

The Graveyard Shift

By Pastor Greg
1-20-08

Matthew 8:28-34

Bunkertown COB

A lonely frog telephoned the Psychic Hotline and asked what his future holds. His Personal Psychic Advisor tells him, "You are going to meet a beautiful young girl who will want to know everything about you." The frog is thrilled, "This is great! Will I meet her at a party?" he croaks. "No," says the psychic, "in biology class."

Like this frog, there are many who hope for good things to happen tomorrow. Maybe it's with our health or wealth, or maybe our career. We look at the possibilities and begin to make plans for our life based upon what we want and what we desire. Sometimes we even do this in our spiritual lives as well. We meet Jesus and He changes our life. And in response, we come up with an idea or plan how we can best serve Jesus in His ministry here on earth. But what if Jesus has something else in mind? Are we willing to follow Him wherever He sends us?

Many of us who have had our lives transformed by Jesus get ideas in our head how we can best serve Him; what we will do for Him in response to what He has done for us. But what if Jesus has something else in mind? Are we willing to listen? Will we surrender to His calling in our lives? Sometimes He calls us to areas we'd rather not go; places we'd rather not serve. And most times we will remain nameless workers for Jesus. Are we committed enough to follow Jesus according to His calling? Can we surrender to Jesus just as faithfully as the man who met our Lord in a cemetery one day?

²⁸When Jesus arrived on the other side of the lake, in the region of the Gadarenes, two men who were possessed by demons met him. They lived in a cemetery and were so violent that no one could go through that area. ²⁹They began screaming at him, "Why are you interfering with us, Son of God? Have you come here to torture us before God's appointed time?" ³⁰There happened to be a large herd of pigs feeding in the distance. ³¹So the demons begged, "If you cast us out, send us into that herd of pigs." ³²"All right, go!" Jesus commanded them. So the demons came out of the men and entered the pigs, and the whole herd plunged down the

steep hillside into the lake and drowned in the water. ³³ The herdsmen fled to the nearby town, telling everyone what happened to the demon-possessed men. ³⁴ Then the entire town came out to meet Jesus, but they begged him to go away and leave them alone. ¹ (Matthew 8:28-34)

¹⁸ As Jesus was getting back into the boat, the man who was freed from the demons begged to go with him. ¹⁹ But Jesus would not let him. He said, “Go home to your family and tell them how much the Lord has done for you and how he has had mercy on you.” ²⁰ So the man left and began to tell the people in the Ten Towns about what Jesus had done for him. And everyone was amazed. ² (Mark 3:18-20)

You want to know what seems so wrong about this story. Here is a man who has been identified for centuries by his problem. He has forever been known as the Gerasene Demoniac. Little is said about what he did for Jesus once his life was changed. And I find that unfortunate. Before he met Jesus, the forces of darkness would have held captive all his love, all his joy, and all his peace. But in a moment Jesus released these bonds and for the first time in who knows how long he is free; his stormy life has now been calmed. Knowing unrestrained love, joy, and peace, this man’s greatest desire is to commit his life to following Jesus. This man, who is now free from bondage, wants to go with Jesus. But notice that Jesus sends him in a whole different direction with a purpose other than what this man had first desired.

Like this man, we all want to travel closely with Jesus. Perhaps we had visions of being in the Who’s Who list of Christianity. We imagined our name being associated with Denominational Leadership or even with churches in a particular district. When people talk about those who are doing a great work for Jesus we hoped that our name would be mentioned. And it’s not for pride or arrogance these ideas cross our mind, it’s just that our desire is that our work for Christ would not go unnoticed. We want people to recognize us as a devoted and energetic follower of Jesus. I suppose it’s just natural to hope that someone notices the change in our life, and for someone to see the things we are doing for Jesus and His Kingdom. But

¹Tyndale House Publishers. (2004). *Holy Bible : New Living Translation*. Wheaton, Ill.: Tyndale House Publishers.

²*The Everyday Bible : New Century Version*. 2005. Nashville, TN.: Thomas Nelson, Inc.

the reality is that we serve in obscurity; bearing a name that means nothing beyond our home town. Our service or leadership is not in demand. When people think of the great names of faith, we remain nameless. And we question our significance within the Kingdom of God.

It's important for us to realize that not everyone got to travel closely with Jesus; not everyone had a book in the Bible bearing their name. And this poor demon possessed man even remained nameless; a face perhaps we'll see one day in heaven. Since he did not get to be a part of the inner circle of followers, was this man's work less significant than the work of the Disciples? He was just a poor man who had his life changed by Christ and who was sent off to do another work. Does that mean he wasn't as important as James or John? But notice what Mark says about this fellow in verse 20. This is how this man should be known; as the man who spoke throughout the Ten Cities of that region; as the man who obediently did as Jesus commanded.

You and I are insignificant in the grand scale of Christianity. There is a very slim chance our names will be mentioned among the Who's Who of Christian Servants. Maybe we are even known more for the things that were wrong. But if we go and do as Christ has commanded; if we are obedient to where He sends us to serve, there will be great things done for His honor and glory. We may never receive the recognition here on earth, but in heaven these things do not go unnoticed.

I think sometimes we need to be reminded that even though we feel what we are doing for Jesus is simple or insignificant, God the Father finds a pleasing and acceptable sacrifice on our part. The Apostle Paul says that by obediently serving Christ we are pleasing God (**If you serve Christ in this way, you will please God and be respected by people.**³ Romans 14:18). This man who was sent into the nearby towns may have been nameless to us, but to God he brought great glory and honor. Do we realize that we can do the same thing as well?

³*The Contemporary English Version : With Apocrypha.* 1997, c1995. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.