

- Albert Benjamin Simpson was born in 1843 in Prince Edward Island, Canada.
  - After feeling like God was calling him to ministry, Simpson was educated in bible, moved around and ended up pastoring 13<sup>th</sup> Street Presbyterian Church in NYC beginning in 1880 at the age of 37. This was a prestigious pastorate, with high income and visibility – a pastor's dream job
  - But Simpson saw the flood of immigrants pouring into the US through NYC. His greatest desire was to see these people come to know Jesus Christ. He began going to the docks, to the areas where there were homeless, sick and displaced. People began to come to Jesus. It was amazing.
  - The problem was that his church wanted nothing to do with the low class and underreached people in the city and asked that Simpson keep those activities separate from the church. So less than 2 years after starting at this amazing job, Simpson left it to establish the church in the heart of NYC where the poor, homeless, sick and displaced would be welcome.
  - The more he ministered to immigrants, the more he became convinced that the message of Jesus needed to be taken to the entire world.
  - He never set out to start a denomination, but the video you saw, the places that are being changed, started with a man who was determined to get the good news of what Jesus had done to as many peoples and places as possible.
  - Hope Chapel is a part of that legacy.
  - At Hope Chapel we say: "People are invited to come as they are and be changed."
  - Being changed is simply growing in our knowledge and obedience to Jesus. We do this by learning to Love Jesus, Love each other because of Jesus and, what we're going to look at today, how we Love the world with Jesus.
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- That burden that AB Simpson felt to see people know Jesus was not just something for him.
  - It is the singular, most important mission we have as followers of Jesus.
  - The average person who doesn't know Jesus has all kinds of missions. To be happy. To raise happy kids. To be rich. To be successful. To watch over family. To help others. Most of which are pretty good things.
  - But followers of Jesus have a mission that has already been given to us.
  - If you have been in a church for a while, you probably know what the mission is. Just before Jesus returned to heaven after coming back from the dead, he said this to his disciples.  
*Matthew 28:16 Then the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go. 17 When they saw him, they worshiped him; but some doubted. 18 Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 19 Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."*
  - Make disciples. Go wherever you can. Let people know about me. I am the answer. I am the way. I am life. I bring freedom. Don't hide it. Live it. Talk it.
  - Have you ever dismissed this command?
  - Have you ever thought that you did know enough? Weren't spiritual enough? Weren't good enough? Didn't care enough?
  - Maybe the whole idea of reaching out to those who don't yet know Jesus feels very forced to you. You feel unqualified, don't know what to say, you'd be embarrassed, you might get laughed at, rejected.
  - I wonder if the problem we have with impacting the world around us has nothing to do with training or knowledge. It isn't our bad experience (or lack of experience) that stops us.
  - I wonder if it just a lot simpler than we make it.

- I want to examine a story this morning – one we talked about a year and a half ago when we were going through the book of Mark.
- But I want to look at it with a slightly different focus this morning.
- I want to see it in a way that will show you that **Your story with Jesus is your best tool to disciple others.**

*Mark 5:1 They went across the lake to the region of the Gerasenes. [MAP]*

- Jesus crossed the Sea of Galilee. He went to a primarily Gentile area. It was one of the few times Jesus went outside to anywhere that was not predominantly Jewish.
- On the way across Galilee, Jesus is sleeping because he is exhausted. A storm comes up, bad enough that these disciples, some of who had made their lives on water, thought they were going to drown.
- Jesus got up and calmed the storm, amazing his disciples by demonstrating his power over even the elements of the world. They had left in the evening to cross the sea, so by the time they reach the other side, it is probably night, or perhaps early morning.

*2 When Jesus got out of the boat, a man with an evil spirit came from the tombs to meet him.*

- They come to shore and get out in the dark. No streetlights. Perhaps they had some light with them – perhaps not. The limestone cliffs where they land are dotted with tombs and caves. There is no village there. It is quiet. It very well could have been a spooky, eerie place.
- And then out of the dark comes a wild man.

*3 This man lived in the tombs, and no one could bind him any more, not even with a chain. 4 For he had often been chained hand and foot, but he tore the chains apart and broke the irons on his feet. No one was strong enough to subdue him. 5 Night and day among the tombs and in the hills he would cry out and cut himself with stones. 6 When he saw Jesus from a distance, he ran and fell on his knees in front of him. 7 He shouted at the top of his voice, "What do you want with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? Swear to God that you won't torture me!" 8 For Jesus had said to him, "Come out of this man, you evil spirit!"*

- In the other accounts of this story we get the added detail that this man went around totally naked.
- I don't care who you are, if a dirty, crazy, naked man comes running at you, you probably are not feeling all that comfortable.
- This has so much drama. If I was one of the disciples, I would either be jumping in front of Jesus to protect him, or quickly back in the boat. "Jesus, I'm still drained and shaking from that last storm thing, but I'd rather take my chances with another storm."
- Pay particular attention to the description of the man.
- 1) He was isolated.
- He was an outcast. He lived in the tombs.
- He had people whose contact with him was to try and control him. To chain him.
- People had tried but no one could do anything anymore. It seems that for the most part they had stopped trying.
- 2) His life was out of control.
- This man was agitated. There was no order, no rhyme, no reason to his life.
- We read that he would cry out at strange times.
- Running at Jesus when he landed is not a picture of a life under control.
- He probably ate at the whim of those people who might bring him food. The same people that tried to control him. Probably his family (we see later that he had family).
- We might infer that he has not always been this way. He did have people who knew him and cared about him. But he knew none of that in his state.
- 3) He had no peace.

- He was up day and night. He had no schedule. He could not rest.
- He was up at weird hours crying out.
- We learn shortly the source of this problem was oppression from unclean spirits.
- 4) He was intent on self-harm.
- He had no clothes. He cut himself.
- It sounds familiar doesn't it?
- 5) He was desperate.
- It is odd that he would run towards Jesus – the demons would not have wanted to have anything to do with them. Yet this man was in a desperate place.
- He had run out of options. He could not fix himself. He could not make it better.
- No amount of self-discipline, motivational speakers, emotional pick-me-ups, scheduling improvements was going to help him. A shopping trip was not going to help. Listening to K-LOVE wasn't going to make it all better.
- Before we continue on in the story, let me ask you . . . can you identify?
- Have you ever felt isolated? Alone? You can't seem to get connected? You see people but you feel like you are on an island?
- Can you identify with that out-of-control feeling? There is so much to do. People have expectations. You feel like you are spinning a hundred plates at the same time. Maybe those plates are falling around you. There is no end in sight. You feel driven to do more but there is little satisfaction in what you do?
- It leads to no peace. You are worried. You can't stop your brain from spinning. You can't sleep. You are awake at all hours of the night. You have these sins that keep coming back over and over and you can't conquer them. You are trapped in a cycle of guilt and self-loathing. You try to work harder, be more disciplined, live better and you are still drowning in quicksand.
- The pain of all this leads you to harmful behaviors. It might even be physical harm, but you search for ways to escape but they harm you, your relationships, your finances, your health. You slide deeper and deeper and keep on telling yourself to "buck up, it's not so bad."
- You are desperate. You have tried everything. You have no energy to do any more. It is difficult to get up. You are going through the motions but you want something . . . anything . . . to rescue you or help you escape from your situation.
- This man is at the extreme end of all of these.

*9 Then Jesus asked him, "What is your name?" "My name is Legion," he replied, "for we are many." 10 And he begged Jesus again and again not to send them out of the area. 11 A large herd of pigs was feeding on the nearby hillside. 12 The demons begged Jesus, "Send us among the pigs; allow us to go into them." 13 He gave them permission, and the evil spirits came out and went into the pigs. The herd, about two thousand in number, rushed down the steep bank into the lake and were drowned.*

- Can you imagine? 2000 pigs is a lot of pigs. They are grunting, grubbing in the ground, just being pigs, and suddenly they go crazy. Like a stampede.
- Something just jumps out of this story to me.

## **I. Jesus is always pursuing people.**

- People are not a means to an end – they are the end.
- When you look at this story in the broader context, it is amazing.
- Jesus takes the disciples across the lake, through a storm, to encounter a man who is oppressed, sets him free, then gets back in the boat and heads back to Israel.
- That seems like an awful lot of work for one person.

- This single-mindedness of God to reach the lost is echoed over and over and over throughout the entire bible, and we see it in Jesus life.
- He said himself, "For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost."
- "For God so loved that world he gave his only son. . ."
- "Jesus answered, "For this I have been born, and for this I have come into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice."
- "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners."
- God has no higher purpose, no higher mission, than to invite people into relationship with him.
- That's why at the end of his time on earth, he said, "Just as I have been sent, so I am sending you."
- Our neighbors, our town, our co-workers, our classmates, our family – Jesus wants them more than he wants anything else.
- Our mandate to be changed by loving the world around us is simply a reflection of the heart of God.
- Everything points to this. We love Jesus more and we begin to love the world and people he created more. We love others and the world sees this and is drawn to him.
- There was a man that was in need of freedom and Jesus did whatever he had to do to make it happen.

*14 Those tending the pigs ran off and reported this in the town and countryside, and the people went out to see what had happened.*

- Those watching out for them probably freaked out. They took off as fast as they could to tell their bosses and anyone else in town who would listen what had happened.
- They people heard the story, and probably thought they were drunk, had been smoking a happy pipe, but clearly they thought something happened so they came to check it out.

*15 When they came to Jesus, they saw the man who had been possessed by the legion of demons, sitting there, dressed and in his right mind; and they were afraid. 16 Those who had seen it told the people what had happened to the demon-possessed man – and told about the pigs as well.*

- He was isolated – Jesus gave him a sense of belonging. He was no longer an outcast. He gave him back his relationships.
- His life was out of control – Jesus freed him from this chaos and bondage.
- The man's identity was lost – Jesus gave him a greater identity.
- The man had no peace – Jesus brought him peace.
- The man was harming himself – Jesus gave him a purpose greater than himself.
- The man was desperate – Jesus gave him himself.

*17 Then the people began to plead with Jesus to leave their region. 18 As Jesus was getting into the boat, the man who had been demon-possessed begged to go with him.*

- Don't blow by this too quickly.
- Put yourself in the place of this nameless man.
- His life has been utterly transformed. He has met Jesus. This man standing in front of him has changed everything. He wants more. He wants to travel with him, learn from him, to experience more with him.
- Jesus has the perfect potential disciple. One who would be committed to him.
- It was the perfect moment to grow the disciples by one more.

*19 Jesus did not let him, but 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."*

- Instead, he told him: "No, I have a job for you."
- Go tell people about me.

- He had no education. Probably not a Jew. Did not have a history of church relationships. Had not gone to school. Had not sat under any sermons. He had not even had the opportunity to listen to Jesus parables or watch how Jesus ministered to people.
- And yet, Jesus sends him out. You see, if Jesus is always pursuing people, then:

## II. Your story is how Jesus pursued you.

*20 So the man went away and began to tell in the Decapolis how much Jesus had done for him. And all the people were amazed.*

- This man went into the world around him and into his relationships and family armed with only one thing – the story of how his encounter with Jesus changed his life.
- He simply told people what happened and people were amazed.
- We do not need to be scared to share about Jesus because someone asks us a question we don't have the answer to – there will always be more of those.
- We don't need to have some theological understanding in order to point others to Jesus.
- The more we learn to love the world, the more we will be changed. The more we will grow. The more we will find ourselves becoming more like Jesus.
- How do we practice loving the world?
- First, reflect on what he has already done for you.
- He has died to be a sacrifice for you. He rose from the dead for you. He adopted you into his family where you will always belong. He has forgiven your sins. He has released you from guilt. He has given you power over problems. He has given you the Holy Spirit to live in you and with you. He has made you significant and given you purpose. He has brought total security into this life. He has given you assurance of eternity with him that will be amazing.
- Second, lean into what he might be doing in your life now.
- Are you lonely? Isolated? Out of control? Worried? Harming yourself through your habits or actions? Lean in towards Jesus. Let him meet you. Engage with him. Do it in community. Be desperate enough that you don't stop.
- And then tell other people your story.
- *“Have you no wish for others to be saved? Then you are not saved yourself. Be sure of that. What is the most natural plan to use for the salvation of others but to bear your own personal testimony?”* (Charles Spurgeon)
- **Your story with Jesus is your best tool to disciple others.**
- Reflect on what Jesus has already done for you.
- Lean into Jesus with whatever is going on right now.
- Share it with others.