DIVING DEEPER DISCUSSION GUIDE

TEXT SUMMARY

In today's text, Matt 8:28-34, Matthew recounts the story of Jesus' one-word exorcism of two demon-possessed men who had terrorized their community.

INTRODUCTION (OBSERVATION):

1. Our text begins with the words "when He came to the other side."
    - Other side of what? What had the disciples experienced and seen just before the events in our text?
    - What would have been their physical and emotional state as they landed on the shore?
2. The two men that Jesus and His men encounter were possessed by demons. What effect did the presence of those two men have on their community?
3. The demons in the two men recognized Jesus immediately. What did they call Him?
4. What is the only thing Jesus says or does in the story?

DISCUSSION (INTERPRETATION):

One of the fascinating storylines in the four Gospels is how Jesus' disciples gradually come to understand who He is: first as a rabbi, then a prophet, then finally Messiah and Son of the Almighty. Compare the way they slowly become aware of who He is with the demons which He encounters throughout His ministry, those malevolent beings who immediately recognize Jesus as the Son of God. Why were the demons able to recognize Him instantly, while the people around Him – even His closest hand-picked followers – were slow to realize who He was?

SO WHAT? (APPLICATION):

1. **Matthew is continuing with the theme he introduced at the end of chapter 7, when he recounts how the audience for Jesus' sermon marveled at His authority (7:28-29).** In the narrative accounts that follow, Matthew shows us His authority in various settings: healing the leper, healing the centurion's servant by His word at a distance, quieting the dangerous storm, and now in one word banishing the demons from the two men.

   Yet many – including many in the church – regard Jesus and His message as mild and gentle, all reassurance and no authoritative demand.

   - In your own life, how have you seen Jesus exercise His authority over your choices? What habits have you abandoned out of obedience to Him? What relationships have you been willing to put to the test because you follow Jesus?

   - What would your life look like if you were to regard Jesus as the final authority in your life? How would that life posture affect your finances, your relationships with the difficult people in your life, your private thought life, your ambitions?

2. **CS Lewis observed that the demons are happy with seemingly opposite responses to them:** both denial of their existence and fascination with their activity will serve their purposes equally well. Think of your own internal posture on this matter.

   - Is either of those two responses (disbelief or fascination) a temptation for you?

   - Or are you more bound by fear of the demonic? If so, what can you do to cultivate a healthy fear of God instead?