



# Hope & HEALING

January 31, 2021



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## **Prelude**

## **Introduction**

## **Invitation**

### **Call to Worship:**

Jesus is with us as we worship, astounding us with his compassion and love. Let us celebrate his presence and praise our God for healing, grace, and hope today and every day. Let us worship together!

**Hymn:** “Amazing Grace,” vv. 1,2,3,6

### **Reading the Word:** Mark 1:21-28

They went to Capernaum; and when the sabbath came, he entered the synagogue and taught. They were astounded at his teaching, for he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes. Just then there was in their synagogue a man with an unclean spirit, and he cried out, “What have you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are, the Holy One of God.” But Jesus rebuked him, saying, “Be silent, and come out of him!” And the unclean spirit, convulsing him and crying with a loud voice, came out of him. They were all amazed, and they kept on asking one another, “What is this? A new teaching—with authority! He commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey him.” At once his fame began to spread throughout the surrounding region of Galilee.

## **Ministry of Music**

### **Message:** “Hope and Healing”

This week’s scripture passage has stopped me in my tracks. I have spent hours reading commentaries and reflecting and praying for guidance as to what I would like to share with you today. Maybe it has stopped me because there are several ways to focus on the passage. So, after long reflections, reading the passage over and over again, and praying for help and guidance, my heart landed on Jesus exorcising the demons. Strange, I know, but I think we can learn something from this part of the story.

The man in the synagogue had demons. We don’t know what they were, except that, they recognized Jesus. One of the intentions for the writer of the gospel of Mark is to consistently establish Jesus’s identity as the Son of God. Ironically, the people in the synagogue did not recognize him except as someone who spoke with authority, and they wondered how he got it. Throughout the gospel of Mark, even Jesus’ disciples never quite caught on to who he was and how he brought the very presence of God into their lives.



But, the demons got it. They hollered at him through the possessed man. Maybe they cried out in fear because they recognized his power, we don't know. There are times in our own lives when we deal with demons. Maybe they are voices that encourage insecurity, fear, worry, lack of self-esteem, guilt, judgment, grief, or any number of thoughts in our heads that destroy who we are and who we can become as God's beloved children. In the story, the demons cry out, "What do you have to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth?" (v. 24) Jesus saw beyond the man who stood there to the demons that possessed him and ordered them to be silent and come out of the man.

There are times when we can be possessed by our demons, to the point where we live behind a mask to cover them up. We are used to wearing masks these days, aren't we? When I was in physical therapy last summer and fall after I had a left knee replacement, I had a wonderful therapist, but I never saw her entire face. For logical and safety reasons, we both wore masks. I wondered what her whole face looked like, and I realized that she may have wondered that about me, too.

In our spiritual lives, our masks hide the things inside us that drag us down and try to pull us away from recognizing Jesus and the power of his healing. We lose hope because we feel that we aren't all we want to be, should be, or can be. Yet, the power of healing in Jesus is always there for us if we turn to him and seek his presence. Maybe we can find Jesus' presence through prayer, reading scripture, talking with a trusted friend, seeking counseling, singing hymns, or taking long walks along the beach or in the woods.

Jesus reaches behind the masks we might be wearing to help us accept ourselves, accept God's grace, and know that we are loved beyond all measure. "What have you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth?" Everything. Everything. Jesus will walk with us, hold us, and carry us when we turn to him for healing of our spirits and souls. Jesus will help us to find ways to silence the demons that invade our lives and turn us away from loving ourselves as God has loved us. Jesus will bring us hope in the midst of uncertainty, sorrow, and pain.

So many people hide behind their masks and trying to find ways to get rid of the demons that drag them down. They turn to addictive substances or behaviors, or they fill their calendars so they keep busy, or they become abusive or be abused themselves. Whatever they do, they don't recognize that there is hope and healing right there in front of them in Jesus of Nazareth, Son of God, Savior of the world.

And, as the church of Jesus Christ in the world, we have a calling to offer hope and healing to others through our actions, words, prayers, and witness of how Jesus has brought hope and healing to us, too. One of the prayers that has made such an impact on me was written by St. Francis of Assisi. It reflects the hope and healing that we, as followers of Jesus, can bring to the world. Please pray it with me.

## **Prayer of St. Francis of Assisi**

Lord, make me an instrument of your peace,  
Where there is hatred, let me sow love;  
where there is injury, pardon;  
where there is doubt, faith;  
where there is despair, hope;  
where there is darkness, light;  
where there is sadness, joy;  
O Divine Master, grant that I may not so much seek to be consoled as to console;  
to be understood as to understand;  
to be loved as to love.  
For it is in giving that we receive;  
it is in pardoning that we are pardoned;  
and it is in dying that we are born to eternal life.  
Amen.

### **Prayer:**

Healing God, you come to us this day and every day as we seek your grace and healing in our lives. You know our fears and hopes, sorrows and joy, illness and wellness. We lift them to you, trusting in your care, compassion, and healing. Thank you for sending Jesus to teach us about the power of your love that sustains and lifts us so that we may serve you and others. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

### **The Lord's Prayer:**

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed by Thy name. Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil, for Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever. Amen.

**Hymn:** "Spirit of God," vv. 1,5

### **Blessing**



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# PRAYER LIST

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Naomi, Bill Stover, Townley Family, Erin Frane, Carol, Jim Slater,  
Jeanne Westcott, Earl, Dennis Hoskins, Charles Gilman, Barbara  
Clement, Harry Junkins, Fabio, Fred, Sophia, Barbara Glidden, Mark &  
Sarah, Jen, Danny Westbrook,  
Dan Strange, Bobbie Noble, Earl,  
Gayle Gardei and Family  
Durgin Pines Residents & Workers,  
Riverside Rest Home Residents & Workers,  
Kittery Estates Residents and Workers  
Those who have lost loved ones to COVID-19  
Those in nursing and assisted living care,  
Our Denomination – Our Church Family





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We, the congregation of the First United Methodist Church of Portsmouth, New Hampshire, are dedicated in worshipping, learning, and serving with all people as we embrace Jesus Christ's message of love and acceptance. As a United Methodist Church we stand fully behind the statement "Open Hearts, Open Minds, and Open Doors". We celebrate our diversity and invite all persons regardless of age, gender, racial or ethnic background, sexual orientation, marital or socioeconomic status, nationality, physical or mental ability into full membership and participation in the life of this community of faith.



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