

Luke Chapter 8 v 26 - 39

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Preacher: Peter Robinson

[0 : 00] It's a beautiful day as well and we're thankful that we can join together as God's people to worship him and to give him thanks and praise for all his many blessings to us.

The flowers there, if you've noticed how lovely they are there, from Ralph's funeral on Wednesday. It was a glorious time, I think everybody agrees, as we're able to give thanks to God for his life and we continue to remember Shirley and the family at this time, but they really are lovely.

We're here again because of our Lord Jesus Christ, because of who he is and what he has done for us. And in Philippians chapter 2, we have this reminder of the Lord Jesus Christ, who being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage.

Rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. Being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself, becoming obedient to death, even death on a cross.

Therefore, God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father.

[1 : 48] Our Lord Jesus Christ is the one who suffered and died, but rose again. And our first hymn reminds us of that wonderful truth, that he is the risen king. And because he is our risen king, we have reason to rejoice this morning.

So let's stand and sing. The song's going to come on the screen behind me. Come people of the risen king. Let's all pray. Our glorious and gracious God in heaven, we come before you this morning as those who have good reason to rejoice.

We may have had difficult weeks. We may have had hard and trying times. We may be struggling even to be here this morning. We may find life is tough.

Yet, oh Lord, if we are yours and you are our heavenly Father, then we have so much to rejoice in. We have so much to thank you for, so much to delight in, because, oh Lord, we know that you love us with an inextinguishable love.

We know that, Lord, you have saved us with an eternal salvation. We know that our sins are forgiven forever and ever, and that there is no condemnation yet for us to face.

[3 : 02] We thank you, oh Lord, that we can rejoice, that we have your Holy Spirit who lives within us, who revives and quickens and helps, sustains and guides and leads.

We thank you that, Lord, we have your word, which is so full of your promises of blessing and good towards us. We thank you, oh Lord, that we have reason to rejoice, because, oh Lord, we are yours and you are ours, that we are not people without God and therefore without hope, but people with God and with hope.

People, oh Lord, who can face all circumstances and situations, knowing, oh Lord, that you will never leave us nor forsake us. Lord, we can look at our own weaknesses and our failings and know that you are the one who gives us strength.

We look at the circumstances around about us, which, Lord, can make us despairing, but, Lord, we never give up, because, oh Lord, we know that you are the sovereign king, the Lord over heaven and earth, that you are the God who is working out your purposes, that you have all things, including our lives and our breath, in your hands.

We thank you, oh Lord, that we have freedom, Lord, of persecution and opposition, that we have freedom, oh Lord, to come and sing your praises and to hear your word preached.

[4 : 27] Thank you, oh Lord, that we are not, like many of our brothers and sisters in Christ around the world, living in fear and trepidation. Lord, many who are in prison, many who are facing sentences of death, many, oh Lord, who are bereaved, help us ever to be grateful, ever to appreciate all that you have given us, and not to forget those who are our brothers and sisters in Christ.

We thank you, oh Lord, that you are here by your Holy Spirit. We thank you, oh Lord, it is your good purpose and desire to bless us and do us good. And so, Lord, we come with faith, asking forgiveness for our many sins.

Lord, looking and trusting in Jesus, our Savior and our sin bearer, and asking, oh Lord, that you would meet with us individually and corporately, and that, Lord, you would do us good.

For we ask it, that through our lives, glory and honor and praise may be given to you, and to Jesus Christ, your Son, in whose name we bring our prayers now.

Amen. A read now from the scriptures. Usually we do that a bit later. We're going to read from our Bibles and from Luke and chapter 8. Luke and chapter 8.

[5 : 45] And that's, if you've got one of the Red Church Bibles, then that's page 1037. 1037.

We're going to read from Luke and chapter 8, verse 26. Luke chapter 8, verse 26. We've been going through the Gospel of Luke.

We've been looking at the Lord Jesus' ministry, particularly. And at the beginning of chapter 8, if you remember, we're told that Jesus traveled about from one town and village to another, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom of God.

And as I said then, the ongoing chapter and the rest of the chapters are much to do with this subject of the good news of the kingdom of God.

We're going to pick up the events then from Luke 8, verse 26, page 1037. They sailed to the region of Gerasenes, which is across the lake from Galilee.

[6 : 46] When Jesus stepped ashore, he was met by a demon-possessed man from the town. For a long time, this man had not worn clothes or lived in a house, but had lived in the tombs.

When he saw Jesus, he cried out and fell at his feet, shouting at the top of his voice, What do you want with me, Jesus, son of the Most High God? I beg you, don't torture me.

For Jesus had commanded the impure spirit to come out of the man. Many times it had seized him, and though he was chained hand and foot and kept under guard, he'd broken his chains and had been driven by the demon into solitary places.

Jesus asked him, What is your name? Legion, he replied, because many demons had gone into him. And they begged Jesus repeatedly not to order them to go into the abyss.

A large herd of pigs was feeding there on the hillside. The demons begged Jesus to let them go into the pigs, and he gave them permission. When the demons came out of the man, they went into the pigs, and the herd rushed down the steep bank into the lake and was drowned.

[7 : 59] When those tending the pigs saw what had happened, they ran off and reported this in the town and countryside, and the people went out to see what had happened. When they came to Jesus, they found the man from whom the demons had gone out, sitting at Jesus' feet, dressed and in his right mind.

And they were afraid. Those who had seen it told the people how the demon-possessed man had been cured. Then all the people of the region of Gerasenes asked Jesus to leave them, because they were overcome with fear.

So he got into the boat and left. The man from whom the demons had gone out begged to go with him, but Jesus sent him away, saying, Return home and tell how much God has done for you.

So the man went away and told all over the town how much Jesus had done for him. We'll come to that reading and that passage a little later on this morning.

Getting it started. Turn with me, please, if you would, then, to the Gospel of Luke, and to chapter 8, to that quite astounding story that we read, that event in the life of Jesus, from verses 26 and following.

[9 : 20] I'm sure you've all heard of the story, Gulliver's Travels.

If you've not seen the film or read the book, it was a book written back in the 18th century by a man called Jonathan Swift. And the most famous part of the story, this fantasy story it is, is when Gulliver ends up on the island of Lilliput, and he's a giant and the people are much smaller.

And in the story there are these two island nations. One is called Lilliput and the other is called Blefusco. And they are at enmity with one another, these two.

They're at war with one another, these two kingdoms, as it were, of Blefusco and Lilliput. And the reason that they are against one another is all down to which end of a boiled egg should be opened first when you eat it.

Some decades earlier, the king of Lilliput had cut his finger while trying to open his egg at the big end. So he passed a law that from there on, all eggs have to be opened at the small end.

[10 : 31] But the people of Blefusco favoured cracking their eggs at the big end. And so they had a war about it and never really got on. It's commonly thought that Swift was poking fun at the two kingdoms of France and England for their long-running hostility towards one another.

He viewed their reasons for division between the two nations as small-minded and as unreasonable as the argument over which end of an egg to open.

Now, when we think about the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, coming into the world as the king of God's kingdom, we need to recognise that he came to fight.

He came to engage in a battle, to engage in a war. But it's not a war over trivial matters, trivial differences of opinion. It's not a war that was fought for wealth, for land, even for an ideology.

This was a battle for men and women's eternal souls. And here in Luke in chapter 8, we find Jesus in the midst of a battle, a combat which is taking place between himself and the kingdom of evil.

[11 : 56] Now, as I read through, some of you will have known the story before, but for some of us, it sounds very, very strange. Extreme. That's because it is.

It is. Here's an extreme case of a man who's living under the brutal power of a terrible regime.

Now, in recent months and years, the people of Iraq have suffered under a brutal regime, the Islamic State. But they all suffered in differing levels, as it were, of oppression.

Some of them got off very lightly in the sense of just having that sense of fear with them all the time, a loss of liberty to do the things they could do. But we know that for others, they were treated unspeakably.

Cruelty and brutality. Many were put to death. And so the people of this world, the people of our world, suffer in varying degrees under the terrifying rule of Satan.

[13 : 04] All people live with fear and a loss of liberty. The Bible tells us very clearly in John's first letter, chapter 5.

The whole world is under the control of the evil one. This world in which we live is a world in which there is a tyrant, a despot, and he is the devil.

Many people don't recognize that, of course, but the effects of his tyranny are all around about in the disappointments, in the griefs, in the troubles, in the struggles of life.

But many do not see that the cause behind these things is something more than the obvious and visible. But for other peoples around the world that are really suffering extreme persecution from Satan.

Extreme abuse, extreme control by evil powers. Sometimes those abuses are caused by their own sinful desires, leading them astray into all sorts of harm.

[14 : 18] But many people around the world endure the evil that others do against them, not recognizing or realizing who is ultimately pulling the strings.

So back to this man, this man who Jesus meets as he lands on the far side of the Lake of Galilee. Although his case is extreme, and it is because it's not repeated anywhere else in the New Testament, how does his life resemble all human life, all those who dwell under the kingdom of the devil?

And how does Jesus change the circumstances? And bring rescue. The first thing that greets us, isn't it, and greets Jesus as he lands on the shore is a very tragic man.

When Jesus stepped ashore, verse 27, he was met by a demon-possessed man from the town. For a long time this man had not worn clothes or lived in a house, but had lived in the tombs.

He was naked, he was homeless, he lived amongst the tombs of the local cemetery. Just a bit later on in verse 29, we're told that he had been chained many times, hand and foot and under guard, but had broken those chains.

[15 : 38] Chained, no doubt, probably for his own safety and the safety of the townspeople, but here he was, he was like a wild animal, unrestrainable, unhelpable.

In Mark's account of the same event and it's in Matthew 2, we're told that this man, day and night, would cry out in torment and cut himself with sharp stones.

What an unbelievably sad situation for any human being to be in. More animal than human. Nothing could be done for him.

They chained him, he broke the chains. He couldn't help himself. There was nothing surely more tragic than this man. No one to rescue him.

No one to help him. We don't know how this came about. We're not told. We don't know how long he'd been in this condition, but it seems to have been for a long time. A tragic man.

[16 : 42] Then we realise that ultimately this was because he was a tormented man. The cause of his tragic life was not due to his being mistreated by other people.

It was not due to a physical or a mental illness. He'd been brought into this pitiful state by a spiritual problem. He was tormented.

Verse 27, Jesus stepped ashore. He was met by a demon possessed man. Later on, we're told that he was an impure spirit.

And then we are told that he had many demons in him. Spiritual problem. Demon possession. Now, tonight, we're going to continue looking at this subject of the devil and demons.

So I'm not going to be going into any huge detail this morning to explain what's going on, but this evening, continuing that theme and teaching from the Bible, please be there if you can. spiritual problem.

[17 : 49] And the reality is this, that we learn here and throughout the Bible is this truth which is much maligned. The devil is real. The devil is real.

This man and others that Jesus meet, meets and heals, testify to the fact that there is a spiritual, unrecognized, often, but real part of this world.

and we are part of it too. These evil spirits are called impure or elsewhere, unclean or demons, but they are the same matter.

We've come across them very briefly earlier on. At the beginning of chapter 8, we met Mary Magdalene who we're told from whom seven demons had come out. And earlier on in chapter 6, verse 18, when Jesus was healing people, we're told, those troubled by impure spirits were cured as well.

But here we have, as it were, face to face and a much longer explanation of this battle between Christ and the devil. Jesus asks this demon what its name is and gives the name Legion because we're told there were many demons gone into him.

[19 : 07] A legion in the Roman army numbered 5,000 soldiers. And when we look at the other accounts, Mark's account in Mark chapter 5, we're told that there were 2,000 pigs in the herd that the demons went into.

So we're getting a picture that this man was possessed by thousands of these impure, unclean, demonic spirits, which really, I suppose, explain why he was in such an awful condition, why he was in such a place of extreme despair and torment.

They had complete control over his actions so that he was unable to control himself and they even had control over his voice as you notice that they themselves speak and answer to Jesus.

There's a change, isn't there? At the beginning when Jesus meets the man, he uses the whatever the possible word is, the word me to describe himself.

What do you want with me, Jesus, Son of God? Later on, they begged Jesus. He's a man who's tragic.

[20 : 22] He's a man who is tormented. Does this man's condition reflect the experience of the rest of humanity? And if so, how?

I've said that this is an extreme situation with an extreme problem that this man faces.

But the Bible tells us that all people, whoever we are, have and live under the shadow of the devil's tyranny. And so I'd like you to turn with me for a moment, please, to Ephesians and chapter 2.

Ephesians and chapter 2. Please turn there because it will be helpful for you. It's page 1173, if you have the church Bible, page 1173. Here, here, Paul, the apostle, reminds the Christians, those who put their faith and trust in Jesus, just what situation they were in before Jesus cured them and rescued them.

Chapter 2, Ephesians, verses 1 to 3. Just listen for a moment and then I'll unpick these verses. As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient.

[21 : 56] All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our flesh and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature deserving of wrath.

So, Paul describes the Christians here as being in their sin, dead in their sin. That means they are dead, cut off from God. But notice how he describes, and notice this is all people, all of us, who lived at one time in this way, as being those who followed the ways of this world and the ruler of the kingdom of the air.

The ruler of the kingdom of the air is just another name for the devil. He's used different titles, he used to describe him, just as they are with Jesus, son of man, son of God, Messiah. So, it's with the devil in that sense, different names and titles.

Now, to follow the ruler of the kingdom of the air doesn't mean that we are all demon possessed, as this man was and others were. But it does mean this, that we copied his example, that we were deceived by him, misdirected by him, lived our lives in disobedience to God by his direction, the spirit there who is now at work in those who are disobedient.

Everyone is disobedient to God because we all break his commandments, we all break his laws. Why do we do them? Because of sin in our hearts, but also because there is a devil, a spiritual realm that influences our thinking.

[23 : 28] We see it much in the world around about us, but it also is upon us. We're ignorant to it, probably. We don't realise we're doing it.

That's why Jesus goes on to say, all of us, also among them at one time lived gratifying the cravings of our flesh and following its desires and thoughts.

We thought they were simply living to please ourselves. We thought that we were simply just doing what we wanted, but in reality we were doing what the devil wanted, which was to disobey God and to live lives in sin against him.

Jesus makes it very clear himself earlier on in the Gospel of John chapter 8. I tell you the truth, he said, everyone who sins is a slave to sin. Again, we see that in extreme forms in all sorts of areas, but in reality it's in each life, where sin enslaves us.

We keep doing those things which we know we shouldn't do or know that the Bible teaches isn't right, but we cannot break free. Unlike the man who is chained, men and women of our day and generation are unable to break free from the chains that bind them.

[24 : 52] And in sinning, what are we doing? We are not only finding ourselves more and more enslaved, but as Paul puts it, like the rest, we are by nature deserving of wrath.

We're increasing our debt. We're adding to our sentence. We are bringing upon ourselves more and more of God's just anger against evil.

So this man, tragic, tormented, but then he meets with Jesus and things change, don't they?

Those powerful demons that had controlled him for all that time, who spoke through him, who caused him to harm himself and to break chains, those terrible demons that tormented him now are removed from him.

Do you notice how they are fearful of Jesus? Though there are thousands of them, they are under him. They begged him, don't send us to the abyss.

[26 : 01] They recognize that Jesus has power and authority over them. And so they ask him, let us go into the pigs. Don't send us to the abyss. Think about what that means tonight.

And so Jesus gives them permission and they enter the pigs and the pigs run down the hillside into the river or into the lake and are drowned. Now before you get all English on me and start feeling sorry for the pigs who have drowned, remember the tragic situation that the man was in.

One human soul is worth more than any number of animals. Why? Because a human soul is eternal. An animal is just for here and now.

It hasn't got a soul. It doesn't go to heaven or hell. It's not got a conscience. It's not answerable to God. You and I are. So one eternal human soul is of far greater value than any number of animals.

And so the pig herders run off when they see these animals drowned and they tell everybody in the town what's happening and so naturally all the people think well what's going on? We want to go and see this event.

[27 : 15] These thousands of pigs just run and drown. This man, they knew him very well and so they all come to see. And what a sight meets them. Unlike the man who met Jesus as he got off his boat as these people arrive they are met with a man who is transformed isn't he?

He's a transformed man. When they came to Jesus verse 35 they found the man from whom the demons had gone out sitting at Jesus' feet dressed and in his right mind and they were afraid.

We could even say he's a tranquil man. He's sitting not running as he did before. He's dressed instead of naked. He's in his right mind instead of out of his mind.

No longer shouting self-harming. He's at peace. He's at peace. No wonder the locals were afraid they'd never seen this man like this.

They'd never seen him in this way. It's clear isn't it? It's obvious this man has been delivered. He's been set free. For the first time in a very long time he is restored to the man that he was meant to be.

[28 : 29] As verse 36 puts it those who had seen it told the people how the demon possessed man had been cured. He's been healed. A spiritual healing.

that transformation in that man's life resembles the change that always takes place in a person when they enter the kingdom of God.

When a person is set free from the devil's kingdom there is always a change a transformation. The Bible speaks about it in so many different ways. Jesus called it being born again in John in chapter 3 and elsewhere being brought from death to life.

When the Apostle Paul talked about this transformation and change he called it becoming a new creation or receiving eternal life. And the Apostle Peter when he talks to the Christians in his first letter tells them that they've been given new birth and that they are participators in the divine nature.

something amazing happens to somebody when they become a Christian. Something tremendous a breaking of the power of evil over their lives and a bringing into the power of God.

[29 : 48] Jesus is the only one who can do that. That's the very reason Jesus came into the world. The very reason that he was born in that stable at Bethlehem as a human being one with us.

The very reason that he lived his life and ultimately went to the cross and suffered and died taking upon himself the punishment for our sin. That's the very reason he rose again from the dead as John puts it in 1 John 3.8 the reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil's work.

How do we account for what's going on in our world around about us? How do we account for the wickedness and the evil that we see in the way men and women treat one another and others and even themselves?

It's evil. There is a spiritual kingdom and men and women are enslaved in that kingdom and if you are not a Christian this morning so are you.

You're not at liberty and freedom to enjoy the goodness and the love and the blessings of God. You're not at freedom to do the right thing. We'll consider some more of this again as I say this evening.

[31 : 09] Let's just close for the moment. Here's this man now he's changed and transformed and we see what happens next to him. He's now a man who has a task verses 38 to 39.

The man from whom the demons had gone out begged to go with him go with Jesus who wouldn't? After what Jesus had done in his life in transforming him and setting him free no wonder he wanted to be with Jesus he wanted to enjoy the company and the presence of Jesus that's what every Christian wants and we can.

But for this man Jesus says no. Rather he says in verse 39 return home and tell how much God has done for you. So the man went away and told all over the town how much Jesus had done for him.

Do you see that? Tell him how God has done. Jesus has done. One and the same person of course. Jesus gives him a task to tell others.

That's the only reasonable way to live. That's the only thing that makes sense. If Jesus has transformed and saved you if Jesus has set you free so that you have been brought into the kingdom of life and light then you want to tell others come and see what God has done for me.

[32 : 23] Come and experience what Christ can do for you. Dear friends if you're a Christian this morning if you know and have received and experienced that transforming power of Christ if you've been set free then you've got a task you've got a commission you've got a job to do because the rest of humanity are those who are still in that trapped enslaved position you've got a responsibility to tell them how they can be free who they can go to what he can do for them.

But spare a thought for the people of the Gerasenes these people who had experienced and seen what Jesus had done in this man's life these people who had the opportunity now of saying to Jesus please what you did for him do for us stay and tell us about the kingdom of God stay and help us to live the lives God wants us to live but instead of doing that we're told there verse 37 all the people of the region of the Gerasenes asked Jesus to leave them.

What a missed opportunity what a terrible thing why did they do that? Because they were overcome with fear. fear is a powerful thing.

Does fear prevent you from asking Jesus to set you free? Fear of what he might ask you to do fear of what people may think of you fear of how your life will be changed fear are you afraid to put your faith in him that you might enjoy the freedom that he has purchased for you.

Don't let fear be your master. Don't let fear rob you of the opportunity that these people had. Jesus is speaking with you Jesus is revealing himself to you Jesus is saying to you here I am I want you to enter in to all the blessings and the joy I want to set you free from the things that bind and enslave you now will you not?

[34 : 35] reject me but receive me and come as it were almost like that man and bow before him Lord Jesus son of the most high gods it is for freedom that Christ has set you free writes Paul in Galatians 3 you and I dear Christians are the evidence that we he still sets people free and dear friends if you haven't been set free what are you waiting for?

now may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all evermore Amen thanks you