

Are you feeling afraid? It's hard not to be if you've been reading the news or watching TV! And if it's not the coronavirus, it may be something else that is more pressing for you. Something that weighs on your mind, that keeps you up at night. Our passage today is especially for you.

There are four important stories in this passage. We could easily preach 4 sermons on this passage to work through the details of each story. And that would be very helpful. But it can also be helpful to take a step back and look at the larger picture of what Luke is teaching us in these stories.

These four stories are all connected. There is a reason he arranges these four together at this point in his Gospel.

Luke 8:1-21 – Powerful teaching;

Luke 8:22-56 – Powerful actions

Here is the truth I want you to see across all these stories: **Jesus' power is greater than our needs.**

Jesus has power over: nature; demons; sickness; death

While we won't look at every detail in this passage - I want to show you a few key details that hold this passage together. We aren't going on a bushwalk. We're taking a helicopter ride over the bush.

After the sermon, there will be a time for Q&A, and you might want to ask a question about a particular detail in these stories.

1. Power over nature

Why did the disciples cross the lake? To get to the other side.

We aren't otherwise told the reason. But it would seem that at least part of the reason is to that Jesus could teach them this truth. He has power over nature.

In verse 25, Jesus asks "Where is your faith?". It seems reasonable to me to have a little fear when on a little boat in a big storm. But Jesus asks the question because his disciples should have known better. They've already seen several significant miracles. They've heard some of Jesus powerful teaching. And yet they have failed to put all the pieces together.

In verse 25, they ask one another:

"Who then is this, that he commands even the winds and water, and they obey him?"

Who is this? It's a question that all four stories raise. And although Luke doesn't say it, it seems clear that he intends us to ask that question in each of these stories: Who is this who commands the wind? Who is this that casts out demons? Who is this who heals the sick? Who is this who raises the dead?

It's why we have titled this whole series with a question: What king is this? These four stories help us understand not only what type of man Jesus is, but ultimately, what type of king he is. Firstly, he is a king with power over nature.

2. Power over demons

We meet a man who lives among the tombs. And we learn he is possessed by demons.

Now, some of us are sceptical of stories like this because we don't really believe in demons, or in demon possession. But others among us are very aware of this kind of thing, and may even be too focussed on the demonic world. Regardless of where you fall, this story still has something important to say to you.

Notice what the demons first cry out to Jesus in verse 28:

"What have you to do with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I beg you, do not torment me."

In the first story, the disciples asked who Jesus was. In this next story, the demons know exactly who Jesus is. Sometimes people think that Jesus is in this grand battle with Satan and his demons, a real struggle of good versus evil. But notice the clear power imbalance in this story. The demons know who Jesus is, and they are in great fear. There is no question in their minds that Jesus has power over them. They literally beg him not to torment them.

In verse 30, Jesus asks the man's name, and he responds "Legion", for many demons had entered him. In the videos we have been watching on 'How to read the Bible', we learned a last week that character names are always very important in Biblical stories. 'Legion' is also the name given to a group of 6,000 Roman soldiers. This man truly has a lot of demons.

³² 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. ³³ Then the demons came out of the man and entered the pigs, and the herd rushed down the steep bank into the lake and drowned.

It's a strange story, and I want to clarify a couple of things:

1. It's not clear why the demons wanted to go into the pigs, and what they expected to happen when they did. But it is clear that they need Jesus' permission to do so. He has power over them.
2. The drowning of the pigs is a physical proof of the destruction of the demons. It wasn't as if the demons just took over someone else. All who saw this would have understood that their drowning meant that the demons have been completely defeated by Jesus.
3. This is a lot of pigs. It's a large economic loss for the farmers. And you may wonder why Jesus didn't care for the lives of these pigs. Why doesn't he find a nicer way to achieve his goal? I don't know. I wonder that, too.

It is not that it's an unimportant question, but Luke just doesn't address it. It's not the point of this particular story. At the very least, the death of the pigs allows for proof of Jesus power, and of the healing of this man. It may have even been the main factor for the herdsmen to go and tell the city what had happened.

The conclusion to this story teaches us another important truth: seeing is not believing. For the pig farmers, seeing God's amazing power over demons is not enough to convince them to follow him. Instead they kick him out. Have you ever heard someone say they would believe in Jesus if only he made a miraculous appearance in front of them? It's easy to say. But it's just not true. The Gospels are full of stories of people, like this one, who saw Jesus power, heard his teaching, and did not believe. Seeing is not believe. You can see, and still no believe.

And that leads us to the third and fourth stories, which show that you can believe without seeing.

3. Power over sickness

4. Power over death

In these last two connected stories, we meet two very different characters.

⁴¹ And there came a man named Jairus, who was a ruler of the synagogue.

And then in verse 43 we meet a second character:

⁴³ And there was a woman who had had a discharge of blood for twelve years, and though she had spent all her living on physicians, she could not be healed by anyone.

We have Jairus: a man; we are told his name; and he is a significant leader in the religious gatherings. And we have a woman. Unnamed. And whose conditions would have prevented her from even entering a religious gathering, because she would be considered 'unclean'. It's a contrast of two people from opposite ends of the spectrum. But both in deep need of the power that Jesus has. Let's first look at the woman's story:

⁴⁴ She came up behind him and touched the fringe of his garment, and immediately her discharge of blood ceased. ⁴⁵ And Jesus said, "Who was it that touched me?"

It's not that Jesus didn't know the answer to his question. But he is using the question for a very important reason. Of course, the disciples don't understand this, and in verse 45:

Peter said, "Master, the crowds surround you and are pressing in on you!" ⁴⁶ But Jesus said, "Someone touched me, for I perceive that power has gone out from me."

And the woman is forced to come forward, in great fear. But Jesus wants to highlight something really important, which he makes clear in verse 48:

⁴⁸ And he said to her, "Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace."

It is not because she touched Jesus clothes that she was healed. It is because she had faith that Jesus had that kind of power. It is her faith that is clearly on display, and Jesus wants to make clear to her and to everyone.

When Jesus was on the boat, he asked the disciples where their faith was. And here the faith of the woman is clearly on display.

Now, while all this is happening, Jairus, with his dying 12 year old daughter receives news that it is too late. How does Jesus respond to him?

⁵⁰ But Jesus on hearing this answered him, "Do not fear; only believe, and she will be well."

He calls on Jairus to have faith, just as the woman did. That even death is not outside the power of Jesus to act and respond. And then Jesus shows this faith is not misplaced, as he raises the girl back to life.

All of the stories in Luke 8 reminds us of this: **Jesus power is greater than our needs.**

He has power over nature, demons, sickness and death. Nothing is outside his power. Nothing is too big or too hard for him. He is a king with great power. And with great care for people in the way that he uses that power. Jesus power is greater than our needs.

Whatever needs you have; whatever challenges you face; whatever fears you feel – Jesus' power is far greater than all of our needs. I think this is deeply important for us to remember amongst the many challenges we face in our world. Many of us are feeling fears and uncertainty of one kind or another. And these stories speak a wonderful, comforting truth just as much to us as they did 2000 years ago.

Are you worried about the uncontrollable forces of nature? Like a storm on a lake? A national bushfire crisis? Or flooding?

Maybe you are overly worried about spiritual forces of evil, or have a heightened sense of demonic forces at play in governments and cultures across our world?

Maybe you have economic fears? You've lost a large herd of pigs. Your superannuation is rapidly disappearing. You lack job security or an income stream.

Maybe you worry about your health. Your carrying significant illness or injury. You've been bleeding for 12 years. Or your movement is severely limited, or you are in constant pain.

Maybe you worry about death – of yourself or a loved one. Of your only daughter, a 12 year old. Or elderly parents. Or a very sick grandchild. You fear the spread of the coronavirus because you – or those you love – will be especially vulnerable to the worst possible effects, and may add to the death toll of the virus.

It would be very unlikely if you were not at all concerned by any of those things. If there wasn't at least some part of you with some fear for some of those things. And maybe you even feel a great deal of fear and worry for many of those things.

All of the stories in Luke 8 reminds us of this: **Jesus power is greater than our needs.**

We should not fear bushfires or floods; demons and evil spirits; the coronavirus; or even death. Not because bad things won't happen to us. They might. But we do not fear, because we know that Jesus has power over all of these, and he uses even awful situations for a greater good. And he promises a future where all things will be redeemed and restored, and where we have eternal life.

Jesus' power is great news. It offers wonderful comfort. And it allows us to perform a very important task. As followers of Jesus, in the midst of fear, we can be a non-anxious presence for the sake of others.

When you are in a panic, when you have a fear and anxiety over your present or future circumstances – you know what is least helpful in that situation? Someone standing next to you to panic with you. It is like through petrol on a fire. It spirals out of control.

A handful of people panic buying toilet paper leads to an increase in panic and fear in others. It escalates. And before you know it, March 2020 will go down in Australian history as the great toilet paper epidemic.

When you are in a panic, the least helpful thing is for others to stand with you in a panic themselves.

The second least helpful thing you can do may surprise you. If the least helpful thing you can do for others is panic, the second least helpful thing is to go to the other extreme. It is to spread the lie the 'everything will be okay'. It is to tell a panicked person that they are overreacting.

It may not be okay. They may get sick, or even die. Or they won't find another job. Or the operation won't go as planned. It may not turn out fine. And, frankly, accusing someone of overreacting rarely helps the situation.

What you need is a non-anxious presence. Someone to calm your fears. Someone to ease your anxiety; to help adjust your perspective to a truer reality of the situation.

Someone to tell you that more than 80% of toilet paper is produced in Australia.

Someone to tell you that Jesus is still king. Someone to remind you that Jesus' power is greater than your need. That he is sovereign and in control, even over this.

There is a lot of fear in our world at present. Our world needs more people to be a non-anxious presence. Non-anxious because we know that Jesus' power is greater than our needs. Non-anxious because we know Jesus is the reigning, powerful and loving king of the universe.