

## **“In a World Restarting: Getting our Bearing Coming out of Chaos”**

**Welcome to your Small Group – Week 1!** (for the week following Sunday, Sept. 26)

So glad you are taking the time to be together with friends, old and new, to spend some time just connecting...and also as people of faith, seeing how God might be speaking to you, to us, as we come through the pandemic and into a new chapter of life.

We’re using the Gospel of Mark in September and October, as it’s a Gospel written in a time not unlike our in many ways. Mark’s hearers were also trying to find their bearings in a time of uncertainty and chaos.

Dr. Matt Skinner of Luther Seminary is making 8-10 min. videos for us each week to introduce us to Sunday’s Gospel story and frame one question for your discussion each week. It will be in Enews the week prior to Sunday, and also on the Small Group page in the box on our website homepage, “In a World Restarting”.

*+ **NOTE:** Each week we’ll suggest a question to open with, then turn to the Bible text for the week (with the video and a question from Dr. Skinner), and then suggest a few other questions to discuss as you ponder what it means for you to get your “bearings coming out of chaos”. Feel free to choose the questions that resonate most with your group, in any order you like. If you have time for all, great, but no worries if you don’t.*

**Check-in:** Share your name, how long you’ve been around Westwood, and either: a) one thing that you hope for in your time together these 5 weeks, OR b) one thing that caused you to lose your bearing a bit during the months of pandemic.

### **Bible reading this week: Mark 5:1-20**

This is a very colorful and strange story! (Summary: A man with some kind of multiple personality disorder, we might say today, “demon-possessed”, is banished from town and lives in a cemetery, howling and unable to be restrained. Jesus calls the demons from within the man, and they leave the man and go into a herd of pigs, which makes the pigs stampede over a cliff to drown in the sea. (Crazy, right?!) The townspeople are angry that they lost their herd of pigs and tell Jesus to get out. The healed man wants to come with Jesus, but instead Jesus sends him back to his own people in the town to tell them what Jesus had done for him. He did, and “he was the talk of town”!)

+Please listen to Dr. Skinner’s video as a group if you haven’t had a chance yet. (Link each week is in Enews from Tuesday of last week and on the website right on the homepage in the “In a

World Restarting” box.) You can decide if you all want to listen to this together each week, or if you will listen beforehand.

### **Question from Dr. Skinner’s video:**

As we come out of these past 20 months, we are being forced to reconsider our assumptions about many things. So many norms have changed...e.g. How can I stay safe? What does my work life look like? What choices are now ahead of me? Dr. Skinner suggests that Jesus’ kingdom breaking into our world and into our lives also forces us to make some new choices...even hard, messy choices.

Dr. Skinner’s question: Where have you seen Jesus’ presence breaking in, perhaps in new ways, in the midst of all the changes we’ve experienced? What new insights might you be discovering about what it means to be a follower of Jesus in this world now?

### **Coming out of chaos, ponder together:**

1. Before you heard Sunday’s sermon (or before you read on), what would you have said you believe is the opposite of FAITH? -share your answers.  
I would’ve said ‘doubt’. But one commentator suggests that the Gospel of Mark shows us examples of FEAR being the opposite of faith. (See Mark 4:40-41, Jesus calming the storm, where Jesus says, “Why are you afraid? Have you no faith?”. Also in the resurrection story when they don’t believe what’s really happened, the reaction is fear.)

FEAR. There’s certainly enough to go around right now! And our fears are really complicating our lives right now. If you think about the things that upset you, or people that you struggle having conversations with, how much of that might be driven by fear? What are some fears you have right now? Are there people who you disagree with who might have fears that are simply different fears than yours that are behind their position? And how does your faith, Jesus’ presence with you and in our world, calm or address your fears...can you put some language around that, or give examples of that?

2. This text from Mark is a healing of someone who we can only assume has suffered greatly from a powerful illness that today might be called a multiple personality disorder. Mark is full of one healing story after another, with Jesus showing that he has power over all forms of brokenness.  
We ALL need healing, whether it’s mental, physical, spiritual, relational, etc. Knowing that healing comes in a variety of ways, and not always in the way we want or expect, can you name any healing that either you have experienced personally through these

months of the pandemic, or that you see in our world, even amidst all the brokenness, strain and evil that is very apparent? If healing/restoration has come in any way, or *would* come, what might that healing look like or mean for you...and then for our society?

3. The man in this Bible story, after he was healed, was sent by Jesus right back into his hometown...into relationships with his family and neighbors, and allowed him to share this healing and Good News he'd experienced right 'at home', in his community. We are called by Jesus usually not to some far-off place, but to our homes, neighborhoods, places of work, organizations in our town, etc. Name the places in your life where you feel most called at this time, and share what the challenges are that you are facing in that setting right now, in these difficult days.

### **Close with prayer:**

If someone is comfortable closing with prayer, please do that....and/or pray together the Prayer of Good Courage. *O God, you have called your servants to ventures of which we cannot see the ending, by paths as yet untrodden, through perils unknown. Give us faith to go out with good courage, not knowing where we go, but only that your hand is leading us and your love supporting us, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.*