

“JESUS THROUGH THE EYES OF – The Gerasene Man”

Luke 8:22-39

Sermon for Peace Church

February 7, 2010

PURPOSE – To exalt the storm-stopping power of Jesus and call forth faith to exercise that power!

MAIN IDEA – Faith in Jesus stops the storms that evil brings!

I. INTRODUCTION

1. WHO IS THIS MAN? ... EVEN THE WINDS & WAVES OBEY HIM!

(i) That QUESTION is at the heart of the sermon series we're now in – LOOKING AT WHO JESUS IS from the gospel of Luke.

(ii) That OBSERVATION – “that even the winds & waves obey Him” – is a reality that the Word of God invites us to experience today!

2. JESUS IS A STORM-STOPPER ... FOR YOU AND ME

- For storms OUTSIDE ... and storms INSIDE.

(i) The 2 stories – the disciples in the boat & the man among the tombs – are INTENTIONALLY COUPLED to convey that message.

Jesus quiets the storms AROUND us and WITHIN us.

Jesus quiets the storms of fear OUTSIDE ME & INSIDE ME.

He stops the RAGING of the wind & waves ... and the RAGING of the mind & tongue! HE'S A STORM-STOPPER!

3. He stops storms because EVIL FLEES at the POWER of His command.

BOTH storms in these stories are caused by evil.

- (i) That's more obvious in the story of the Man Among the Tombs. He is nicknamed LEGION because he has a LEGION of DEMONS in him. (A Roman legion was made up of 6,000 men!)
- (ii) The storm on the lake too is incited by evil. There's no explicit reference to that but most commentators recognize this because, in stopping the storm, Jesus REBUKED the wind & the wave – in the same way that he REBUKED EVIL in other places; the same way HE COMMANDED the demons out of the Gerasene man – “Be gone” (both stories).

A. Those of us who recently read in Job with our “One Book / One Body” readings know that Satan can at times incite nature to do his wicked work. In chapter 1, a mighty wind knocks over the home where Job's children are feasting and kills them all – the work of Satan! So he can stir nature, God-permitting.

But ... JESUS IS A STORM-STOPPER CAUSE EVIL FLEES AT HIS REBUKE!

4. In their boat the disciples FEARED PERISHING in their storm:

“Master, Master, we're going to drown!” – EVER FEEL THAT WAY?

(i) Storms blow into our lives – just like the one that hit the East Coast this weekend.

- A. Relationships break down – and the more you say to try to fix it, it gets worse!
- B. Storms blow AROUND US – you feel like an outsider at school – someone on the “in-crowd” has it in for you – they incite a whole group to distance from you.
- C. Storms blow WITHIN US – because of pressures from work, we get spun around in fear – can't sleep at night – wave after wave of fear-filled thinking hits us!

“Master, Master, we're going to drown!”

- Maybe a storm has hit you this weekend!

(ii) In Mark's account of this storm, the disciples add: “MASTER, DO YOU CARE? ... We're going to drown - DO YOU CARE?”

5. YES, JESUS CARES!

He is the storm-stopping man – God with us – for evil flees at his rebuke. Let’s look at this a little more closely at this in the case of the Man Among the Tombs.

II. EVIL FLEES AT JESUS’ WORD – The Gerasene Man

1. What a FITTING IMAGE that is of the impact of evil on our lives – living among the dead! – isolated, naked, self-destructive

Having come through the demonic attack on the water (Satan wanting to end their mission right there!), Jesus and his disciples land their boat on the east side of the Sea of Galilee – a Gentile region – (there were PIG-FARMERS on that side of the Lake; wouldn’t be on the Jewish west-side ... not KOSHER!).

Where they land is the local cemetery (Oak-Ridge) – and there’s a man who lives there! He’s at home there among the dead. Authorities had attempted to chain to a tree – because he would attack travelers going by on the road outside the cemetery (Ridge Road). However this man would break his chains because he had demonic powers IN HIM!

(i) It is more Biblically accurate to say that he had demons IN HIM (that’s how the Greek literally describes it), than to say he was DEMON-POSSESSED.

A. Demon-possession (though that is how the NIV unfortunately translates it) is not a Biblical concept. Demons don’t “possess” people in the sense of owning them. Biblically people can have demons LOCATED in them, influencing them from within, but it’s not Biblical to say that someone is POSSESSED by demons – that Greek term is never used! So we should lose that term from our Christian vocabulary.

This man HAD demons in him. And the Greek word describes them literally as “UNCLEAN SPIRITS” (footnote to v. 29).

A. Not only did they raise a storm to make him violent against others, they took away his DIGNITY – he ran around naked; they took away his community – he lived away from family, friends ... the demons drove him into solitary places.

B. THAT'S WHAT EVIL DOES: he (it) robs you of dignity & community. He drives you into solitary places.

2. But THEN JESUS ARRIVES ON THE SCENE! He lands on the cemetery shore.

Sizing up the situation, he realizes that this man has demons in him – bearing strong, wicked influence upon him. He may well have also thought, “So that’s why the storm on the lake was kicked up against us ... Satan did not want us here cause he’s having a hey-day with this man, this community.”

Jesus STRIDES INTO that man’s life COMMANDING those evil spirits to leave him! And THEY MUST – because evil flees at his rebuke. Demons obey because Jesus has authority over evil.

- Just as the Fire Dept. Chief has authority over a lieutenant who has authority over an officer ... all authority belongs to Jesus.

Subordinates obey.

(i) And it’s not only because He’s the eternal Son of God through whom all creation is upheld, but also because of the INNATE PURITY of his life. He has official power AND MORAL POWER.

- When you’re in the RIGHT and you know it, you have power!

A. I.e. – Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. had power in the civil rights movement – because he was in the right in his social justice concerns. On those matters he was aligned with God. So he had moral power in his work.

JESUS HAS ALL POWER – not only by right of position, but by right of PURITY. He is in the right. He IS the right! So He cannot be stopped or disobeyed.

Yes, evil crucified Him – but that only served to show His greater holiness on earth. He gave evil its day – but only for His greater cause:

To reveal a holiness that brings salvation, a holiness that brings forgiveness of sins, a holiness which BROKE OPEN ETERNITY into this age, a holiness vindicated in the resurrection!

HE IS IN THE RIGHT. HE IS THE RIGHT. ALL POWER IS HIS. So EVIL MUST FLEE AT HIS REBUKE!

3. These demons, through the speech of the Gerasene man, immediately acknowledge Jesus' authority as "Son of the Most High God".

"Don't torture me", he adds – it is of evil to make you think that God has anything less than the VERY BEST for your life. – "Don't torture me!"

(i) Then, knowing that they must leave the man, the demons ask that Jesus not order them into the ABYSS. The ABYSS is a place of CONFINEMENT – Rev. 20 – it's where Satan & his legions go unless God, in His greater purposes, uses them on earth.

They don't want to be confined. They're having FUN messing up lives & communities! ... > "Don't send us to the Abyss ... please ... pretty please!"

A. Now I spent a lot of time this week thinking: "Why didn't Jesus just send them there?"

I mean ... HE HATES EVIL. He HATES the effects that these demons have had on that man & region! Why would He give demons anything they want? – Can there be any good in it?! ... Why didn't He just lock 'em up then & there (as He will eventually)!?!

We don't know specifics, but we do know it's always to serve the greater purposes of his glory. God's ways are above & beyond any of our ways; His thoughts greater than mine.

(ii) Those demons asked to go into a nearby herd of pigs. Jesus must have discerned that that was of God. He gave them permission.

But as soon as they bore influence on those swine, the pigs rush down a steep bank into the water and drown. They commit suicide! What animal ever commits suicide, apart from the influence of evil on them?!

A. Did Jesus know that would happen? Maybe so maybe not. Perhaps that Legion of demons ended up in the Abyss after all, the lake-bottom their route there!

B. Perhaps Jesus did know that would happen. Imagine the impact that seeing those pigs drown would have on the GERASENE MAN. For him there would be assurance & comfort in it – seeing the destruction of those demons under Jesus’ command. Maybe Jesus knew it would happen and for the man’s good – FOR HIS CONFIDENCE IN CHRIST – allowed it.

(And for the good of the farmers ... townspeople – it drew a crowd! It draws attention to Jesus and His work in this man! – It sets up his later ministry!)

Who knows? ... Maybe those pigs were inflicted with disease & should be destroyed!!

(iii) We don’t know all the purposes God has through Christ in this world. But this much is clear: EVIL FLEES AT JESUS’ COMMAND! HE IS THE STORM-STOPPER

4. After the deliverance, the man sits CALMLY at Jesus’ feet.

He is still. He has peace. The storm is gone.

He is dressed - He has dignity.

He is in his right mind – He can love and be loved.

THE STORM IS STILLED!

III. EVIL IN OUR LIFE

As we turn to apply this to our lives / our storms, let me address this question:

CAN CHRISTIANS HAVE DEMONS (unclean spirits) LIVING IN THEM?

I’m not asking whether Christians be demon-possessed (cause that’s not Biblical)?

1. This also is not to ask whether Christians can be harassed, tempted, oppressed, attacked, afflicted by demons.

Biblically that is CLEAR – we face an enemy who “prowls around like a roaring lion, looking for someone to DEVOUR” (1 Peter 5:8)

Eph. 6:12 – We struggle against the spiritual forces of evil.
NOBODY DISPUTES THIS.

2. But can those demonic powers be within us, if we’re a Christian?

(i) MOST Bible teachers say NO - Once the Holy Spirit lives in you, demons depart – because of the incompatibility of light & darkness. While demons can’t possess you, the Holy Spirit CAN (1 Cor. 6 – you are a temple of the Spirit). If He owns you, then demonic attack comes only from OUTSIDE of you, appealing to the sin nature within where, as an unclean spirit, the demon previously “attached”.

A few others DIFFER – they point to Ananias & Sapphira (Acts 5) believers of whom it says, when they LIED, “Satan filled their hearts”(same word used for the Holy Spirit’s filling their heart).

PRACTICALLY speaking, it makes no difference in handling the STORMS they bring!

A. DEMONS can influence our thinking & desire from either location: Whether they’ve been kicked out of the house to stay, and they’re just KNOCKING on the window of the room they used to live in (& you must go to the window & scare them off) ...

... or whether they crack open the window and slip within (and you must go into the room & command them out), what difference does it make?

Either way, we still need deliverance from being “demonized”.

THOMAS WHITE WRITES: *“Whether a demon buffets me from a mile away, the corner of the room, sitting on my shoulder, whispering in my ear, or clinging to my corruptible flesh, the RESULT is the same.”* ... = A STORM BEGINS TO BREW!

3. Like the Gerasene man, that storm has characteristics which you must spiritually discern:

A. It comes with a sense that God's ways are NOT the best for you. "Don't torture me, Jesus".

B. It comes to lead you to be "violent" to others – using, abusing

C. It comes to ROB YOU OF DIGNITY – to undress you – to make a SHAM of your life - to lead you into self-destructive behaviors: addictions to food, drugs, porn, shopping, gambling, control, anger, abuse - addictions that will leave you naked!

D. Satan's storm comes to ISOLATE YOU – in shame & privacy – no one knows who you really are.

THE STORMS COME – because there is an enemy who seeks to DEVOUR you.

IV. HANDLING EVIL

HOW DO WE HANDLE THEM?

To answer that, LET'S GO BACK INTO THE BOAT.

After Jesus rebuked the wind and waves; the storm subsides, and all was calm, He asked his disciples: "WHERE IS YOUR FAITH?"

Faith is what Jesus expects from us when the storms of evil come! (There are 2 ways to read this ... "FAITH" / "YOUR")

FAITH EXPRESSED AT TWO LEVELS:

1. First, FAITH THAT LOOKS AT HIM – who He is / where He is.

In that storm, He was asleep in the boat! Talk about someone who could nap anywhere!

(i) When Jesus says, "Where is your faith?", He's saying, "FIRST LOOK AT ME."

> "I am at REST – even in the midst of the storm" = no fear!

A. We know even more WHO HE IS – the storm-stopper!
IS HE IN YOUR LIFE? CENTER?

A. When the storm comes, find that center of peace & power in your life – look at Jesus. He is WITH YOU. Faith remembers that. Faith is CENTERED in that. Faith finds REST in that.

That’s where faith begins ... but faith is more than SURVIVING STORMS.

2. When Jesus says, “Where is your faith?”, He’s also asking, “Why didn’t you stand up and rebuke the wind & waves?”

He’s asking: “Where is YOUR faith? ... Can’t you discern what’s going on here?” ...

... And, realizing who is WITH you & FOR you, “Can’t you stand up and REBUKE the evil attacking you? ... Where is YOUR faith?”

= STAND UP IN HIS NAME & SAY, “Be gone”

(i) Faith grows beyond mere survival mentality – BAILING WATER in the storm.

In the name of Jesus, it COMMANDS the presence of evil away!

Where is YOUR faith?

A. Don’t just SURVIVE ... ADVANCE the kingdom – the gates of Hell will not prevail against you!

Yes, you’re SAFE in the boat when Jesus is with you ... you’re always safe ... but Jesus is asking for a faith which REBUKES EVIL!

Resist the devil & he will flee from you!

= THAT’S WHAT FAITH DOES, MEANS, KNOWING THE STORM-STOPPING POWER OF JESUS

3. When do the storms of evil blow into your life?

They come & go. Maybe you're in one right now! It takes a while to recover from those storms.

FAITH REBUKES IN JESUS' NAME!

(i) Christian maturity is also getting to know the "weather patterns" of your life! (Tom Skilling). You know when & where you're vulnerable.

I.e. – situations you're alone ... or with someone – temptation will come, storms brew – doesn't necessarily mean you shouldn't be there or with that person, but you'd better be prepared in prayer!

A. There are times of VULNERABILITY. Satan would like nothing more than to close the doors of Peace Church. When we're vulnerable (as the disciples were when Jesus was napping), be assured SATAN will be attacking a ministry!

FAITH REBUKES IN JESUS' NAME!

4. He is the storm-stopper with all power.

He delegates that authority to us, and as we learn to live by faith we grow in our ability to rebuke evil.

You and I may not be able to witness such dramatic results as these Scripture stories. That's understandable – Jesus was a man without sin. But it does not mean that, in His name, we don't command the evil around & within us, to be gone. WE DO!

- It may take us longer to overcome the storm; it may require more prayer & fasting ... but ours too is a ministry of rebuking evil in Jesus' name!

Where is YOUR faith?

Don't just be a storm-survivor, but a peace-maker!

ADVANCE THE KINGDOM!

V. CONCLUSION

1. That's how the story of the Gerasene man concludes: KINGDOM ADVANCING!

(i) Jesus transformed his life from being a "Man of the Tombs" to a "Man in Community".

= A man with a NEW LIFE and NEW CAUSE!

A. After his deliverance, the man would like to stay with Jesus, but Jesus sends him home – out of the cemetery, back to the neighborhood:

RETURN HOME AND TELL HOW MUCH GOD HAS DONE FOR YOU!

2. As we RECEIVE the storm-stopping power of Jesus over evil;

As we MINISTER that power; we gain a story to tell!

(i) Those people in the Gerasene region needed to hear it!

They sent JESUS away in fear. They didn't understand Him. The man had his work cut out for him – but he went to it, "telling ALL OVER TOWN how much Jesus had done for him!" (v. 39)

OUR WORLD STILL NEEDS THIS MESSAGE

You who know Jesus, where is YOUR FAITH?

AMEN!