

*Sermon on Luke 8:22-56 prepared by Jonathan Shradar*

## **Luke 8:22-56**

**The power, mercy, and compassion of Christ won't leave us the same.**

*I want to thank Jonathan for inviting me to speak this morning, to tell my story. I am the Gerasene Demoniac. Strange name I know. And more of a description of who I used to be.*

*My story is all about meeting Jesus. Before I met him, life was dark. It is as if I had no control whatsoever. You can ask anyone who knew me, and I can confirm myself, I was out of my mind. Dark things dominated my thinking and every waking, and sleeping, moment was out of my ability to grasp or act. I felt like a zombie.*

*I would wake up to find myself in strange deserted places. My clothes would be gone and people would be scared. I was scared. We even tried to chain me to my bed to keep me home but no guard could prevent this army of demons from doing what they pleased with me.*

*My yearbook said "most likely to be remembered" but not for anything I wanted to be remembered for! Grave yards were more home to me than my family. And the darkness always lingered even when the sun rose each morning.*

*That is until I met Jesus. Long story short, I was possessed by demons until Jesus freed me and now, in my right mind, I can't help but tell everyone what God has done for me!*

Long story short. We all have one of those. Or at least we are in the midst of the formulation of that story. Of freedom. Belief. Home.

Occasionally you hear that phrase, long story short, at the end of a really long story!

Today is my attempt to give you a long story short. In our text, there is a lot of story. Three key stories in Jesus' ministry. And while each could be taken on their

own - mined for meaning and response - I want to take them as a whole, seeing who Jesus is throughout and reflecting on what that means for us.

## **The power, mercy, and compassion of Christ won't leave us the same.**

Context - we are in the midst of a section - through the end of chapter 9 - that highlights the identity and destiny of Jesus. Before us we have the "tells" of his power, mercy, and compassion. Uncovering these we are clued in on who this Jesus is - and it is more meaningful than maybe we have understood so far.

### **Power**

This week I was lamenting the tension between great ideas and the ability to make them happen. I feel like that disparity is a great descriptor of my life! Even beyond me, it seems we are inclined to rally around people, teachers, leaders, because we become convinced of the idea but lose hope when there is no ability to deliver.

Talking a big game but playing poorly. No different than Judea in the first century.

Jesus though stands apart from other teachers because more than ideas alone, he has the authority and the ability to deliver. Think about what he has done already.

- Saving a centurion's servant
- A widow's son raised to life out of his casket
- Driving out unclean spirits
- Healing a man lowered through the ceiling by his friends
- He doesn't just talk of forgiveness, he provides it.

The Kingdom is at hand and his actions are proving it.

In these stories, we see his power clearly displayed.

Why did Jesus cross the sea? To get to the other side.

Setting out to the others side of the lake, as they were sailing Jesus fell asleep. Dude was tired. Ministry is full. So he is taking the time and getting the rest that he needs.

*When I read this it makes me think of Darry, who do to his Navy training, can sleep anywhere. If you have ever been in a prayer time with Darry and it gets quiet, he will catch the sleep he needs!*

While Jesus sleeps a fierce windstorm hits the lake and the disciples, some of whom are experienced sailors, freak. The boat is taking on water and there is real danger.

He got up and rebuked the wind and raging waves. So they ceased and there was a calm. He has the power to direct even nature. Jesus said they were going to the other side, but the waves made the disciples doubt.

“Since we are people of little faith as well, we understand why they became fearful. But when Jesus said they would reach the other side, he meant what he said.” TS

Even if we think maybe this is coincidental, his power will deliver a man possessed by thousands of demons, bring a dead girl to life, and heal a woman beyond hope. After that healing touch he will say, “Someone did touch me,” said Jesus. “I know that power has gone out from me.” -- **Luke 8:46** (CSB)

“Who then is this?” His disciples ask... where the exercise of his power leads, and in its wake their is calm, deliverance, and healing.

Jesus clearly has power, otherworldy power. But he also extends mercy.

## **Mercy**

*Mercy:* “forbearance shown especially to an offender or to one subject to one's power” “kind and forgiving treatment of someone (as a wrongdoer or an opponent).” Essentially, when you have the power to give someone the punishment they deserve, and not giving it to them.

Say that Ewen, my son, wilfully takes a baseball bat to my car, breaking the windshield. While it is within my power to give the dude a spank and make him pay for the replacement; mercy is showing him the strange kindness by not tanning his hide or taking his money, instead paying for it myself.

Jesus has mercy on the faithless disciples by calming the storm. And he has mercy by delivering the demoniac.

The whole point of the boat journey was to get to the other side. Waiting there was a “demon-possessed” man from the town. Naked and crazed. Quite the sight to be welcomed ashore by.

The man falls at Jesus’ feet and cries out, “What do you have to do with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I beg you, don’t torment me!”

Jesus had commanded the unclean spirit to come out of the man.

*A quick aside here:* The spiritual realm is real. And we are going to see a lot more of it in our study of Luke. Growing up in the 90’s I maybe got to witness overdoing this reality - but where we recognize the evils of the world systems and even our flesh, there is also the devil and he is very real. There is a cosmic enemy of God and his people and his demons look to wreak havoc wherever they can.

“There are two equal and opposite errors into which our race can fall about the devils. One is to disbelieve in their existence. The other is to believe, and to feel an excessive and unhealthy interest in them. They themselves are equally pleased by both errors and hail a materialist and magician with the same delight.” C.S. Lewis

This man knows. He is seized by demons constantly. Bound by chains that snap as he is driven to deserted places.

We are not told why this man is possessed - and people will sell you books on how to avoid it - but Jesus extends mercy to him in delivering him. Extending kindness to someone he has the power to free.

“The night before, a single word from Jesus had flattened the raging sea. Now in the morning light, a veritable spiritual storm was again hushed with a single

word...The disciples' appreciation for and understanding of Christ flamed ever brighter. Jesus could do anything!" Hughes

And I wonder if Jesus isn't also extending mercy to the demons - Legion (military classification of thousands), begging to not be banished to the abyss. He gives them permission to enter the pigs.

The locals want Jesus to leave - which is a pretty common response - he has upended their routine, the status quo, and they rather their lives not be changed so!

But the man, clothed and in his right mind, wants to be with Jesus. Far better than the demons. "Go back home, and tell all that God has done for you."

Power, mercy, and now compassion.

## **Compassion**

"Sympathetic concern for the sufferings or misfortunes of others." Caring enough to act, to solve. Not just sending warm thoughts, but to care and have the ability to act. This is Jesus.

They return to the original side of the lake and a crowd has been there waiting for him.

This is the story of two daughters. 12 years of life and 12 years of pain. One dying, one not living. Juxtaposes two contrasting situations in life, sharing only desperation and fledgling faith.

We don't get a sense that either party are followers of Jesus - not yet anyway. But at the end of their ropes, and he has healed others.

Out of the crowd comes Jairus, leader of the synagogue - the one who decides who teaches, who sits where, and his daughter is dying. He pleads with Jesus to come to her.

And he goes, on his way. Compassion.

*I have a 12-year-old daughter. Just beyond baby girl status, becoming a woman. With her own thoughts, emotions, and interests. And I would do whatever I could to save her. (You would probably do the same for your kids). We get Jairus' request.*

As a parent, I would rather it be me who died rather than my child. Jesus knows this. Even on his way, when news of her death comes he is undeterred and in power - calls her to get up, and she does.

The other daughter though has no advocate. She has languished and suffered from bleeding for 12 years. She has spent all she had on doctors that did nothing. (Talmud is full of strange concoctions and rituals, incantations to solve this very problem).

She must have heard about the healing Jesus had done. And she fought here way through the crowd to get close thinking "all I have to do is touch him."

We might not recognize how profound this is. Understand - she has touched no one in 12 years. No one has touched her. She has been labeled "unclean" and to be with her, to sit where she sat, to touch her meant you too would be unclean.

Rejected. She is an outcast. If the crowd would have known, they would have lurched out of her way.

Touching just the end of his robe - "instantly her bleeding stopped."

Jesus was not made unclean, but his power healed her. And he gives her a name, no longer hidden, no longer invisible and unseen. "Who touched me?"

Everyone is like "not me!" And Peter, ever the one with an answer, says 'the crowd was pushing on you, who hasn't touched you.'

She saw that she was discovered - I wonder if it was Jesus' eyes that landed on her, that caught her face. She fell down before him and declared to everyone the reason and the healing.

He was gentle toward her. This is the only woman he ever called "daughter" in the whole Bible. "Your faith has saved you. Go in peace."

The outcast no belongs. In compassion, Jesus does more than heal, he calls her his own.

Power, mercy, compassion. This is who Jesus is.

What does this ultimately say about his identity?

“Who then is this? He commands even the winds and the waves, and they obey him!” -- **Luke 8:25** (CSB)

“Others went to sea in ships,  
conducting trade on the vast water.  
24 They saw the Lord’s works,  
his wondrous works in the deep.  
25 He spoke and raised a stormy wind  
that stirred up the waves of the sea.  
26 Rising up to the sky, sinking down to the depths,  
their courage melting away in anguish,  
27 they reeled and staggered like a drunkard,  
and all their skill was useless.  
28 Then they cried out to the Lord in their trouble,  
and he brought them out of their distress.  
29 He stilled the storm to a whisper,  
and the waves of the sea were hushed.  
30 They rejoiced when the waves grew quiet.  
Then he guided them to the harbor they longed for.  
31 Let them give thanks to the Lord  
for his faithful love  
and his wondrous works for all humanity.  
32 Let them exalt him in the assembly of the people  
and praise him in the council of the elders.” -- **Psalms 107:23-32** (CSB)

Wait, who then is this? That commands wind and waves... it is God.

“Praise is rightfully yours,  
God, in Zion;

vows to you will be fulfilled...

7 You silence the roar of the seas,  
the roar of their waves,  
and the tumult of the nations.” -- **Psalms 65:1,7** (CSB)

Even within our text...

“Go back to your home, and tell all that God has done for you.” And off he went, proclaiming throughout the town how much Jesus had done for him.” -- **Luke 8:39** (CSB)

The man of power, mercy, and compassion is Yahweh. This is God.

Jesus is no prophet, no mere teacher, he is not an entertaining miracle worker - he is God.

These are the “tells,” he has shown his hand; hands that will be pierced in mercy and compassion for us.

“He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. 16 For everything was created by him, in heaven and on earth, the visible and the invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities — all things have been created through him and for him. 17 He is before all things, and by him all things hold together. 18 He is also the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that he might come to have first place in everything. 19 For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, 20 and through him to reconcile everything to himself, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross.” -- **Colossians 1:15-20** (CSB)

In an age of deconstruction and doubt, this is the foundation - this is what the disciples will clue in on as they are sent - this is the reminder that comes over and over again in the Word - this is truth. And it doesn't leave us the same.

- The disciples are learning to trust, becoming fearless in the face of troubles.
- The man freed, in his right mind given a mission to make Jesus known.
- Two daughters both alive - made whole by the One who sees them and calls them his own.



They are all changed by Jesus. Never the same. It's glorious. And it's for us.

*The fact that Christ is the Creator, Sustainer, and Goal of everything brings us to the ultimate grand logic: he can meet every need we will have in this life or in the world to come.*

I have to confess, that I have far too often defaulted to holding Jesus far off, as the perfect example, neglecting his power, mercy, and compassion. Neglecting the awe that is meant for us before our Creator.

Beyond moral teaching, or the acting out of tradition, this is who Jesus is. A God of power, mercy, and compassion.

- Will you live trusting Jesus, (in community, on the boat with others!)
- Will you live free, (telling others what Jesus has done for you)
- Will you live belonging to him, alive in him?

What's your story? How has he shown his power? How has he extended mercy? How have you experienced his compassion?

*Long story short:* Jesus is God. He is for you. He has the power to deliver on his promises. He has mercy and compassion for you in endless reserve.

Whether 2, 12, 24, or more, reach out to him and live.

The power, mercy, and compassion of Christ won't leave us the same. Praise God!