

Welcome to Sunday School!

Today is the last in our 3-part series on uncovering the Hidden Blessings in the Strange, Gross and Weird stories in the Bible.

As we know, the Bible is made up of 66 books and that means that there are LOTS of different stories in the Bible. And some that are just plain odd. Before we give up on trying to understand some of the odd ones, let's take a deeper look and see if we can find a Hidden Blessing in these stories – something that makes sense out of the weirdness that we can learn from and apply to our life.

JESUS HEALS A MAN, PIGS INVOLVED:

Our third strange story comes from the New Testament, while Jesus was teaching and doing his ministry, found in 2 books - Mark & Luke! (Mark 5:1-20 & Luke 8:26-39.)

After a very scary boat ride across the Sea of Galilee, Jesus and the disciples arrived on shore. As soon as Jesus climbed out of the boat, a demon-possessed man (what we might call a crazy man) came running out from the cemetery to meet him. He was not in his right mind and was dirty and he lived outside among the tombs. Everyone in the town was afraid of him and they even tried to chain him up and he broke free every time. He spent his days howling and hurting himself and living a miserable life. Jesus saw that he needed help and healed him by asking the demons that were inside of the man to leave and to give this man peace. The man was scared but when Jesus asked for his name, he was able to tell Jesus that his name was Legion - meaning that many many evil spirits lived inside of him. Jesus told the demons to leave and they went over an invaded a huge herd of pigs. The pigs went crazy and jumped off a cliff and drowned. The man got better, got cleaned up and even asked if he could go with Jesus on his travels. But Jesus told him to stay and let the people know his story.

HIDDEN BLESSING:

Is this story really about demons and pigs? Maybe something else... I think the Hidden Blessing in this story is transformation. Transformation means to be changed into something new. We can be transformed by God's power and love. And that when there is evil in the world it can do horrible things (those poor pigs!) but when Jesus is in our lives and we know God's love, we are made new. Jesus never hesitated to reach out to those in need. Other people didn't care about people that were difficult to deal with but Jesus saw them as God's children and worthy of love. **We can be like Jesus.** We can give everyone a chance or two or three because God shows us that people can change and deserve mercy. Anyone can transform if they can get rid of their hatred and fear and crazy thoughts and know the love of Jesus. Sometimes all it takes is someone else to show them that they care.

SCRIPTURE:

"People came to see what happened... (The man) was sitting at Jesus' feet, fully dressed and completely sane. They were filled with awe."

—Luke 8:35

ACTIVITIES:

Family Discussion:

1. Have you ever see someone get a makeover? How do you think that made them feel?
2. Why do you think Jesus helped those who were difficult to help?
3. Why did Jesus say it was important for the man to share his story?

Transformation Activity:

Find something simple like a box or a water bottle and using only things you can find around your house, try to transform it into something new.

Did You Know?:

- Pigs are the brains of the barnyard. Winston Churchill once said: "I am fond of pigs. Dogs look up to us. Cats look down on us. Pigs treat us as equals." In all of nature they rank third behind apes and dolphins in terms of intelligence. They are the quickest animals to learn a new routine or trick!
- Pigs actually do not have sweat glands, which is why they tend to roll in the mud to keep cool. But they are very clean animals.
- Pigs have an excellent sense of smell.



PRAYER:

Dear God,
Help me to see the good in others and know that anyone can change for the better with your help.
Help me to remember that you love me and that I can share your love.
Thank you for helping me uncover hidden blessings in weird stories. And bless all of the pigs - they need your love, too.

Let's pray the Lord's Prayer together:

**Our Creator,
who art in heaven, hallowed be 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. Lead us not
into temptation but deliver us from evil.
For Thine is the kingdom and the
power and the glory forever.
Amen**