

This morning, I am in the eleventh week of a sermon series that I've entitled "Meeting Jesus." I am making my way through Luke's account of the life of Jesus, looking at various interactions that people had with Jesus, in order to better understand what it means to know and follow Him. This morning we'll be in Luke 8:22-39, looking at Jesus' interaction with his disciples during a storm, and then with a demon-possessed man.

Luke 8:22–25 - One day Jesus said to his disciples, "Let us go over to the other side of the lake." So they got into a boat and set out.²³ As they sailed, he fell asleep. A squall came down on the lake, so that the boat was being swamped, and they were in great danger.²⁴ The disciples went and woke him, saying, "Master, Master, we're going to drown!" He got up and rebuked the wind and the raging waters; the storm subsided, and all was calm.²⁵ "Where is your faith?" he asked his disciples. In fear and amazement they asked one another, "Who is this? He commands even the winds and the water, and they obey him."

Luke 8:26–39 - They sailed to the region of the Gerasenes, which is across the lake from Galilee.²⁷ When Jesus stepped ashore, he was met by a demon-possessed man from the town. For a long time this man had not worn clothes or lived in a house, but had lived in the tombs.²⁸ When he saw Jesus, he cried out and fell at his feet, shouting at the top of his voice, "What do you want with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I beg you, don't torture me!"²⁹ For Jesus had commanded the impure spirit to come out of the man. Many times it had seized him, and though he was chained hand and foot and kept under guard, he had broken his chains and had been driven by the demon into solitary places.³⁰ Jesus asked him, "What is your name?" "Legion," he replied, because many demons had gone into him.³¹ And they begged Jesus repeatedly not to order them to go into the Abyss.³² A large herd of pigs was feeding there on the hillside. The demons begged Jesus to let them go into the pigs, and he gave them permission.³³ When the demons came out of the man, they went into the pigs, and the herd rushed down the steep bank into the lake and was drowned.³⁴ When those tending the pigs saw what had happened, they ran off and reported this in the town and countryside,³⁵ and the people went out to see what had happened. When they came to Jesus, they found the man from whom the demons had gone out, sitting at Jesus' feet, dressed and in his right mind; and they were afraid.³⁶ Those who had seen it told the people how the demon-possessed man had been cured.³⁷ Then all the people of the region of the Gerasenes asked Jesus to leave them, because they were overcome with fear. So he got into the boat and left.³⁸ The man from whom the demons had gone out begged to go with him, but Jesus sent him away, saying,³⁹ "Return home and tell how much God has done

for you.” So the man went away and told all over town how much Jesus had done for him.

Let me share three things we learn from this passage.

1) Evil is real, but Jesus has authority over it

In the first story, a storm comes upon the disciples while they are sailing across the lake. Jesus, worn out from a long day of ministry, is sound asleep in the boat. The disciples, despite having some experienced fishermen among them, are afraid that they are going to drown, so they wake Jesus up. And with a word, he rebukes the wind and the waters. And the disciples respond with fear and amazement, wondering what kind of person this Jesus is, who can even command the wind and waves to obey Him.

After that, they land in the region of the Gerasenes and are met by a demon-possessed man, who dwells naked among the tombs. Jesus asks his name, and the demons say “Legion,” a reference to a 6,000 soldier unit in the Roman army. And even though the disciples aren’t quite sure who this Jesus is, the demons know: “What do you want with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God?” They know that He has authority over them and has come to destroy them, and they do not want to be sent into the realm of the dead.

1 John 3:8 - The one who does what is sinful is of the devil, because the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil’s work.

And Jesus casts the demons out of the man and into the pigs – unclean spirits into unclean animals – who proceed to run headlong off the cliff into the lake.

In these passages, we see an important tension at work: in this world, there will be storms, and it will feel at times like God is asleep on the job. And there is real spiritual evil behind a lot of the craziness of the world. But God is still Lord over it all. The storms of life and the evil of this world are real and they are scary. But Jesus has authority over it all. As Jesus put it in John’s gospel:

John 16:33 - “I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.”

It is so important to hold these two truths in tension. You will have trouble, but Jesus has overcome the world. **If you are surprised by the evil of the world, then you're not reading the Bible very closely.** If you thought that coming to Jesus meant sunshine and rainbows and no more trouble, you haven't listened to what Jesus has been saying. Remember the ending of the Sermon on the Mount:

Matthew 7:24–27 - “Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. ²⁵ The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock. ²⁶ But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand. ²⁷ The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash.”

What is the difference between the two types of people? It's not the size of the house or the absence of storms, but the foundation upon which your life is built. **That is a foundation of obedience to and submission to Jesus' words.**

After Jesus stills the storm, He asks the disciples, where is your faith? The reason that Jesus is able to sleep in the storm is because He trusts His sovereign Father and knows that He will not let Him perish. And so He asks the disciples, “Why do you not trust that I am sovereign and that I love you? Even though storms may come, even though there is real spiritual evil in this world, I am over that, and nothing can separate you from my love. I am always working all things together for good.”

In both stories, the people end up with a mix of fear and amazement. More than the storms or the demons or anyone or anything else, Jesus is the one who deserves our reverence, our holy fear.

Matthew 10:28 – “Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather, be afraid of the One who can destroy both soul and body in hell.”

Sometimes it may feel like Jesus is asleep in the storm of your life. But take out your faith! Keep your eyes on Him. Remember this story about George Müller, 19th century British pastor who founded and ran an orphanage in Bristol, England that housed over 10,000 children during his lifetime, while also establishing 117 schools to provide Christian education, in L.B. Cowman's devotional “Streams in the Desert”:

I went to America some years ago with the captain of a steamer, who was a very devoted Christian. When off the coast of Newfoundland he said to me, “The last time I crossed here, five weeks ago, something happened which revolutionized the whole of my Christian life. We had George Müller of Bristol on board. I had been on the bridge twenty-four hours and never left it. George Müller came to me, and said,

“Captain I have come to tell you that I must be in Quebec Saturday afternoon.” “It is impossible,” I said. “Very well, if your ship cannot take me, God will find some other way. I have never broken an engagement for fifty-seven years. Let us go down into the chart-room and pray.”

I looked at that man of God, and thought to myself, what lunatic asylum can that man have come from? I never heard of such a thing as this. “Mr. Müller,” I said, “do you know how dense this fog is?” “No,” he replied, “my eye is not on the density of the fog, but on the living God, who controls every circumstance of my life.”

He knelt down and prayed one of the most simple prayers, and when he had finished I was going to pray; but he put his hand on my shoulder, and told me not to pray. “First, you do not believe He will answer; and second I BELIEVE HE HAS, and there is no need whatever for you to pray about it.”

I looked at him, and he said, “Captain, I have known my Lord for fifty-seven years, and there has never been a single day that I have failed to get audience with the King. Get up, Captain and open the door, and you will find the fog gone.” I got up, and the fog was indeed gone. On Saturday afternoon, George Müller was in Quebec for his engagement.

I love that story, but not just for the miraculous answer to prayer. I love that according to the author, Müller prayed “**one of the most simple prayers,**” and proceeded to tell the other man not to bother praying. It reminds me that God does not respond to our many or elaborate words, but to our faith in Him. **I pray that like George Müller, you and I would take our eyes off of the “fog” that surrounds us and place it on the living God, who controls every circumstance of our lives.**

Romans 8:31–32 - What, then, shall we say in response to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? ³² He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all—how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things?

Evil is real, the storms are real, but Jesus has authority over them. Where is your faith? Take it out and use it!

2) People matter more to Jesus than things (or animals)

After Jesus heals the demon-possessed man, the demons enter the pigs and drive them off a cliff to their death. And then we read this:

Luke 8:34-37 - When those tending the pigs saw what had happened, they ran off and reported this in the town and countryside, ³⁵ and the people went out to see what had happened. When they came to Jesus, they found the man from whom the demons had gone out, sitting at Jesus' feet, dressed and in his right mind; and they were afraid. ³⁶ Those who had seen it told the people how the demon-possessed man had been cured. ³⁷ Then all the people of the region of the Gerasenes asked Jesus to leave them, because they were overcome with fear. So he got into the boat and left.

What a travesty, what a shame. As fearful as the townspeople were of the demon-possessed man, once he was healed, they were even more afraid of the one who healed him, Jesus. And as they watch their livelihood rush headlong off the cliff to their death, they beg him to leave.

What a shame! It's a travesty, not only because they have rejected Jesus, the Messiah, but because in the end, **they valued the pigs more than the redeemed life of the man from whom the demons had gone out.**

But it does bring up an important question: **how much is a life worth to you?** Is the salvation of another person worth your job? Worth your finances? Worth your time? Worth your comfort? We know each life is precious to God.

Luke 12:6-7 - Are not five sparrows sold for two pennies? Yet not one of them is forgotten by God. ⁷ Indeed, the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Don't be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows.

And each life is worth more than many pigs as well.

1 Timothy 2:3-4 - This is good, and pleases God our Savior, ⁴ who wants all people to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth.

How much is a life worth to you? Is it worth a little discomfort? Some sacrifice of time or money or attention? **When I was in college**, I had a single, no roommate. But then a kid who people made fun of asked if he could live with me. And I said no. I valued my own comfort and privacy more than his life. Would it have been worth it? We have done foster care and adoption. We have our children serve our neighbor through bringing in their trash can. How much is a life worth? Is the sacrifice worth it to you?

3) Go back and tell people how much God has done for you

Luke 8:37-39 - The man from whom the demons had gone out begged to go with him, but Jesus sent him away, saying, ³⁹“Return home and tell how much God has done for you.” So the man went away and told all over town how much Jesus had done for him.

The man wants to come with Jesus, but he tells him to go home and tell the people of his town what God has done for him. And so he goes and tells them what Jesus has done. Notice of course that he recognizes that whatever Jesus has done, he has done in God’s power.

I don’t know your situation. You may also want to move on from your past, break ties with your family or friends. But what would it look like for you to return home and tell how much God has done for you, whether it is your family, or neighborhood, or friends? If God has saved you, then He also wants to use you to share the good news. Don’t forget Jesus’ commission to his followers:

Matthew 28:18–20 - Then Jesus came to them and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”

Acts 1:7–8 - He said to them: “It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority. ⁸But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”

The commission has not changed – be His witnesses wherever you are, going and making disciples, followers of Jesus, led by the power of the Holy Spirit.

1 Peter 3:15 - But in your hearts revere Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect.

Who can you pray for? Who can you invite to Easter this year?