

Can Jesus Come Back To America

by Carter Conlon

This sermon delves into the powerful story of the Gadarene demoniac in Luke chapter 8, highlighting the man's transformation from a tormented soul living in death to a redeemed and restored individual through his encounter with Jesus. The sermon emphasizes the importance of sharing personal testimonies of God's work in our lives to impact others and bring about revival in communities. It challenges listeners to embrace Christ as Savior, share their stories, and trust in God's transformative power.

Duration: 39:45

Scripture: Luke 8:26, Psalms 107:1, Hebrews 3:15, 2 Chronicles 7:14, John 14:6

Topics: "Transformation", "Sharing Testimonies"

Description

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Transcript

Amen and amen. Now Luke chapter 8 is an incredible journey when Jesus leaves Galilee and goes across the sea and comes into a place called the Gadarenes. We're going to start in verse 26.

I'm going to be commenting on this story as we go through it. Verse 26 of Luke chapter 8 says, Then they sailed to the country of the Gadarenes, which is opposite Galilee. And when he stepped out on the land, there met him a certain man from the city, who had demons for a long time.

And he wore no clothes, nor did he live in a house, but in the tombs. In other words, here was a man, part of this society, a man that many people in this particular city were probably really aware of, maybe a type of a certain kinds of person that persons that we become aware of in our generation too as well. His first thing he says about him is he wore no clothes.

So he's obviously unconcerned about his appearance. He dwelled in no house. He didn't live in a house.

His family structure, whatever it had been, was now broken down. He was not nurtured. There was no security in his life.

And he dwelt in the place of tombs. He lived in a place of death. Romans chapter 6 in verse 23, the word of God says that wages of sin is death.

If a people choose to live in sin, if sin becomes the dominant force in a society, then death starts like a tsunami. Death starts to come in and swallow that particular society. Elsewhere in the Scriptures it tells us that he was cutting himself with stones in this place.

We live in a time when there's an epidemic. There has been for a couple of decades of young people cutting themselves. I think of the shooter in Evalde, Texas.

So not Scripture tells us, but the news tells us that he started cutting his own face about a year before he committed this atrocious crime. And the warning signs were there. This is what was happening to this man.

He's dwelling in a place of death. He's got no family structure. There's no security in his life.

He's got nobody to tell him the difference may be at certain points in his life between right and wrong. We don't know if he was abandoned or what happened that brought about this myriad of demonic oppression in his life. But we do know that he was cutting himself and living in a place of death.

But when he saw Jesus, verse 28 of Luke chapter 8, he fell down before him and with a loud voice he said, what have I to do with you, Jesus, son of the most high God? I beg you, do not torment me. Now he knew about the reality of God in some measure, but he felt that he didn't want God to add to his torment. He had such a myriad of torment going on in his mind, and some people are like that.

In America today there's a lot of people who have a knowledge of God, but they don't want the voice of God to be added to the multiples of voices that are now in their hearts and in their minds. But there's something interesting in chapter 8, verse 28, and the interesting thought is no matter how many voices have gotten ahold of him, there is one voice that is above them all. There's one voice that has absolute authority, and we know from Scripture that he had probably over a thousand voices going on in his head at one time.

Hundreds for sure, and potentially thousands of demonic voices speaking to him, leading him here, leading him there, causing him to have grief, and causing him to do harm to himself, and giving him the desire perhaps to do harm to others as well. But suddenly the voice that created the universe moves into the situation. Even though it's a place of death, the voice that has the power to calm the storm and the wind and the waves, the voice that can call dead people out of graves and cause them to listen again or to live again, that voice is standing there.

And it's interesting to know, because James says, you believe there is one God, you do well. The demons also believe and tremble. And no matter how many voices, no matter how many demonic powers were active inside this man's life, having dominion in a sense, there is another voice that came into that place of death.

And every voice had to bow. That's what the Scripture says. Every knee shall bow, and every tongue shall confess that Jesus Christ is Lord.

Verse 29 says, He had commanded, that's Jesus, the unclean spirit to come out of the man. For it had often seized him, and he was kept under guard, bound with chains and shackles. And he broke the bonds

and was driven by the demon into the wilderness.

He had a tendency to violence, and nobody knew how to restrain his anger. It's interesting that we're seeing in the news in our generation now this endless discussion of how do we restrain the anger of all these young people, young men in particular, that are growing up without the security of a home, without true guidance, with no knowledge of God, and suddenly raised on demonic videos, and seeing endless scenes of violence on television and in movies, and suddenly we're so surprised when they begin to do what we taught them to do. And there's this discussion now that says, how do we restrain the anger of this young generation? How do we stop these young people from going in and committing these crimes of violence in our schools, or shopping malls, or churches, or wherever it is, or just in public gatherings? Now nowhere seems to be safe in society anymore.

Isn't it amazing that everyone will ask the questions, and everyone will come up with solutions, except for the one solution that will make a difference? We have, as a nation, turned from God, and we need to turn back to God. We need to humble ourselves and pray again. We need to turn from our wicked ways.

The Bible says, if my people who are called by my name will humble themselves and pray, seek my face, turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, I will forgive their sin, and I will heal their land. That's the promise of God once spoken to the nation of Israel that has an application, of course, to all of us today. Now he was driven into the wilderness, no matter what kind of restraint that the people of that time tried to place upon him.

He broke the restraints, and he was driven by this demonic power into this empty, dry, purposeless place. And Jesus asked him in verse 30 and said, What is your name? And he said, Legion, because many demons had entered into him. Many voices.

We're living in a generation where there's so many voices. Voices on the internet, voices in the schools, voices on the radio, voices on television. Everybody has an opinion about almost anything.

Angry voices are being raised up, voices of vengeance, voices that demonize anybody that has an alternate opinion to their own. And all these voices had entered into him and drove this man into this place of death and drove him into the place where he couldn't be restrained. And verse 31 says, They begged him that he would not command them to go out into the abyss.

I love that scene. That means that, let's say, a lot of people say that there was about a thousand demons in this man, or a thousand demonic voices speaking to him. Could be anything from the commentaries take it from 300 to 6,000, so you determine.

It's hundreds if not thousands of voices. But the wonderful thing is that when Jesus comes on the scene, suddenly all of these voices have bent their knee and they're begging, they're literally begging the Son of God to have mercy on them because they knew they had no power in the presence of God. Hallelujah.

Now the devil can take years to infuse in society all of these voices that cause all this bitterness and division and anger and action and all these things that are going on in our generation. But when Jesus comes, every knee bow, every voice confesses that he is the Son of God. Every demonic voice starts literally begging for mercy.

Can Jesus come back to America again? In verse 32 it says, Now they begged him not to go out. He would not command them to go out into the abyss. Now a herd of swine was feeding there on the

mountain.

So they begged him that he would permit them to enter them, and he permitted them. Now he's about to teach something to the people of this town. It's not that he was unkind to the pigs as it is.

It's not that anything, you know, in the natural was going to be, the demons were not going to escape their fate because obviously the pigs ran down over the cliff and into the sea and drowned. So they lost their temporary abode. So what is the lesson here? Verse 33 says, Then the demons went out of the men and entered the swine, and the herd ran violently down the steep place into the lake and drowned.

Then those who fed them saw what had happened. They fled and told it in the city and in the country. Then they went out to see what had happened and came to Jesus and found the man from whom the demons had departed, sitting at the feet of Jesus, clothed and in his right mind, and they were afraid.

They also had seen it, told them by what means you had been demon-possessed was healed. And when you go back into the gospel of Mark of this same story, the scripture says they also told them what had happened to the pigs. Now you would think that the people would be excited about this.

You would think that they would say, Oh God, thank you for coming to us because we didn't know how to control this man. This man, we were afraid of this man. We sent people, we sent emissaries into the cemetery to try to bind him, but he would always break the shackles and he was cutting himself.

And we lived in fear because we never knew what he was going to do next. It was so unpredictable. But here he is sitting at the feet of Jesus.

He's now clothed. That means he's presentable. He's got a sense of wholeness about him.

And the scripture says he's in his right mind. He's actually thinking right thoughts about himself, about God, about the future, about the people. The myriad of voices were now gone out of him, and only one voice had remained, the one who says, I'm the way, the truth, and the life, and no man comes to the Father except through me.

But the scripture says they were afraid. So the question is, what were they afraid of? I mean, they obviously had been afraid of this man in this garden, but suddenly there's a new kind of fear came upon them. And then verse 37 says, Then the whole multitude of the surrounding region of the Gadarenes asked him, that's Jesus, to depart from them, and they were seized with great fear.

And he got into the boat and returned to Galilee, or he got into the boat and left. The whole multitude, what were they afraid of? I'm going to tell you what they were afraid of. They were afraid of the loss of their pigs.

They were afraid of having a God in their midst that was going to bring about some kind of a personal cost to the freedom that was going to come to others. They didn't want this kind of a religion. They wanted a God that would prosper them.

They wanted a God that would make them eternally healthy and happy, and everyone would be wealthy, and there would be no more troubles, no more trials, no more sighing, no more groaning. They wanted it all here. They wanted it all now.

But they did not want a Jesus in their midst that was going to cost them their livelihood or cost them something personally for the sake of other people getting free. That's what they were afraid of.

Realistically, they chose pigs over people.

You have to wonder, at what point in America did we do the same? At what point did we say, we don't want a Christ that demands that we follow him? We don't want a Christ that calls us to take up our cross and follow the will of our Father, which is always for the betterment of other people. We don't want the Spirit of God to call us to the mission field to have to sell off what we have and perhaps give to others. We want a Christ.

You see, they didn't abandon religion. They just abandoned Jesus. They wanted a religion that just let them come to whatever temple they went to and sit for an hour and hear nice songs and clap their hands and leave feeling happy.

They didn't want anything that was going to cost them their comfort, their security, their livelihood, their money, the lifestyle that they wanted. In America, in the Constitution, there's this undeniable right or inalienable right, as it says, to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. And so basically what the church in America did at large, not everywhere, thank God, but by and large, much of the church in America took that constitutional value system and brought it into the theology of the church.

And so people coming into the house of God, it was about my life, my liberty, and the pursuit of my happiness. And this is the kind of a God I wanted to serve. I wanted a God who gave me a sense of well-being now.

I wanted to be free, and I wanted to be happy, and I want money to go along with all of this. And I don't want any kind of a relationship with God that's going to cost me anything. And so they begged him to leave.

I don't know when America asked Jesus to leave, but I know he did go. I don't know when the whole of society said, we don't want the kind of a Jesus that might cost us our pigs and our income and our livelihood, even if it results in a demonic man being set free. So they asked him to depart, and they were seized with great fear, and he got into the boat, and he left.

Now the man, verse 38, from whom the demons had departed, begged him that he might be with him, but Jesus sent him away saying, return to your own house, and tell what great things God has done for you. And he went his way and proclaimed through the whole city what great things that Jesus had done for him. And so it was, verse 40, when Jesus returned, he actually did come back, that the multitude welcomed him, for they were all waiting for him.

Isn't that amazing? One man. Now I want you to think about this for a moment. This man didn't have a Bible.

This man couldn't quote John 3, 16, because it didn't exist back then. This man didn't even probably have an Old Testament. This man had only one thing.

He had had an encounter with Jesus, and he was now free. And Jesus said, now I want you just to go, and I want you to start speaking about what I've done in your life. Could it be that simple in this generation? Could it be that simple that we as the people of God who have had an experience with God, it's just time to start not quoting scripture at people, but just say, hey, can I tell you what Jesus did for me? Can I tell you? Can I tell you that I had suicidal thoughts in my mind, and when Jesus, when I encountered Jesus, those thoughts left, and now I have a reason to live.

Can I tell you what he did in my family? Can I tell you the strength he's given me is to be a mother to my children, or a father to my children, or a husband to my wife, or a wife to my husband? Can I tell you how he changed this heart that was so diseased, and this mind that had this myriad of voices just milling about through it? I didn't know which way to go. I was getting angry. I didn't know how to really intersect with the society around me.

But I had an encounter with the living God, and when I encountered the living God, he transformed me from the inside out. He changed my life, and the scripture tells us and history tells us that this particular man, he just went through this area called Decapolis, which as I'm led to believe is about 10 small towns, and he went into this area, and he started publishing abroad. He started telling people, I met a man called Jesus.

I was in a place of death. I was harming myself. I didn't care anymore what I looked like.

I didn't care what people thought about me. They tried to counsel me, but their counsel amounted to nothing, and every restraint they tried to put upon my behavior, I broke it, and I was becoming more violent and more vile and more difficult to deal with. But then suddenly into the place of my death came this man called Jesus, the Son of God.

I felt every voice inside of me that was trying to destroy me and others around me suddenly bend its knee, and I suddenly found my own mouth speaking and asking for mercy. Every thought that had embedded itself in my character was now on its knees begging for mercy in the sight of this one man. You can imagine the people in these towns saying, well, I've been thinking thoughts like that, and I'm struggling in my home, and I've got issues in my heart, and I feel like cutting myself with stones.

Oh, how do we get to meet this man? And he said, I don't know, but maybe one day he'll come back. Maybe if we call out to him, maybe the boat is not so far from shore. If I was this man, I would have gathered a whole bunch of people and gone to the cliff that leads out to the Sea of Galilee, and I would have said, Jesus, come back.

I would have encouraged the people. Let's shout together. Let's pray together.

Let's implore the Son of God to come back into our society again. Come back, Jesus. Come back.

Come back. Don't go away from us. Don't leave us the way we are.

Oh, God. And yet this man could be the loudest voice of all and say, God, what you did for me, would you do for them? Would you set their children free? Would you set their families free? Would you heal their marriages? Oh, God, would you put a new song inside of their mouths? Lord Jesus Christ, would you do what only God can do? I don't know how the boat turned around. I don't know when it turned around, but I know it did.

In Psalm 107, the psalmist begins in verse one by saying, oh, give thanks to the Lord for he is good and his mercy endures forever. Let the redeemed of the Lord say so. Let the redeemed of the Lord speak.

Let the redeemed of the Lord. Can you imagine if everybody in this sanctuary today and those listening to the sound of my voice, can you imagine if you went out and just started telling your story, if you have a story with God? And may I encourage you today, if you don't have one, get one, because God's willing to give you a story of freedom and deliverance and a reason to live and a hope and a purpose and giftings of

the spirit and supernatural ability. He is willing to do that in your life.

If you will call out to him, he gathered them, he redeemed them. He says, let the redeemed of the Lord say so, whom he has redeemed from the hand of the enemy and gathered out of the lands from the east and from the west and the north and from the south. They wandered in the wilderness in a desolate way.

They found no city to dwell in hungry and thirsty. Their soul fainted in them. Then they cried out to the Lord in their trouble and he delivered them out of their distresses.

And he led them forth by a right way that they might go to a city for a dwelling place. Oh, that men would give thanks to the Lord for his goodness and for his wonderful works to the children of men, for he satisfies the longing soul and fills the hungry soul with goodness. And so the news is today to you.

If you're wandering, if you're empty, if you're living in a dry place, you don't have to live there anymore. He has already redeemed you when he went to the cross. He already paid the price for that, which we call sin.

And it separates you from the life of God. He paid the price for it. And if you will open your heart and invite him to be your Lord and Savior and confess him with your mouth, the scripture tells us and bears witness that he will bring you into that place where you're dwelling safely again.

Verse 10 says, those who sit in darkness in the shadow of death, bound in affliction and iron because they rebelled against the words of God. Does that not describe our society today? We're bound in affliction. We're seemingly behind bars and we can't get out because we knew the word of God as a nation.

Whether, I don't care what people are teaching in schools today. We knew the word of God at one season in this nation, but we turned against the word of God. We did not want the restraints of behavior that God's word will bring.

And we despise the counsel of the most high. Verse 12, Psalm 107 says, therefore he brought down their heart with labor. They fell down and there was none to help.

Then they cried out to the Lord in their trouble and he saved them out of their distresses. He brought them out of darkness in the shadow of death and broke their chains in pieces. Oh, that men would give thanks to the Lord for his goodness.

Verse 17 says, fools because of their transgression and because of their iniquities were afflicted. Their soul abhorred all manner of food. In other words, they gravitated to any and every opinion, except that which is eternal and that which is true.

And they drew near to the gates of death. Then they cried out to the Lord in their trouble and he saved them out of their distresses. He sent his word and healed them and delivered them from their destructions.

Oh, that men would give thanks to the Lord for his goodness and for his wonderful works to the children of men. Oh, that we would give thanks to God. Oh, that our hearts would explode again with gratitude.

Oh, that we would be like this man in the scriptures that we're reading about today, that we could go to our friends and our family and even our enemies and say, I've got to tell you what God has done in my life. And lastly, verse 23 says, those who go down to the sea in ships, they do business on great waters. Now remember, they asked Jesus to leave because they didn't want their prosperity affected.

They thought that financial gain was going to bring them security. The Lord is about to take that all away, folks. I think you're aware of it now.

It's about to all be gone, all the security, and it's a mercy moment. Trust me. Some say, well, it's irrevocable judgment.

I don't agree with that. I say it's the mercy of God. I'd rather go to heaven hungry than hell full, wouldn't you? Praise be to God.

They go down to the sea in ships. They do business in great waters. They see the works of the Lord and his wonders in the deep.

He commands and raises the stormy wind. Think about the stock market for a moment, which lift up the waves of the sea. They mount up to the heavens.

Then they go down again to the depths, and their soul melts because of trouble. They reel to and fro and stagger like a drunken man and are at their wit's end. Then they cry out to the Lord in their trouble, and he brings them out of their distresses.

He calms the storm so that its waves are still. Then they are glad because they are quiet, and he guides them to their desired heaven. Oh, that men would praise the Lord and give thanks for his goodness and his wonderful works to the children of men.

Let them exalt him also in the assembly of the people and praise him in the company of the elders. All it took is one man, one man. All it takes in your neighborhood is one woman, one person, somebody somewhere.

Maybe you see a group of listless kids on the sidewalk somewhere on a corner, and you just say, can I just tell you what Jesus did for me? You don't have to quote a wagon load of Scripture. You don't have to give the Hebrew meanings of any words to these kids. The Gadarene man just had an experience with God, and he went through ten towns.

Historians say it was a great revival when Jesus returned because he had told his story, and the people were stirred by his story and said, and even though maybe they didn't admit it, maybe because he was the worst of the worst, perhaps some of them thought maybe this same Jesus can help my kids. Maybe this same Jesus can help my marriage. Maybe this same Jesus can help me with the voices that are tormenting my mind every night, waking me up in a sweat in the middle of the night.

Maybe the same Jesus can help me. And so when he did come back, they heard about it, and word began to spread everywhere. Can you imagine in America if Jesus comes back in power again into our nation, and word begins to spread from town to town and church to church and place to place? I'm going next week to preach in a little town, only 2,200 people in this town, but they've had seven teenage suicides this last winter, and the whole community is shaken.

What a privilege to go there and just tell them what Jesus has done so that when he comes to them, they might be willing and ready to be able to hear what God is willing to do for each of them. You know, Jesus stood in the temple one day, and he said, the Spirit of the Lord is upon me because I've been anointed to preach the gospel to the poor. In other words, I've been anointed to go to those who have no resource.

They don't know how they're going to get out of where they are. They can't buy their way out. Their security is gone.

Their false security is all gone, but I've come to them with the good news that they can be forgiven, they can be free, they can have a new, meaningful, eternal, and purpose-filled life. I've come to them. I've come to the brokenhearted who've been so let down, so abused, so betrayed, so unnurtured, that their hearts can be healed.

I've come to those that are behind prison bars so that they can be set free. They've gotten themselves into, for whatever reason, they've gotten into places they can't get out of, and I came to set them free. And he closed the book, and he said, this day is the Scripture fulfilled in your ears.

This is not something for a hundred years down the road. It's not something for even five years down the road. It's today.

That's why in the book of Hebrews, the Scripture says, today, if you can hear his voice, don't harden your heart against the Son of God. Don't ask him to leave. Don't say, well, come back some other time when he is here right now.

I would rather be like the blind man on the side of the road that no matter how many people had told him to shut up, he just kept shouting out, Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me. He didn't care what people thought. He didn't care if he was done with living for public opinion, and Jesus heard his voice and gave him back his sight.

And that's another thing he said in Luke 4 18, I've come to give sight to those who can't see a way forward. Oh God, oh God, there is no other hope for the nation now. Folks, do you hear me? There is no other hope.

We've come to a dead end. We're about to go bankrupt as a nation. We are already morally bankrupt.

We're spiritually bankrupt. It's time for you and I simply to call out to him again and say, Jesus, come back, come back. Remember he said to his own people in Jerusalem, you won't see me again until you say, blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.

He said that to his own people. How much more to us as a nation if we could just collectively say, Jesus, Jesus, we believe. Now the word blessed means indwelt by God and fully satisfied.

It's really a type of a people that say, God, we believe that your presence is what we need. Your life becoming our lives is what we've always longed for. Your future is the future we want.

And God, forgive us, forgive us, Lord, for placing our trust in our retirement plans and the stock market and our jobs and our homes and furniture and all the rest of the things that we've looked to for security. God almighty, forgive us, Lord, for trying to create in this country a costless gospel where we just come in to see what God can do for us today, not what God can do through us for other people. God, forgive us for living this kind of a self-serving Christianity.

And like the prodigal son who just came to himself in the midst of a famine, in the midst of a society that was so selfish and self-centered, he got tired of it himself and said, in my father's house, it's different. In my father's house, there's bread for everyone. Yet here, it's become so selfish.

It's so divided. It's so bitter. I don't want to live here anymore.

And he got up and started heading home, and he was such a long way off. But the scripture says his father saw him and ran towards him and fell on his neck and kissed him, covered him, empowered him, invited him on this incredible journey. That's what the shoes on his feet were all about.

What do you think the journey was? Son, just go tell people who I am. Go tell people what I've done for you. Go tell people that in spite of the mess that they've made, in spite of the distance they've been from me, in spite of how they've lived and taken the life I gave them and consumed it on themselves, I am still willing to embrace my people.

I'm still willing to be kind, for the mercy of God endures forever. That's what the psalmist says. The mercy of God endures forever.

My challenge to you today, my challenge to everybody listening online, start telling people what Jesus Christ has done for you. For this society is hungry for truth. People are starving for direction.

They're starving for a reason to live. They're starving for hope. The election is not going to give us hope.

Do you understand? It's not going to happen. The only hope for the future that's ahead of us is Christ's visiting us again in power, visiting our churches in glory, visiting our schools with truth, visiting us in the places we least expected Him to be in. I want to remind you that when Jesus came to the Gadarenes, He didn't go to the Gadarene Bible School.

He went to the cemetery, because there was a man there that needed to be set free. That's where the Son of God will be. That's what the Son of God will do.

That's how the kingdom of God will advance. He will go where nobody else will go and speak to those that nobody else will speak to. And now He has a body on the earth.

That body is you. That body is me. He said once to His own disciples, you'll do greater works than I do, because I go to the Father.

Well, He wasn't necessarily saying that we're all going to raise the dead. What He was saying is that He was confined to one body, one physical body in one place. He said, but basically He was saying, I'm going to have a body now that's going to be all over the world.

And the testimony of life in God through Jesus Christ won't be confined to one place, one geographic location anymore. It will be all over the world. And we are now the place where God dwells.

We're the temple of the Holy Spirit. By God's grace, if we can learn to just speak, and a lot of people don't speak because they think that they don't know enough scripture, or maybe you've had a rough week, and the devil succeeds in shutting your mouth. But everyone who knows Christ has a story.

Tell your story. Just tell your story. People like a good story.

The Gadarene demoniac was not concerned about who was going to laugh at him. He just went out and started telling his story. And it just started to spread.

He told it to one person. He told it to another person. And then these people started telling it to other people.

And unknown to him, it's now starting to permeate neighborhoods and towns as people are starting to, did you hear what happened to that man? I met a man. He told me that God had done something for him. And people would start thinking.

And there was a stir in the community. I wonder if this Jesus would come to us. And when enough people had that thought and that yearning in the heart started to germinate in that society, then suddenly across the sea comes a boat one more time.

Lands on the shore, and it's the Son of God. And the word goes out, Jesus has come. And the people went out to meet him.

And a great revival happened in that generation because one man started to tell his story. Can you imagine if the 1,500 people maybe in this sanctuary today started telling your story? You imagine if each one of us started telling our story to somebody, somewhere, a stranger. We just kind of broke through the barrier.

And we just started saying, God has been so merciful to me. Let me tell you what he's done for me. Give me five minutes to tell you my story.

I've found that the most effective way to communicate the truth of Christ to people all around is just tell them your story. You don't have to argue scripture with anybody because it's your own experience. Just tell them what Jesus has done for you.

Now, if you don't have a story, I want to challenge you to get one. How do you get a story? As Pastor Tim always says, it's as easy as A-B-C. It's really easy.

Just admit you can't save yourself. Admit your condition. Stop hiding.

Don't think you can dress yourself up on Sunday morning and hide it from God. You can't. He knows exactly what you are.

He knows what you were doing last night. So all the nice clothes and the Bible or cell phone or whatever it is you carry are not going to cover that up. He knows exactly who you are.

So admit your condition. Don't deny it and don't try to pretend it's not there. This man in the garden in the tombs, he just had no trouble admitting his condition.

He knew what he was. He knew where he was living. And when we put away the pretense and get honest with God and say, listen, I can't save myself.

I can't get out of this struggle in my own strength. But I believe that you love me. I believe that you came and you died on a cross so that I can be forgiven of all of the wrong that I've done, which the Bible calls sin.

And I can call you, if I will open my heart to you, I can call you Lord of my life, Savior. Savior, that means saved. That means I was drowning and you're the guy that threw the life ring to me and hauled me into the boat.

That's Savior. And from this point onward, I can call you Lord, which means that you have the right to the future of my life. You have the right to everything I have belongs to you now.

You have the right to use it as you see fit. You know, I'm 68 years old now, and my prayer in the last little while has been, God, you have deposited a lot into this physical body in the last 44 years. And so I'm asking you to spend it wisely now.

This last tenth or whatever I've got, spend it wisely for your glory. It's not up to me to spend it, Lord, it's up to you. So whatever you want me to do, make it clear.

Whatever you require of me, give me the grace to give it to you for the sake of people who need to be set free. And confess Him as Lord. If you're willing to do that, you'll have a story.

The giftings of God, not just the forgiveness, the first thing that happens is your mind gets set in order. Your priorities come back into order. You suddenly have a reason to live.

The hate, the self-loathing and cutting and anger, it all goes away. And it's replaced by something that only God can give. And He takes you now into places that only He can, and gives you a story that belongs to Him.

He's loaned it to you because of grace, because of His mercy. If you've never done that, that's the reason why you don't have a story to tell anybody. But the moment you do, the moment you do, I've told this a thousand times, I guess, but it was May 12th, 1978, when I pulled over on the side of the road, a police officer on the way to work, and another cop had been sharing Christ with me for weeks.

I had read the gospel of John, and I kind of ran out of arguments against God. And I pulled over on the side of the road, and I prayed a simple prayer. I said, oh, Jesus, if what Irv, his name was Irv, I said, if what Irv has told me is the truth, if it's true, then I invite you to come into my life and be my Lord and my Savior.

That was it. That's all I prayed. I went to work, didn't feel a thing.

So don't think you have to feel anything. You don't. Went to work, worked my shift, came home, went to bed.

The next morning when I woke up, I remember rolling out of bed. It was the right side of the bed. When my feet hit the floor, that express moment, I knew, I knew something had happened.

I wasn't the same man anymore. How do you explain that? If anyone is in Christ, the Bible says he or she becomes a new creation. The old things in your life pass away.

It means they lose control. And behold, all things have become new. So the old things lose their control and new things.

What happened to the man in the cemetery? The old things lost control, and new things in his life began to take over. 44 years ago, I learned that to be true. And God began a journey where I've had the privilege of sharing this story with thousands of people all over the world, still do today.

That story can be yours. I don't know the plan that God has for you, but I know He has a plan for you. I know it's supernatural, which means that you can't do it on your own.

It has to be Him doing it in you and through you. He promises through the Old Testament, He says, I'll give you a new mind, I'll give you a new heart and a new spirit. That's the promise of God.

I will wash you clean. I will put my spirit upon you, and you will become the person that you were intended to be when you were conceived in your mother's womb. If you'd like to receive Christ as your Savior today, unashamedly, unashamedly, would you raise your hand with me? Would you just raise your hand? God bless you.

All over, in the balcony, all through the sanctuary. Thank you for raising your hands today. Now, you're going to be given an opportunity today to start telling your story.

When you leave the sanctuary, I want you to meet somebody somewhere and say, can I tell you what happened to me today? I just decided to go to church, and then church decided to go to me. I walked in one way, and I walked out another way. I'm telling you what God has done for me, He can do for you.

Let's just really keep it simple. Let's all pray this prayer together for the sake of those in the sanctuary and online who are praying with us. Lord Jesus Christ, thank you for coming to me in all of my confusion, my struggle, and my sin.

Thank you for loving me. Thank you for going to a cross and paying the price for the wrong things I have done. This day, I open my heart to you, and I invite you into my life to be my Lord, my Savior, and my God.

From this day forward, I belong to you. Only your voice matters. Help me to put away all other voices and follow your word and the leading of your Holy Spirit.

Give me courage to tell somebody what you have done in my life. Thank you for loving me and for receiving me as your child. In Jesus' name, amen and amen.

Praise God.

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