

KAILUA CHRISTIAN CHURCH
SUNDAY, JUNE 22, 2025
SERMON: TRAVEL TIME
SCRIPTURE: LUKE 8: 26-39
REV. IRENE WILLIS HASSAN

LUKE 8:26-39

26 They sailed to the region of the Gerasenes, which is across the lake from Galilee. 27 When Jesus stepped ashore, he was met by a demon-possessed man from the town. For a long time this man had not worn clothes or lived in a house, but had lived in the tombs. 28 When he saw Jesus, he cried out and fell at his feet, shouting at the top of his voice, "What do you want with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I beg you, don't torture me!" 29 For Jesus had commanded the impure spirit to come out of the man. Many times it had seized him, and though he was chained hand and foot and kept under guard, he had broken his chains and had been driven by the demon into solitary places.

30 Jesus asked him, "What is your name?"

"Legion," he replied, because many demons had gone into him. 31 And they begged Jesus repeatedly not to order them to go into the Abyss.

32 A large herd of pigs was feeding there on the hillside. The demons begged Jesus to let them go into the pigs, and he gave them permission. 33 When the demons came out of the man, they went into the pigs, and the herd rushed down the steep bank into the lake and was drowned.

34 When those tending the pigs saw what had happened, they ran off and reported this in the town and countryside, 35 and the people went out to see what had happened. When they came to Jesus, they found the man from whom the demons had gone out, sitting at Jesus' feet, dressed and in his right mind; and they were afraid. 36 Those who had seen it told the people how the demon-possessed man had been cured. 37 Then all the people of the region of the Gerasenes asked Jesus to leave them, because they were overcome with fear. So he got into the boat and left.

38 The man from whom the demons had gone out begged to go with him, but Jesus sent him away, saying, 39 "Return home and tell how much God has done for you." So the man went away and told all over town how much Jesus had done for him.

Sermon: Travel Time

Before I start, let me be clear that not many things annoy me about the Gospels because I think they're actually the greatest books of all time. But one thing that I feel is missing from the Gospel stories is travel time. What is travel time? It's the trip between point A to point B. We have a lot of travel happening in the Gospels but no one shows us on google maps how long it took for them to

get places, really. I think this is weird – I mean, in the Hebrew bible, there are whole books dedicated to travel time. Exodus, Leviticus, and Deuteronomy are literally about what people do when they're stuck wandering around between events.

Yet, we don't see a lot of travel time in the Gospels. Yes, Jesus stops to pray alone sometimes. However, the tone of a lot of the Gospel message is in general very urgent – and with good reason – the writers thought the world was ending. You don't see a lot of Jesus and the disciples wandering around between places, grumbling about how their feet hurt and they have headache. It's always “they were here and this stuff happened, wow” and then suddenly “then they were over here and some more stuff happened, wow”, but very little discussion about what was happening in between.

The problem with that, and the reason it annoys me, is that travel time is important. Like I said, a whole chunk of the Torah is about travel time. Whole books and movies, like Jack Kerouac's “On the Road” or “Planes, Trains & Automobiles” are about the important soul searching that is done during travel time. These stories are about the evolution of character that happens when we are aimlessly wandering. These titles, On the Road, Planes Trains and Automobiles, The Book of Exodus are all home staples in Americana – demonstrating just how valuable we find the story of enlightenment while wandering.

And the thing is, obviously there was travel time involved in Jesus' ministry. The video I just showed you from Gerasenes – also known as Gadara in the Book of Mark, or The Golan Heights in the modern day Middle East – demonstrates just how far away Gerasenes actually was from the Sea of Galilee. Had I walked down that mountain and not gotten shot for doing so, my guesstimate is that it would have taken a solid 8 hours to get to the bottom. I actually tried to do a google maps search about the travel time from Capernaum to Gerasenes and it said 18 hours, but that's only because you have to take a wildly contrived route through political zones to get there that may have not existed in the year 33. At any rate, it's no simple hike.

So the grand question is – what were Jesus and his disciples doing on that walk up to and down from Gerasenes? And what were they doing in the several hours that it took for the demon possessed pigs to run down the hill from Gerasenes into the lake? Just standing there watching? Did no one get bored and their mind start wandering? Did they start to think that maybe the pigs would die on the hillside before making it to the bottom and they would have to trek down there and clean up the mess? Did anyone have to get up and go to the bathroom or grab a drink of water while witnessing this multi-hour event?

Travel time. While the major life changing events of our lives are obviously memorable and important, a lot of the development of who we are happens in the between spaces. For example,

this week is Juneteenth on the Mainland. As a country, we honor and celebrate the major event of slave emancipation. But what observation of this holiday really asks of us is that we incorporate it into the travel time. That we don't just witness the significance of the event itself, but more importantly how we integrate it into the mundane practices of our every day lives. Travel time asks us - How will I be proactively antiracist in the grocery store? What daily habits do I need to work on to be anti racist? The actual work of Juneteenth is done in the travel time, not the revolutionary moments.

It was also Father's Day last week. Yes, the moment a baby is born, or takes her first steps, or wins her first soccer match are monumental moments. But fatherhood is mostly done in the mundane moments. It's in the endless diaper changes, the daily negotiation of chicken nuggets vs cookies, or the thankless driving to and from practices, lessons, and schools. The actual work of fatherhood is done in the travel time.

And that's why I feel like it's important to think about what was happening in those hours that the pigs were running down the hillside, and the hours that Jesus and the disciples were walking to and from the lake, because the formative work that accompanies life changing events happens in the mundane and ordinary spaces. The scripture said the people came out from the Acropolis to see what was going on, and then hid because they were afraid and asked Jesus to leave. That must have been a long, lonely walk down the hillside, no? Not to mention Jesus was being followed by the man he had healed, who was begging the whole way to be taken with him. How long do we beg God for the things we want, only to feel unheard? Hours? Days? Months? Years?

I want you to think back on an experience you had where a big event happened and then was followed by an intense uncertainty, or loneliness, or begging God to show you the direction forward. Maybe it was the birth of a child, followed by the sinking feeling of dread and inadequacy in the weeks that followed. Maybe it was graduating, and the frustration of applying for hundreds of jobs but nobody wanted a fresh graduate. Maybe it was the death of a loved one, and the daily reminder that their absence is now your new normal. I want you to think about the travel time in your own life that happened after a big event.

Now take how you feel in those mundane aftermath moments, and I want you to imagine you're walking with Jesus down that long hillside, maybe along the Roman road that led up to the Acropolis. The apostles are all complaining. Everyone is tired, the adrenaline is draining, the sun is relentless and there's no shade. The healed man is begging tirelessly to join them the whole way down, it's getting borderline obnoxious after 6 hours of this. I want you to breathe your own anxiety from the moment you've picked in your head into that walk down the hillside.

Walk down that hillside holding the anxiety of living fully into the mundaneness of it. Then look up, and look at Jesus, walking there with you. What is He doing?

I'll tell you what I see him doing. I see Jesus allowing the anxiety to walk with him. Jesus could have told the healed man to stay up at the Acropolis and start telling everyone about the love of God right then and there. Instead, Jesus lets the man walk with them, jabbering on with his anxious energy all the way down, until Jesus gets back to the boat. In the travel time, Jesus opens space for the begging, the complaining, the insecurity of travel time to exist. He knows that there is a reason for the travel time, a reason for the hard work of being uncomfortable in those in between spaces. It's like he wanted all the anxiety and the discomfort to stay with him and walk with him before releasing the good news into the community.

And that's what travel time is. It's our process of transitioning the aftermath of big events into something we can narrate effectively. A child isn't born knowing how to talk or perform surgery or play basketball, he learns those things in the travel time. A career isn't made just by graduating from school, it's in the networking, exploration, and working one's way up in competency. The travel time. A person learning who they are in the wake of grief doesn't happen overnight, it's done through tears, support, and process. Travel time translates the big events of our lives into something that we internalize, discipline, and manifest in the world with new energy.

The Gospels may have not included travel time in their narratives not only because of the urgency implied in the writing, but also because the audience would recognize the places and naturally know the distances between them. The audience would have also known intimately the grand sacred story of Travel Time from the Book of Exodus.

And the Gospels, to their credit, name the anxiety associated with "what happens now" consistently after big events. Anxiety, fear, and insecurity are highlighted as reactions that people had to Jesus. But Jesus' response is almost always, "Do not be afraid, for I am with you." Jesus walks with us down that long, uncomfortable hillside. Jesus walks with us through the fear, and he is still confident that we are the messengers of the good news when we walk through the fear back up to the top of the hillside.

Transformation doesn't just happen in the big moments of our lives. God can make a big theatrical scene out of healing us, but we see over and over in the Gospels that those big moments were often accompanied by lingering anxiety. And the thing is, God will still be with us while we process that anxiety. He will be with us especially when we process that anxiety, because the processing is where the real growth takes place. God will walk us down the hillside, listening to us babble incoherently all the way down, and still think we're good enough to walk back up there and go spread the word. God is present with us not just in the life shattering events, but the travel time.

So embrace the travel time. Jesus is walking with you. Amen.