

Luke 8:26-39

“What has God done for you?”

December 8, 2024

1. Intro

- a. Well last week we saw one of the incredible miracles of Jesus, as he exercised his authority over nature itself, calming the stormy winds and the raging waves on the Sea of Galilee
 - i. As this terrifying storm fell upon Jesus and the disciples, the disciples were in an absolute panic
 1. But Jesus was sound asleep on a cushion
 - ii. The disciples, fearing for their very lives, finally get Jesus to wake up
 1. Jesus sits up in the stern of the boat...
 - a. He looks around at all the chaos on the sea...
 - b. With a word, he rebuked the winds and the waves...
 - i. And everything became still
 2. And then he looks at his poor disciples, who are all soaking wet and completely undone, and he says to them,
 - a. “Where is your faith?”
 - i. This is the question he would ask all of us as we walk through our own storms in this life, isn’t it?
 1. Where is your faith, Christian, as you face sickness or disease?
 2. Where is your faith, Christian, as you face financial trials and hardships?
 3. Where is your faith, Christian, as you face persecution or slander or reviling or mocking, all because of the name of Jesus?
 - ii. Where is your faith, Christian?
 1. Have you forgotten that Jesus Christ
 - a. The one who rebukes fevers, and they depart
 - b. The one who rebukes demons, and they flee
 - c. The one who rebukes the stormy seas, and they all become calm
 2. Have you forgotten that Jesus is WITH YOU in the midst of your storm?
 - a. And that he has PROMISED that his Father will work ALL things together FOR THE GOOD for those who love him and are called according to HIS purpose?
 - iii. This was the question Jesus asked his disciples on that boat in the Sea of Galilee nearly two thousand years ago
 1. And this is the question that he STILL is asking his disciples... you and me... even today
 - a. Where is your faith?
 - b. Well, after everything settles down, Jesus and the disciples continue on across the lake, and so we pick up this morning in verse 26...

2. Luke 8:26

- a. ²⁶*Then they sailed to the country of the Gerasenes, which is opposite Galilee.*
 - i. We have to pause briefly here and talk about this country of the Gerasenes, especially since Matthew records it in his Gospel as “the country of the Gadarenes”

1. The reality is, we don't know exactly where this place was that Jesus and the disciples landed at
 - a. There are records of ancient cities in that area called Geresas AND Gadara, but both of these cities were situated too far away from the banks of the sea to apply to this event
2. What we DO know is that this area was opposite from Galilee, which we read here in Luke
 - a. And we also know from Mark's Gospel that it is a part of the larger area known as the Decapolis
 - i. This is an important detail, because we know from history that the region of the Decapolis was made up of a mostly GENTILE population
 1. We'll talk about that here in a little while
3. So they land on the shores of the Gerasenes, and then in verse 27 we read...

3. Luke 8:27

- a. *27When Jesus had stepped out on land, there met him a man from the city who had demons. For a long time he had worn no clothes, and he had not lived in a house but among the tombs.*
 - i. Again, we have to pause here and address another question
 1. Here in Luke's account, as well as in Mark's account, Jesus and the disciples step out of the boat and encounter ONE man who was possessed by demons
 - a. But in Matthew's Gospel, he says that there were actually TWO men possessed by demons that they encounter
 - i. Well, the skeptics love these little inconsistencies, don't they?
 1. If the Gospel writers couldn't even agree on a simple detail of whether there was one man or two in this story, what else do they get wrong?
 2. This is why it is important for us to dig deeply into the Scriptures, because that question is actually a legitimate one
 - a. One of the major foundations of all of our faith is expressed in the statement that we believe that the Bible is inerrant – it is without error of any kind
 - i. This is what we affirm in the very first section of our own Statement of Faith, as we wholeheartedly say
 1. "We believe that the Holy Bible was written by men divinely inspired and is God's revelation of Himself to man. It is a perfect treasure of divine instruction. It has God for its author, salvation for its end, and truth, WITHOUT ANY MIXTURE OF ERROR, for its matter. Therefore, ALL Scripture is totally true and trustworthy."
 3. So in light of that affirmation, how do we answer the skeptic who says, "Well is it one demon-possessed man, or two? Because it cannot be both"
 - a. There are actually a couple of good explanations for the difference in the two accounts
 - i. The first is that, in Matthew's account, he never actually says that there were two demon-possessed MEN
 1. He just says that there were two "demoniacs"
 - a. The word "men" that you might have in your Bible is simply inferred
 2. And so many scholars have come to the conclusion that these two demoniacs might have actually been not two men, but instead a husband and a wife

- a. And while they were both possessed by demons, it is the husband who gets the focus of attention in Luke and Mark
 - i. This is one plausible argument
 - ii. A second explanation is that this could very well have been two men, but the one who was possessed by THE MOST demons, and therefore the one who had THE MOST power, was the one who Jesus addressed
 - 1. And therefore, Luke and Mark chose to just focus on this one man as well
 - a. Again, this is a plausible argument to account for the differences in Matthew and Luke and Mark
 - i. If we work our way through these things CAREFULLY, we can find reasonable ground to stand on when the skeptics attempt to poke holes in the Bible
 - b. So Luke tells us that they step off the boat, and they encounter this man, naked, living among the tombs, and possessed by MULTIPLE demons
 - i. And verses 28 and 29 say,
4. Luke 8:28-29
 - a. ²⁸*When he saw Jesus, he cried out and fell down before him and said with a loud voice, "What have you to do with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I beg you, do not torment me."* ²⁹*For he had commanded the unclean spirit to come out of the man.*
 - i. There are three things that we must note about these verses
 - 1. First, notice that the man, under the influence and power of the demons, FELL DOWN BEFORE JESUS
 - a. Luke goes on to tell us that this man had been kept under guard and bound with shackles, but there were no chains known to man that could contain the power of these demons
 - i. But when they came face-to-face with Jesus, these demons BOWED before him
 - 1. Here they stood before One who they KNEW they could not overcome
 - 2. Second, notice that these demons know EXACTLY who it was that stood before them
 - a. "What have you to do with me, JESUS, SON OF THE MOST HIGH GOD"
 - i. Think about the disciples...
 - 1. Just a few moments before, after Jesus had rebuked the winds and the waves on the Sea, they were afraid, and they marveled, saying to one another,
 - a. "Who then is this, that he commands even winds and water, and they obey him?"
 - b. The disciples were still trying to figure out who this Jesus was
 - i. But these demons had no confusion whatsoever
 - 1. They KNEW that this was the Son of God who had existed eternally with the Father and the Spirit
 - 2. They KNEW that this was the Son of God who had stood beside the Ancient of Days as they were cast out of heaven with their master, the great serpent Satan

- 3. They KNEW that this was the Son of God, through whom and for whom ALL things had been created, in the heavens and the earth...
 - a. Including themselves
 - ii. They KNEW that this was the Son of the Most High God who was commanding them in this moment
- 3. And so the third thing we see is that they BEGGED Jesus not to torment them
 - a. My friends, this is INCREDIBLE power that we are witnessing here
 - i. These demons who were unable to be contained by any means given to man, were now bowing before Jesus, BEGGING him not to torment them
 - 1. If the disciples were afraid and amazed at Jesus' authority over the winds and the waves, then surely they must have been absolutely terrified at this point
 - a. Who then is this, that he commands these immensely powerful demons to come out of this man, and they fall to their knees and BEG him for mercy???
 - b. We then are given more insight into the horror of this man's condition in verse 30, as we read

5. Luke 8:30

- a. ³⁰Jesus then asked him, "What is your name?" And he said, "Legion," for many demons had entered him.
 - i. Brothers and sisters, this should cause us to stop for a moment, in fear and trembling
 - 1. We don't know exactly how many demons were in this one man
 - a. In those days of Roman rule and occupation, the idea of a Legion of soldiers would have been a very common one
 - i. However, the size of a Roman Legion could vary from one region to another
 - 1. In smaller, less populated areas, a Roman Legion could have been made up of around a thousand soldiers
 - 2. But in the more densely populated cited, a Roman Legion could have been upwards of six thousand soldiers
 - a. With some accounts even going as high as twelve thousand
 - ii. We'll see in a moment that Jesus allows these demons to go into a large herd of pigs, and they immediately all go mad
 - 1. In Mark's Gospel, he specifically tells us that there were about two thousand pigs
 - a. So does that mean that there were two thousand demons in this man?
 - i. Maybe!
 - b. But as we see here, multiple demons could possess one man, so couldn't multiple demons possess one pig?
 - i. So is it possible that this man had been possessed by well over two thousand demons at once?
 - ii. Well, we do not know for sure, but the facts certainly allow for that

2. This is a staggering reminder for us, my friends, that we are not engaged in a battle against earthly enemies
 - a. As Paul tells us in Ephesians 6:10-12,
 - i. *¹⁰... be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. ¹¹Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. ¹²For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.*
 - b. When you encounter unbelievers out in the world, Christians, we must remember that they ARE NOT the enemy
 - i. Our battle is not against those who annoy us as we're waiting in line at the grocery store
 - ii. Our battle is not against our neighbor who plays his music too loud, or doesn't mow his grass often enough
 - iii. Our battle is not even against those who would ridicule us or persecute us for our faith in Jesus Christ
 1. Our battle is against these cosmic powers over this present darkness
 2. Our battle is against the spiritual forces of evil such as Legion
 - a. And you have ZERO chance of standing against these enemies, if you are not strong in the Lord, in the strength of HIS might
3. So we see the true strength of the Lord's might, as again in verse 31, they beg for mercy from hm

6. Luke 8:31-33

- a. *³¹And they begged him not to command them to depart into the abyss. ³²Now a large herd of pigs was feeding there on the hillside, and they begged him to let them enter these. So he gave them permission. ³³Then the demons came out of the man and entered the pigs, and the herd rushed down the steep bank into the lake and drowned.*
 - i. Just imagine standing there and witnessing all of these things happening
 1. This man, naked and filthy and bloody, had run up to Jesus and had fallen down before him
 2. We soon find out that this man was possessed, not just by one demon, but an entire LEGION of demons
 3. You hear these demons beg for mercy from Jesus, and then they ask for this inexplicable concession from him...
 - a. Don't send us into the abyss, Jesus!
 - b. Let us leave this man and go into that herd of two thousand pigs!
 - i. And then, just as inexplicably, Jesus gives them permission to do just that
 1. The demons enter the pigs
 2. The herd immediately goes mad
 3. And every single one of them rush down the steep bank into the lake and drown
 - c. Two THOUSAND pigs, peacefully feeding on the side of the hill in one moment
 - i. And then, within seconds, all of them are dead

1. Trying to picture this scene in our heads helps us to understand verse 34...

7. Luke 8:34

a. ³⁴*When the herdsmen saw what had happened, they fled and told it in the city and in the country.*

i. I would say that that is a pretty rational response to all that just unfolded!

1. And so they go throughout the city and the country, telling everyone everything they had just seen, and verses 35-36 tell us,

8. Luke 8:35-36

a. ³⁵*Then people went out to see what had happened, and they came to Jesus and found the man from whom the demons had gone, sitting at the feet of Jesus, clothed and in his right mind, and they were afraid.* ³⁶*And those who had seen it told them how the demon-possessed man had been healed.*

i. If you're familiar with the Gospels, you might here in these passages see echoes of another similar story

1. In John chapter 4, Jesus encounters a Samaritan woman who had come to draw water from Jacob's well

a. This woman certainly wasn't a raging, demon-possessed person like the man here in Luke 8

i. But from a spiritual perspective, she was just as lost as he was, wasn't she?

ii. And from an ethnic perspective, she was just as much on the outside as this man from the region of the Decapolis

1. Remember, this was a region primarily inhabited by Gentiles

a. The fact that there was a herd of two thousand pigs nearby confirms this, for the Jewish people had nothing to do with pigs, did they?

b. So this demoniac was an outsider, just as the Samaritan woman was an outsider

i. Yet Jesus, in his great mercy, goes out of his way to go to Samaria to speak to this one woman

ii. Just as, in his great mercy, he went out of his way to cross the Sea of Galilee, just for this one man

2. If you remember from last week, we saw that, according to Mark's Gospel, Jesus got into the boat to cross the sea, on the same day that he told the Parable of the Sower, and on the same day as he told the Parable of the Mustard Seed

a. In Mark 4, verses 30-32, Jesus says,

i. ³⁰*"With what can we compare the kingdom of God, or what parable shall we use for it? ³¹It is like a grain of mustard seed, which, when sown on the ground, is the smallest of all the seeds on earth, ³²yet when it is sown it grows up and becomes larger than all the garden plants and puts out large branches, so that the birds of the air can make nests in its shade."*

b. Jesus was a Master Sower for the Kingdom of God, wasn't he?

i. For he had FAITH that the Kingdom of God is an unstoppable force, even if it is just sown in one little heart

1. So Jesus sowed a small grain of the Gospel into the Samaritan woman's heart

a. She runs back into the town to say to her people, "Could this be the Christ?"

- b. Jesus stays the town for a couple of days
 - c. And John tells us that MANY Samaritan's believed because of his word
 - 2. Jesus sowed a small grain of the Gospel in this woman's heart, and it grew up into a large tree where MANY found refuge
 - a. The Kingdom of God had advanced to the Samaritans
 - ii. So we would expect the same thing here in this story, wouldn't we?
 - 1. The herdsmen saw how Jesus healed the demon-possessed man
 - 2. They saw his authority over the legion of demons
 - 3. They saw the herd of pigs go mad and flee into the waters
 - a. So they also went into town to tell all the people what they had seen and heard
 - b. And, like the people of Samaria, the people of the Decapolis come out to see who this Jesus truly is
 - i. And they find the man who had once terrorized their towns, now clothed and in his right mind, sitting at the feet of Jesus
 - 1. Surely, they would be as excited to bring Jesus back to their towns as the Samaritans were in John chapter 4?
 - iii. Sadly, this is NOT what we find
 - 1. Verse 37 tells us...

9. Luke 8:37

- a. ³⁷*Then all the people of the surrounding country of the Gerasenes asked him to depart from them, for they were seized with great fear. So he got into the boat and returned.*
 - i. In Mark's account, the people didn't just ask Jesus to depart from them... they BEGGED him to leave
 - 1. This doesn't make sense to us, does it?
 - a. Just imagine if there was a man who had lived here in Sapulpa for many years
 - i. He was known throughout the city as a crazy man, a man of violence, a man to be feared
 - ii. And just imagine that all of a sudden, this man shows up here in church, dressed in clean clothes, in his right mind, and longing to sit at the feet of Jesus in worship
 - 1. I hope and pray that if we were to experience such a thing, we would be OVERJOYED at the transformation we got to witness
 - 2. I hope and pray that we would be THRILLED to go all around town and say to people, "Come and see the power of our Lord!"
 - ii. But instead of being overjoyed, the people of the Gerasenes were seized with great fear
 - 1. And they BEGGED Jesus to leave
 - a. We have to ask, why were they not just afraid, as the disciples had been back in the boat, but instead seized with GREAT fear?
 - i. So much so that they would beg Jesus to depart from them?
 - 1. Well, maybe on the surface level, they didn't like Jesus messing with their stuff
 - a. Two thousand pigs would have provided a LOT of income for those who owned the pigs
 - b. Two thousand pigs would have provided a SUBSTANTIAL boost to the local economy'

- c. Let's just be honest... two thousand pigs would have provided a LOT of good tasting ham and bacon and pork chops
 - 2. And whoever this guy Jesus is, and whatever it is that he just did, he just put a MASSIVE dent in our economy and in our well-being
 - a. If he did that to our pigs, WHAT ELSE is he going to mess up?
 - 3. Surely there were many who were thinking at that level, and so they were seized with great fear
 - 2. But I believe that there was a deeper reality going on here as well
 - a. If we think back to the Parable of the Sower, and all that Jesus had taught us regarding the conditions of our heart...
 - i. We simply have to acknowledge that these people's hearts were lacking in GOOD SOIL
 - 1. Some of them may have initially heard the good news about Jesus and the healed man, but when they realized their stuff was at risk, their hearts were choked out, and the seed never had a chance to produce good fruit
 - ii. But I believe, for the most part, these people heard all that had happened, but it all fell upon the hardened soil of their hard hearts
 - 1. And so Satan swooped in like the birds of the air, and he devoured the word from them
 - a. They did not believe
 - b. They were not saved
 - c. But instead, they were seized with great fear
 - i. The Kingdom of God had just arrived on their shore, but they were still blinded by the god of this age
 - iii. And so they begged Jesus to depart, and he did exactly what they asked
 - 1. This is a sobering reminder for us of Jesus' teachings near the end of the Sermon on the Mount
 - a. In Matthew 7:6, Jesus tells us these words...
 - i. ⁶Do not give dogs what is holy, and do not throw your pearls before pigs, lest they trample them underfoot and turn to attack you.
 - 1. The pigs belonging to the herdsmen had charged into the lake and drowned
 - 2. But, according to the language that Christ himself uses, the country of the Gerasenes was still full of spiritual pigs
 - a. The Holy One of God had just performed an incredible miracle in saving the life of this demon-possessed man
 - i. And the people wanted nothing to do with him
 - b. So he got back in his boat with his disciples, and they went back to the other side of the lake
 - b. But not before he had one more conversation...

10. Luke 8:38-39 says,

- a. ³⁸The man from whom the demons had gone begged that he might be with him, but Jesus sent him away, saying, ³⁹Return to your home, and declare how much God has done for you."

- i. And notice what the man DOES NOT do...

1. He doesn't get mad at Jesus for saying no
 2. He doesn't turn and walk away sad from Jesus
 3. He doesn't go back to the tombs, wondering what he's going to do with his life
- b. No, the end of verse 39 tells us that *"he went away, proclaiming throughout the whole city how much Jesus had done for him."*
- i. And Mark tells us that as he proclaimed in the Decapolis all that Jesus had done for him, EVERYONE marveled
 1. Now, don't miss the point that Jesus told him to declare how much GOD had done for him,
 - a. But Luke tells us that the man went about, proclaiming how much JESUS had done for him
 - i. Yet another affirmation for us in the Scriptures that Jesus is fully man, AND Jesus is fully God
 1. He is not A god
 2. He is not LIKE God
 3. Jesus is the Word made flesh!
 - a. In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word WAS God!
- c. And as this man faithfully went about, all through the Decapolis, proclaiming all that Jesus had done for him, the people MARVELED
- i. What's fascinating is that Jesus was in fact, NOT done with the people of this region
 1. We find the account of the demon-possessed man in Mark chapter 5
 - a. But in Mark chapter 7, Jesus is back in the Decapolis, SPECIFICALLY back on the shores of the Sea of Galilee
 - i. Likely very close to the very same region that had rejected him
 1. Only now, Jesus heals a man who was deaf and mute, and the people were "astonished beyond measure," saying "He has done all things well!"
 - b. And then, in Mark chapter 8, we find Jesus still in the Decapolis, still on the shore of the Sea of Galilee, where he feeds four thousand people with just seven loaves of bread, and a few small fish
 - i. And they all ate and were satisfied
 2. The Holy One of God was back among the people who had once feared him
 - a. Only now, instead of begging him to leave, they were proclaiming with great satisfaction, "He has done all things well!"
 - i. The soil of the hearts had changed, hadn't it?
 1. So to what would we attribute this dramatic change?
 - a. Certainly we would want to affirm the sovereignty of God in all of this, and the Scriptural reality that he is ultimately the One who softens the soil of people's hearts
 2. But the Bible is also clear that God accomplishes the expansion of His Kingdom through very specific means
 - a. And those very specific means are the people of God, going BACK to their homes, going BACK to their friends, going BACK to their communities...
 - i. And proclaiming to everyone all that God has done for them

- ii. The man who was once possessed by an entire LEGION of demons had become a treasured possession of Christ himself
 - 1. He didn't do a single thing to earn that incredible privilege
 - a. But Jesus, knowing that there was a lost sheep on the other side of the lake, traveled through the storm to go and rescue him who was incapable of rescuing himself
 - b. Jesus planted a small grain of a mustard seed, and it grew into a tree larger than all the garden plants, and MANY in the Decapolis took refuge in its shade
 - i. Yes, because God is sovereign
 - ii. But ALSO because this man was faithful in proclaiming all that God had done for him
- d. Brothers and sisters in Christ, this is how the Kingdom advanced throughout the Decapolis in the days of Jesus
 - i. This is how the Kingdom advanced all throughout Europe in the following decades through the witness of the Apostles and the early church
 - ii. This is how the Kingdom spread to the shores of America, as the Puritans brought the Gospel to this land
 - iii. And this is how the Kingdom still advances today, here in Sapulpa, OK, and even as far away as among the Tabasaran in Ukraine
 - 1. It is ultimately God who saves
 - 2. BUT, the way in which He has CHOSEN to save, is through His children, faithfully proclaiming to the world all that He has done for them
 - a. So the question is, Christians, what has He done FOR YOU?
 - i. According to Colossians 1:13-14,
 - 1. *¹³He has delivered [you] from the domain of darkness and transferred [you] to the kingdom of his beloved Son, ¹⁴in whom [you] have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.*
 - ii. According to 1 Peter 1:3-5,
 - 1. *³According to his great mercy, he has caused [you] to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, ⁴to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, ⁵who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.*
 - iii. And according to Ephesians 2:4-7,
 - 1. *⁷... because of the great love with which he loved [you], ⁵even when [you] were dead in [your] trespasses, [God] made [you] alive together with Christ – by grace you have been saved – ⁶and [He] raised [you] up with him and seated [you] with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, ⁷so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward [you] in Christ Jesus.*
- e. Brothers and sisters in Christ, your story may not be that you were once possessed by thousands of demons, and Jesus delivered you from them all
 - i. But your story IS that you were once in the domain of darkness, and now God has brought you into the Kingdom of His Son
 - ii. Your story IS that God has caused you to be born again, and your hope is now a LIVING hope, because of HIS great mercy

- iii. Your story IS that, because of the great love that God has for you – even while you were dead in your trespasses – God saved YOU
 - 1. HE raised you up from the dead
 - 2. HE seated you with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus
 - 3. HE has poured out the immeasurable riches of His grace and kindness upon you in His Son
 - a. In light of all of these incredible truths, now GO and declare how much God has done for you!
 - i. Go and sow the seeds of the Good News of Jesus Christ, even if that seed is only the size of a small grain of a mustard seed
 - ii. For this is how the Kingdom of God grows...
 - 1. As WE are faithful in proclaiming in our cities how much Jesus has done for us!