

Rescue from Darkness

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[0 : 0 0] And we're going to turn to our Bible reading for this morning, which you will find in Luke's Gospel at chapter 8, which I think is page 865, if you have one of our church visitors' Bibles.

We're continuing our study in the Gospel of Luke, and we come this morning to this section beginning at chapter 8 and verse 22, and we're reading through to verse 39. Two little stories, but which are bound together very definitely by the Lake of Galilee and by the disciples and Jesus traveling on it and across it on their boat.

So Luke 8, verse 22, one day he, that's Jesus, got into a boat with his disciples, and he said to them, let's go across to the other side of the lake, that is to the area of the Gerasenes that we'll read about, which was really a Gentile area.

So they set out, and as they sailed, he fell asleep. And a windstorm, a whirlwind, 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 are perishing. And he awoke and rebuked the wind and the raging waves.

[1 : 2 5] And they ceased, and there was a calm. He said to them, where is your faith? And they were afraid, and they marveled, saying to one another, who then is this, or who is this man 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 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. 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.

And 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 : 3 8] And they begged him not to command them to depart into the abyss. Now 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.

When the herdsmen saw what had happened, they fled and told it in the city and in the country. And 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. And those who had seen it told them how the demon-possessed man had been healed. And the people of the surrounding country of the Gerasenes asked Jesus to depart from them, 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.

[3 : 53] And he departed, proclaiming throughout the whole city how much Jesus had done for him. Amen. And may God bless to us this, his word.

Well, let's turn in our Bible, shall we, to Luke chapter 8. And to the passage we read together. Page 865 in our church visitors' Bibles.

And a passage which is all about rescue from darkness. I read in the newspaper this week that according to Google, the number one Christmas gift this year is likely to be a Ouija board.

Apparently there's a craze for this because of a film of that name, Ouija. And it's been a big hit.

And of course, many people will think that that is just a piece of harmless fun. And plenty of people will just mock it as a piece of fraudulent hokum.

[5 : 02] And no doubt, somebody will be exploiting it as a great money spinner to extract cash from credulous people. But I do want to issue a word of warning.

There are people, and I've met people myself, who have been deeply damaged and deeply disturbed by the effects of dabbling in what might seem to be a simple thing like that.

Occultism. Something they thought was perhaps just nothing more than a bit of a laugh, but in fact turned out to be something very, very different indeed from a laughing matter. And while we need to avoid the kind of hysteria about these matters that some Christians can get carried away with, seeing demons under every bed, as it were, attributing to evil spirits absolutely everything under the sun, we must at the same time be very clear, mustn't we, that the Bible is very plain, that there is an unseen world, that there are very real spiritual forces, dark powers, forces of evil, the cosmic powers of darkness, as Paul calls them, that are ultimately from the evil one, ultimately from a dark and truly dangerous personality, that is the devil himself.

And ultimately, the Bible is clear that this is what explains our world, and the wickedness and the evil and the rank horror that sometimes reveals itself very plainly in extremes of brutality and of inhumanity and of frank bestiality, that even the secular, the irreligious media can only describe by resorting to the language of wickedness and evil and demonic.

We've all seen these sort of headlines, haven't we, on the front of the red tops. And it is the reality of these forces that also make it seem to us, at times, that even nature itself has a malign and hostile intent over the human race, with its unleashing of earthquakes and tsunamis and eruptions and all these things, not to mention floods and droughts and tornadoes and many other things that seem to assault us as a human race and are right beyond all of our control, but bring misery and tragedy and suffering on almost a cosmic scale.

[7 : 39] Well, the Bible is very clear that ultimately the explanation for all such disorder and disaster in our so-called natural world and all the darkness and horror in our human world is that both humanity and, indeed, the whole created order has been engulfed in a catastrophic invasion of the powers of darkness and evil.

And that has happened because of man's rebellion against the good and gracious rule of our Creator. We have, therefore, invited evil powers to march in and to claim ourselves and our world as the fiefdom of the tyrannical powers of darkness.

That is the big story that the Bible tells, rather like a group of rebels in a country who want to claim for themselves self-rule as though that will bring them liberation and a much better and self-fulfilled life, only to find that by rejecting the sovereignty of their own nation, they've offered the dictator of the huge country next door to march in and exploit them forever with his new tyranny of slavery.

And that's hardly an unknown scene in our world history or, indeed, even in our world today, is it? And the truth about our world of humanity is that in grasping autonomy for ourselves from the hands of God, we have not created the utopia that we long for, have we?

Just look around you. Your eyes and your ears tell you that is not so. No, the truth from our senses is far more in line with how the Bible describes things. That this world and its people have fallen prey to the prince of the power of the air, as the Apostle Paul puts it, the devil, the spirit, he says, who is now at work in the sons of disobedience.

[9 : 35] Inhuman nature. The whole world, says Paul, lies under sin's power. As Hebrews 2, verse 14, puts it, under the one who has the power of death, that is the devil, and who keeps people in lifelong slavery through fear of death.

That's the grim picture of the predicament of human life and the deed of our whole world and the ultimate problem of all mankind. And a solution does not lie in the realm of politics or economics or governments or military alliances or the United Nations or even NASA or any of these things because nowhere on this planet or nowhere in our universe is the answer because everything in this universe is part of the problem.

of the salvation revealed in the Christian gospel is that as the apostle John puts it in 1 John 3, verse 8, the reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil.

And that is what Luke is demonstrating for us so vividly in the accounts that he records in the passages before us this morning.

We've already seen that the wonder of the salvation Jesus brings is that he reverses the penalty of sin, death, as the wages of sin. And he releases people thereby from sins past.

[11 : 09] Their debt is cancelled and they have a new life. And because in his death on the cross he came to do that and bear away sin's penalty, as the hymn says, he breaks the power of cancelled sin and sets the prisoner free, free from his captor.

He rescues people from the dark power of sin and from the devilish personality that lies behind all of sin's power in this world.

And so what we see vividly and powerfully in these verses before us is our Savior, the Son of God, rebuking the powers of evil and removing the personality of evil with absolute authority and replacing fear and fury with his own perfect calm and peace, both for creation and for his precious creatures, for human beings made in his own image.

So let's look at the first story in verses 22 to 25, which is a vivid display of evil rebuked by the Son of God. Verse 24, He rebuked the wind and the raging waves and they ceased and there was calm.

The message of these verses is that the wonder of the salvation Jesus brings means that the whole world is rescued from sin's dark power because Jesus came to rebuke the dark powers of evil through his saving work on the cross.

[12 : 43] He breaks the power of cancelled sin. Now people often consider these verses as just what they might call a nature miracle, but I want you to see why Luke is indicating that there's more to it than just that.

One very strong clue is the way that the story is linked very clearly with the next one and the encounter of this legion of demons and it's linked by the boat and the lake.

In verse 22, they get into the boat and in verse 26, then they sail to the country of the Gerasenes. It's all part of the one story and both involve the boat and crucially, both prominently feature the lake and the lake as the place of death.

So let's notice, first of all, in this story, the great peril that Luke puts before us in verses 22 and 23. They sail out on the lake and the lake is the place of potential death.

That's why when we come to verse 33, it's no accident. The lake is where you drown. But the sense of peril builds up in verse 23. A windstorm, a whirlwind suddenly rushes on the lake.

[13 : 56] Galilee is way down below sea level and it's surrounded by high mountains and that sort of thing happens. They were filling with water. They're in danger. And verse 24 says, there's a high wind and raging waves, a really tempestuous sea.

They are in great peril. Now the sea and any great water is a very dangerous place. Those who live near to the sea, those who work on the sea, learn rightly to fear it.

But there's more here than just the sense that this is merely a natural phenomenon. Because to anyone who knows the Bible, especially the Old Testament, like all of Luke's first readers would and indeed Jesus' followers certainly would, they knew that water and sea, especially raging seas, speaks of disorder and chaos and evil.

All through the Old Testament, the great deep, dark waters that symbolize evil and everything that is anti-God, the anti-God's people, that's prominent.

The waters are where Leviathan resides, that great embodiment of evil, the great twisting serpent himself. The Bible gives us the picture, doesn't it, in the very first chapter in Genesis 1 of God creating order and beauty out of the chaos and the darkness symbolized by darkness being over the face of the deep or the abyss, as the Greek Bible that Luke used would have called it.

[15 : 24] The Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters and into that dark watery chaos and disorder, his word brought order and light and beauty and life.

That's why in Genesis 7 when God judges the earth, he returns the world to that watery chaos and we read that the fountains of the abyss, the great deep, were opened and flooded the earth.

death. That's why in the poetry of the Bible, surging waters and waves so often symbolize evil and disaster and calamity. Like Psalm 46, the picture of the world collapsing is that the mountains are trembling at the waters roaring and foaming against them.

Jeremiah 25, verse 32, where God says disaster is going forth from nation to nation. It's called a great windstorm, just as the same word here in verse 23.

And you'll find that all through at the book of Psalms. And you notice that the raging waves in verse 24, the tempestuous seas, that's exactly the same phrase that we find three times in Jonah chapter 1 to describe the storm that came upon Jonah's ship as he fled to Tarshish.

[16 : 38] In fact, there are extraordinary parallels, aren't there, with that story of a prophet asleep in a boat, wakened up by the sailors, told to pray for rescue from the storm. And that was a storm, wasn't it, sent by God to teach that fleeing prophet a lesson.

And remember, the pagan sailors came to trust in the one true God, the God of Israel, the only God who could possibly calm the seas and stop the threatening winds.

well, this too was a storm sent by God to teach a lesson. By the way, I find it very interesting that in Job chapter 38, verse 1, it was out of the whirlwind, the windstorm, that God spoke to Job and put him right about his sovereignty and the extent of his powers.

Well, Jesus' action here amid this windstorm has a very clear message that he is the sovereign controller of even the dark powers of the deep.

In the face of this great peril, he demonstrates to them great power. And the meaning of it was perfectly evident to the disciples who would have been reciting these psalms and learning these psalms off by heart since childhood.

[17 : 52] Psalm 77, verse 16, when the waters saw you, O God, they were afraid. Indeed, the deep, the abyss, trembled. Your way was through the sea, Your path through the great waves, yet Your footprints were unseen.

You led Your flock by the hand of Moses and Aaron, the great redemption of the Exodus, where the threatening seas was cast aside by the great Redeemer saving his people.

Or Psalm 135, verse 6, whatever the Lord pleases, he does in heaven and on earth, in the seas, at all the deeps, every abyss. And with great power here, Jesus rebukes the wind and the raging, hostile waves.

Because it's not just something natural that's going on. It's an evil rebellion of the created order against, well, against not only God, but against the rightful ruler of the created order on earth.

God created man, didn't he? To be lord over creation, to fill the earth, to subdue it, to have dominion over the earth and everything in it. To take the perfect pattern of peace and harmony of God's heaven and establish it all through the cosmos, the universe, to the glory of God.

[19 : 10] But with man's sin, with man's rebellion, it gave the powers of darkness a foothold into God's perfect world. It displaced man. man's sin, and so defaced God's image and brought the whole of creation under the curse, so that all nature, so called, is unnaturally hostile to man in this world.

But here, with a word, the raging sea and the winds cease, and there's calm. In Genesis 1, it was the Spirit of God, wasn't it, that brooded over the great deep and spoke God's almighty word, and chaos and darkness heard it and took their flight.

That's exactly what we're seeing happening here. No wonder the disciples are astonished. They marvel, verse 25, who is this? What kind of a man is this, says the authorized version, that he commands even the winds and the waves, and they obey him.

Notice, they obey his sovereign command. They're not just inanimate things. They know that only the Lord God commands the sea and the storm.

Psalm 107 is another psalm where there's a whole section about sailors at sea crying to God for help. They cried to the Lord in their trouble, and he delivered them from their distress. He made the storm be still, and the waves of the sea were hushed.

[20 : 36] But here is a man who is Lord not only of nature, but also over the dark powers of evil that are ultimately behind every so-called natural disaster that assaults and afflicts humanity.

He's Lord over the great deep, the great dark abyss of evil that envelops this whole world, that explains our whole world in all its complexities, and all the mysterious horrors of darkness.

And that is what really explains our world. world. We live in a world that's not under a benign mother nature, as people sometimes call it, but under the dark power of sin and evil.

That's what the Apostle Paul lays out so fully in the sinister picture of sin that he paints in Romans chapter 6, where he says it's a dark and deadly power. He likens it to an evil monarch, to a vicious slave master, to a ruthless general, to a brutal employer who pays out a wage, a wage that is nothing other than death, everlasting.

And that's the real heart, you see, of what the Bible means by that word sin. Sin is not just a few peccadilloes in the cupboard. It's not just a few misdeeds or bad things that we do.

[21 : 56] Sin in the Bible is a dark, enslaving power that envelops this world and our lives. The very first mention in the Bible of sin is in Genesis 4, verse 7, where God says to Cain, it's like a power crouching at the door, waiting to dominate you and control you.

And it's the brutal, hostile, raging hatred of that power that is signified in the dark, raging sea and storm here. We're perishing, is the disciples' cry.

And that was true physically, but it speaks eloquently of a far greater peril than mere drowning. But here is the revelation of one who is sovereign Lord over every darkness, over every evil power that imperils the life of man.

He rebukes the raging of the deep and he brings calmness and stillness and peace. A great peril, but met with great power. And like all Jesus' miraculous works, this is therefore above all a great picture.

A picture of darkness defeated and Eden restored. It's a picture, first of all, of what Jesus coming again at last will mean for this world and for his people. It's a picture of what he will one day do for the whole earth.

[23 : 25] What we see in his earthly ministry is but a foretaste of what the full consummation of his saving purposes will bring to this world. Remember, all the way through his ministry he's having to teach his followers that although the day of salvation has begun with his coming, it's not yet complete.

It's what he had to teach John the Baptist, remember. All the prophets thought that the day of the Lord would be just that, a day when God would bring salvation and judgment in an instant to the whole world.

But Jesus was teaching them, no, no, I've come first to usher in the year of God's jubilee, the time of salvation and restoration, the time to call people to repentance and to find salvation in me before I come at last to judge the whole earth.

But make no mistake, that day will come and when it does, what the earth has glimpsed in Jesus' earthly ministry will be what covers this whole earth as the waters cover the sea.

All these mighty works are pictures. They're like the brochure, if you like, that show us something of what his real kingdom of glory is going to be like forever. He will rebuke, he will banish every dark power of sin and evil forever.

[24 : 49] Every storm that has afflicted human lives will cease forever when Jesus returns. His salvation means the cosmic healing of this entire universe and all who are in it who are his.

His salvation means deliverance, says Paul, from the domain of darkness into the kingdom of the Son of his love. Isn't that a wonderful prospect?

Isn't that something to fill us full of joyful hope? that every storm, every dark tempest in this world and in your life will come to cease.

Every natural but damaging and disturbing feature of our own lives, our own personalities, things that cause us harm and grief in this world, whether it's physical or psychological or whatever it is, it will be brought to complete peace and calm one day.

Every storm in our lives that's caused by others and by their problems and their deficiency and their sins, all the relationship difficulties that we have, the ruptures, the divisions, the secret pains and agonies of soul that we bear and nobody knows about, all of these will one day be stilled absolutely.

[26 : 11] all darkness will be banished forever. Every agony and evil and pain and fear, whether it's caused by the so-called natural state of our world or whether it's caused by particular sin and wickedness of human beings, every such dark tempest will be stilled because in his coming to the cross at Calvary, our Savior Jesus in the blood that he shed for the sins of his people, he spoke forever the word that rebukes once and for all the dark power of sin and he brought peace, peace for our guilty hearts and indeed peace for the holy heart of God who is now at peace with us.

In his coming to the cross he reconciled all things to himself whether on earth or in heaven making peace through the blood of his cross says Paul in Colossians 1.

Evil rebuked by the Son of God. It's a picture of what his coming will mean for all mankind, for all who are his.

And it's also a picture, isn't it, of what his care means even now for those who are his. Where's your faith, he says to his disciples. They'd seen so much already, hadn't they, and yet still they didn't seem to really trust in him.

Did they really think that his kingdom purpose was going to falter because, well, Jesus was careless or Jesus had fallen asleep? Can't help think, can you, but the contrast that there is between the disciples here and the centurion in chapter 7 who had such great faith, he understood Jesus' power even when he was at a distance.

[27 : 57] He didn't need to be right there. Did they doubt his care of them? As if his presence with them in the boat just didn't really mean anything?

And so often we are like that, aren't we? We worry that our circumstances must mean that the Lord of the universe has fallen asleep on the job, he's lost control because of what's happening in my life.

Or a storm hits us of whatever kind and we're so quick to panic, we think Jesus has lost control or, oh, he doesn't care about me. But God is in control of every storm even in this age.

Indeed, he allowed this storm, surely, just as he sent that storm on Jonah to test them, to draw forth faith in Jesus, to grow their faith in him. How much better it would have been, wouldn't it, if they hadn't panicked, if they trusted, well, with the Lord Jesus Christ in our boat, no storm can touch us.

But just like the disciples, so often we only seem to learn things the hard way or the wrong way, don't we? Friends, the New Testament is so very clear. This world is not yet fully redeemed, that is true.

[29 : 14] Many storms may remain. We live in hope, as Paul says in Romans 8, waiting in a still groaning creation that itself is longing to be set free from its bondage to decay.

And so we walk by faith, not yet by sight, as Paul says to the Corinthians. That means that Christians will face many storms, much loss, much trouble, great pain.

But let this picture of his care for you, even now, let it fill your minds and hearts, friends. nothing comes to your life outside his knowledge.

Nothing, however frightening, however fearful, can ever possibly ultimately harm you if Jesus Christ is with you as Savior. If you're journeying with him, nothing can harm you.

You needn't fear even those who have the power to kill the body, Jesus says. Whether violence from without or even whether it's a disease from within your own body.

[30 : 26] He says in Luke chapter 12, Are not five sparrows sold for tuppence? And not one of them is forgotten before God. Why? Even the hairs on your head are numbered.

Fear not. You're of more value than many sparrows. You see, if Jesus is with you, if he's your Savior, you need to have no fear of evil.

Either in the darkest storms of life or indeed in the valley of the shadow of death itself. This story is a great picture, not only of what his coming will ultimately mean for this world, but what his care means for your life and for mine even now, even before we see his ultimate calm and peace flooding this whole world.

And that day will come. Paul says so clearly in Romans chapter 8 though, that the whole creation will only be set free ultimately from its bondage to decay when it obtains the freedom of the glory of all the children of God.

That is, only when all men and women in this world are like Jesus, are restored to the image of God's glory that we were created to be as lords of creation, when all of his own are rescued from the deformity, from the degradation of being ruled by the evil one and being held in bondage to death and despair.

[32 : 00] Only when that happens will this whole world be stilled and calm and at peace. And it's a graphic picture of precisely that that we see in verses 26 to 39.

As Luke shows us, the evil one removed by the Son of God from the life of a man whose bondage is broken so that we see him restored and made new in full humanity as he was meant to be.

Verse 35, the demon's gone and sitting at the feet of Jesus, clothed and in his right mind. And we can't miss the message surely that the wonder of the salvation that Jesus brings means that individual human beings are being rescued from sin's dark personality.

Because Jesus came to remove forever the dark personality of evil, the devil himself. He came to crush him through his saving death on the cross.

He breaks the power of canceled sin and sets the prisoner free from our dark captor. This story begins in verse 27 with an even more explicit picture of the dark powers that are hostile to man.

[33 : 17] And not just powers but personalities. He has multiple demons. As I've said, the Bible is unashamedly explicit in its teaching about the devil and his angels and Jesus himself.

As already mentioned, the devil back in verse 12 in the parable of the sower. A little later on in Luke chapter 11, he declares that casting out demons is a sure sign that the kingdom of God has come and is breaking into the world.

And what more wonderful picture could there be of the touch of Jesus on someone's life than the transformation that we see from the tragic pathos here of verse 29 to the serene wholeness of verse 35.

Here is a living demonstration of the rescue that Jesus the Savior came to bring to human beings, turning them from darkness to light, from the power of Satan to God.

And Luke narrates for us this dramatic rescue and then shows for us the divided response that it produces. So first look at the dramatic rescue. Here is such a very extreme case of the influence of sheer evil in human life.

[34 : 31] He had multiple demons as verse 30. And verse 27 shows us the effect of that he was naked, he had been for a long time. He lived no longer in a house like a human but among the tombs like a dead man.

He's deranged, he's damaged, he's deserted. And verse 29, you see he's dangerous, he's chained because he has immense strength that at times overcomes even these shackles.

Rather like we sometimes do see, isn't it, with people who are high on drugs, they have a huge surge of strength. You need to be able to fight off large numbers of people. It's a picture, isn't it, of the total degradation of the human personality.

His whole life is taken over by this power. Now some people today, of course, would just want to attribute everything that the Bible calls demon possession to what we would today call extreme psychiatric illness.

But that is not so. it does not equate with the facts of Scripture. We've already seen that Luke, who himself was a physician, has on several occasions clearly distinguished demon possession from other forms of illness.

[35 : 43] We saw it in chapter 4, verse 41, and again in chapter 6 and chapter 7. We've also seen in Luke, and you see elsewhere in the Gospels, that it's not only mental symptoms that demons could produce.

It could be physical things, sometimes dumbness or blindness. Sometimes there were no symptoms at all. Judas Iscariot was perfectly healthy, perfectly in his right mind, and yet in Luke 22, verse 3, we're told plainly Satan entered into him.

So it's not nearly as simplistic as some people might want to say, and demon possession is very clearly singled out as something real and distinct. And this man, it seems, is totally diminished in every way by his demons.

He's broken down, he has no self-control, he has no self-respect. He's lost all sense of his identity. Jesus asks his name, and he doesn't give his name, he gives the demon's name.

My name is Legion. He's no longer a person. He's defined by what he's become. I'm a man of many demons, is what he's saying. Sometimes we find that, don't we, when someone is so utterly defeated.

[36 : 55] They'll say things like that, define themselves by what they've become. Well, I'm just a junkie. I'm an addict. I'm a prostitute. I'm just a cripple.

I'm a dropout. I'm an ex- something, an ex-wife, an ex-banker, an ex-student.

In other words, I'm no longer what I once was. I'm just defined by my misery and my calamity. This was a truly hopeless man. But he saw Jesus, and the demons, we're told, recognize him as the son of the most high God.

That's the Gentile name for the God of Israel. This was a Gentile area. So the demons have perfect theology. Notice, perfect theology is not necessarily a mark of grace and regeneration.

Some people have perfect theology and are possessed by multiple demons. A salutary thought, isn't it? Important to remember that. We saw in the last passage, didn't we, that love to Jesus is a far surer mark of grace than just being able to recite your catechism perfectly.

[38 : 14] So he knows these demons. They know that Jesus' mission is to destroy all their kind. But the demons seem shocked that Jesus has come to torment them already.

In Matthew's account, in Matthew 8 of this, he explicitly says, why have you come to torment us before the time, that is, before the time of final judgment and destruction? So the demons are just as confused about Jesus' saving timetable as everybody else was.

That's another important thing for us to remember, isn't it? The devil is not in on God's plans and timetable. The devil is not omniscient. The devil is not like God. He doesn't know everything. What a comfort that is.

So he begs in verse 31, don't send us into the abyss, into the great deep, into the chaotic world of darkness where they belong. The bottomless pit is how Revelation translates that word, the abyss.

The horrific kingdom of darkness ruled by one who is called the destroyer in Revelation chapter 9, Satan himself. Well, certainly he's destroyed this man's humanity, hasn't he? Revelation makes clear that the abyss is a terrible place, even to the demons who call it their home.

[39 : 29] So they beg Jesus first, not there, not back there. Well, if you read John's vision in Revelation chapter 17, it pictures the abyss as the home of the great beast, the embodiment of evil, Satan himself.

And in Revelation chapter 20, we are told that Satan is cast down there into the abyss because of the victory of Jesus Christ, and he is bound at God's command for the perfect thousand years while Christ's kingdom advances throughout all the world, until at the very end of that age, Satan is at last cast down forever.

We're into the lake of fire, the place of eternal judgment forever and ever. Revelation tells us that truth in all that mysterious imagery and vision.

But what more vivid picture could we have here in Luke chapter 8 than the breaking in of Christ, the conqueror of Satan and his minions, of Jesus Christ, already binding Satan, binding the strong man, as Jesus puts it later on in Luke chapter 11, binding him and plundering his dwelling and rescuing his captives.

This is foreshadowing for us what Jesus achieves on the cross forever. Remember in John 12, 21, Jesus says as he's about to go to the cross, now is the ruler of this world cast out.

[40 : 57] And here we see that in the proclamation of the gospel of the kingdom of Jesus Christ, Satan receives his marching orders. He must retreat. That's why later on in chapter 10, when Jesus sends out the 72 and they come back and they speak of their preaching and all that was happening and Jesus says, yes, and I saw Satan fall from heaven like lightning in the preaching of the glorious message of his salvation.

In Revelation chapter 10, you see, John saw a vision of exactly the same thing, Jesus' victory resulting in the casting down of Satan from heaven and all his angels with him.

furiously, still warring against God's people, but knowing that his time is short, knowing that his certain eternal destruction is awaiting in the lake of fire and sulfur, the place of eternal torment.

Is it significant? I wonder that the only other place in the whole New Testament where we read about a lake, indeed the lake, apart from here in Luke 8 and just once in Luke chapter 5, is there in Revelation where it's called the lake of fire, the dreadful end of the devil and his angels, the place Jesus himself calls the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels.

And look here in verse 33, where do the demons who think they find refuge among these pigs, these unclean animals, where do they end up? Verse 33, in the lake, in the great deep, in the abyss, in the watery chaos and the threatening raging waters that all through Scripture epitomize the absence of God, the absence of life and all that is goodness and light and the presence of darkness and evil and all that is deathly and demonic.

[43 : 02] The lake that threatened Jesus' followers with destruction and death but which was rebuked by the Savior who brings his precious people from safety out of the depths while his enemies, the demons, cannot avoid being returned to the destiny that is unavoidably theirs.

You see, evil in the end, evil is always self-destructive. And what we see here in verse 33 is the only possible end for that which is evil.

And for all, for man and beast indeed, who are not rescued by the great Savior, Jesus Christ, from that evil. And that was surely the ultimate end for this poor man, had he not been rescued by Jesus from these forces that had hijacked his entire personality so utterly to destroy his humanity.

But he has rescued, a dramatic rescue. The evil one removed by the power of the Son of the Most High God even before the final complete banishment of sin and evil and Satan from this world forever on the last day.

That is the power and that is the wonder that the salvation of Jesus Christ brings. And friends, isn't it a wonderful thing when we see people whose lives have been so diminished, so dehumanized by the presence of darkness, when we see them rescued, sometimes from the most destructive forces including the ravages of drugs and other addictions and damaging behaviors and damaging relationships and all manner of things that diminish human dignity, but when we see people rescued and restored to right-minded, joyful and true, wholesome humanity in Jesus Christ through the gospel of Jesus Christ.

[45 : 08] But that is what Jesus came to do. Satan desires to have every one of us. Jesus said that even to Peter, his closest disciple. Satan desires to have you, Peter.

Not usually. as extreme looking as this man's condition. In our culture, it's usually far more subtle, isn't it? But Satan will seek to enslave in every way he can, every human person, with whatever leverage your particular personality gives to him to exploit.

And he knows us better than even we know ourselves. Satan has desired to have you. him. But Jesus said to Peter, I have prayed for you.

And he prayed in the upper room, did he not? For each of his own. He prayed to his father, keep them from the evil one. And John assures us in his letter in 1 John chapter 5 that Jesus goes on protecting all those who are born of God and that the evil one cannot touch them.

The Son of God appeared to destroy the works of the devil. For everyone whom he rescues through faith in his word, just as this man was rescued, just as real and just as wonderful.

[46 : 37] And yet once again, Luke wants us to see that Jesus' work always provokes and always indeed demands a response. And verses 34 to 39 show us that this dramatic rescue produced a divided response.

While the former demoniac declares Christ's glory, the townspeople demand that his glory depart from them. Verse 37, the people asked him to depart.

Even the demons begged Jesus not to depart, not to have to depart from his presence. However uncomfortable Jesus' presence was for them, they knew that the abyss, which was truly the place where God is utterly absent, they knew that that was far, far worse.

And friends, the tragedy is that one day people of this world who have wished all their lives that they could banish God absolutely from human life, they will discover how terrible, terrible it is to have that wish granted for all eternity.

but these people would rather have the presence of demons in their locality than the presence of Jesus. The wonderful transformation that they'd seen, it frightened them, it unnerved them, they didn't like it.

[48 : 05] It seems so strange, doesn't it? But in fact, it's really quite common, isn't it? When someone is saved dramatically from destructive forces in their life, like for example, addiction, and they give their testimony, and they say, I've been saved by Jesus Christ and his gospel, and people don't like it, people find it uncomfortable, they're glad that somebody's changed, but they don't want to hear about Jesus and his power, it's far too threatening, it threatens their lives too.

Maybe something to do with economic cost here, Mark's gospel says that the pigs were very valuable, certainly that's common too, we see in Acts chapter 16, don't we, where the slave girl is saved from a demon by Paul, and her masters are livid because they've lost a living that they made from her as a medium.

See the same in Acts chapter 19, when the silversmiths and idol makers form a riot against Paul because so many people are turning to the one true God and leaving their idols behind that there's a recession in the silversmith industry.

We saw that in the Great Awakening in the 18th century when so many drinking dens and whorehouses were bankrupted because so many people were being converted and turning to better ways.

No wonder the evangelists were hated. Depart from us. We would rather have the demons we had before.

[49 : 29] What did Jesus say? The light has come into this world, but people love darkness rather than light because their deeds were evil.

Jesus came to rescue people from darkness, but still many people say, please depart from us, Jesus. Quite literally, they would rather have the devil they know than the Son of God who scares them.

But not all respond that way, and Luke leaves us with the man in verse 38, now fully restored, verse 39, begging not to have to leave Jesus, begging to go with Jesus now and stay with Jesus forever, but Jesus says, no, it's not time for that yet.

There would be a time, of course, at last, when he would follow Jesus forever and be with Jesus forever, but not yet. He has a task, verse 39, to declare Jesus to his home, his family, his friends, his people.

And notice his new freedom results in a new slavery, a liberating slavery to a new master, the Lord Jesus Christ. As Jesus said back in verse 21, he's one of Jesus' true family now, who hears his word and does it.

[50 : 47] And the fruit of his new life, we see, is that the whole city now hears how much God has done for him, which he clearly understands means, do you see, how much Jesus has done for him.

And what Paul writes in Romans 6 could have been written so personally for this man, don't you think? When you were a slave of sin, what fruit were you getting at that time? Things of which you are now ashamed.

For the end of those things is death. But now that you have been set free from sin and become a slave of God, the fruit that you get leads to holiness and its end, eternal life.

friends, we don't yet see the final end to all darkness. We don't yet see this whole world liberated from evil and from the evil one.

That we will see only when the Lord Jesus returns and when all his true family obtain the glory and the freedom of the children of God, when we are raised in bodies that at last will never sin again.

[51 : 56] but through the cross and the resurrection of Jesus, Satan and all his angels have been cast down and they know that their time is short. And we know that now is the day of salvation.

Now those Satan has blinded and kept from seeing the truth and hearing the truth, even now they are all over this world coming to the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

As Paul wrote to the Colossians, all over this world, this gospel is now bearing fruit. It was then and it is still today. And the charge that God gave to Paul then and many others is the same charge that he gives to the church today.

Acts 26 verse 18, I am sending you to open their eyes, turning them from darkness to light, from the power of Satan to God, that they might receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified forever by faith in Jesus Christ.

The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil. And the reason that we are still here on this earth and not with Jesus in glory is that we are to do what this man did when Jesus restored him to the true purpose of his life, to declare throughout this city, my friends and community, how much Jesus Christ has done for us and how much he will do for all who will welcome the wonders of his salvation.

[53 : 41] salvation. Let's pray. Heavenly Father, how we praise you that you came to seek and to save the lost and to destroy and banish forever the powers of darkness and the slavery of the evil one himself.

May we be a people who in our liberated life service to Christ, our true master, who never ceased to declare how much Jesus has done for us and so draw many others to know the liberation that we know for the glory of our great Savior and God.

Amen.