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Preacher: Gordon Frame

[0 : 00] breaks into really Jesus's Galilean ministry shortly after he has given the Sermon on the Mount. Now it's quite a stretch we've read and each of the three incidents there could easily you know be worth at least a sermon each if not more. But I want to look at it all together this morning because I wanted to look at it at broad brushstrokes if you like as to what these passages together as Matthew under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit has brought them together what they are really telling us about the Lord Jesus Christ. In these three incidents we see Jesus as being the controller of nature, the conqueror of demons and the forgiver of sins. But I want to begin really this morning with dealing with what some people would call the elephant in the room. I looked that phrase up apparently it first came into existence in the 1950s that's when it first entered our dictionaries. I don't know if you know that phrase the elephant in the room it's it's kind of the event that is there you know if there was an elephant in your room I think you'd probably notice it.

But sometimes it's there it's huge but people just ignore it and forget about it and you know act as if it wasn't there at all. Well the elephant in the room for me is this many people who I know and I'll change that most people I know if I was to read this to them and talk to them about it they would be incredulous that I could take these accounts at face value. If I was to talk to people in the staff room where I work and read this to them they would sort of come out with the you know the old John McEnroe saying you cannot be serious. And I expect you know some of you young folk are here if you go back to your colleges to your schools and you share that with people you would get the same sort of reaction and many of us with our neighbours and so on would do as well. Come on they would say. You know we're living in the 20th century. Surely we cannot be expected to believe these events literally.

That a man can control the weather. That demons can be sent into pigs. That somebody who is paralysed can be immediately and fully healed. Some of them would just say well you know the bible it's just full of fairy tales anyway. You know you can't take it any more seriously than Grimm's or Hans Christian Anderson. And some of them some of them might be a little bit more respectful than that.

They might say well there's probably some truth there but it's been exaggerated in order you know Christians would exaggerate it when they wrote it just to kind of big up their leader.

You know and maybe we should look at these things metaphorically. But you certainly can't look at them literally. In a way to say well why not?

[3 : 25] You know what's your problem in taking these at face value? The answer would be well these things don't happen. We've never seen things like this happening in our lifetime.

And even of our parents and of our grandparents. And you know we've got no videos or anything of things like this happening. We have no experience of it.

Therefore it is impossible. And these things cannot have happened. How do we respond to that? How would you respond to that? Well the first thing I would say to them is you're absolutely right in certain aspects of what you're saying here. We are talking here about extraordinary events.

We are not talking about things that happen every day. Those who were in the boat with Jesus when this tremendous storm rose up and he stilled it.

[4 : 32] What was their reaction? Well we're told they were amazed. And it caused them to ask the question what kind of man is this?

And remember some of those guys in the boat along with the Lord Jesus Christ were fishermen who knew that lake and that sea inside out.

They'd have been in rough storms as well. But this one was really rough. This was one where they were frightened.

And when Jesus still did they were awestruck. They were amazed.

They weren't just sitting there saying wow that was interesting wasn't it? You know. They were absolutely awestruck with it. They saw it as something absolutely out of the ordinary and miraculous.

[5 : 34] And as I said that was the question. Somebody who can do this what kind of man is this? And in a way throughout Matthew's Gospel in the early part of Matthew's Gospel that is very much the question he is asking and challenging his readers with and challenging all of us as we read it and listen to it now.

What do we make of this man who can do such things? Writing about miracles in general in the Bible a preacher in the past a man called G. Campbell Morgan said that wrote this grant the truth of the first verse in the Bible and there is no difficulty with the miracles.

The first verse in the Bible of course tells us that in the beginning God created the heavens and the earth from nothing.

And he says if you grant that then the rest of the miracles really shouldn't be a problem. He's arguing almost from the great to the smaller.

If God is able to create out of nothing then we shouldn't be amazed that he can carry out great miracles.

[6 : 57] Now again some might say yeah okay well you're talking about God here but here you're talking about a you know a 30 year old man living in Israel something like 2000 years ago.

Well of course the claim that we Christians make is that Jesus is the eternal Son of God of equal divinity to the Father and the Holy Spirit.

And therefore we should not be surprised but we should also almost expect that he would do things that the Father did as well.

And I think if we look at these three incidents in each of the three incidents we will see something of the the Godness the deity of the Lord Jesus Christ coming out.

In that first incident where he halts this raging storm. Right at the beginning of our meeting this morning we read from Psalm 89 the first two verses.

[8 : 15] A little later on in that Psalm Ethan under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit writes of God you rule over the surging sea.

I must confess there were points over the last day or two when I said to myself perhaps I should make it easier for myself and preach on something else this morning. I had it settled in my mind earlier in the week that this is what I wanted to bring before you the Lord storming you know calming the storming sea and having this passage here you rule over the surging sea and yet very much in our minds there is a situation there in Japan.

How are we to respond to that? First of all I hope as I brought out in the prayer first of all is with tremendous compassion and to do whatever we can for those in that situation.

but the Lord Jesus as I said at a time when there was a huge horrible event in there two events one caused by people people who had killed others and then drunk their blood and another where a towered had commanded he said to the people these people aren't more sinful than anybody else that these things happened to we need to look to ourselves and see whether we are ready but also I was bearing in mind thinking this morning that there was a time when the Lord God flooded the whole earth because of the rebellion towards him of the earth and I would suggest that we are just as rebellious as a race and a people now as we were then but God has promised that he will never again flood the whole earth but there is going to come a time of course when these heavens and this earth all of it will be swept away and the

Lord will bring in a new heaven and a new earth in which will dwell righteousness and we need to ask ourselves will we be with him at that time and the only way we can know that is if we are resting and trusting in him now the psalmist wrote you rule over the surging sea and here on the sea of Galilee Jesus the divine son did exactly the same he was able to calm the raging lake in the second event we have these two men who were in a dreadful state demon possessed violent they were kept out of the community everybody was terrified of them and isn't it interesting that how the demons within them speak to

[11 : 33] Jesus they address him as the son of God that's interesting by the way it tells us doesn't it that we can be very theologically savvy and still be a long long way from having saving belief they knew more of who Jesus was than most of the disciples at that point it's not enough to know who Jesus is we need to put our trust in him so it's not just a matter of head knowledge it's a matter of

putting our trust in him and they were a long long way from doing that but they knew who he was and they said to him you know what are you doing coming to us at this point have you come to torture us before the appointed time they recognized that a time will come when all the forces of evil are going to be destroyed and that will be at the time when the

Lord comes again and when as I say this present age in these heavens and earth are wrapped away but here Jesus breaks into that and brings a foretaste of the appointed time as he destroys the power of these demons over these two men so the second incident shows Jesus' godhood as well and then what about the third incident the healing of this paralyzed man well it's interesting the reaction to what he says when he says your sins are forgiven the Pharisees and the teachers of the law turn around to him and say that's blasphemy that's an appalling thing to say that's an abomination only God can forgive sins how dare you stand there and claim to do that and of course part of what they were saying was absolutely right they were absolutely right to recognize that it's only God who in the end can forgive sins but where they were wrong was not to realize who Jesus was to look at all they had done and seen the evidence for his divinity which was further shown by his instant and complete healing of the paralyzed man he said okay as far as you're concerned which is the easier thing for me to say your sins are forgiven or get up and walk and obviously for them and I guess for most people it would seem the hardest thing to say was get up and walk Jesus knew it wasn't the other was actually far more important and far more difficult but he said the man get up and walk and he did so then are we right are people right in thinking that nothing like these events has happened before at such intensity and regularity and never has been since yes they're absolutely right in saying that but are they right in saying therefore these things did not happen and are impossible no they are wrong because they do not take into account that at no other time in human history has

God himself walked upon the earth and that is why these things happened and that is why I can take them as being literally true I want now just in closing in the second part of this I want to take each of these three incidents and I want to apply something from them to different groups of people of us who may be here this morning I want to take the first incident Jesus calming the waters on the sea of Galilee and I want to apply that this morning to those of us who are here who are already Christians Christians a lot of us here no doubt this morning are already Christians and I want to say that that you know that event has tremendous encouragement for us a lot of encouragement for us there now as I hope I've already said I believe it to be a real historical event but I think as well as that it is also an illustration of the way in which

Jesus helps his people in distress often the term a storm is used in the Bible not to describe a literal storm but to describe something going on in our lives and we talk about it ourselves don't we we use it like that oh so-and-so has been through a really stormy time or we even say somebody went out of a room in a storm you know if they're really angry about something and I think although this is a true historical point it also encourages us that in the furious storms of our lives Jesus is there for us now I'm coming in as an outsider here you know I've come across from York here this morning I certainly don't know what's going on in the lives of the youngsters here in Leicester I don't know really too many of the people in

[17:37] Whitby very well to know what's going on in your lives but you might be in the midst of stormy weather at the minute or you may have been recently or you may be in the time to come that might take the form of severe illness illness or it might be severe illness not parts for yourself but people who you love and in some ways that's almost harder isn't it sometimes it might be the fear over your employment it might be the fear over your exams it might be people saying things about you that aren't true but others believing it and making your life miserable and painful various storms come into our lives life isn't a bed of roses is it for any of us yet there will be many people here who can testify that in the midst of those storms

Jesus was able to take away fear and to bring about his calm and his comfort in those situations we too might be little faith people literally that's what Jesus said to his disciples we have it here it's translated you of little faith he actually calls them you little faith people and that's a pretty good description of me and I suspect it's a pretty good description of many of us who are Christians here this morning yet the fact that we have little faith doesn't stop God loving and caring for us if we are people of genuine faith even if it's little faith man in the past the first bishop of Liverpool Bishop Ryle said he pities even those who he reproves reproves means almost telling them off a bit and in sense he was saying to the disciples you know you shouldn't really have been as worried as you

are but nevertheless

I'm going to help you and sometimes he does that to me he says you know really you shouldn't have been as worried as you were about this situation you're only worried because you care about your own opinion of you rather than the real thing but nevertheless I'll help you so for individual believers here I think there's a real encouragement in that account that in the storms of our life which we will all go through Jesus promises to be there for us and to care for us and comfort us in it but I want to say also I think there's a message here for congregations for churches local churches together for those of you here in Whitby for us back in York for those of you going back to Kington this afternoon and it is this Jesus at that point was entering into new territory when he went over and he met those demon possessed men it was

I think the first time that he actually went over into Gentile territory there they were with their pigs and as he did so he actually found fierce opposition the fiercenies he'd had for quite some time and I think it's good to be aware of churches and as congregations that if we go out into new territory and I think God wants us to go out into new territory don't let us be surprised if we face opposition last year in about this time last year we had a mission in our church in York and we did some things we hadn't done for a long time we actually went around and knocked on doors around about where the church was we held meetings in the local pub and in the local community centre we went out probably more from our building and out into the area than we done for a long time intensively and we noticed in the week or two beforehand it seemed remarkable how many people in the church hit real problems in those two or three weeks beforehand you know that there were illnesses and deaths in the family there were all sorts of difficulties that arose from various people and it would have been easy to have been discouraged by that but somebody brought this to our notice you know this is what to expect in a way it's not to say to yourself oh in that case we better sit comfortably in our little school and you know make sure we're comfortable and safe

God wants us to take his light out into the darkness but it will bring the it will come to the notice of the enemy but don't be surprised about it indeed almost be encouraged not in a masochistic way but just be encouraged that this is we're in the battle and we're encouraged and we're going through it but then let me turn to the third passage Jesus is healing of this paralyzed man and let me apply that particularly this morning to any of you here this morning who are not yet Christians you may know quite a lot about it you're quite interested in it but perhaps even you yourself know well I'm not yet a Christian isn't it amazing the way that Jesus deals with this bloke

[23 : 50] I mean his friends bring him and they see that he has a great need he's paralyzed been paralyzed perhaps for years and they've come to believe we've seen this Jesus heal people perhaps he can heal our friend and you know they come to him it was obvious he had a great need and yet Jesus didn't deal with that first he did deal with it but he didn't deal with that first he said his first real need is to have his sins forgiven now as I say I don't know all of you here at all and I don't want to underestimate some of the real needs that some of you may have some of you may have needs in health areas some of you may have great needs in relational ways some of you might have tough home lives

I don't know I don't know all your needs and I don't want in any way to underestimate them or underplay them but Jesus says this to you if you're not yet a Christian if you're not yet trusting in me even though you might not even know that at the minute that is actually your greatest need I want to put a challenge to you a challenge to all of us but particularly to any of you who are not yet Christians I want to say that Jesus disturbs things Jesus disturbs your life if you become a Christian you'll never be the same again but how are you going to respond in these three accounts people responded in different ways some people responded very very positively they they responded with amazement you know what kind of man is this that even the winds and the waves obey him the end of the passage when the crowd saw the man walking away they were filled with awe and they praised

God so there were some very positive responses but there were also some negative responses you notice that when Jesus had healed and cast out the demons from these two Gadarenes he went to the town and you know if you were reading this for the very first time you might think all of the town would say wow that was amazing what you did those two people you know who were so violent and so distressed they're in their right mind now they're healed that's absolutely great but they didn't the vast majority of them says go away get back to your own country we don't want this you you disturbed our life too much they were more concerned with their lost income from the pigs let's not

minimize that there would have been some loss of income from them but they were more concerned about that than the transformation in these two people's lives where do we stand on that this morning a man called

Lebertov once wrote very bluntly all down the ages the world has been refusing Jesus because it prefers the pigs what about you where do you stand on that may God give us the courage to respond to the Lord Jesus with awe and with praise and with trust rather than rejecting him and saying go away I don't want you in my life let's close flexible and have oh and chance on the work late but it was ■■ tores your son andalu out and to that that and

The power of your voice Let the skies declare your glory Let the land and seas rejoice You're the author of creation You're the Lord of every man Let your cry of love Brings out across the land To death the days of angels Be to seek and save the lost And let's change the joy of heaven For the anguish of the cross With a prayer you breath the whole green With a word you still perceive Yet how silently you suffered

[29 : 32] And the guilty made you free You're the author of creation You're the Lord of every man And your cry of love Brings out across the land In the shadows you rose victorious Breasting hatred from the grave And descended into heaven Living that is in your way That is handed for the Father It's a ceiling for your own For this silent, darkened nation You are leading Savior's throne You're the author of creation

You're the Lord of every man And your cry of love Brings out across the land May the God of hope Fill us with all joy and peace As we trust in him So that we may overflow with hope By the power of the Holy Spirit Amen God bless you Amen