I mean pigs are kind of cute – think of porky?! But in Jesus' day, because of O.T. law and tradition, pigs were anathema. 1 Maccabees records a story of some Jews, 180 of them, who were told by Roman soldiers to eat pork and when they refused they were slaughtered! What was the Legion's logo? The Bore!

This story is, to Jews in Jesus' day a classic confrontation between good and evil, And there's no contest – the pigs lose!

The people's response was fascinating! The herders, those looking after the pigs, run off and tell their story in the whole town and countryside (v.14).

The result?

People are curious. "They want to see what has happened." (v. 14).

They don't see the pigs – they're gone!

They see Jesus, although that doesn't evoke an immediate response

But when they see the man, "clothed and in his right mind" – "they're afraid!!"

And they begin to plead with Jesus to leave their region.

An intriguing response! They don't respond by, "Wow this is great. Here is a man with power!" They don't think, "I have a sick Mum, a tormented child or a troubled friend, and this man, this man with power could help them!"

They beg Jesus to go away! He has power, but He's from *the other side!* And someone from *the other side* could hurt them

Someone from *the other side* would have an agenda (and it wouldn't be good!)

Someone from *the other side* won't accept us so we won't accept them!

They beg Him to go away – so He does!

There's one exception– the man! He begs to follow Jesus. *The other side* has, for him been a place of darkness and torture and he wants to leave it.

'Well,' you think, 'he's doing the right thing. That's what Jesus always asks people to do!'

But Jesus wouldn't let him! Man that's inconsiderate! I mean, doesn't the guy have a right to if he wants to? Jesus says, "No, don't follow me. Stay here and tell your story."

Imagine how the man felt as the boat rowed away and disappeared into the haze of the horizon? But he says, “Okay. This guy saved my life. I’ll do what He asks.” And so he goes, not just to his own city but, throughout the whole Decapolis, “telling how much Jesus had done for him.” (v.20)

And all the people were *amazed!*

Mark 7:31 sees Jesus back in the Decapolis, and in Mark 8:2 how now a large crowd has gathered.

Before we go any further, step back for a minute into Mark 6.

There we find another miraculous feeding – in this case on the Israel side of the Sea of Galilee. A crowd of 5000 has gathered and listened to Jesus’ teaching. At the end of the 1st day the disciples come to Jesus, concerned, and tell Him that He has to send the crowd away so they can go and get food. They have a concern for the crowd. And Jesus feeds them from 5 loaves and 2 fish. The disciples, at Jesus’ instruction, collect 12 baskets with left-overs.

When an Israelite heard or saw reference to 12, what do you think they thought of? Yes, the 12 tribes of Israel. 12 was representative of God’s whole community. That was why Jesus chose 12 disciples. These are statements that God hasn’t forgotten His people – *He never does!!*

Now back to Mark 8

Jesus is now teaching on *the other side*. A huge crowd gathers – 4000 in fact.

Jesus teaches 1 day – the disciples say nothing!

Jesus teaches 2 days – the disciples still say nothing!

Jesus teaches 3 days – and still the disciples say nothing!

Why not? Well these guys are on *the other side!* Let them feed themselves!
So Jesus takes the initiative – “how many loaves have you got?” take note *seven!*
Jesus feeds these people just like he fed the other 5000, and like the others –
they’re satisfied. There’s even some left-overs, and take note on how many
baskets full! Seven! How many loaves? Seven! How many nations were there?
Seven!

The good news hasn’t only come to the 12 tribes of Israel – it’s come to the
7 nations of Canaan. God hasn’t forgotten either of them! Why not?
Because “God so loved the world..” That was what *moved* Him, remember!?

Just one other detail

When Jesus first comes to the Decapolis, how many people greet Him? One!
And the people’s response? Please leave!

On His second trip? What is the response? More than 4000! In fact Matthew
describes it as “great crowds came to Him.” (15:30). Jesus heals them and the
result? “They praised the God of Israel!”

The first time – a poor demon tormented wretch!

The second time He comes He has one of the most dramatic responses in the New
Testament. What had happened?

One man told his story!

One man travelled from one town to another;

One man travelled from neighbourhood to neighbourhood,

Saying, “Let me tell you about Jesus and what He did for me!”

And it changed whole cities! ONE MAN!

St. Luke's, what is our vision? To reach ONE city (and not by ourselves!)

His man could do what not even Jesus could do – because he came from *the other side*. He was an insider – One like them

Imagine Jesus, when He returns and sees the man – here was one for whom He would have to say, “Well done, good and faithful servant!”