

Matthew 8 • The Authority of Jesus

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Matthew chapter 8. Let's pray.

Lord, speak to our hearts. Allow the ministry of Your Spirit to really touch us, Lord, at the deepest level. And teach us today, Lord, the things that we need to learn. We look to You. Our hearts are tuned to You. Fill us we pray now. We ask it in Jesus name, amen.

This chapter begins by saying, *“When he came down from the mountain, (that's where Jesus has been during the last 3 chapters teaching the Sermon on the Mount, it says) great crowds followed him. ² And behold, a leper came to him and knelt before him, saying, “Lord, if you will, (and that literally means if you are willing, you can make me clean) you can make me clean.” ³ And Jesus stretched out his hand and touched him, saying, “I will; (in other words, I'm willing) be clean.” And immediately his leprosy was cleansed. ⁴ And Jesus said to him, “See that you say nothing to anyone, but go, show yourself to the priest and offer the gift that Moses commanded, for a proof to them.” (ESV)*

I, actually, we read this passage on Wednesday night during our Leviticus study. And the reason we went to this passage during Leviticus is because we were dealing with all of those skin diseases that were so readily prevalent, I suppose, among the Israelites during that time. And so God had to give them lots of instructions about how to deal with them and so on, and so on, and so on.

We also talked about the fact that when a person had leprosy, they were basically ostracized from the community of Israel. Nobody could come near them. They weren't supposed to come near anybody else. And they were supposed to call out when they did find themselves among others who weren't so infected. And they had to cry out, unclean, unclean. And that was a way of warning people.

And the reason for that wasn't to be mean, it was because leprosy and many of the other skin diseases that went under the name of leprosy, were very contagious. And so this was a situation that just went on.

By the way, I don't know if you know this, but leprosy is still going on in some third world countries unfortunately. You go to India, they still have leper

colonies. It's called Hansen's disease today, but back in biblical times, it was a death sentence for sure. And you would be put into a leper colony. And from the day you contracted the disease until the end of your life, you would never more experience that simple element of human touch. No one would touch you.

What's interesting about this passage is what we read in verse 3 where it says, *"And Jesus stretched out his hand and touched him,..."* I can well imagine, it says great crowds followed Him. I'll bet you anything there was some gasps of horror when he did that. Really, because it's like, what are you doing? You don't touch a leper. You just don't do that.

For starters, if you touch them, you would be ceremonially unclean yourself. Big deal. The tough part is that you would contract leprosy, but surprise, Jesus didn't get leprosy. The man ended up getting healed. Proving again that Jesus is greater than the most feared diseases of the day. And I believe that it still be true today.

Verse 5 goes on and says, *"When he had entered Capernaum, a centurion came forward to him, appealing to him,"* ⁶ *"Lord, my servant is lying paralyzed at home, suffering terribly.""* Let me explain a little bit why this is an interesting situation.

Israel had been conquered by Rome and so here comes this centurion. Well, we're going to find out that wasn't exactly the case. I'll explain in a minute. But anybody who was from Rome was despised because Israel had been conquered. And the Roman soldiers that wandered around the streets of Jerusalem and other places frankly, were a constant reminder of the humiliation of the Jews.

And the Romans often made life miserable for the Jews. They not only had conquered them and demanded their obedience, but they taxed them also very heavily. Somebody who you see walking around as a Roman soldier or even somebody who represents a Roman soldier is not going to be someone that anyone is going to like very much.

Now, here's the thing I need to explain to you. The picture that Matthew gives us here in this grouping of verses makes it sound very much like the Roman centurion himself came to Jesus and pled with Him on behalf of his servant. However, Luke tells us a slightly different slant to the story. Let me put it up on the screen. It's from Luke chapter 7 and it says,

Luke 7:1-3 (ESV)

After he had finished all his sayings in the hearing of the people, he entered Capernaum. Now a centurion had a servant who was sick and at the point of death, who was highly valued by him. When the centurion heard about Jesus, he sent to him elders of the Jews, asking him to come and heal his servant.

After he had finished all his sayings in the hearing of the people, he entered Capernaum. Now a centurion had a servant who was sick and at the point of death, who was highly valued by him. When the centurion heard about Jesus, (look at this) he sent to him elders of the Jews, asking him to come and heal his servant.

Luke tells us that the centurion actually didn't come, he sent elders, Jewish elders to do this.

And, you might look at these two passages and say why the difference? Well, there's no problem here, and there's no contradiction. Because, first of all, Matthew is known to abbreviate passages and stories related to this. Luke gives more information.

But Matthew's version, where he doesn't mention the representatives and just basically makes it sound like the centurion came by himself is based in the whole idea that when you send a representative to speak on your behalf, the words and the actions of that representative or representatives are the same as, and carry the same weight as the person asking them self.

This was a common sort of an idea in biblical times. It's not something we think about as much today. And it's one of the reasons why people get messed up when they hear about the fact that we are to pray in the name of Jesus and we are to go forth and share the gospel in the name of Jesus. We think it means tagging a little end on the end of our prayers, in the name of Jesus, amen.

But see, in biblical times, they knew and understood that when you go in the name of someone, you go as their representative. And what you say is what they're saying. And so in Matthew's understanding of this whole thing, he doesn't need to simply give us the information that these representatives came because it doesn't matter. They came in the name of the centurion. They came to speak in his name. It frankly just wasn't important and it was perfectly acceptable to leave that information out.

Anyway, it goes on here, and it says in verse 7, *“And he said to him, “I will come and heal him.”*⁸ *But the centurion replied,* (and of course, this is spoken

through his representatives) *“Lord, I am not worthy to have you come under my roof, but only say the word, and my servant will be healed. ⁹ For I too am a man under authority, with soldiers under me. And I say to one, ‘Go,’ and he goes, and to another, ‘Come,’ and he comes, and to my servant, ‘Do this,’ and he does it.”*”

In other words, what the centurion is communicating to Jesus, again through his representatives is that I understand the idea of authority, and I know how it works. And when I give a command to one of my soldiers, I don't have to go there and watch him carry out my command, I know he's going to do it. The reason is because I have authority over that individual. And if he knows what's good for him, he's going to do what I told him to do. He understands my authority. I understand authority. And so he says to Jesus, there's no need for you to come. Just give the word.

I want you to notice in verse 10 what it says, because we're told, *“When Jesus heard this, he marveled and (He) said to those who followed him, “Truly, I tell you, with no one in Israel have I found such faith.”*

Now that's an interesting statement, and it wouldn't probably have gone over very well from with the Jews that were following Jesus. He's basically telling them, I've never heard this level of real faith even among the Jews. And here comes this Gentile, who by the way would be despised by all of these Jews following Jesus. And Jesus says, this man has expressed greater faith than I've ever heard. And it says, *“he marveled.”*

You ever think about what it takes to make God marvel? There's only two references in the entire Bible of Jesus marveling. This is one of them, where He marvels at this man's faith. The other time that Jesus marveled was at the very opposite. Let me show you this on the screen from Mark chapter 6. It says,

Mark 6:5-6a (ESV)

And he could do no mighty work there, except that he laid his hands on a few sick people and healed them. And he marveled because of their unbelief.

And he (and that's Jesus) could do no mighty work there, except that he laid his hands on a few sick people and healed them. And he marveled (why?) because of their unbelief.

Guess what? That's what it takes to marvel, to make God marvel. Either faith or unbelief. But now Jesus is going to use this. This is not one of those things that

happens every day. This level of expression of faith. Jesus is going to use this to make a point.

And He goes on to do that in verse 11. And He says, *“I tell you, many will come from east and west and recline at table with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (that patriarchs of Israel) in the kingdom of heaven, ¹² while the sons of the kingdom (and that’s referring to the Jews) will be thrown into the outer darkness. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”*

Now, be careful, Jesus isn't saying that all Jews are going to be thrown into outer darkness and that all Gentiles are going to be accepted in the kingdom of God. He is saying though, to the Jews, there are going to be Gentiles in the kingdom of God and they're going to sit with the patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, while some of you will not be there.

This statement certainly wouldn't have scored any points for Jesus with the Jews because most of the Jews believed the Gentiles couldn't even be saved. They weren't capable of being saved. Here Jesus is saying, not only are they going to be saved, some of them, but some of them are actually going to sit at the table at the great feast of the heavens. And, while He's also saying that some Jews are going to be thrown into outer darkness. As far as the Jews were concerned, that was an absurd statement. I mean, you're not even making any sense anymore.

But why would some Gentiles be accepted at God's table, and some Jews would not? Well, what's the context of this passage? What just happened? This man gave an expression of faith, right? That's the context.

It's not like somebody just did some powerful, glorious, moral, virtuous work, and then Jesus said, began to talk about who is going to be in heaven and who's not. What happened was faith. Somebody simply saying, I believe. I believe. And then Jesus launches into this statement. The Gentiles, some of the Gentiles are going to be there and some of the Jews are not.

You see, that's the important thing to see in this. It's all about faith. Faith is so critical, so key. We're going to see it several times throughout the course of our study here in Matthew.

But I went through a period of time in my life where I played down faith. And the reason I did was because I had been exposed early on in my Christian life, my serious Christian life anyway, by the word faith movement. You guys familiar with that? We call it word faith. We call it ultra-faith. There's been a movement that's been going on for, quite some time, decades, where faith is

built up in, I believe, some actually unbiblical ways. And I was exposed to that. And I knew even as a young believer that it was bunk. I knew that people were doing and saying things that just didn't line up with the Word of God, but they were doing the name it, claim it, this and that, and the other thing.

What happened is, I had a knee jerk reaction to that and I stopped emphasizing faith and I just was like... And this is even as a pastor and I'm just going to teach through the Word of God. But I'd come to these passages in the Bible that would just bug me.

Jesus would talk about faith and I would read these verses where Jesus would say, if you pray and you believe that you've received it, you'll have it. And I would say like, Jesus, why did you say that? That's so dumb. Don't you know, that's just fodder for these word faith guys. They're going to blow it up and they're going to make it say something You didn't mean. And I don't even know why You even said it. That was dumb.

And I would read these things in the Bible and I would actually get upset a little bit because I felt like, Jesus isn't really helping the matter here. But the more I taught through the Bible and by the way, I'm on my fourth time teaching through the Bible, the more it kept running into faith. Faith. Faith. Faith.

Especially the apostle Paul. He was really concerned about faith. You read through his letters, he's constantly concerned about the people growing in their faith, expressing faith. He would say to them, I long to come and be with you that I might build up your faith. (Romans 1:11) He was very concerned about it.

And I finally got to the place in my life where I could no longer deny the importance, the critical importance of faith. Faith is key. Faith is huge and we can't allow someone's unbiblical approach to the topic of faith, allow us to be blinded to what the Bible does say about the importance of faith in our lives.

Good grief, it starts with salvation. We're saved by grace through what? Faith. And then our life in Christ is lived day by day from faith to faith. The righteous will live by faith. (Romans 1:17, Galatians 3:11, Hebrews 10:38) It's everything. Anyway. And I'm not saying you have to get weird about it, like some people do but it we can't ignore it either. Faith is so cool.

Verse 13, it goes on here. It says, *"And to the centurion Jesus said, "Go; let it be done for you (look at this) as you have believed."* (or, like you would often say, according to your faith, right?) *And the servant (we're told) was healed at that very moment."* In other words, his faith was rewarded and that's beautiful.

Verse 14. *“And when Jesus entered Peter's house, he saw his mother-in-law lying sick with a fever. ¹⁵ He touched her hand, and the fever left her, and she rose and began to serve him. ¹⁶ That evening they brought to him many who were oppressed by demons, and he cast out the spirits with a word and healed all who were sick.”*

Well, what Matthew is doing here is he's beginning to lay out for you and me as we read through this Gospel account, the fact that Jesus has authority over all of these things. Demonic possession, sicknesses. And by the way, you'll notice that Matthew draws a distinction between illness and demonic possession. Doesn't mean that Satan can't induce some kind of physical infirmity, but it's not always the case. And we see that here in these verses.

But I want you to pay special attention here to the first four words of verse 17. Look with me at those in your Bible. Verse 17, *“This was to fulfill (and then He goes on to say) what was spoken by the prophet Isaiah: “He took our illnesses and bore our diseases.””*

And what Matthew is quoting there is Isaiah chapter 53. One of the most amazing chapters in the entire Bible, because it is so prophetically on point about the life and ministry, death, burial and resurrection of the Messiah. It's just mind blowing. He's quoting this verse from Isaiah 53, but he's quoting it in such a way as to say that the earthly healing ministry of Jesus fulfilled that passage. Did you catch that? This was to fulfill. Why am I emphasizing that?

Well, again, I come back to the faith healers, the word faith group. They like to quote this passage from and they like to say that When it says that Jesus bore our illnesses, that means that he bore them on the cross and therefore healing is a guarantee of the covenant that we now have through Jesus Christ.

Right? But that's not what Matthew said, is it? He pointed to the earthly healing ministry of Jesus and said this was to fulfill. In other words, Isaiah's prophecy was fulfilled by the earthly healing ministry of Jesus. Now what am I saying about healing? Am I saying God doesn't heal today? Absolutely not.

We believe in healing. We believe that God heals. When people come up front and they have a physical issue, infirmity, sickness, ailment, whatever, we will according to the exhortation given us in the book of James, anoint them with oil. We will lay hands on them and pray for healing. Here's the difference.

I don't believe that healing is guaranteed in the covenant that we are now under, and we're under the new covenant, right? And we believe that God heals. But

we also leave room for His sovereignty, and we do not believe that healing is a guarantee of the covenant. It is the sovereign right and choice of God to heal when He sees fit.

We believe He can heal at any time. He has the power to do and we don't question that. God can heal. Can God heal you? Yes, of course. Is he going to in every and all situations? I don't know. I'm not God and neither are you. And all I can tell you is there's not a guarantee in the covenant. It's not a part of the covenant because you see our covenant in Jesus Christ is not about physical things.

It's about spiritual things. Israel's covenant was a physical covenant. Israel's covenant was all about physical things. The land, their enemies, their children, their crops. And God did say in the old covenant that the diseases of the Egyptians would not touch them. Although it was conditional. They had to be obedient to the covenant.

Under the new covenant, we know that all of the blessings and all of the promises that are ours in Jesus are spiritual promises. And that's what Paul explains in the Book of Ephesians. If you want to go through and read that sometime, he starts off the Book of Ephesians in chapter 1 by saying, all of our blessings and all of the promises of God are kept for us in the heavens. They're spiritual. Right? That's what the new covenant is all about.

So, does God heal? Yes. Does He heal every time? No. Is it a guarantee? No. Is God's love a guarantee? Yes and God's sovereignty is always a guarantee as well. It's important that we understand that.

Verse 18 goes on. It says, *"Now when Jesus saw a crowd around him, he gave orders to go over to the other side."*¹⁹ *And a scribe came up and said to him, "Teacher, I will follow you wherever you go."*²⁰ *And Jesus said to him, "Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head."*²¹ *Another of the disciples said to him, "Lord, let me first go and bury my father."*²² *And Jesus said to him, "Follow me, and leave the dead to bury their own dead."* Okay, we need to talk about this a little bit.

First of all, you got to know that when there's a crowd and it's exciting and exciting things are going on, there's always going to be people who are going to, be attracted by the excitement. And Jesus knew that when people get excited, they're bound to make promises that they perhaps don't fully understand the significance of. And promising devotion in a time of excitement is one thing.

Sticking to that promise when the going gets hard, that's another thing, altogether.

Jesus, interestingly enough, He tries talking people out of following Him, which I think is really something. The scribe comes up and says, I'll "*follow you wherever you go*" and He goes, well, I'm homeless. That's what He said. He's... All these people are going to go home here tonight, I don't know where I'm going to sleep. You still interested?

And then the other guy comes up and he says, Lord, let me go and bury my father first. And Jesus responds to him in what might sound like a little bit of a harsh response when He says, let the dead bury their own.

But you see, the point is, it's very possible, very, very likely that this man's father had not yet died and probably wasn't even close to death because there was a familial responsibility among the Jews, particularly among the firstborn that you needed to be responsible for your parents when they came to that place of death. And it was an expression of great honor for someone to be buried. To go unburied was something that only the cursed had happened to them. To follow through and to take care of one's parents after they passed, to make sure they had the proper burial was a responsibility that every Jew knew was extremely important.

But essentially what he's saying to Jesus is, I'll follow you later. It's not convenient right now. There's other things that I might need to do first. And so let me take care of those things first, and then I'll follow you. And then Jesus responds again with that saying, look, tell you what, why don't you leave "*the dead to bury their own dead.*"

You might think, well, I don't know, it's a little harsh. Oh no, just wait. When we get to Matthew chapter 10, Jesus is going to up the ante. Let me show you this on the screen from Matthew 10,

Matthew 10:37 (ESV)

Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me, and whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me.

Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me, and whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me.

Now we're going to talk about this passage in more detail when we get there, but sufficed to say that Jesus has just raised the bar of devotion to a pretty high level, right?

He says, and this is sometimes hard for us to read because we're very family oriented. We love our families. I love my wife. I love my kids and along comes Jesus and says you need to love Me more And if you don't, you're not worthy of Me.

Can I explain that He's talking here about discipleship, the devotion of discipleship, and He's not talking about salvation. You guys understand there's a difference right, between discipleship and salvation. You need to understand that because otherwise you're going to come to some passages like this, the one we just saw up on the screen and others.

Remember, Jesus said, if you don't take up your cross and follow me, you're not worthy of me. (Matthew 10:38) Remember that one? Some people who don't understand the difference between discipleship and salvation, look at that passage and they say, that's what's required to be saved. That's not what Jesus is saying. He's saying that's what's required to follow Him as a disciple. You see?

Listen, you got to understand, salvation is free. Discipleship is costly, very costly. It costs you your life. But salvation, that's free. You with me? Don't confuse the two. If you do, you're going to come away with a works based understanding of how a person is saved. Jesus is talking here about devotion, following Him, being devoted in that discipleship sort of a way.

Verse 23, *“And when he got into the boat, his disciples followed him. ²⁴ And behold, there arose a great storm on the sea, so that the boat was being swamped by the waves; but he was asleep. ²⁵ And they went and woke him, saying, “Save us, Lord; we are perishing.” ²⁶ And he said to them, “Why are you afraid, O you of little faith?”* (if He'd have given them a minute, if I was there, I could have come up with a few reasons) *Then he rose and rebuked the winds and the sea, and there was a great calm. ²⁷ And the men marveled, saying, “What sort of man is this, that even winds and sea obey him?””*

There are some important questions in this passage that it's good for us to look at. And the first one is uttered by Jesus where He says, *“Why are you afraid, O you have little faith.”* Now I want you to think about this for a little bit. There's four guys in this boat who were fishermen. Peter and his brother Andrew, and then the brothers, James and John. They probably have been in a boat since their

earliest days cause dad was a fisherman. I imagine he took them along, from the time they could probably start walking.

Chances are very good, they were very familiar with the dangerous squalls that would come upon the sea of Galilee at a moment's notice, and swamp a boat, and cause a loss of life. In fact, I am willing to bet that at least those men were personally familiar with people who had lost their lives at sea. I'm willing to bet because it was not an uncommon sort of a thing.

And this is the same kind of squall that came up on the sea of Galilee when these guys are out on the boat. Jesus is asleep, but they know exactly the danger level of this whole event. And yet Jesus has the audacity to say to them, why were you guys afraid? What's going on?

You look at that. Like I said, if I was in the boat, I'd say, give me a minute. I'll give you a few reasons why I was afraid. Well, the fact of the matter is it was fairly natural thing for them to be afraid. They knew the consequences. They knew the outcome of being on the sea when that kind of wind and stuff was going on. And it was natural for them to fear for their lives.

But you see, that's the point. Jesus is calling them, leading them to not just respond naturally, but to respond with faith. Which is by the way, a supernatural response. And that's really what He's challenging them to begin to do. Because you see these very same men, they're going to deal with some dangers that are even greater than wind and waves, and that's coming down the pike.

In fact, all of these men, save that of John, will give their lives in martyrdom for the Lord Jesus Christ. And John, we believe died of old age, although they tried to kill him a few times, it just didn't take. These guys are going to be confronted through the years with some pretty astounding dangers, and they're going to need to get used to looking at those dangers through the eyes of faith, and the sovereignty of God.

And that's a lesson for all of us because we've learned to look at life through our own natural eyes. We see a situation, we're confronted with a situation. We know that other people have gone down in these same circumstances, and we immediately fear. We fear all the time.

Jesus is challenging His closest followers to say, there's a new paradigm, a new dynamic that needs to take hold in your hearts where fear is not your reaction to every circumstance that you face in life, but rather faith. To trust in Me with all

of your heart and to lean not on your own understanding. You see, their own understanding would clearly put them in a tailspin emotionally in this situation.

But I want you to begin to operate on a different level. I want you to begin to walk in faith. Because when we do that, rather than fear, we begin to experience peace. Here's how the apostle Paul explained it in his letter to the Philippians on the screen. He says,

Philippians 4:6-7 (ESV)

...do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

...do not be anxious about anything, (easier said than done, right?) but in everything (in other words, in the midst of all of those challenging times) by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. (and then what happens?) And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

Have you ever experienced that peace that passes understanding? I have. What it means is you're peaceful, but you don't know why. You're like, I don't get it. And it's just, there's a peace, there's a peace in your heart. But you'll notice that the promise of peace comes with conditions.

It's in verse 6, “do not be anxious...” Instead, pray, lay these things before God “with thanksgiving.” “And (then) the peace of God..., will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.” In other words, we're called to trust God instead of spending our time worrying.

But there's another question in this cluster of verses here that we need to look at, and that is the one that the disciples asked after Jesus calmed the wind and the waves. Notice that they said, what sort of man is this? See, they're not, they're, they've been seeing all this stuff, but they're still not sure who they're dealing with. They say, “What sort of man is this, (I mean) ...the winds... obey him?” The waves obey Him.

Well, actually there's a passage in the Psalms that explains or answers the question, who is this? Who is this guy? Anyway, let's look it up on the screen. He says,

Psalm 89:8-9 (ESV)

O LORD God of hosts, who is mighty as you are, O LORD, with your faithfulness all around you? You rule the raging of the sea; when its waves rise, you still them.

O LORD God of hosts, who is mighty as you are, O LORD, with your faithfulness all around you? (look at this) You rule the raging of the sea; when its waves rise, you still them.

So the psalmist answers their question. Who is this guy? Guys, this is the Lord of Hosts. That's who this is. This is the Son of God, the Lord of Hosts. And you can see here that the Lord is systematically revealing Himself to His disciples by showing His authority over all these things.

And then in this final section of the chapter, one more show of authority. Jesus is going to prove His sovereign rule. It says in verse 28, *“And when he came to the other side, to the country of the Gadarenes, (and that's the other side of the Jordan or the other side of the sea of Galilee) two demon-possessed men met him, coming out of the tombs, (it says, they were) so fierce that no one could pass that way.”*

All right. You need to understand where Jesus is because He didn't go here very often. Let me put a map up on the screen here so you can see it and there's a little red pin. If you'll see that to the south and to the right there of the sea of Galilee. That's the region of Gadara or if you will, the region of the Gadarenes.



Now, Jesus didn't go there very often because frankly, this was never part of God's original promised land to Israel. All of the promised land was on the west side of the Jordan River, which you see flowing down from the Sea of Galilee.

But when they got to the land, you'll remember when Moses brought them to the land, some of the tribes wanted to stay on the east side of the Jordan. In fact, there were two and a half of them that said, this is a really nice land here, we like to stay. And they asked Moses if that would be okay.

Well, Moses said, okay, here's the deal. If you're fighting men will cross the river and fight alongside your brothers, and clear the land of the people there, then after that's finished, you can go back and you can possess this land. All right. But again, it was never really intended to be God's portion, but He gave it to them on a special condition, sort of a situation.

Well, the problem is those two and a half tribes that lived on the east side of the Jordan, they were separated from the rest of Israel by the Jordan. And there were times of the year when you couldn't cross the Jordan because it was at flood stage. And so they couldn't get there to worship with their fellow Jews. And these were the first peoples who began to fall away from the Lord and began to fall under the influence of the pagan societies and the gentile societies that lived in those regions on the east side of the Jordan.

So this is where Jesus finds Himself now. He's crossing the Jordan. He's there in the region of the Gadarenes. And it tells us here that as he approached a graveyard, that two men who literally lived there among the tombs came running out and screaming at Jesus.

Verse 29 tells us what they said. I think this is fascinating. *“And behold, they cried out, “What have you to do with us, O Son of God? Have you come here to torment us before the time?””*

We don't typically sit and focus on the words of demons to try to learn about what's true because they have a real hard time telling the truth. But this is a very interesting statement as it relates to Jesus because you'll notice they instantly refer to Him as the *“Son of God.”* They've leapfrogged above the whole idea of even Messiah. The Jews hadn't even come to that conclusion yet, that He was really truly the Messiah.

These guys already know He's the Son of God. Why? Because the demons know who God is. Man struggles. You might have neighbors, friends, relatives, co-workers, they haven't figured out who Jesus is yet. But the demons know who He is. And that's what they begin to say.

I want you to also notice here, they begin to speak about judgment. Notice they cried out, *“Have you come... to torment us before the time?”* In other words, before the appointed time.

Here's what's interesting. The demons know and understand that judgment is coming and they know they can't do anything about it. In fact, they were wondering if Jesus came to hasten that time. Have you come to do this before the appointed time?

They know full well that there's a time of judgment coming. Did you know that? In fact, did you further know that you're going to be involved in the judgment process over those fallen angels. Let me show you this on the screen. It's from 1 Corinthians chapter 6. Paul asks,

1 Corinthians 6:3a (ESV)

Do you not know that we are to judge angels?

Do you not know that we are to judge angels?

And he's referring there to the fallen ones. And that's what demons are. They're just fallen angels. You got to imagine this is really quite a scene. Jesus is walking up past this graveyard and these two men come screaming out. Yeah, running toward Him and asking Him these questions.

And then Matthew tells us in verse 30, *“Now a herd of many pigs was feeding at some distance from them.”* And by the way, this is another sign that these people living in this region had thrown off they're Jewishness because pigs were an unclean animal and they were not to be raised by Jews. An observant Jew would not be raising pigs so you can see what's going on here.

Verse 31 says, *“And the demons begged him, saying, “If you cast us out, send us away into the herd of pigs.””* This is crazy, but interesting too, that the demons were so fearful about not having a host, that they were willing to go into pigs instead. I'm sure they knew that Jesus wouldn't let them go into any other humans.

And so it says in verse 32 that, *“...he said to them, “Go.” So they came out (that means the demons came out of the two men) and went into the pigs, and behold, the whole herd rushed down the steep bank into the sea and drowned in the waters.”* We're told that whole herd in another Gospel account, consisted of about 2,000. That's a lot of pigs. Right. It's a lot of ham hocks.

Anyway, isn't it interesting that apparently these pigs, which have no capability of resisting the destructive element of demonic possession, just simply freak out of their minds, and run down the hill, and drown themselves. Human beings at least have the ability to resist at some level, but pigs don't, or I should say animals don't.

And so they simply have to do what is inherent in the demons which is to destroy. And please understand demons only have one plan for your life and that is destruction. Thankfully in Jesus you have authority and power over demons. You don't have to worry about demons and believers cannot be inhabited by a demon, they can be harassed but not inhabited. Anyway, we see this interesting response by the pigs as they just give in to the operational function of the demons, which is to destroy.

Verse 33, *“The herdsmen fled, and going into the city they told everything, especially what had happened to the demon-possessed men. ³⁴ And behold, all the city came out to meet Jesus, and when they saw him, they begged him to leave their region.”*

Isn't that surprising? I mean, it's a little bit tragic, too. But, it's just an all too familiar attitude that we see in some people. That they're just not, I'm not ready for God. I'm not ready for God to come in and change my life so would you just leave please? This is not a good time for me to be a Christian. Okay?

I worked with a guy in radio back in my radio days and I wasn't a believer either. I wasn't, well, I should say this, I wasn't walking with the Lord. I was working in rock and roll radio as a disc jockey. And there was this buddy of mine whose mother was a Christian, and she was constantly exhorting him to go to church and to give his life to the Lord.

And he told me one time over breakfast, he said, I'm just not ready to do that. I'm having too much fun. In other words, this isn't a good, convenient time for me to give my life to the Lord, and that's the attitude of these people. I mean, their whole herd of pigs is dead and Jesus rained on their parade and would you just please leave?

Here's what's really interesting about this whole passage. We find out in another passage of scripture that the man who at least, one of the men who had been delivered from all of these demons asked Jesus if he could come along and be His follower and Jesus said no. It's recorded in Mark chapter 5. I want to show you that passage up on the screen. Here's how it goes.

Mark 5:18-20 (NKJV)

And when He got into the boat, he who had been demon-possessed begged Him that he might be with Him. However, Jesus did not permit him, but said to him, “Go home to your friends, and tell them what great things the Lord has done for you, and how He has had compassion on you.” And he departed and began to proclaim in Decapolis all that Jesus had done for him; and all marveled.

And when He got into the boat, he who had been demon-possessed begged Him (that's Jesus) that he might be with Him. (I'm quoting this out of the New King James) However, Jesus did not permit him, but said to him, “Go home to your friends, and tell them what great things the Lord has done for you, and how He has had compassion on you.” And he departed (and he departed, and that's the demoniac, or at least the former demoniac) and began to proclaim in Decapolis

(which is the, in other words, for the ten cities) *all that Jesus had done for him; and all marveled.*

So people are, they're sitting up and they're taking notice at this man's testimony. Why? Because they all knew that this is one of the guys that used to live at the graveyard and he was so violent, nobody could restrain him. We find out in another gospel account, they used to chain him or tie him with ropes and nothing would work. They would eventually get free. And we're just so violent that people were like, I'm not going that way.

And here he is walking around in his right mind saying, let me tell you what Jesus did for me. You know what? That's going to get people's attention, right? Well, it did get people's attention. And Jesus came back this way later on.

And you know what? Instead of the people asking him to leave, He got a different reception. It's actually in the very next chapter of Mark. Let me show it to you on the screen from Mark 6 it says,

Mark 6:53-56 (ESV)

When they had crossed over, they came to land at Gennesaret and moored to the shore. And when they got out of the boat, the people immediately recognized him and ran about the whole region and began to bring the sick people on their beds to wherever they heard he was. And wherever he came, in villages, cities, or countryside, they laid the sick in the marketplaces and implored him that they might touch even the fringe of his garment. And as many as touched it were made well.

When they had crossed over, they came to land at Gennesaret (and that's another name for that area of the Gadarenes) and moored to the shore. And when they got out of the boat, the people immediately recognized him and ran about the whole region and began to bring the sick people on their beds to wherever they heard he was. And wherever he came, in villages, cities, or countryside, they laid the sick in the marketplaces and implored him that they might touch even the fringe of his garment. And as many as touched it were made well.

Isn't that crazy? They went from a place of saying, you need to leave, to saying, if we, they had such faith, if we just touch the tassel of His garment, we know that we will be healed because if He could do it for that guy, He can do it for me. Nobody could touch that guy. Nobody could get near that guy. That guy had so many demons we lost count.

And Jesus healed him. And now we see him walking around fully clothed and in his right mind. And if Jesus can change a life like that, sky's the limit. And they came in droves.

Don't feel bad about that man when Jesus said, no, you can't come with Me because he had work to do. And that work was to go tell people. Let me tell you what Jesus did. And it was fruitful, and there was a harvest, and it's good. Amen.

Let's stand together. We'll close in prayer and invite you as we always do, that if you need prayer this morning, we'll have our prayer team up front here to pray with you.

Father, thank You so much for loving us, and caring for us, and healing us. And Lord, whether You heal us physically so that You take away our disease or infirmity, or whether you heal us and bring us home, we are healed nonetheless.

And we know Lord God, that death has lost its grip because You have conquered it through your death, burial, and resurrection. And we praise You, O Lord, for who You are.

And we thank You, God, that every time we get into the Word, You nourish our hearts. So Lord, continue to speak to us through the Scriptures.

Grant us peace, grace, and life through Jesus Christ, our Savior, and all God's people said together, amen.

Have a good rest of your Sunday.