

Luke chapter 8

I. Transition

(Luke 8:1-3) After this, Jesus traveled about from one town and village to another, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom of God. The Twelve were with him, ² and also some women who had been cured of evil spirits and diseases: Mary (called Magdalene) from whom seven demons had come out; ³ Joanna the wife of Cuza, the manager of Herod's household; Susanna; and many others. These women were helping to support them out of their own means.

A. Clearly, these women were women of means. Jesus didn't condemn for being wealthy, but then they were willing to share for the sake of the gospel.

B. The other gospels don't mention these women until the crucifixion, but they do make the point that they were true to Jesus to the very end.

C. At this point, the good news is still vaguely defined, except that Jesus has frequently declared that people are saved by their faith in him and calls people to a life of greater ethical standards.

D. It was not socially acceptable for these women, whether married or single, to travel with Jesus and his apostles. They certainly could have supported him without traveling with him. Jesus was not about social convention.

E. Notice again the leveling effect of Jesus. As was true of the apostles, people joined people of very different backgrounds.

F. Is there any reason to suppose that Mary Magdalene is the woman who anointed Jesus' feet? [No] Some suggest the mentioning of her at this point is evidence of that identification, but the woman in c. 7 was "a sinner" not a demoniac. It's a silly argument.

G. None of the four gospels mentions any woman who was hostile to Jesus. Why?

II. The parable of the sower

(Luke 8:4-18) While a large crowd was gathering and people were coming to Jesus from town after town, he told this parable: ⁵ "A farmer went out to sow his seed. As he was scattering the seed, some fell along the path; it was trampled on, and the birds of the air ate it up. ⁶ Some fell on rock, and when it came up, the plants withered because they had no moisture. ⁷ Other seed fell among thorns, which grew up with it and choked the plants. ⁸ Still other seed fell on good soil. It came up and yielded a crop, a hundred times more than was sown." When he said this, he called out, "He who has ears to hear, let him hear."

A. It's popular to argue that this parable should be called the Parable of the Soils, as it's really about the different kind of soils, not the sower. But in Matt. 13:18, Jesus calls the parable the Parable of the Sower. Why do you suppose Jesus picked this name? [because one point of the story is that the sower doesn't discriminate among the soils—he casts seed in all the places, even the road where it obviously won't grow. It instructions on what WE are to do, not on how to respond.]

B. What does this tell us?

C. From a sermon by the great 19th Century preacher Charles Spurgeon,

In our country, when a sower goes forth to his work, he generally enters into an enclosed field, and scatters the seed from his basket along every ridge and furrow; but in the East, the corn-growing country, hard by a small town, is usually an open area. It is divided into different properties, but there are no visible divisions, except the ancient landmarks, or perhaps ridges of stones. Through these open lands there are footpaths, the most frequented being called the highways. You must not imagine these highways to be like our macadamized roads; they are merely paths, trodden tolerably hard. Here and there you notice bye-ways, along which travellers who wish to avoid the public road may journey with a little more safety when the main road is infested with robbers: hasty travellers also strike out short cuts for themselves, and so open fresh tracks for others. When the sower goes forth to sow he finds a plot of round scratched over with the primitive Eastern plough; he aims at scattering his seed there most plentifully; but a path runs through the centre of his field, and unless he is willing to leave a broad headland, he must throw a handful upon it. Yonder, a rock crops out in the midst of the ploughed land, and the seed falls on its shallow soil. Here is a corner full of the roots of nettles and thistles, and he flings a little here; the corn and the nettles come up together, and the thorns being the stronger soon choke the seed, so that it brings forth no fruit unto perfection. The recollection that the Bible was written in the East, and that its metaphors and allusions must be explained to us by Eastern travellers, will often help us to understand a passage far better than if we think of English customs.

D. The explanation

9 His disciples asked him what this parable meant.

10 He said, "The knowledge of the secrets of the kingdom of God has been given to you, but to others I speak in parables, so that, "though seeing, they may not see; though hearing, they may not understand."

E. Jesus adopts a deliberate strategy of speaking parables. Luke suggests what Matthew states explicitly—

(Mat 13:15) For this people's heart has become calloused; they hardly hear with their ears, and they have closed their eyes. Otherwise they might see with their eyes, hear with their ears, understand with their hearts and turn, and I would heal them.'

F. Jesus concluded that most of the people were unwilling to accept his teaching. Parables would be understandable to “he who has ears,” that is, anyone open to the gospel.

11 "This is the meaning of the parable: The seed is the word of God. *12* Those along the path are the ones who hear, and then the devil comes and takes away the word from their hearts, so that they may not believe and be saved. *13* Those on the rock are the ones who receive the word with joy when they hear it, but they have no root. They believe for a while, but in the time of testing they fall away. *14* The seed that fell among thorns stands for those who hear, but as they go on their way they are choked by life's worries, riches and pleasures, and they do not mature. *15* But the seed on good soil stands for those with a noble and good heart, who hear the word, retain it, and by persevering produce a crop.

G. This certainly seems to deny once saved, always saved. After all, the seed does germinate in some places and later dies.

H. What are the things that can cause us to fall away?

1. The devil—who prevents germination entirely
2. Testing (or temptation)
3. “worries, riches and pleasures” — failure to mature. Why would these things prevent maturation?

I. What's required to make it to the end?

1. Perseverance
2. Noble and good heart

J. There's a possible secondary meaning, which was to encourage the apostles. “We've been evicted from the synagogues, called blasphemers, etc., etc., but just because some of our “seed” has fallen hard ground, realize that there will still be a 100-fold harvest, so be encouraged.”

III. The lamp

(Luke 8:16-18) "No one lights a lamp and hides it in a jar or puts it under a bed. Instead, he puts it on a stand, so that those who come in can see the light. *17* For there is nothing hidden that will not be disclosed, and nothing

concealed that will not be known or brought out into the open. *18* Therefore consider carefully how you listen. Whoever has will be given more; whoever does not have, even what he thinks he has will be taken from him."

A. This is a very different metaphor from the "light of the world" metaphor in the Sermon on the Mount.

B. Here "light" is not good works but the light of God's word. This seems to be a promise that the gospel will be fully revealed.

C. V. 18—seems to mean that the more you hear and listen to, the more you'll be able to hear. And this is true (and a good reason to be teacher!). Learning God's word compounds like interest, except at a very high rate. It accumulates and builds.

IV. Jesus' true family

(Luke 8:19-21) Now Jesus' mother and brothers came to see him, but they were not able to get near him because of the crowd. *20* Someone told him, "Your mother and brothers are standing outside, wanting to see you."

21 He replied, "My mother and brothers are those who hear God's word and put it into practice."

A. Seems harsh?

B. The lesson is that those of us who are "good soil" and accept the word, who really listen, and keep on listening, and who then put it into practice, as closer to Jesus than his earthly family (including Mary)

C. It's important to remember how close families were in the First Century Palestine. Sometimes 4 generations slept under one roof.

D. Which tells us how close church members are to be to one another. It's a difficult ideal to realize but one we give up on too easily. Too often, church is like the Rotary Club, a place to network and make acquaintances and even friends, but not the kind of friends you open your home to—even giving out keys to your home.

E. Small groups are a big step in this direction. I think it was C. S. Lewis who observed the importance of a man's home to him as sanctuary, a place away from the office and other cares, a place of great intimacy and family. Thus, when a man invites you into his home, he is sharing something of himself that is very personal.

F. Dr. Joyce Brothers says a woman "wears' her house like she wears her dress." That is, the woman feels that the house is part of who she is and displays her personality and character. Hence, being invited into a home is also an act of self-revelation by the woman (which is why they have to clean for 5 days!)

G. You cannot be family and not share your home.

H. There is some evidence that Jesus' earthly family were opposed to him early in his ministry, but he would have said this even if they'd been fully committed to his work. Consider Mark 3:21—

(Mark 3:20-21) Then Jesus entered a house, and again a crowd gathered, so that he and his disciples were not even able to eat. 21 When his family heard about this, they went to take charge of him, for they said, "He is out of his mind."

I. You can talk about how this contradicts Catholic teaching, but it's generally a bad idea to use class time to talk ill of other belief systems. If a Catholic is present, you'll either get an argument or hurt feelings. You are very unlikely to have a convert. If you don't have a Catholic present, why bother? Teach what helps those who are actually there. Besides, the odds are 99.9% that someone else will bring it up. It's reflexive among us.

J. We take too much delight in showing off how much smarter than everyone else we are. Therefore, never point out that —

1. there weren't necessarily 3 wise men
2. Jonah was swallowed by a fish, not a whale (to correct someone)
3. Christmas wasn't born on 12/25

K. I don't even correct class members (always visitors) who get such things wrong and I refuse to call on anyone who wants to correct them.

L. Etc. Everybody who cares already knows—and it affirms a very annoying habit of "I'm smarter than you," which people hate about us.

M. For every person converted by such things (if there's even one), there are thousands brought to Jesus by other, better means. We just need to get over ourselves.

N. And perhaps just as important, when we read the Bible to disprove others, we often failed to see what the passages *teaches* us. Negative teaching just isn't very instructive.

O. But then, you don't hide the fact that the Bible says these are Jesus' brothers, and if a visiting Catholic or someone not familiar with Protestant understanding has a question, answer the question gently. No one minds your saying what you believe, and it's much more convincing than talking down others.

V. Jesus still the storm

(Luke 8:22-25) One day Jesus said to his disciples, "Let's go over to the other side of the lake." So they got into a boat and set out. 23 As they sailed, he fell asleep. A squall came down on the lake, so that the boat was being swamped, and they were in great danger.

24 The disciples went and woke him, saying, "Master, Master, we're going to drown!"

He got up and rebuked the wind and the raging waters; the storm subsided, and all was calm. 25 "Where is your faith?" he asked his disciples.

In fear and amazement they asked one another, "Who is this? He commands even the winds and the water, and they obey him."

A. The Sea of Galilee is in the Great Rift that extends into Africa, where two continental plates are sheering apart, leaving a deep fissure in the earth. The Sea of Galilee is 700 feet below sea level and yet near mountains and plateaus, so the wind sometimes rushes down with great vigor. Storms on the sea are often truly horrific.

B. Thus far, Jesus had not exercised authority over nature.

C. Why did they run to Jesus? Some of them were expert sailors. What did they expect Jesus to do? Perhaps they just thought he shouldn't face death asleep.

D. Why the rebuke? Should they have let Jesus sleep? Is the point that Jesus would take care of his own even if they don't ask?

E. Why were the disciples afraid? It would seem more logical to be comforted by having such a man with them.

F. "Who is this?" is an amazing question, when Jesus had just explained himself in response to John the Baptist's query. Plainly, the apostles were still learning the full significance of the Messiah's coming.

VI. The demoniac

(Luke 8:26-40) They sailed to the region of the Gerasenes, which is across the lake from Galilee.

A. This was on the eastern side of the lake (opposite Galilee). The exact location is unknown, but it was a predominantly Gentile area (as shown by the pigs) with a substantial Jewish presence. (However, some argue the pigs were owned by Jews, as evidenced by their failure to complain about their loss to a Rabbi. We really don't know. But we know for a fact that this was an ethnically mixed area, Jews and Gentiles).

27 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.

28 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!" 29 For Jesus had commanded the evil 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 had broken his chains and had been driven by the demon into solitary places.

B. I'm no expert on demon possession and have never felt compelled to take a hard position on it. Some say they've seen demon possession and exorcisms in various poor nations. I've corresponded with someone who says he witnessed an exorcism in the U.S.

C. Others contend that this was a temporary outpouring of demons that was ended by Jesus and the apostles—as a way to show their power.

D. Or perhaps it was an outpouring by Satan to oppose Jesus.

E. Others contend that demon possession is simply an interpretation of what we'd call mental illness today. And while this may be true in some cases, it hardly explains the events of this miracle.

F. The only reason to deny the gospel record is because the things recorded no longer happen today, but (a) that's not necessarily true and (b) doesn't prove much, as the NT is FULL of things that no longer happen. Jesus' time was all about once-in-history events.

G. I'd suggest not insisting on a particular interpretation. In fact, I might begin by asking if anyone has any personal experience with demon possession. I wouldn't be at all surprised if some of our members do. I know if you asked them about experience with angels several would have fascinating stories to tell (as did Gene Stallings when he was here).

30 Jesus asked him, "What is your name?"

"Legion," he replied, because many demons had gone into him. 31 And they begged him repeatedly not to order them to go into the Abyss.

H. A Roman legion had 6,826 soldiers. The number is likely not literal, but a very large number is definitely suggested.

I. We should take some time to reflect on what life was like for this man. He was completely isolated from society. He was forced to seek shelter in tombs (cave like tombs carved into the bluff).

J. The Jews would have considered him unclean, not only due to his demons but due to contacts with tombs.

K. He may not have spoken with another human for years.

L. Jesus immediately shows interest in him as a person—“What is your name?”

32 A large herd of pigs was feeding there on the hillside. The demons begged Jesus to let them go into them, and he gave them permission. 33 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.

M. Odd that Jesus would show mercy on demons. They wanted to escape the “Abyss,” is a place where demons are held captive by God.

(Rev 20:1-3) And I saw an angel coming down out of heaven, having the key to the Abyss and holding in his hand a great chain. 2 He seized the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the devil, or Satan, and bound him for a thousand years. 3 He threw him into the Abyss, and locked and sealed it over him, to keep him from deceiving the nations anymore until the thousand years were ended. After that, he must be set free for a short time.

N. We have no idea why the pigs ran into the lake or whether Jesus meant for that to happen.

34 When those tending the pigs saw what had happened, they ran off and reported this in the town and countryside, 35 and the people went out to see what had happened.

O. Sending the demons into the pigs had the effect of creating witnesses who reported what 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.

P. “Dressed” means wearing an outer robe. An apostle apparently shared his clothing with him. It wasn't a full set of clothes—just enough to be decent and warm.

Q. Fear in response to the kindness of Jesus is a recurring theme in Luke. People are always afraid of the unknown. We habitually fill the unknown with our worst fears. Jesus had healed a man considered beyond help—and they people were afraid! The fear comes solely from (a) the fact that Jesus obviously had power to do them harm and (b) assuming the worst in someone unfamiliar.

R. Why do we so often project our fears onto those we don't know? Why assume the worst in others?

36 Those who had seen it told the people how the demon-possessed man had been cured. 37 Then all the people of the region of the Gerasenes asked Jesus to leave them, because they were overcome with fear. So he got into the boat and left.

S. "Cured" literally means "saved." "Heal" and "save" are often the same word in the Greek. We see salvation as a new legal condition before God (which is true), but often salvation is actually healing. How is being saved like being healed?

T. "Overcome with fear" is literally "in the grip of (or held tight by) fear."

U. How very pathological—and normal! Jesus could have healed all their diseases—not to mention bringing salvation—but because of their irrational fear, they insisted that he leave.

V. When do we do the same? When do we tell Jesus to leave because of our fears?

1. When he asks us to teach the gospel to our friends and neighbors
2. When he asks us to help those in need

W. Jesus asks us to leave our comfort and venture into areas we don't know, and our faith is often not strong enough to let us obey—because of our fear of the unknown.

X. What does the miracle of the calming of the storm tell us about how we *should* respond?

Y. Of course, many have suggested that the fear was due to the loss of a valuable herd—Jesus wasn't good for the local economy.

Z. It's certainly true that Jesus considered this man's salvation more important than someone else's pigs. (The fact they were unclean does not detract from the fact that it cost the farmer a lot of money—and Jesus was unlikely to have been all that offended about Gentiles eating pork.)

AA. We often get upset with Jesus when his commands contradict our opportunity for profit. It's a fact that Jesus often calls on those with wealth to give some of it up for those in need.

38 The man from whom the demons had gone out begged to go with him, but Jesus sent him away, saying, 39 "Return home and tell how much God has done for you." So the man went away and told all over town how much Jesus had done for him.

BB. Notice how Jesus credits God but the man credits Jesus. The unity of the two is being subtly suggested.

CC. What would it have been like for this man to return to his home town? How would they have received him?

DD. How would they have received his message?

EE. What are we to learn from this?

FF. Does the Parable of the Sower apply here?

GG. It's interesting that Jesus, contrary to earlier practice, wanted the news spread. Perhaps because it was a rare opportunity to teach the Gentiles. Or perhaps because teaching the Gentiles did not risk accelerating the crucifixion to before the right time.

HH. The former demoniac desperately wanted the comfort of Jesus' presence, but Jesus considered the mission of spreading the good news more important. We sometimes hide from our fears by seeking Jesus' presence away from those who need us, when Matt. 25 teaches that we most surely find Jesus' presence in those who need our care.

VII. Jairus' daughter

(Luke 8:40-56) Now when Jesus returned, a crowd welcomed him, for they were all expecting him.

A. Perhaps some from the eastern shore had sailed ahead of Jesus. Or perhaps they just recognized the boat.

41 Then a man named Jairus, a ruler of the synagogue, came and fell at Jesus' feet, pleading with him to come to his house *42* because his only daughter, a girl of about twelve, was dying. As Jesus was on his way, the crowds almost crushed him.

B. The ruler prostrated himself, as was the custom of the day. He was desperate for his daughter.

C. Lenski says "only daughter" means an only child, a daughter.

D. It's easy to imagine the crowd being like this. The need for healing is great today in an age of modern medicine. It was beyond desperate in those days.

VIII. The woman with a issue of blood

43 And a woman was there who had been subject to bleeding for twelve years, but no one could heal her. 44 She came up behind him and touched the edge of his cloak, and immediately her bleeding stopped.

A. “Edge of his cloak” means the tassels on a square cloak thrown over the shoulder—not the fringe of his robe near the ground.

B. Recall that others had been healed earlier by just touching Jesus. Jesus was so compassionate that he healed *indiscriminately*. He *lavished* healing on the people. No one had to beg or say magic words. Even faith was not always required. Jesus’ *looked* for ways to help those in need.

C. We should realize what this says about the love of God. God isn’t trying to test or trap us. He’s looking for ways to save us. Any limitations are imposed by the nature of things, not any stinginess on God’s part.

45 "Who touched me?" Jesus asked.

When they all denied it, Peter said, "Master, the people are crowding and pressing against you."

46 But Jesus said, "Someone touched me; I know that power has gone out from me."

D. Jesus had healed many who’d touched him. Jesus called her to make a point.

47 Then the woman, seeing that she could not go unnoticed, came trembling and fell at his feet. In the presence of all the people, she told why she had touched him and how she had been instantly healed. 48 Then he said to her, "Daughter, your faith has healed you. Go in peace."

E. Jesus wanted the crowd to know that he’d healed her, just by being touched.

F. Imagine her desperation. Not only was she sick—and surely felt terrible due to anemia—but the Mosaic Law treated a woman menstruating as unclean. She’d been unclean for 12 years — meaning she couldn’t be touched. She really shouldn’t have touched Jesus, as this would have made him unclean—but he certainly was happy to be touched.

G. This likely one reason she tried to hide—she didn’t want to admit she’d polluted Jesus this way.

H. She wasn’t trying to steal a healing so much as to hide her shame.

I. By pronouncing her healed, he also restored her to her community.

IX. Jairus' daughter resurrected

49 While Jesus was still speaking, someone came from the house of Jairus, the synagogue ruler. "Your daughter is dead," he said. "Don't bother the teacher any more."

A. "Teacher" translates "rabbi."

50 Hearing this, Jesus said to Jairus, "Don't be afraid; just believe, and she will be healed."

B. The theme of the story is faith.

51 When he arrived at the house of Jairus, he did not let anyone go in with him except Peter, John and James, and the child's father and mother. *52* Meanwhile, all the people were wailing and mourning for her.

C. The custom of the day was to wail for the dead.

"Stop wailing," Jesus said. "She is not dead but asleep." *53* They laughed at him, knowing that she was dead. *54* But he took her by the hand and said, "My child, get up!" *55* Her spirit returned, and at once she stood up. Then Jesus told them to give her something to eat.

56 Her parents were astonished, but he ordered them not to tell anyone what had happened.

D. The passage is explicit that she was in fact dead. "Her spirit returned."

E. "Not dead but asleep" is true of all who die.

F. Taking her by the hand was to touch a corpse, which made him unclean. Jesus just walked all over the taboos of the day. It was very inconvenient to become unclean. It wasn't a sin, but it kept you away from others and forced you to undergo a cleansing ritual (usually an immersion) so you'd become clean again.

G. Jesus is always compassionate and sees people as people, not as objects to be used to show his power. He wanted the girl fed, the demoniac clothed. He is concerned about the small generousities, not just the giant miracles.

H. Why make them keep it secret (and how could they?)

I. It's important to see that Jesus was willing to get a little dirty to do a lot of good. The inconvenience was greatly outweighed by the blessings given.