

Dethroning Darkness

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[0 : 01] We're going to turn to our Bible reading now, to Luke's Gospel and chapter 8. And Josh has been leading us through some of these chapters in Luke, and we're coming this evening to the section beginning at Luke chapter 8 and verse 22, and we'll read through to the end of verse 39.

And if you don't have a Bible and you need one, there's some at the sides and at the back and at the front here. Don't be embarrassed. Go and grab one, and you'll be able to follow along and make sure that you can see what we're speaking about.

So Luke's Gospel then, chapter 8 and verse 22. One day Jesus got into a boat with his disciples, and he said to them, Let's go across to the other side of the lake.

So they set out, and as they sailed, he fell asleep. And a windstorm came down on the lake, and they were filling with water and were in danger.

And they went and woke him, saying, Master, Master, we're perishing. And he woke and rebuked the wind and the raging waves.

[1 : 11] And they ceased, and there was a calm. He said to them, Where's your faith? And they were afraid, and they marveled, saying to one another, Who then is this that he commands even winds and water?

And they obey him. Then they sailed to the country of the Gerasenes, which is opposite Galilee. When Jesus had stepped out onto the land there, met him a man from the city who had a demon. For a long time he'd worn no clothes. He'd not lived in a house, but among the tombs. 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. For he had commanded the unclean spirit to come out of the man. For many a time it had seized him. He was kept under guard and bound with chains and shackles. But he would break the bonds and be driven by the demon into the desert. Jesus then asked him, What is your name? And he said, Legion. For many demons had entered him.

[2 : 25] And they begged him not to command them to depart into the abyss. 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. Then the demons came out of the man and entered the pigs. And the herd rushed down the steep bank into the lake and were drowned.

And the herdsmen saw what had happened. They fled and told it in the city and the country. 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.

Those who had seen it told him how the demon possessed man had been healed. And then all the people of the surrounding country of the Gerasenes asked him to depart from them.

[3 : 28] For they were seized with great fear. So he got into the boat and returned. The man from whom the demons had gone begged that he might be with him.

But Jesus sent him away saying, Return to your home. And declare how much God has done for you. And he went away proclaiming throughout the whole city how much Jesus had done for him. Amen. And may God bless to us his word. Well do open your Bibles once again to Luke chapter 8. Our penultimate week on these two chapters that we've been looking at together. Now it doesn't take a lot to convince most people of a sense of darkness at work in this world.

After all our newspapers are littered with the depravity of man and the devastation of life lived in this world. And of course because bad news sells we read no shortage of it.

[4 : 43] So most people are likely to have a grasp on the reality of darkness. But where the great consensus on darkness stops is when we begin to think about the source of it or the personality behind it or indeed the part that humanity owns in it.

But the Bible is clear about the why and the who of darkness in this world. darkness, evil exists. And it holds a great sway in this created world and in the lives of the humans who inhabit it.

And the Bible makes clear that evil is personified by the devil. And his influence over humanity and the created order was ramped up when Adam, our first father rebelled against the good and perfect rule of God himself.

And you see, sin hasn't just corrupted us. It has wreaked havoc on the created order. Bringing the curse of death to creation itself as we can read very clearly in Romans chapter 8.

Creation has been subjected to futility. It groans under the effects of the fall, longing to be restored. And so the fall has seen humanity and this world seized by the powers of darkness.

[6 : 09] Under the rule of the great figure of darkness, Satan himself. And because of all that, our world is no stranger to devastation, to calamity, to chaos.

Often called natural disasters. And this world is no stranger to great evil and wickedness that is perpetrated by mankind. Sin runs riot in humanity and pours out of people in all kinds of cruelty and selfishness.

And so the great predicament that this world faces is that we have subjected ourselves to the disastrous rule and reign of evil himself. Satan.

The father of lies. The prince of the power of the air. Just some of the names that the Bible has for him. But, but, it is into this darkness that the light of the world stepped.

And Luke's clear message in this passage is that the good news of the victory of Jesus' kingdom is that he has mastery over such chaos. So that darkness will be subdued and the devil's reign of terror will be swallowed up.

[7 : 20] This is just the latest picture of salvation that we find in Luke chapter 7 to 8. Jesus dethrones darkness. And he delivers those who come to him in repentance and faith from the grasp of Satan himself.

And so the first thing we see in our passage is a divine rescuer. Verses 22 to 25. A divine rescuer. Jesus is the God-man who is supreme over the great forces of chaos in this world.

This brief episode sees Jesus directing his disciples to cross the lake at Galilee to get over to the other side. Verse 22. Then verse 23.

As they sailed, Jesus fell asleep. No doubt tired after a spell of preaching. And as he dozed off, a windstorm kicks off on the lake.

These wouldn't have been uncommon on the lake of Galilee. And this storm raged so much that the boat was filling up with water. They were in danger. And so the disciples have to wake Jesus saying, Master, Master, we are perishing.

[8 : 30] And so there was no little concern here on the part of the disciples. They were experienced fishermen. They knew this lake well, but they were significantly concerned. Because we knew the sea is a frightening thing, isn't it?

Anytime I'm on a beach, I can't help but feel the immensity of the ocean. It's just so vast. Indeed, growing up beside the sea, as I did, I can recall many occasions where massive wave after massive wave smashed upon the rocks.

The sight and sounds of it are terrifying. As you see, vast power before you. And so the disciples' cries are understandable, but there's more to it than just the ferocity of the waves.

You see, when the Bible talks about the sea, it usually has a deeper connotation. The sea in the Bible is associated with darkness, with judgment, with disorder, with chaos.

Right from the very beginning, back in Genesis chapter 1, verse 2, the sea is pictured as chaotic and dark. The earth was without form and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters.

[9 : 49] Before the world was created in all its glorious fullness and declared to be good, we read five different words in one verse, without form, void, darkness, the deep, and the waters.

Five words that are used throughout the Bible as descriptors of chaos, of disorder. And three of them are tied to the sea. And so the picture that the Bible has of the sea is that it's a place of chaos before God graciously brings order and light to the world.

Now the sea is also the place where the great sea creature Leviathan is housed. The beast, the dragon of the sea, so significant in Job.

And of course Leviathan is to be understood as a guise of the great figure of evil himself, Satan. Present also in Revelation 13, the great beast of the sea.

A picture, a guise of Satan. And so the sea, the deep, the waters, the abyss, these are pictures of chaos.

[11:00] It was a place where evil dwelt. And the chaos and darkness are particularly on display in storms. Think of Isaiah's words, the wicked are like the tossing, the churning sea, for it cannot be quiet.

Its waters toss up mire and dirt. Or the psalmist's words as we sang from Psalm 46. We will not fear though the earth gives way, though the mountains be moved into the heart of the sea, though its waters roar and foam, though the mountains tremble at its swelling.

And many, many more references besides. But water also spoke of judgment. We saw that this morning in Ezekiel, didn't we? Or think of the time of Noah. God's judgment was meted out by means of a great flood.

The deep burst forth, returning the world to chaos and enacting judgment. Or think of Jonah, whose disobedience brought upon the sailors a great storm like the one the disciples faced.

Indeed, Jonah was asleep on the boat, just like Jesus. And he was awakened by cries at the prospect of perishing. Or think about the Egyptians, perhaps particularly in Luke's mind here.

[12:16] Look at verse 24. Jesus rebukes the sea. Another clue that this isn't just about Jesus' mastery over creation, but something much more.

Jesus rebukes the sea. That's language that picks up, I think, Psalm 106, a psalm that in some ways recounts the path taken by those rescued in Exodus.

The psalmist says he rebuked the Red Sea and it became dry and he led them through the deep as through a desert. And the psalm goes on to tell of the swallowing up of Pharaoh's army.

And so the sea speaks of judgment that leads to salvation. And so the words of the disciples ring with a depth of meaning. Master, Master, we are perishing.

But look at what happens. Verse 24, Jesus woke up and rebukes the wind and the raging waves and notice they ceased and instead there was calm.

[13:24] Order was restored amidst chaos. And here, Jesus doesn't just still a storm and a... Here, Jesus doesn't just still a storm.

He establishes very obviously for his disciples that he is the one who can subdue the raging forces of evil in the world. Remember, Luke's method in his gospel is to go back to the very beginning to establish and prove who Jesus is and what he fulfills from the very beginning.

And so Luke was writing to people who would have understood the undertones of the raging sea.

They would have known that Jesus wasn't just Lord of wind and rain, but he was being shown here to be the defeater of darkness.

Jesus was rebuking the revolt of evil that bubbles up in this world, a revolt initiated and amplified at the fall when darkness was given an opening, a base camp in this world from which it attempts to subvert God's good and glorious rule on earth, a rule which was to be carried out by his image bearers.

Jesus calms, he stills the storm. Jesus' words, now as at creation brings light from darkness and order from chaos.

[14:42] That is what happened to the darkness. It was over the face of the deep at creation.

God's words spook and brought order and light. And that's what happens here again as Jesus speaks. Chaos and darkness are overcome.

And in so doing, Jesus is displaying so very vividly that he is doing what God does. He can do as God does.

For he is the divine son of God, the God-man here in their midst. There was a well-established idea, certainly throughout the Psalms, that God was the one who could still the raging storms.

Psalm 89, you rule the raging sea. When its waves rise, you still them. Psalm 107, he made the storm be still and the waves of the sea were hushed.

But here amongst the disciples was one who, verse 23, fell asleep. Here was one who knew the weakness of human flesh.

[15 : 48] One who was tired after a spell of preaching and ministry. One who had taken on flesh amongst them. But, one who also mastered the powers of darkness as only God could do.

And so isn't the question that comes from the disciples the obvious question at the end of verse 25? Who is this? Even the winds and the waves obey him.

Who is this? He is the one who subdues the dark chaos at play in this world. He is the one who has mastery over the evil that is so present in this world ever since the fall.

Here in Jesus is a man who walks and sleeps in the midst of the disciples and yet is lord of creation and also lord over the chaotic powers of evil that lie behind the groaning of creation.

the chaotic powers that spark all kinds of supposed natural disasters. Disasters that afflict humanity with peril and death.

[16 : 54] death. You see when sin entered the world through Adam it didn't just affect mankind it affected the whole of creation and sin is a ravenous power that hungers after more and more destruction it is ever seeking to devour the life the existence and the flourishing of God's image bearers.

That's what is pictured in the raging sea but Jesus rebukes it. the reason the son of God appeared says John was to destroy the works of the evil one.

Now we've been seeing that Jesus' great day of salvation is ultimately an eschatological one. He gives glimpses and tastes of what his kingdom will be like. We see in Jesus' earthly ministry the first fruits the harbingers of what will come at the last day and note that one of the things that will mark that glorious day of salvation according to Revelation 21 the new heavens and the new earth will have no more sea.

The deep the abyss will be no more. Revelation goes on to explain that the absence of the sea means every tear will be wiped away death shall be no more so to mourning crying and pain chaos and darkness will one day cease the earth's groaning will give way to a renewed creation and so those words of rebuke issued to the raging sea will be words of rebuke to every dark shadow that hangs over our lives now every relationship that has been ruptured and which has caused untold pain for us at Jesus rebuke the sin and darkness that is at work in these things will be rebuked finally and they'll be calm every affliction that we knew within our own bodies that flows from the curse of death of degeneration and disease rebuked and they'll be calm minds that are clouded with great darkness that weighs us down the parts of our personality that causes despair by perpetuating turmoil for us and for others rebuked and they'll be calm every scar from sin's dark rule that we carry which grieves our very heart and soul whether known or unknown seen or unseen rebuked and they'll be calm any reason that there is that you'd be brought to tears of sadness to mourning to crying to sleepless nights to tortured minds and to pain rebuked and they'll be calm the reality is in this church there'll be so very many of us who carry heavy burdens owing to this fallen and dark world that most of us will be unaware of but Jesus isn't and he assures us that he is the one who can deal with them all and he will he is the one who says to the tempest peace be still he is the one who says to the on rushing waves that would smash the life out of us thus far shall you come and no further and so

Jesus questioned his disciples verse 25 where is your faith that's a question we have to reckon with too for Jesus mastery over the deep will not prevent storms for us in life that's not promised his mastery will be fully and finally realized that great last day the day will be no more sea but until then where is our faith our trust it's so easy to be shaken by our circumstances to slip into thinking that God is asleep at the wheel or asleep in the bow of the boat but Luke is assuring us here that Jesus can be trusted Jesus question is asked to elicit in us the comfort that of course Jesus can be trusted even in the most frightening tempest just as Jesus said to John the Baptist you have seen enough of my ministry to know that the great day of salvation has begun and he says again to us trust me until that day has finally arrived well secondly

[21 : 40] Luke shows us a definitive rescue a definitive rescue from verses 26 to 39 Jesus with all of his divine power rescues individuals from the dark and enslaving grasp of Satan Jesus sets the believer free from the dark reign of Satan in our lives Jesus defeat of Satan will be full and final I notice how the narrative continues relatively unbroken in verse 26 so that their journey continues they set out to get to the other side and they finally get there to the region of the garrisons I think Luke wants us to take these events together not just because of the journey but because both events are centered around darkness and evil and this is a first significant venture into Gentile territory and notice that there is an overwhelming presence of demons here this miracle is not just

like the other episodes with evil spirits and demons verse 30 there were many demons there was a concentration of demons that was unusual even in the gospels now we've seen before in our time in Luke that we should be careful when reading about the demonic in the gospels careful not to take it as a normative thing the vast majority of demonic activity in the New Testament is concentrated in Jesus ministry it's a counter attack on Jesus as Satan sought to fight back having been left bloodied and beaten in the wilderness of course we've seen that darkness and evil are present in this world causing chaos and disorder terror and the truth is that when people do deliberately give themselves more and more into the dark depravity of sin that there can be terrible consequences because that is toying with a real force of evil with Satan himself the one who seeks to kill and steal and destroy and to do so is to put oneself into very real bondage but that is different from seeing in any and every sin or even addiction the presence of a demon or even seeing certain sicknesses as demonic activity no the demonic activity that

Jesus faced in his earthly ministry was a unique rising up of the armies of darkness to oppose the Christ nonetheless we see in this event pictured the disastrous effect of Satan's reign on humanity these particular demons had afflicted this man for quite some time verse 27 having an utterly dehumanizing effect on the man he wasn't able to be in normal company instead he was naked and living among the tombs not in a house and isn't that a succinct picture of curse and darkness his place was among the tombs death was his company notice verse 29 under demonic power he had to be restrained in chains he was dangerous and in this episode we see the thorough going effects of sin and so

Satan and darkness upon humanity sin and Satan are utterly dehumanizing that's what we see in this man isn't it it's a horrible picture it's such a distance from true humanity but the reality is that sin and Satan rob us of all that we could be turning life into a shadowy death like existence like living among the tombs sin and Satan ultimately seek to crush out of us all that is good to crush out of us the image of God within us and the true purpose for which we are made and instead it breeds danger and destruction within us this whole episode is a grim and disturbing picture a man having to be locked up and constrained so as not to cause terrible damage and notice even when he breaks out of the chains verse 29 it's only to escape to where the desert to wilderness to emptiness Satan and sin deliver only imprisonment they deliver only slavery to darkness and disordered humanity they promise all kinds of fullness but leave you empty and imprisoned it is so obvious in reading the effect of these demons on this man that he has lost almost every semblance of humanity but that is what happens the more one is gripped by sin and Satan's power when the world claims that throwing off the shackles of obedience to the Lord Jesus is the way to fulfillment and joy or throwing off the shackles of the created order what it is actually promising is imprisonment and captivity sin and Satan don't just want to have a piece of us they want all of us and so our longing and sin will always crave more and more and more until sin has satisfied its desire in us of reaping total destruction this man's entire person is given over to the power of darkness his personhood his own personality squashed as sin and

[27 : 36] Satan reign notice verse 30 when Jesus asks his name what's the answer legion why because so many demons have possessed him the man is so overcome and characterized by the grip of Satan that it is as if his personality is gone his identity removed defined only by the evil one who masters him but notice when he sees Jesus verse 28 he recognizes Jesus he uses the name son of the most high God the title given to Jesus by the angel Gabriel as he visited Mary but also a title common in Gentile territories and the question is what have you to do with me at the same time this demon ravaged man recognized the identity of Jesus he can see who it is but is also set in conflict with him what have you to do with me don't torment me do you notice the demons speaking through this man plea not to be tormented by

Jesus just as the raging sea recognized Jesus and was subdued by his rebuke so too these demons recognized Jesus and knew that he is supreme over them Jesus victory over the demons master back in the wilderness has already been established he defeated Satan absolutely and so his minions are left toothless against Jesus their faith is sealed and so Jesus commands the demon to come out of the man verse 29 and verse 31 all that is left for them is to plea and plead for some sort of leniency as Ralph Davis puts it the terror of the demons is the hope of the church and so in terror they ask don't command us to depart into the abyss the deep do you see that don't cast us off into the place of darkness and judgment see the connection between the calming of the storm and this incident that that same verse from psalm 106 that speaks of Jesus rebuking the sea at the

exodus which would seem to be where luke draws his language from that same verse also mentions the abyss the deep the demons ask not to be cast into the abyss and so instead they point to a herd of pigs another pointer to this being gentile territory perhaps verse 32 so they depart this man and enter the pigs maybe there is something in it being pigs that being maybe it's something to do with pigs being considered unclean which makes them a fitting place for the demons to belong we aren't told that for certain but then we have this final detail about the pigs rushing down the hill and into the lake to be drowned and that seems like a somewhat random detail for

Luke to include remember he's his gospel together it's an orderly account and this level of detail isn't accidental so why this strange episode of an army of demons of pigs charging down into the water well I think first it becomes a very visible demonstration of salvation it can be seen it makes it unmistakable that Jesus has done something miraculous it also reveals something about the judgment that Satan and his minions will ultimately face we'll come back to that they go to the place of judgment to see the place where judgment fell in Noah's day where judgment fell upon Jonah and where an army of captors met their watery grave in the exodus I think that this detail about the pigs is not incidental but is actually revealing something of the great saving purposes of God at play here the shadow of exodus hangs over both of these events the first miracle draws on the language of the sea being rebuked from a psalm that recounts the events of the exodus and it's a miracle of salvation and crossing the sea and then here what better parallel is there to draw from than the great rescue from captivity that was found in the exodus it was the defining salvation experience of the old testament a great liberation and also we read elsewhere in the old testament that pharaoh and

Egypt are even acquainted with Leviathan the great sea dragon and so here what Luke shows us I think is a picture of the truer and greater exodus God didn't just set his people free from Egypt in the end he also swallowed up the captors in the sea and so the pigs running into the lake to their end is actually a source of us being able to sing in anticipation of what is to come to sing in light of Christ's ultimate victory through the cross and resurrection it's a source of us being able to sing the words of exodus 15 moses song with longing expectation i will sing to the lord for he has triumphed gloriously satan and his minions he has thrown into the sea the lord is my strength and my song he has become my salvation the lord is a man of war the lord is his name satan his chariots and his host he cast into the sea and his chosen officers were sunk in the red sea the floods covered them they went down into the depths like a stone at the blast of your nostrils the waters piled up you blew with your wind the sea covered them they sank like lead in the mighty waters the demons end up in the abyss because the reason the son of god appeared was to destroy the works of the devil and as we can take those words of

Moses song onto our lips in anticipation into the lake the day is coming when Satan and all his minions will meet their destiny in another lake the lake revelation calls the lake of fire but we must note here that this incident isn't just about Jesus conquering evil and its grip on us although it most certainly is about that it is also about Jesus divine power as the great rescuer actually reaching into this world and rescuing individuals you see this man were it not for Jesus intervention would probably have been destined for something like the pig's fate that's what demons do their self destructive power and so Luke wants us to see Jesus here as the great rescuer here we are in gentile country and the great act that Jesus carries out is an echo of the great rescue of old and [34 : 57] Jesus has been moving around to various towns proclaiming the good news of the victory of his kingdom and he heads across the lake to gentile country Luke wants us to see that Jesus salvation extends far and wide he to and his to love to him to freeing us from the captivity that has shaped and controlled our lives before Jesus set us free that's what this man tastes for some people that rescue is particularly obvious

I can think of someone in this church whose life has been transformed so obviously since Jesus rescued them from the darkness they once walked in leaving behind their shadowy former self and coming to life and joy that's what this man tastes Jesus rescue restores humanity and that isn't just a future thing we will taste it fully and finally at the last day when all the weakness of this flesh is thrown off forever but we do taste it now too in part as Jesus and his gospel word reshape our lives and priorities but we must note the reaction that comes this salvation Luke gives us two reactions the first from the locals those who had witnessed the terrible and demeaned existence that this man had known verse 34 the herdsman witnessed

Jesus' miracle and they fled and spread the news around verse 35 the crowd descends upon Jesus and they see the fruit of salvation here was the man restored to humanity clothed in his right mind and verse 36 the witness tells others how this man had been healed or as we've already seen better translated how this man had been saved and look at what happens in verse 37 in light of all of this it's rejoicing what a marvel Jesus is no wait it's not instead they have a request for Jesus just like the demons did and it's a request about departing just like the demons but they want this saviour to go to depart from them we see that so often don't we real works of salvation in people where their change has been so obvious but it's written off and held at a distance oh what's gotten into him oh he's found religion we'll see how long that lasts or where people will gladly hear about the fruit of a changed life but resist anything to do with the root of that change well both of these miracles produce fear verse 25 there was a right fear of

Jesus that produces marvel but there's a wrong fear of Jesus in his word of salvation verse 37 that wants to close eyes ears and hearts to him Luke doesn't tell us why there is such rejection we could speculate as many do that it was to do with the cost of the pigs or some such thing but listen to Ralph Davis again maybe Luke simply wants the sadness of folks asking Jesus to leave him alone to sink into our souls and Jesus complies which should grip us with even greater fear Jesus got into the boat and returned but Luke gives us a second reaction to salvation verse 38 this man begged and longed to be with Jesus which is always a surefire sign of having tasted salvation just like the sinful women from last week but Jesus doesn't grant this request instead he continues to work his salvation thoroughly within this man

Jesus salvation restores us to our true humanity and our true purpose is to serve him to fill the earth and to do it to see the world brought under the sound and the rule of the gospel of the victory of God's kingdom and so verse 39 Jesus says return home and declare how much God has done for you there's a beautiful irony in these verses the demons seem to have their request listened to only to taste defeat the people of this region seem to have their request granted as Jesus gets in the boat but in refusing this man's request Jesus refuses the request of the region for for whilst Jesus leaves as he gets into the boat his gospel doesn't his gospel will be spread abroad because this man gripped by salvation wants to tell everyone else about it

[40 : 46] Jesus work of salvation alters completely the direction and destination of life it unpicks the dark tentacles of the evil one it halts and undoes the dehumanizing effect that sin has upon us and it restores us to our true purpose warm fellowship with God a desire to be with Jesus and it returns us to the purpose for which we were made the life of true fulfillment serving him by making him known the reason the son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil let's pray Lord God we marvel at the beauty of the salvation that you offer in Christ and as we marvel we also ask that you would grant us help as we contend with the still groaning nature of this world grant us the grace to trust you the grace to see in Jesus all that we shall ever need and to see the one through whom all darkness will be defeated in the end help us to that end before we pray it in Jesus name amen our