

That's My Guy

Seeing Is Believing

June 5, 2022

Today we're looking for the root of our fruit. And that's got to begin with this question: **What does your life say about God?** And moreover, *how exactly* is that message communicated?



Well, last Sunday we saw Jesus *surprisingly* send the previously possessed Gadarene into the Gentile Decapolis as an *apostle*:

Jesus sent him away, saying, "Go home to *your people*, return to *your house* and *report* to them and *describe* what great things the Lord God has done for you, and how He had mercy on you." So he went away, *proclaiming* throughout the *whole city*, and began to proclaim in *Decapolis* what great things Jesus had done for *him*; and *everyone was amazed*. – Mk 5:19-20; Lk 8:38-39 NAS



Well sure! Have you heard this guy's testimony?! Just to recap, this *apostle* He just fixed up and sent out used to be:



A demon-possessed man from the town *so violent that no one could pass that way*. For a long time this man had not worn clothes or lived in a house, but had lived in the tombs. For he had often been chained hand and foot, but he tore the chains apart and broke the irons on his feet and had been driven by the demon into solitary places. No one was strong enough to subdue him. Night and day among the tombs and in the hills he would cry out and cut himself with stones. – Matthew 8:28; Luke 5:27,29; Mark 5:4-5



But now, *after* Jesus told the *other Gentiles* across the pond *not* to talk about His miracles until He's ready to fulfil Isaiah – He *suddenly* commands *this guy* to go yell it on the mountain – over the hills and everywhere! **WHY?!** **Well, believe it or not, he's exactly who Jesus was waiting for.** Cuz as Bruce noted, *there's a whole sermon to be had based on Jesus saying, "That's My guy!"*

You see, *Jesus* goes to the house of Israel *first* because they have the scriptures and over *there*, He's making His case as Messiah *through* the scriptures – while on the *Gentile* side of the lake, where they don't know their Bible from Adam – well, preaching takes on a different form. Here, He's gotta demonstrate *who He is* to people who don't even know *what* to look for. So **He needs grab their attention, hold their interest, and explain who He is, without Biblical backup!** But He knows *exactly* what's going to get it done. An *incredible* illustration.

Because a picture *is* worth a thousand words – but if you want to preach your whole *basic* Bible in one quick pic, you're gonna need a *profound* painting. It has to be deep, detailed, and captivating. And it has to be *personal*, because **the picture we present in our life preaches the God we trust with our life. It's the outer, visible effect of our inner, invisible cause.**



And – you only need to *see* one side to *know* them both. For example, back in the 1840s, astronomers were loving using Newton’s *relatively new* laws to make sense of the solar system, but when mapping the path of the planet Uranus, they found it had an *unusual* orbit.



So those who *trusted* the laws looked closer and concluded that the observed *effect* could only be *caused* by some *unknown* planet’s gravity. And, based on that *effect alone*, they predicted where this *unseen* planet would *have* to be, aimed their telescopes, and discovered *Neptune*.

Because **every observable product, outcome, or effect points us to a root cause** that will *explain* whatever picture is presented.



[Which is why Jesus says] *A good tree does not bear bad fruit, nor does a bad tree bear good fruit. For every tree is known by its own fruit. – Luke 6:43-44 NKJ*

And it works both ways: **the root decides the fruit and the fruit reveals the root.**



So, if we want to present that perfect and profound picture of everything Jesus *is*, **He needs to be made visible by the effect He’s having in our life; our fruit must reveal He’s at the root!**

And that means a full-fledged *surrender* to Jesus as the sole *cause* in our life. From there, our *attitudes* and *actions* will prove His *presence* and *power* as “fruit” because **they naturally grow in the hearts of those who receive and plant God’s love, grace, and truth.** And *then* we produce:

Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. – Galatians 5:22-23 NIV

However, **whatever we farm will fail if our passion is pretend.** Because you can’t *fake* nurturing. Either there’s an *authentic* desire to tend to a tree, or it *dies*. And to keep it *real*, we gotta get *excited!* Cuz **joy fuels our passion for action and keeps the connection to our cause active and evident.** The Gospel is *good* news! People who *plant* it should *share* it with eager energy, and *deep desire*.

[Because] The *joy* of the *Lord* is *your* strength. - Nehemiah 8:10 NIV

And it’s when you are just *ripe* with this *authentic*, *exciting*, and *joy-filled* fruit – that people can’t help but *see* it and be compelled to *know* what *caused* it. Which is why we need to:

Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks *you* to give the reason for the hope that you *have*. – 1 Peter 3:15-16 NIV

Just like the Gadarene. Because the picture he presented with his life *before* and *after* Jesus was apples and oranges. **Everyone who saw him, had to ask, “What planet had this effect on you?!”**

And this is where most of us get most nervous. *What do you say?! How do you explain your faith as a whole in this unexpected moment?! And how do you make it effective?!* Well, let's learn from the Gadarene, because He got prepared with direct instructions from Jesus, Himself: Just *describe what great things the Lord God has done for you, and how He had mercy on you.*

Well that doesn't sound so hard, *does it?* But just picture it *happening*: There's ol' naked-crazy from the cemetery... and he's coming toward *you!* Oh no – this guy's gonna go berserk as usual! But hang on, he's got *pants...* and a *haircut*. And he's just *walking* and *smiling* before he stops and says your *name*, "Hey Bill old buddy! How've you been?!" But you're frozen, jaw on the ground and all you can do is look him up and down. "Gad? Is that you?! What on earth happened?!" And he just politely laughs and says, "Well, I met a guy named Jesus."

And in that moment, without *argument, effort, or intention*, Jesus's power, purpose, grace, mercy, and love was preached and proven by the incredible illustration of His effect alone.

And this experience would've been repeated day in and day out as he followed Jesus's orders to just walk around the Decapolis and tell everyone what caused this incredible change. And we can see how profound these encounters must've been by observing the cumulative effect on the *region!* Because back at the beginning, immediately after ol' Gad got exorcised:



All the people of the region of the Gerasenes asked Jesus to leave them, because they were overcome with fear. – Luke 8:37 NIV



But *after* Gad spends some *time* in the region as the *walking, talking* picture that *preaches* Jesus – well, Jesus is now welcome to feed 4,000 on the *same slopes* He was *kicked off*; and we get another poetic *peak* at how *powerful* His transformative effect truly *is*. The whole country was changed. Because with *regular* broken humans, **He can paint a picture so compelling, that everyone who sees them, knows they've also seen Him.** And they're just itching to point their telescopes in *His* direction to check it out.

Well guess what? It works the exact same way in *your* life. Because **every actual effect that God has had on you shows up as organically grown fruit** in the new picture *you're* painting with your life. And to the degree you make Jesus your life's *cause*, your life will be transformed by His *effect*.

However, remember that growth is a process and don't get discouraged if you *feel* your fruit ain't worth picking, *it is!* **We all struggle to grow in different seasons but sometimes, we don't detect the slow and steady progress because we're too close to see the cumulative effect** that others *can*. And I know, because I just got *this* reminder *myself* when God gave me a great gift this Easter.

Right before service, I was greeting people and shook hands with a guy I hadn't seen in the 15 years since my rowdy bartending chapter. And as we were talking about how funny it was to see each other at church, I got to blow his mind and say, "Whoops! I gotta go, we're about to start and I'm a pastor here." Best. Face Ever. But what was really cool, was that someone *else* told me he mentioned the encounter *later*, and said, "Noah? Can you believe it?! He used to be so *naughty!*" I didn't have to say a single word – but those 15 years spoke all at once, all about Jesus!

And I think we *all* need that reminder. **You're here because your tree is growing and your fruit is showing!** And there *are tons* of people on your path who looking everywhere for *something*.

[But like Paul says:] How, then, can *they* call on the One they have not *believed* in? And how can they *believe* in the One of whom they have not *heard*? And how can they *hear* without someone *preaching* to them? – Romans 10:14 NKJ

Well, they *can't*. Unless *we* step up. Because **if we're God's children we're also the Lord's ambassadors.** (2 Cor 5:19-20) *You* are an apostle and you've been sent *specifically* to the people in the region around you. And you need to recognize the *significance* of this corner of God's kingdom, because it could be the beginning of something big.

Do you think that the Gadarene thought his ten-city testimony tour would light the fire that led the way for *all* Christians?! Probably not! But that's not what any of us are aiming for. **It's not our job to sell God, convict hearts, or convince others** who stubbornly refuse to believe. That's *God's* job. (Jn 16:8) *You're* simply commanded and commissioned to be ready with an answer if someone asks what *caused* the things they're seeing in you. And you've *already* got *that* answer. *Jesus*.



The picture you present with your life does the real talking – the words you say just provide clarifying commentary. And remember, like the Gadarene, we're sent to a people largely Bible illiterate who need a *demonstration* more than a *discussion*. Because **they might not ever even open God's book unless you provide an inspiring illustration.**



So before we close, really *consider* this last poignant example. Because once again, our country is full of hurting hearts hunting to understand one tragedy after another. And while we're debating the *cause* and solution, I want to point out a picture that really preached to me from the Amish community.

Now, yes, there's some very specific doctrinal differences, but the Amish community is nothing if not fundamentally Christian. And if you recall, in 2006 *their* community suffered an awful school shooting that took the lives of five young girls and the shooter. However, that hopeless picture of death was *painted over* by the way they just *lived* afterward. Within hours, the community announced they had *forgiven* the gunman and began a *collection* for his widow and family. Families who had buried their own daughters the day before, then attended the *shooter's* funeral to console *his* family. And one of them remarked, **"what I found out in my own experience - if you bring what little pieces you have left to God, He somehow helps you make good out of it. And I see that happening in this school shooting as well. The whole world got to see the simple message of forgiveness."**

Amen! Everyone who was looking saw *exactly* what the reason was for *their* hope. Because *those lives* said an awful lot about God and I gotta believe that if *that* kind of message was preached through each one of *our* lives, we could transform *this* country faster than a single Gadarene who inspired the *world* with *one* illustration. And everyone *here is* already preaching cuz God's affected your orbit! So, tend to your roots, but then get out there, *live it up*, and share some fruit!