

Further up, Further in

Resources for Continued Study



LOOKOUT
MOUNTAIN
PRESBYTERIAN
CHURCH

"RESPONDING TO JESUS' LIBERATING POWER"

For individual study or group discussion

In last week's lesson, Jesus calmed a tempestuous storm, demonstrating for us his power over the natural realm. In today's passage, Luke 8:26-39, we observe Jesus demonstrating his power over the supernatural realm, as he calms a tormented soul (v. 35). Remember how the fearful disciples marveled at Jesus' power over the storm in verse 25 when they asked, "Who then is this, that he commands even winds and water, and they obey him?" The answer to their question comes to them through a demon-possessed man who emerges from the tombs as they step off the boat onto the shore of the country of Gerasenes (v. 27).

Luke's narration informs us of three different responses to Jesus' liberating power. The first is the demons' submissive response, identifying Jesus as the "Son of the Most High God." Dutch-American theologian, Geerhardus Vos, explains their reply in his book, *The Self-Disclosure of Jesus*: "The demons employing the title ['Son of the Most High God'] thereby express proximately their knowledge that Jesus is the Messiah...the knowledge on the part of the demons is rather of an intuitive, supernatural kind. Because they are themselves supernatural spirits, they 'scent' the supernatural in Jesus."¹ Consequently, the disciples witness the unclean spirits' appeal as they beg Jesus not to torment them and to send them into a neighboring drove of pigs rather than into the abyss.

- If Jesus speaks and nature listens, and if Jesus speaks and demons listen, how should we as humans respond when he speaks? Meditate on Job 38-39, 40:1-5. (See also Psalm 65:1-8; 89:5-9.)
- Examining the demons' confession regarding the identity of Jesus, discuss what it means to have only a "head knowledge" of the identity of Christ and of his Gospel. (James 2:19)

The setting for our story is the eastern shore of the Sea of Galilee, in the territory of the Decapolis, a group of ten cities (cf. Mark 5:20). With a majority Gentile population, it comes as no surprise that pigs are a major source of commerce for the Gerasenes. Note that Jesus takes his disciples to a Gentile region in close proximity to tombs and swine, all of which are considered "unclean" for a Jew (see Leviticus 11:7; Numbers 5:2), teaching his disciples that there is no place he will not go in order to seek and to save the lost (Luke 19:10). But the people's fearful response to Jesus' liberating power, when they hear the news from the herdsman, compels them to ask Jesus to leave (vv. 34-37). The healing of the demoniac comes at the expense of their prosperity, and they are unwilling to undertake any more economic loss.

- How does the casting out of demons affirm Jesus' identity as the "Son of the Most High God"? (See Hebrews 2:14-15; Colossians 2:9-15; and 1 John 3:8.)
- Material goods are meant to function as an arrow pointing to the goodness and faithfulness of God. How does the swine herders fearful response to Jesus' power provide a window into their hearts?
- What does the power of Jesus over demons mean for believers? (2 Peter 2:4-10) How should this truth affect how you live for Jesus?

The transformed man's eager response to Jesus' liberating power is indicated by his desire to stay with Jesus (v. 38). Jesus does not permit the man to accompany him, but instead sends him away with the instructions to "Return to your home, and declare how much God has done for you" (v. 39). This is the first time in the *Gospel of Luke* that Jesus does not order a participant to a miraculous event to keep quiet. Instead, he urges him to share the good news of Christ's liberating power. By proclaiming the good news of what Jesus has done for him to the whole city (v. 39), the healed demoniac is, quite possibly, the first missionary to the Gentiles recorded for us in the Gospels.

- The disciples will no doubt remember these lessons in chapter 8, when later at his ascension, Jesus commands them to preach the message that "repentance for the forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things" (Luke 24: 47-48).

DATE: May 15, 2022

SPEAKER: Chad/Brian

SERIES: Gospel of Luke

PASSAGE: Luke 8:26-39

Family Dinner Table

The story of the Gerasene demoniac tells the tale of how Jesus takes his disciples through a dangerous storm in order to rescue one miserable, tormented, wretched human being. The account is reminiscent of Luke's *Parable of the Lost Sheep* (Luke 15: 3-7) in which the shepherd leaves the flock of ninety-nine sheep in order to seek out and save the one, lost sheep. British author and apologist Dr. Amy Orr-Ewing in her book *Where is God in All the Suffering?* comforts her readers with the truth of God's persevering love when she writes, "Dwell on that thought for a moment. Think about the possibility that you are precious to him — your breath, your body, your mind, your thoughts, your emotions. They matter to the Creator of the universe. You have significance. The Christian story says that God entered the world in Christ because he loved you. Jesus told a story of a shepherd who had 100 sheep. When one of them got lost, this shepherd had such ridiculous priorities that he left the 99 to go after the one. Jesus told that story to illustrate how much God cares for the one, and that one is you, and it is me. This love of God is available to you and me whatever we might be feeling, and in full knowledge of all that we have experienced."²

- Jesus states in John 6:37, "Whoever comes to me I will never cast out." Discuss as a family how this knowledge can bring comfort during difficult and trying times. Read Psalm 107:1-22 together.

PRAY FOR HOME MISSIONS

Lakeway Church, supported church plant in Morristown, TN

PRAY FOR WORLD MISSIONS

Bill & Melanie, supported national partners, with a ministry that aims to bridge the gap between vocation and ministry with an emphasis on restricted access.

¹ Vos, Geerhardus. *The Self-Disclosure of Jesus*. Nutley, NJ. P&R Publishing, 1926. 171.

² Orr-Ewing, Amy. *Where is God in All the Suffering?* Oxford, The Good Book Company, 2020. 82.