

## 2021 Rock of Grace Family Ministries “Worship Brings City Transformation”

**Video: 2021 Year in Review: Slide 1: Worship Brings City Transformation.** I'm here to say “Thank You,” because you make stories like that possible...with your neighbors and in nations. Let's look at some stories...

Jesus and the 12 arrive on the regional shores of the Gergesenes—part of the Decapolis: a group of ten cities on the eastern frontier of the Roman Empire. As the bow of the boat crunches against the rocky beach, Jesus is immediately charged by a character straight out of the Exorcist! **Slide 2:** *“When Jesus climbed out of the boat, a man possessed by an evil spirit came out from the tombs to meet him. 3 This man lived in the burial caves and could no longer be restrained, even with a chain. 4 Whenever he was put into chains and shackles—as he often was—he snapped the chains from his wrists and smashed the shackles. No one was strong enough to subdue him. 5 Day and night he wandered among the burial caves and in the hills, howling and cutting himself with sharp stones.” Mark 5:2-5 NLT*

This man is not a fictional creature, a caricature...this guy is real...so let's give him a real name...Let's name this guy **Jason**. Something happened that **made him snap**. Somehow he ended up a violent, uncontrollable, mentally ill, hell-bent crazy man. Jason lives in a condo complex called “The Tombs.” It's a bunch of caves on the side of a hill, and it's a great place to bury the dead and a great place to drop off people who are dead to us. They don't fit in our society. Their **issues are beyond our ability to fix**. They are beyond our margins...they are marginalized. **You are not welcome in our community** and we won't come to yours. That's where he should be because he's freakishly strong, the very essence of hell, shrieks, and howls. He cuts himself, so his naked body is covered with scars. What do you do with a guy like Jason? You push him away. This man is in despair with no hope, and this is his settled place.

Jason runs toward Jesus, but Jesus doesn't run from Jason. I can imagine climbing over each other to get back into the boat. **(Slide 3) Here are three observations of how Jesus disrupts our settled place ; (Slide 4) Jesus engages people, not issues. We don't want to deal with “that thing”...Jesus wants us to deal with “that person.”** And that declaration of Jesus that you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you and **you will show and tell neighbors about a force that disrupts all margins...**it's not about a missions' program, it's about our mission to engage the person who needs hope, outside our margins...to enter their world. The Word became flesh and moved into our neighborhood.

**(Slide 5) Jesus dislodges accepted margins.** That's why it was impossible for Jesus to be the Son of God...wrong side of the margin. Hal Donaldson was a successful author and sports writer. He had gone to Calcutta, India, to write a book about a

compassionate couple feeding the hungry when he had an opportunity to interview Mother Teresa. In the middle of the interview, she asked, "Hal, what are you doing to help the poor and suffering?" He said, "Nothing." Her response was, "You may not be able to feed 100, but you can feed one. Everybody can do something." Don't run from them; run to them. He went home, with the help of his brothers, they loaded groceries into a pickup truck and began to feed the migrant workers in Northern California." And a movement called Convoy of Hope began.

What 3 men and a truck started in 1994 has transformed into a movement having served over 163 million people, distributing over \$1.39 billion dollars worth of food and supplies, through the local church in 2100 communities in 21 countries.

What is that force motivating Jesus to break down margins and to break off the chains of despair?... Let's cut right to the end of the story: Slide 6: "Go home to your friends, and tell them what great things the Lord has done for you, and how He has had compassion on you. The Jews called it the "Bowels of mercy." The first century saw it as the center of love and pity. 1 Cor...miracles w/o compassion are an annoying sound. God so loved the world that he gave his Son...(Slide 7) Jesus is propelled to engage people. It's called compassion...

Slide 8: Compassion is rooted in worship. Compassion is the image of God in you--it's a divine mindset; The prophet Isaiah gave us insight into worship...Isaiah 6... I saw God, Holy, Holy, Holy (John)...Other...Make me like you--coal from altar...Who will go, do what I do? Worship is transformational: I want to be like you; I want to do what you do.

Mel's mindset...Very successful entrepreneur. Never buys anything at full price. A place like Taco Bell, Del Taco. Long before became highly successful, he answered the phone and the voice said, 'Is this Mel? I need help.' "Where are you? I'll come to you." "You don't know who this is." "It doesn't matter; you need help." Mother Teresa said, "Just go do the next kind thing God puts in front of you." It's just a step at a time...COVID hit and Hal said, "Let's try to get 10 Million meals out there; we will keep going until we don't have anything left." "The issue is beyond me and I don't know that person" or "Where are you? I'll come to you": When we do what God does, then God gives us what he has. Video: 10 million meals:

If Compassion is rooted in worship, then compassion transforms the environment. When 80,000 trafficked women in Europe were pushed out into the streets to find their own food during COVID, compassionate generosity made it possible for Convoy of Hope to partner with a Jesus-based anti-trafficking organization. As these ladies were brought into their 5 rehab homes, Convoy began empowering them, providing food, leading them into spiritual growth, and helping them develop new job skills. Convoy is not rescuing women, but we are empowering women who have been rescued. Why?

Because it's what Jesus does--that's worship. Have you ever been in a worship service and you feel like God is right there? **Marginalized people won't be in your worship service, but will be affected by your service of worship.** God is in this place...**their despair is eclipsed by compassion.** For that to happen...

**Slide 9 Compassion sees value.** Jesus asks this man his name. The demonic voice says, "I am legion." A Roman Legion is 6,000 soldiers. There are a lot of evil spirits in this guy. Jesus casts out the demons, and needing a body to get into, he permitted them to go into 2000 pigs. The pigs ran down the hill and drowned. Here's what happened next:

**Slide 10:** *Mark 5 NLT...14 The herdsmen fled to the nearby town and the surrounding countryside, spreading the news as they ran. People rushed out to see what had happened. 15 A crowd soon gathered around Jesus, and they saw the man who had been possessed by the legion of demons. He was sitting there fully clothed and perfectly sane, and they were all afraid. 16 Then those who had seen what happened told the others about the demon-possessed man and the pigs. 17 And the crowd began pleading with Jesus to go away and leave them alone.*

Jason is no longer a wildman. He's in a new mindset. Jesus casts out a community of demons, answering the question, "What is this man worth?" Whatever is the value of 2000 pigs; some say \$500,000 of their revenue literally liquidated; and here's the sad part, if the townspeople weren't so freaked out by what compassion costs, they would find out that they are worth the value of God's own son...that's how God's compassion views life...

So two summers ago, hundreds of people said, let's tell our city what God-compassion can do for them; so they gave up their money, their time to engage people...here's how compassion engaged one person who needed hope: **Video: John Stroup and Michael Ischay...** Thank you for making that story possible.

**The disciples had to be stunned at what they had witnessed and when they realize what Jesus is really asking: "What do you think Jason is worth?"**

You've been answering that question: For over a decade, you have given \$71,560 through Convoy of Hope. What's a hungry child worth? Your compassion can feed 596 kids for a year. What's a woman caught in abuse and gender inequality worth? Your compassion can empower 71 women.

How much is a city worth? Compassion doesn't run from despair, it runs to despair. Compassion is not overwhelmed by the issues, it finds what it can do to engage the person. Compassion is not comfortable, it's transformational...and that is worship: Compassion says, "Father God, I want to be like you; I want to do what you do." **And God compassion will remind us, "Everybody can do something." Let's make that our story!**