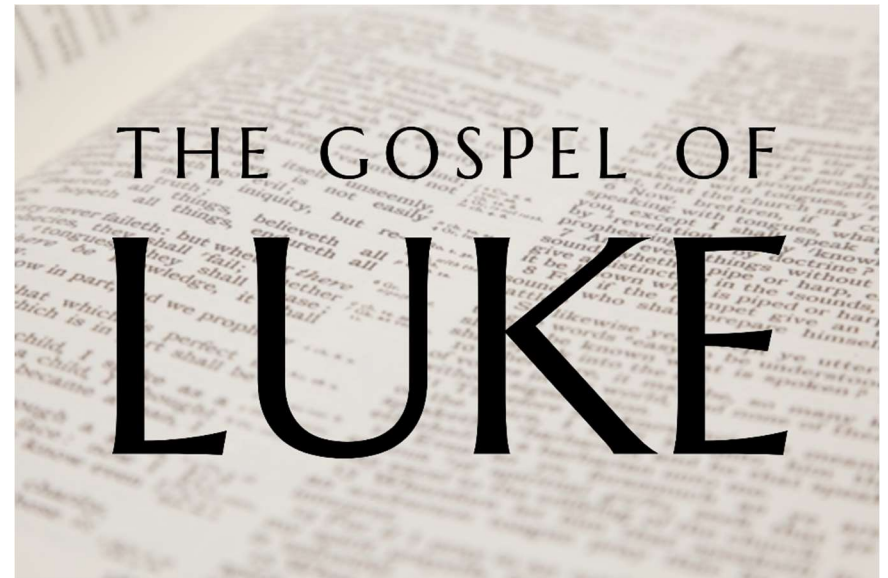


FAMILY WORSHIP BOOKLET



God tells us that Ezra read from the book of the Law,
day after day, and that the people of God
were filled with joy!

Friday - Please read Luke 8:40-48 - Jesus does know what is best for us.

Yesterday, we read how this woman who had this illness for twelve years, had reached out and touched the hem of Jesus' outer garment and was healed. Now we see in verse 45 that he turns around and asks, who touched his garment? Peter states the obvious, in essence, pick any one of a hundred people. But Jesus is not asking about those who have pressed up against him with no thought of what they are doing. He's asking about the one who touched him, knowing what, and why they were doing so. Jesus knows that "power" went out from him, he had permitted it, and he knows to whom and why, but he wants the person to come forward publicly. Why? Why would Jesus, knowing the woman's plight, want to make a public spectacle of her? She, after all, had done what she had because she wanted to keep her anonymity. This was a deeply personal matter. Others would possibly have been aware of it, but there is a difference between a few friends knowing and the whole of the community. Who wants their personal affairs to be laundered in public? Some things are just best left unsaid. Is Jesus so lacking in common sense that he cannot see and understand this? God often does things or allows things to happen that apparently make no sense, and often through other people, whether they are aware of it or not, for a reason.

Jesus persists and, indirectly by way of a general question to the crowd, invites the person to come forward. He desires that they do so voluntarily, for their own good. The woman steps forward, physically trembling, fearful of what Jesus might say, but again showing her faith in him. She remains calm, her head bowed low, and tells him, in front of everyone, that she is the one who touched him, and that she has been healed. So why did Jesus put her through this? Why did he not let her slip quietly away into the crowd and go home rejoicing? Because this woman needed to know that he loved her, as did the people in the community. Jesus didn't want her to go home and, after the excitement had died down, to possibly think that she had done something wrong in secretly benefiting from his healing power. He also wanted people to know that *he* had healed her. This may have been difficult for her to understand at the time, but she would subsequently see the blessing it was to her.

When God does things that we don't understand, things that seem to only make the situation worse and not better, things for which there appears to be no plausible explanation, we need to content ourselves that God does know what and why he is doing it. Time will reveal the reason for it.

Jesus' parting words to this woman are gentle and tender, knowing that she will receive them with grace. He calls her "daughter", the only woman in Scripture to have been addressed by Jesus in this way, showing his love for her, and declaring the conviction of her faith.

Q1. How does Jesus respond to the woman who touched his outer garment?

Q2. Why does Jesus seek to identify her? What benefit is this to her?

These notes have been prepared by
Rev. Dr. Andrew Quigley.

Thursday - Please read Luke 8:40-48 – People in real need seek Jesus.

Jesus returns home to Capernaum the same day as he had healed the man in the Gerasenes, and he is met by a crowd who welcome him. He is responding to a question about fasting (Matthew 9:17), when a prominent synagogue ruler called Jairus suddenly approaches him in a highly distressed state because his twelve-year-old and only daughter is dying ('only' in the sense of only child). His worst nightmare is unfolding before him. Ordinarily this presumably polite, well-mannered, respectable man would have waited until Jesus had finished what he was doing, but this demanded an urgent intervention. He falls at Jesus' feet, pleading for Jesus to come to his house and lay hands on his daughter so that she will live (Mark 5:23). Many things are important in our lives, but some things are 'off the page' important. Things only God can address. How we deal with those things determines the course of our lives.

Jesus is going to respond immediately, however, among the pressing crowd there is a woman who had been hemorrhaging blood for twelve years. The same number of years as Jairus' daughter had lived. It was a condition that had totally impacted this woman's life. Physically, it would have been extremely demanding on her body. Socially, it would have meant that she was considered ceremonially unclean (Leviticus 15:25ff.), drastically curtailing her opportunities for normal human interaction. As for public worship, that would have been impossible for the same reasons. Financially, she was ruined. She had been to numerous doctors, each offering to address the problem, but none doing so successfully; in fact, their interventions had made it worse (Mark 5:26).

Desperate, the woman ventures out to see Jesus and, in the melee that surrounds him, she manages to get close to him and then it happens – she touches a tassel on Jesus' square outer robe that is thrown over his shoulder. The merest physical contact with a tassel, probably bobbing about on Jesus' back as he walks along. Why does she do it? Because she believes doing so will heal her. It is really astonishing that she could think this. Where would she get the idea from? Yes, she probably had heard about Jesus' healings, but to think that she could be healed by just touching his outer garment? It is incredible when you think about it. However, it happens, and instantly she is healed, and she knows it. Mark says, "she felt in her body that she was healed of her disease" (Mark 5:29). What elation she must have felt. Twelve years of daily, unrelenting physical suffering are instantly gone. The possibility for renewed social interaction, yes, it would take time, but it would come; not to speak of the financial implications for the remainder of her life. All these thoughts must have been cascading through her speechless mind as she slowed down and allowed the crowd to pass by her; and then Jesus stops.

Q1. Who approaches Jesus and why?

Q2. Who else goes out and ends up touching the hem of his garment? Why?

Monday – Please read Luke 8:22-25 – Where is your faith?

Jesus gets into a boat and says to his disciples 'let us go across the lake'. The disciples follow; little do they know what lies ahead of them, but following is just that, it is 'following' and often we don't know where it will lead. One thing is for sure, when we follow Christ, it will always turn out for our good, no matter what happens.

As they set off from the shore in the boat, Jesus takes the opportunity to get some rest and falls asleep. Sleep is a wonderful blessing that God has granted to man, and one of the tell-tale signs that we are not doing well is if we are finding it difficult to sleep. If you are experiencing that, do not hesitate, go to the Lord and seek the peace that only He can give you.

The Lake of Galilee lies 700 feet below sea level, with mountains on either side which channel cold air, and frequently create the perfect conditions for a storm. But the storm that descends now is one that even the seasoned fisherman among them had not experienced before. Something which possibly points to some form of demonic activity. What the disciples say to waken Jesus up certainly speaks to the danger they are in, "Master, Master, we are perishing!". Mark adds, "Do you not care that we are perishing?" (Mark 4:38). Sometimes things can hit us, and it seems that God is either asleep or doesn't care. Nothing could be further from the truth though, God never slumbers nor sleeps, and He cares more than you and I will ever understand. We need to remember that.

Luke, like Mark, says that Jesus addresses the storm, whereas Matthew says that Jesus speaks to the disciples first. Why the contradiction? Because we are dealing with real people and people just remember things differently. One might have expected Jesus to say something reassuring to these men, who are fighting for their lives, but he doesn't. Instead, he rebukes them, and points a finger at their faith. In effect, he is asking them, 'what in reality is your faith, if you don't actually trust me enough to keep you alive'. It's the same with us. We will sing the songs about God being my Shepherd, the one who will lead me through troubled waters, the one who is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble; and we mean it. But put us in a season of real difficulty, where we are gasping for some sense of peace in life, and then what? It's not too long before we are thinking to ourselves, 'God, why are you doing this to me'.

Jesus speaks to the storm, and what speaking! He rebukes it. Mark tells us that he said "Peace! Be still!" and the wind ceased, and the lake fell calm. Three words and the situation is transformed, from one of absolute terror to one of extraordinary peace. Jesus declares his authority over creation in a few words. The disciples are filled with the fear of wonderment, at what this man has just done with creation. You and I need a real sense of that wonderment.

Q1. What do the disciples do when Jesus tells them to get into the boat? How are you following Christ?

Q2. How did the disciples react to the storm? What did Jesus do?

Tuesday - Please read Luke 8:26-34 - Phenomenal power of Jesus is displayed.

As soon as Jesus steps out of the boat, he is confronted by a man in a terrible physical and mental condition; naked, unrestrainable, violent, self-harming (Mark 5:5), and experiencing frequent seizures. This man had given up living in a home many years before and was choosing to live among 'the dead' in tombs. Why was he like this? Because his being was owned, possessed, by demons. What are demons? Demons are evil angels who rebel against God in eternity and spend their existence trying to destroy everything associated with God. Luke speaks of demonic activity twenty-nine times in his gospel, whether it be references to demons, being demonized, unclean or evil spirits.

Given what follows, it is interesting that the man comes running towards Jesus, yelling, and screaming at him. Why? Because the demons possessing the man know whose presence they are in, and want to reveal what Jesus would have kept hidden – his Deity. Hence their deliberate use of the term “Son of the Most High God”, and their causing the man to fall before Jesus. When Jesus left the glory, he 'covered' his Deity in human form to fulfil God's eternal plan of salvation. The demons wanted everyone to know this, thinking that it would serve their attempts to thwart the purpose of God.

Why did Jesus ask the demons their name, not something he had done before or would do again? It's hard to say, but maybe it was because he wanted to show the sheer scale of what he was dealing with and so demonstrate his power. The response is “Legion”. There were up to 7,000 men in a Roman legion, so whatever the number of demons possessing this man, they were numerous.

Jesus has commanded them to leave and, while not resisting this because they know they could not, these evil spirits beg Jesus not to ‘torment’ them. What do they mean? They are asking not to be sent to their final eternal destination, the abyss, Revelation 20:1ff. This is serious stuff; these demons are fighting for their lives in the face of Jesus' absolute power over them. Their plea is to be allowed to enter a large herd of around 2000 pigs on the nearby hillside (Mark 5:13). In permitting this, Jesus is not granting them permission to escape the abyss, he is just delaying that reality, and the result is dramatic. It must have been some sight, and generated some noise, as this entire herd is destroyed.

Debate surrounds the reason why Jesus permitted the destruction of these animals. Was it an indication of his indignation that they were being kept by Jews, something clearly against the Law of God, or was this a gentile-owned herd, and Jesus was giving precedence to human life over animal life? There are those who say that Jesus came to proclaim the good news of the power of the gospel to save, not to address specific cases of lawbreaking, although there were occasions when he did address such behaviour when it related specifically to his mission, John 2:13ff. Others say, ‘but would Jesus have caused such a financial loss to Gentiles without a word’. I'm not sure which is it.

Q1. Who ran at Jesus and why? What did Jesus ask the demons?

Q2. What did the demons ask Jesus and what did Jesus do?

Wednesday - Please read Luke 8:35-39 – Go and Tell.

Yesterday we read about how Jesus allowed the Legion of demons to enter into and destroy a huge herd of pigs. The herdsmen on the hill were unsurprisingly shocked at what they saw. The sheer trauma of it obviously would have hit them on so many levels. The immediate emotional impact of just the sight and sound of what happened. Then there would have been the panic stickiness caused by the thought of the financial loss. Whatever state they are in, the herdsmen flee the hillside, telling anyone who would listen what they had witnessed.

Word spreads quickly, and soon the place where the tombs are is filled with people wanting to see for themselves what has happened to the man. What they witnessed was unbelievable. The formerly, demon-possessed, naked, grossly violent, untameable man is sitting clothed and quietly at peace at the feet of Jesus. Many of them would have seen him and thought, this just isn't possible. It is so unbelievable, so incapable of explanation that they are filled with fear. Not at the man, who had engendered so much fear in the community in the past they would never have cause to fear him again, but at Jesus' power.

What happens next seems unreasonable even irrational. They unanimously, with respect borne of their fear, ask Jesus to leave the area. You would have thought given what Jesus has just done, in transforming this man who had been terrorizing their community for years into a gentle humble human being, would have seen Jesus receive numerous invitations to their homes. Surely such power and its impact would be lauded, heralded; not so... Surprising? Not really when you think about it. For isn't that what happens with all unbelief? What rational explanation is there for a person to reject the Lord as their Saviour from eternal damnation – none. It makes no sense, and yet people will not have Jesus to be their Saviour and Lord.

For the 'saved' man, it was different. The demons had begged Jesus to let them flee from him; now, this man begs Jesus to let him go with Jesus. What a story the man could tell. Surely, he would be a great asset to Jesus through his testimony. If there was anyone who could bring real life to the message of the power of the Kingdom of God, it had to be this man. But Jesus declines the request. Instead, he instructs the man to go and tell his family and others about what God had done for him. Mark says he began at home and reached out to the surrounding cities in an ever-increasing circle of activity, Mark 5:20.

Jesus would not allow the demons to reveal him as God, but in sending this man out as he does, Jesus shows that he was not beyond doing so on his terms when it suited him. Jesus is always in control.

Q1. How did the herdsmen react and why?

Q2. How did the townspeople react and why?

Q3. What does the man ask Jesus and what does Jesus tell him to do?