



The Gospel of Luke - Chapter Eight

IV. Luke 4:16-9:50 - The Ministry of Jesus in Galilee (continues)

Summary of Chapter Eight

Many women came into the life of Jesus and they chose to help him in his ministry. One woman of special interest was Mary Magdalene, who once had seven demons within her. Some of these women were so influential or probably convicted in their faith, that they persuaded their husbands also to help both financially and, with the influence they had, even into the court of Herod Antipas.

Jesus described his followers with an agricultural analogy of seeds that fell in different places, with differing results. Only those that are planted in good soil, i.e. grounded in, and adhering to, the word of God would grow, ripen and become a good harvest.

He likened them to a lamp, whose light is meant to be seen and to bring light into a room to help others to see as well. As believers, it is our responsibility to take and explain the word to others. Those that spread their light will become an even brighter light, while those that don't will become dimmer lights. Jesus explained that his true family were those who heard and obeyed the word of God.

By calming a storm on the Lake of Galilee, Jesus displayed his awesome power in controlling nature. Despite being mostly experienced sailors, the disciples had been fearful of drowning so Jesus chastised them, not for being frightened but for their lack of faith.

On the other side of the lake they found a man in a pitiful state, besieged by a legion of demons that left him wandering naked in a cemetery; a total outcast from society. Jesus drove the demons out into a herd of pigs, which then immediately stampeded into the lake and were drowned. On hearing this, the owners of the pigs and their community demanded that Jesus should leave the region.

On returning to the Galilæan side of the lake, Jesus was told of the sick daughter of a man named Jairus. As he made his way to Jairus' house, crowds were pressing in on him. A woman, who had menstrual bleeding for 12 years, touched Jesus and was immediately healed. Jesus felt the power go out from him and demanded to know who had touched him. His disciples were dismayed as there were great crowds all around pushing and shoving all the time, but Jesus knew that this was different. The woman confessed, told her testimony and was blessed by Jesus for her faith.

Just then someone came from Jairus' house to report his daughter had died. Jesus went anyway and found the place filled with wailing mourners. When Jesus told them to be quiet as the girl was not dead but just sleeping they laughed at him. Apart from the parents and an inner core of his disciples Jesus cleared the house, took hold of the girl's hand and told her to get up, which she immediately did; another example of raising the dead.

IV.e Luke 8:1-21 - Jesus teaches in parables

Included in this section are the parables of the sower (vv.4-15), and of the lamp (vv.16-18).

IV.e.i Luke 8:1-3 - Women accompanying Jesus

Luke has more references to the role of women in Jesus' ministry than any other Gospel. Here he mentions several by name. It is noteworthy that the women come from a wide array of social levels: from the highest levels of the social order in Herod's palace to a demon-possessed woman, who would have been a social outcast. In Luke 23:49 we read: <<But all those who knew him, including the women who had followed him from Galilee, stood at a distance, watching these things>>, in Luke 24:1-11 <<On the first day of the week, very early in the morning, the women took the spices they had prepared and went to the tomb. They found the stone rolled away from the tomb, but when they entered, they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus. While they were wondering about this, suddenly two men in clothes that gleamed like lightning stood beside them. In their fright the women bowed down with their faces to the ground, but the men said to them, Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here; he has risen! Remember how he told you, while he was still with you in Galilee: 'The Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, be crucified and on the third day be raised again'. Then they remembered his words. When they came back from the tomb, they told all these things to the Eleven and to all the others. It was Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and the others with them who told this to the apostles. But they did not believe the women, because their words seemed to them like nonsense>>, and, in Acts 1:14 <<They all joined together constantly in prayer, along with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brothers>>.

¹ After this, Jesus travelled about from one town and village to another, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom of God. The Twelve were with him,

Luke 8:1

On the good news of the Kingdom of God Jesus marks the arrival and actual presence of the Kingdom of God. Nevertheless, the consummation of the kingdom is still a future event; a blessed hope for which the church continually prays.

² and also some women who had been cured of evil spirits and diseases: Mary (called Magdalene) from whom seven demons had come out;

Luke 8:2

Mary was called Magdalene because she was from Magdala, a city on the western shore of Galilee identified with modern Migdal.

Seven demons reveals the greatness of her healing as we read here: <<Then it goes and takes seven other spirits more wicked than itself, and they go in and live there. And the final condition of that man is worse than the first>> (Luke 11:26).

The number seven indicates perfection or completeness and was highly symbolic to the Jews of God's work among them.

Later writers in church history connected Mary Magdalene to the sinful woman of Luke 7:37, i.e. the woman who washed Jesus' feet and dried them with her hair, calling her a former prostitute. There is no evidence for this in the biblical text or in early church history. This mistaken identification arose from erroneously combining the two separate accounts found in John 12:1-8, and probably in Simon the Leper's house, as in Matthew 26:6-13, and with those in Luke 7:36-50, and with this passage in Luke Chapter 8. On the other hand, heterodox Gnostic writers from the late-2nd Century, i.e. those not in agreement with accepted beliefs, afterward promoted their own interpretation of Mary along with other minor NT figures such as Thomas, Philip and Judas, considering her a special possessor of secret knowledge from the Saviour.

Another viewpoint by some commentators is that Mary Magdalene is the same Mary who is the sister to Lazarus and Martha. However, scripture informs us that Mary Magdalene followed Jesus from Galilee, whereas Mary, Martha and Lazarus are only ever mentioned when Jesus is in Judæa, specifically in Bethany.

Contrary to various popular media accounts, no ancient source, whether orthodox or heterodox says that Mary was married to Jesus, let alone had a son by him! In fact, there is no source anywhere that says that Jesus was married to anyone. The NT simply informs readers that Jesus healed her of demonic possession and that she gratefully followed him to the foot of the cross and the empty tomb. See Matthew 27:56, 27:61 and 28:1; Mark 15:40, 15:47 and 16:1; Luke Chapter 24 and John 20:1-18.

³ Joanna the wife of Chuza, the manager of Herod's household; Susanna; and many others. These women were helping to support them out of their own means.

Luke 8:3

Both the mention of Joanna wife of the manager of Herod's household and the report that these women were helping to support them out of their own means indicate that, although Jesus' ministry was directed primarily to the poor, for as Jesus himself proclaimed: <<The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor>> (Luke 4:18a), some of the wealthy and powerful supported and welcomed it.

The phrase many others is feminine in the Greek referring to women who supported Jesus and his disciples.

IV.e.ii Luke 8:4-8 - The Parable of the Sower

Even though the Promised Land was not as fertile as it once was, agriculture was still extensive in Jesus' time and it is not surprising that he should use such metaphors in his teaching.

⁴ 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.

Luke 8:4-8

Although referred to as 'The Parable of the Sower', the sower is the least important component and is only referred to once in v.5. This is confirmed by its omission in v.11 and from Mark 4:14 <<The farmer sows the word>>. The focus rather is on the various kinds of soil on which the sower sows his seed. The types of soil are symbolic for the state of the human heart. Therefore, the success of the sowing is wholly dependent on the state, attitude and condition of the heart of those that hear, assuming of course the sowing reflects the true nature of the Gospel of Jesus. Once we hear the message, we must not leave any entrance to our heart for Satan to take from us what we have received and, as the writer to the Hebrews puts it: <<We must pay more careful attention, therefore, to what we have heard, so that we do not drift away>> (Hebrews 2:1).

A parable is Jesus' means of communicating truth through a narrative analogy in order to teach a moral or spiritual lesson. His parables produce very different results in different people: they hide truth from the crowd while they communicate truth to the disciples. Luke provides several examples of Jesus teaching in parables. To the hard-hearted, parables are a warning; to those who are open-hearted, parables illustrate principles of the messianic rule of God. A parable consists of a story and its corresponding intended message.

For birds of the air consider: <<Jesus replied, Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head>> (Luke 9:58), <<It is like a mustard seed, which a man took and planted in his garden. It grew and became a tree, and the birds of the air perched in its branches>> (Luke 13:19), Peter's vision of a sheet from heaven <<It contained all kinds of four-footed animals, as well as reptiles of the earth and birds of the air>> (Acts 10:12).

Some fell on the rock perhaps lying beneath a thin layer of soil, but more likely Jesus is referring to an unreceptive heart.

A hundred times. A good soil facilitates the growing, increasing and yielding of much fruit. Typical agricultural yields ranged from about five to fifteen times with ten considered a good crop, although some historical records tell of extraordinary yields up to a hundred times, which is considered a real blessing from God. For example: <<Isaac planted crops in that land and the same year reaped a hundredfold, because the LORD blessed him>> (Genesis 26:12).

Ears to hear. An exhortation to understand and heed the parable as confirmed in Matthew 11:15, 13:9 and 13:43; Mark 4:9, and Luke 14:35. Jesus will also instruct John to use a similar phrase in the letters he writes to the seven churches in Asia, as recorded in Revelation Chapters 2 and 3, e.g. <<He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches>> (Revelation 2:7a).

IV.e.iii Luke 8:9-15 - The purpose of the parables

In his explanation of the parable of the sower, Jesus also explains that parables blind those who have resisted God's revelation, while helping those who have believed it.

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’.

Luke 8:9-10

The knowledge of the secrets of the Kingdom of God has been given to you. For the disciples have unique access to Jesus’ teaching, as we see in [Luke 10:21-22](#) <<At that time Jesus, full of joy through the Holy Spirit, said, I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and learned, and revealed them to little children. Yes, Father, for this was your good pleasure. All things have been committed to me by my Father. No-one knows who the Son is except the Father, and no-one knows who the Father is except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal him>>, or in [Luke 12:32](#) <<Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has been pleased to give you the kingdom>>, and in [Luke 22:29](#) <<And I confer on you a kingdom, just as my Father conferred one on me>>.

Secrets are the mysteries of how the Kingdom of God would operate and are revealed to the disciples but withheld from the spiritually unresponsive crowd. In particular, these secrets of the Kingdom of God explained its partial and preliminary manifestations in Jesus’ day as it was breaking into the world in advance of its full and final appearing at the end of the age.

So that indicates the purpose of Jesus’ teaching in parables.

The final clause comes from [Isaiah](#): <<He said, “Go and tell this people: “‘Be ever hearing, but never understanding; be ever seeing, but never perceiving’>> ([Isaiah 6:9](#)).

God sovereignly uses the parables to either harden a person’s heart, so that he or she will be unable to respond or to elicit the positive response of coming to Jesus, asking for an explanation and accepting his message.

Again, we need to consider what is being said in these words: <<He said, Go and tell this people: ‘Be ever hearing, but never understanding; be ever seeing, but never perceiving’. Make the heart of this people calloused; make their ears dull and close their eyes. Otherwise they might see with their eyes, hear with their ears, understand with their hearts, and turn and be healed>> ([Isaiah 6:9-10](#)). **They describe the hard-heartedness of Israel. Its citation here emphasises the fact that Jesus speaks the parables to outsiders as a form of prophetic warning. Jesus warns of the serious consequences for all, both Gentiles and Jews, who do not open their hearts to him. And yet there is still room for repentance.**

¹¹ This is the meaning of the parable: The seed is the word of God.

Luke 8:11

The meaning of the parable: The sower in the parable primarily represents Jesus but in a secondary sense every faithful preacher of the Gospel. The various soils represent human hearts. The inhospitable hearts in the parable gradually become more receptive from indifferent to opportunistic to very interested but nevertheless remain preoccupied with the cares of their present life in rebellion against God’s true purposes. The good soil represents a consistently attentive and accepting heart.

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.

Luke 8:12

The seeds along the path through the field represent one group of hearers.

The devil comes shows that, although Jesus had a victory in the wilderness (Luke 4:1-13), and finally defeated him through the Cross and Jesus' subsequent resurrection, Satan will always remain a resolute opponent of all disciples of God, and will do all he can to rob everyone of their chance of eternal salvation.

So that they may not believe and be saved assumes that faith is the means of salvation. It is a person's faith that Satan will attack and take from them. It is often done very subtly, e.g. <<"You will not surely die," the serpent said to the woman>> (Genesis 3:4).

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.

Luke 8:13

The second group of hearers receive the word with joy and believe for a while, at least. A few interpreters think this is saving faith because these people believe and, although they fall away; perhaps from fellowship? This is not an ultimate rejection of Christ.

But it is more likely that this is a temporary, merely intellectual faith, as confirmed in James 2:17 <<In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead>>, that is, not saving faith for these plants have no root. As Mark puts it: <<But since they have no root, they last only a short time. When trouble or persecution comes because of the word, they quickly fall away>> (Mark 4:17), they bear no fruit and they do not persevere but last only for a while. Although: <<For my Father's will is that everyone who looks to the Son and believes in him shall have eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day>> (John 6:40), which implies that no true believer who perseveres will ever lose his or her salvation, since everyone who believes in the Son will also have eternal life and will continue as a believer until the final judgment, i.e. the last day when Jesus will raise him up into the fullness of eternal life. Paul also indicates that there is an issue of predestination to consider so that some will never accept the message and will always fall away as stated in: <<For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified>> (Romans 8:29-30).

Consider these words: <<¹¹Here is a trustworthy saying: If we died with him, we will also live with him; ¹²if we endure, we will also reign with him. If we disown him, he will also disown us; ¹³if we are faithless, he will remain faithful, for he cannot disown himself>>. **Here in 2 Timothy 2:11-13, Paul gives a trustworthy statement that has us moving from comfort to challenge and back to comfort: v.11b is a reminder of life, even in the face of death; v.12 calls for perseverance and v.13 is a reminder of God's preserving power and faithfulness. In this context, to deny him must entail a more serious offense than being faithless. Denying Christ envisions final apostasy, in contrast with a temporary lapse in trusting Christ, i.e. if we are faithless. Those who deny Jesus will be judged forever; but God is faithful and will pardon, restore and keep those who are truly his.**

Christians keep themselves in God's love by growing strong doctrinally, persevering in prayer and waiting for the Lord's coming. Christians are to keep themselves in God's love and know that God keeps them in his love as well. Ultimately, God promises to keep and preserve the faith of his own people so that no true believer will ever lose his or her salvation.

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.

Luke 8:14

The third kind of soil, containing **thorns**, describes those who initially embrace the message, start **on their way** but do not persevere to maturity; and so fail to **mature** because of **life's worries**. See Luke 12:22-34, which says that we should not worry but to trust in God, and Luke 21:34 states: <<Be careful, or your hearts will be weighed down with dissipation, drunkenness and the anxieties of life, and that day will close on you unexpectedly like a trap>>.

And on **riches and pleasures** we read: <<But woe to you who are rich, for you have already received your comfort>> (Luke 6:24), and in Luke 12:15 it states: <<Then he said to them, Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; a man's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions>>. Later on, we will read the consequences of the Rich Man employing an unscrupulous manager in Luke 16:1-13, and how his possessions were abused and squandered; although even this has a positive message for believers.

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.

Luke 8:15

The fourth group hears with a **noble and good heart**. They **retain it** and **produce a crop**.

Persevering shows that fruit-bearing in God's kingdom often requires much work before significant results are seen.

Interestingly, it does not specify the size of crop, as with God it is not a numbers game but that every individual is worth celebrating. However, this does not mean that we should ever be satisfied and we must persevere in sharing the Gospel with as many people as possible.

IV.e.iv Luke 8:16-18 - A lamp on a stand

This is sometimes referred to as 'The Parable of the Lamp'. Disciples of Christ are called to be the light of the world that is Christ, so that through them and their lifestyles, the glory of Christ will be revealed. This will then attract non-believers with receptive hearts to seek God themselves.

¹⁶ 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.

Luke 8:16-18

If believers do not hide the **light**, i.e. the message they have heard but proclaim it for others to **see** then what is **hidden** will be **disclosed** and what is **concealed** will be **brought out into the open**. Jesus is ultimately speaking about the final judgment but Gospel proclamation and Gospel ministry in this age are like a lamp that illuminates and drives away dark areas of sin before the final judgment.

Whoever already **has** knowledge of God's Word will understand it better. That is, **will be given more**, whereas the one who does not listen carefully, i.e. **does not have**, will lose even what he has heard.

We can see this confirmed in Acts 13:46, which describes the response in Pisidian Antioch to Paul's preaching in the synagogue, where many of the leading Jews became abusive because some of the Jews and many Gentiles started following Paul. The following account is recorded by Luke: <<Then Paul and Barnabas answered them boldly: We had to speak the word of God to you first. Since you reject it and do not consider yourselves worthy of eternal life, we now turn to the Gentiles>>. **Similarly in Corinth**: <<But when the Jews opposed Paul and became abusive, he shook out his clothes in protest and said to them, Your blood be on your own heads! I am clear of my responsibility. From now on I will go to the Gentiles>> (Acts 18:6).

There was a similar reaction in Rome as well: <<They disagreed among themselves and began to leave after Paul had made this final statement: The Holy Spirit spoke the truth to your forefathers when he said through Isaiah the prophet: 'Go to this people and say, You will be ever hearing but never understanding; you will be ever seeing but never perceiving. 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'. Therefore I want you to know that God's salvation has been sent to the Gentiles, and they will listen!>> (Acts 28:25-28).

My question is 'But will we listen?'

The key point to these verses is that to everyone who has, more will be given. Using one's God-given abilities wisely and productively is a vital part of discipleship and will be rewarded with additional opportunities to serve God faithfully and fruitfully.

If the hearer embraces Jesus' message of the kingdom in a rich and profound way, then still more will be added to them. That is, God will take up residence in that heart and give increased understanding and blessing, both in this age and in the age to come. The person who welcomes God's rule and presence will be given more of God's intended fruit. The one who depends on his own resources without receiving the word; that is, the one who has not will lose even that, i.e. what he has will be taken away.

IV.e.v Luke 8:19-21 - Jesus' mother and brothers

Jesus uses a visit by Mary and her sons to demonstrate his real family are spiritual and not biological, that is, he is looking for those who are coming to God through the revelations of the Gospel he is proclaiming.

¹⁹ 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.

Luke 8:19-21

The brothers of Jesus are most naturally understood as the sons born to Joseph and Mary after Jesus' birth. This would include James and Jude, who are both NT authors. James also went on to become a senior church figure in Jerusalem after Jesus ascended into heaven.

My mother and my brothers are those. As noted in the section introduction, for Jesus spiritual relationships were more important than physical ones. Thus his real family is made up of those who hear God's word and put it into practice. This statement also shows that it is not just enough for people to say they believe but that Jesus expects them to live out their faith in their everyday lives.

There is no mention of father, which may indicate that Joseph had died by this time. Joseph is never mentioned after the trip to Jerusalem when Jesus was 12. Jesus' family may have been trying to bring Jesus to his senses, from their perspective, as stated in Mark 3:21 <<When his family heard about this, they went to take charge of him, for they said, He is out of his mind>>. As the eldest son, Jesus would have been responsible for the care of the family if Joseph were indeed dead.

Jesus' messianic mission takes priority even over familial loyalties. Rather than negating the importance of one's biological family, Jesus is demonstrating the pre-eminence of the person's commitment to him and the Kingdom of God. See Luke 15:3-9, which are known as the parables of the lost sheep and the lost coin.

As noted earlier, his brothers and his sisters refer to children born to Joseph and Mary after the birth of Jesus. Some interpreters, seeking to defend a doctrine of the perpetual virginity of Mary, have suggested that these were either cousins or children of Joseph from another marriage, but no evidence in the Greek words adelphoi (brothers) and adelphai (sisters), or in any other historical information gives support to that view. For Mary to have a sexual relationship with her husband Joseph, and to bear children to him, would contribute to her holiness, not detract from it.

IV.f Luke 8:22-56 - Jesus, Lord of nature, demons, disease and death

In the following accounts Luke helps his readers answer the question 'Who then is this?' in v.25 and also commented on in Luke 7:49. The sequence of this section shows the extent of Jesus' authority over nature, demons, disease and even death.

IV.f.i Luke 8:22-25 - Jesus calms the storm

While crossing the lake, the group encounter a violent storm that even has experienced fishermen fearing for their lives. They instinctively turn to Jesus, who was sleeping. He calms the storm and then rebukes his disciples for their lack of faith.

²² 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 fishing boat like this from Jesus' time was discovered near Lake Tiberius.

Luke 8:22-25

Squall. The Sea of Galilee is located in the earthquake-prone Jordan Rift Valley. Matthew 8:26 also mentions winds, which points in the direction of a powerful storm that created large waves that shook the boat. The Sea of Galilee is 696 feet or 212m below sea level, resulting in violent downdrafts and sudden storms.

Although we shouldn't always look for natural reasons, as the similar passage in Jonah 1:45 tells us: <<Then the LORD sent a great wind on the sea, and such a violent storm arose that the ship threatened to break up. All the sailors were afraid and each cried out to his own god. And they threw the cargo into the sea to lighten the ship. But Jonah had gone below deck, where he lay down and fell into a deep sleep>>. **God can create strange weather patterns wherever and whenever he chooses. Some commentators believe that Satan, as the prince of the air, could have created this storm but this is perhaps giving too much credence to his capabilities. He can only do what God permits him to do anyway.**

Jesus sleeping indicates lack of fear and also great fatigue, a reminder of his true humanity. Although there are possible echoes of Jonah, we must remember that Jonah was fleeing from God, while Jesus was and is restoring people to God.

The disciples' fear of perishing is greater than their confidence in the presence of Jesus. Although rebuked for lack of faith (v.25), the disciples were aware that, whereas they were helpless in the storm, Jesus was not, so they **went and woke him.**

Jesus **rebuked the wind and the raging waters** revealing that he has authority over nature just as the Lord God does. An example of this can be read in Psalm 107:29, which says: <<He stilled the storm to a whisper; the waves of the sea were hushed>>.

Where is your faith? Little faith for the Greek word *oligopistos* is not ‘no faith’, the Greek *apistos*, but is ineffective, defective or deficient faith. Jesus calls the disciples to a clearer understanding of who he is. Jesus chides the disciples for being afraid. The antidote to fear is faith, i.e. trust in Jesus. They are right in turning to Jesus but they are exhorted regarding their fear and feeling of being forsaken by God.

For many of us fear is a natural emotion, but we always need to be aware that it is also a barrier to us hearing from God!

The Greek word *thaumazō* used for **in fear and amazement** also means to wonder or be amazed but it is different from the term used to describe the reaction of the crowds who were astonished at the teachings in Matthew 7:28. Yet even the disciples do not yet fully grasp Jesus’ identity.

The account culminates with the question ‘**who is this?**’ who exercises lordship over nature itself? This was discussed at the beginning of the section.

IV.f.ii Luke 8:26-39 - The healing of a demon-possessed man

Jesus demonstrates his greatness through his mastery over the demonic realm. It also reflects his true love and compassion for those who are in most need of it, which is most of us!

²⁶ They sailed to the region of the Gerasenes, which is across the lake from Galilee.

Luke 8:26

The region of the Gerasenes. The incident occurs near Gerasa a small town by the sea to be distinguished from the larger Gerasa or Jerash, which is 34 miles or 54 km away from the sea. Matthew 8:28 specifies that this was in the region of Gadara although some manuscripts say Gergesenes and some Gerasenes, all generally the same area.

A 5th Century church excavated in Kursi possibly marks the traditional location of this event on the eastern shore of Galilee.



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.

Luke 8:27

The description of the **demon-possessed man** in vv.27-30 underscores this terrible plight and the greatness of Jesus, who can cast out so many, i.e. a legion of powerful demons. The use of *he* (vv.27-30), and *they* (vv.31-33) is determined primarily by whether the demons are seen as acting in unity with the man or apart from him.

This story reminds us of the deep compassion Jesus has for people. He has just undertaken a perilous journey to save this one poor soul. He will then depart without so much as giving a single message to the remaining residents!

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!

Luke 8:28

When he saw Jesus, he cried out and fell at his feet. When the man ran and fell down before Jesus it may indicate an involuntary submission of the demons to Jesus' greater power or that the man himself longed to be free of the demonic influence, or a bit of both. In either case, the demon immediately takes over the man's voice.

For the demons' knowledge of Jesus' identity we have already read: <<Moreover, demons came out of many people, shouting, You are the Son of God! But he rebuked them and would not allow them to speak, because they knew he was the Christ>> (Luke 4:41). The demons recognise that one of Satan's strongholds, the dark spirit world, is being invaded and overpowered by the Son of God.

I beg you reveals the subservience of the demons.

The significance of don't torture me becomes clear in v.31.

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.

Luke 8:29

Jesus had commanded indicates that the demon may not have come out the first time Jesus commanded it to.

Many times heightens the man's plight.

³⁰ Jesus asked him, What is your name? Legion, he replied, because many demons had gone into him.

Luke 8:30

Legion indicates thousands of demons but may be an intentional overstatement as a legion was the largest unit of the Roman army and at full strength had 6,000 soldiers. This may not necessarily mean that there were 6,000 demons in the man only that there were a great many. Mary Magdalene's plight of being possessed by seven demons in v.2 is exponentially exceeded by this man's situation.

Jesus speaks directly to the demons and not to the man, indicating his ability to interact directly with the spiritual realm. For some reason he is interested in the name or names of the demons but no other details are requested.

³¹ And they begged him repeatedly not to order them to go into the Abyss.

Luke 8:31

The Abyss is the final destination of Satan and his angels. We have several similar passages to confirm this such as: <<Then he will say to those on his left, 'Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels>> (Matthew 25:41), <<For if God did not spare angels when they sinned, but sent them to hell, putting them into gloomy dungeons to be held for judgment>> (2 Peter 2:4), and: <<He threw him into the Abyss, and locked and sealed it over him, to keep him from deceiving the nations any more until the thousand years were ended>> (Revelation 20:3a).

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.

Luke 8:32-33

A large herd of pigs reveals that this is a Gentile region since pigs were forbidden for the Jews: <<And the pig, though it has a split hoof completely divided, does not chew the cud; it is unclean for you>> (Leviticus 11:7), and: <<The pig is also unclean; although it has a split hoof, it does not chew the cud. You are not to eat their meat or touch their carcasses>> (Deuteronomy 14:8).

The herd of pigs would have been raised for food in this Gentile region on the east shore of the Sea of Galilee and the local people were very upset and all the city had begged him to leave, for the loss of the herd was about 2,000 pigs, according to Mark 5:13. The pigs' fate in the sea prefigures and pictures the final fate of demons when God defeats Satan and throws him into the lake of fire (Revelation 20:10). Jesus accomplished the decisive defeat of Satan in his earthly ministry (Matthew 4:1-11 and Luke 10:18-19), and ultimately in his crucifixion and resurrection (John 12:31, Colossians 2:15 and Hebrews 2:14-15).

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. 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.

Luke 8:34-35

The demoniac's salvation is confirmed by: the drowning of the pigs; his **sitting at Jesus' feet** instead of being among the tombs, bound with chains and shackles (v.27 and v.29), his being **dressed** rather than naked (v.27), and his being **in his right mind**, as confirmed in Mark 5:15, which reads: <<When they came to Jesus, they saw the man who had been possessed by the legion of demons, sitting there, dressed and in his right mind; and they were afraid>>.

Afraid. We have seen this reaction many times as people realise the work of God is at hand. The drowning of so many pigs also verifies that a large number of demons were in the man.

People should be encouraged to approach God in awe rather than in fear as this would be a better response, and it would enable the relationship to build more naturally.

³⁶ Those who had seen it told the people how the demon-possessed man had been cured.

Luke 8:36

The man is described as cured, which can also be translated saved.

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.

Luke 8:37

Because they were overcome with fear. While fearful reverence and awe are appropriate in the presence of Jesus, the fear of these townspeople is negative and seems to be a wrongful superstitious fear of Jesus' mysterious power. Perhaps a fear of further loss of their property, for their fear does not draw them to Jesus.

So he got into the boat and left. The orderly fashion of their departure shows that Jesus is never intimidated by people's reactions to them but he doesn't impose himself either. He waits patiently for us to come to him. Luke completes the story concerning the townspeople before completing the story of the demoniac.

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 the town how much Jesus had done for him.

Luke 8:38-39

The parallel statements return home and tell how much God has done for you and went away, told, how much Jesus had done for him should be noted indicating that Jesus has the same status as God. Following Jesus involves the responsibility to evangelise.

Being possessed by evil spirits is not just something that happened in Jesus time but has continued throughout the ages into modern times and western countries. However, the devil is often more subtle than to use his demons to possess us. He can often fill our hearts with cravings for the allures of this world. We know this is the case when we start to make excuses, often to ourselves, for not serving God and his church. This also applies to any of us who do not give what we really should, whether that be our time, resources or money. We must always guard our hearts against the wiles and subtleties of such spiritual attacks.

Jesus did not allow the restored and thankful man to join him. It is possible that he was asking Jesus for permission to belong to the closer circle of disciples. Jesus wanted the restored man to be a witness to God's power in the Decapolis, an example of Jesus intentionally instructing a restored person to proclaim what had happened to him, in contrast to his call for secrecy in other cases. Jewish and Gentile people in the Decapolis did not yet pose the same danger of misunderstanding Jesus as a political or military Messiah, as was the case in Galilee or in Judæa.

IV.f.iii Luke 8:40-56 - A dead girl and a sick woman

Jesus raises Jairus' daughter (vv.40-42a and vv.49-56), after being interrupted by another person needing his attention (vv.42b-48).

⁴⁰ Now when Jesus returned, a crowd welcomed him, for they were all expecting him.

Luke 8:40

Jesus returned to the Galilæan side of the sea, where his popularity had constantly grown.

A crowd welcomed him refers back to vv.1-21.

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 ^{42a} because his only daughter, a girl of about twelve, was dying.

Luke 8:41-42a

A ruler of the synagogue would probably be a layman, who would have presided over the affairs of the synagogue, including organising and teaching in synagogue services. Most of them were Pharisees.

The Greek term archisynagōgos has been found on many inscriptions in Palestine and throughout the Roman world. Jairus was probably a board member of the synagogue or more likely the official in charge of arranging services as confirmed in v.49. A similar example, from Acts 13:15 is: <<After the reading from the Law and the Prophets, the synagogue rulers sent word to them, saying, Brothers, if you have a message of encouragement for the people, please speak>>.

Fell at Jesus' feet, pleading with him. The description reveals Jairus' desperation, as does only daughter, similar to the widow's only son in Luke 7:12, and the man whose only son was besieged by an evil spirit in Luke 9:38. The fact that Jairus 'fell at Jesus' feet' demonstrates his real need and his sincerity.

Luke 8:42b-48

While Jesus heals someone else, Jairus' daughter dies.

^{42b} As Jesus was on his way, the crowds almost crushed him. ⁴³ And a woman was there who had been subject to bleeding for twelve years, but no-one could heal her.

Luke 8:42b-43

Subject to bleeding. Her plight is heightened by its duration, twelve years, and hopelessness, no-one could heal her. Moreover, her hæmorrhaging would have made her ceremonially unclean, which would have cut her off from many social and religious relationships as confirmed in the law: <<When a woman has a discharge of blood for many days at a time other than her monthly period or has a discharge that continues beyond her period, she will be unclean as long as she has the discharge, just as in the days of her period>> (Leviticus 15:25).

⁴⁴ She came up behind him and touched the edge of his cloak, and immediately her bleeding stopped.

Luke 8:44

Touched the edge of his cloak. In contrast to the 12 years of hæmorrhaging and failure to be healed by human means, the miraculous healing that comes from God happens **immediately**, as confirmed in Luke 18:43 by: <<Immediately he received his sight and followed Jesus, praising God. When all the people saw it, they also praised God>>.

By touching Jesus' garment, she technically renders him ceremonially unclean, but Jesus is greater than any purity laws for he makes her clean by his power instead of becoming unclean himself.

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.

Luke 8:45-46

Who touched me? Jesus is aware that one of the many people touching him had been healed. Jesus senses in himself, probably indicating some physical sensation in his body **that power had gone out from him**, not merely by being touched but by being touched by someone who has faith that he can heal her.

Jewish rabbis like Jesus would always wear a Tallit or prayer shawl. As they walked along, the Tallit would billow out like a bird's wings. Perhaps Jesus was excited that someone actually had the faith to believe in the scripture about him that says: <<But for you who revere my name, the sun of righteousness will rise with healing in its wings>> (Malachi 4:2).

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.

Luke 8:47

The woman came trembling. In Luke, fear is appropriate when experiencing God's presence. The woman told why she had touched him. When Jesus asked, 'Who touched me?' the woman responded with fear and trembling. Her fear may have been partly because, in working her way through the crowd to get to Jesus, she would have touched many people and thus rendered them ceremonially unclean as well.

Again the theme of fear is noted and shows how it leads to faith. More importantly the woman felt deep awe; the Greek phobeomai can be rendered 'be afraid' or 'feel awe and reverence' at the powerful presence of God, who has healed her: she fell at his feet and told him the whole truth, which testifies to her confidence in and sincere gratitude toward Jesus.

We should always have reverential fear of God. He should not be packaged as some fluffy bunny that goes around just loving everyone like a 1960's hippy.

⁴⁸ Then he said to her, Daughter, your faith has healed you. Go in peace.

Luke 8:48

Jesus addressing her as daughter probably reassures the woman, as does his statement that your faith has healed you, in the sense of both physical and spiritual healing for the verb here is saved. Faith itself does not do the healing; God does. But the woman's faith was the divinely appointed means for her bodily healing, as well as for her spiritual salvation.

Also, Jesus' final words to her were go in peace, which suggests that she has been saved.

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.

Luke 8:49

While Jesus was still speaking marks a change back to the story of Jairus.

Don't bother the teacher any more assumes that while Jesus could heal the sick, the girl's death placed her beyond his ability to heal, as seen by some in the crowd in the account of Lazarus' death in John Chapter 11.

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

Luke 8:50

Don't be afraid is a recurring theme as previously mentioned.

Just believe. Words of reassurance for us all! Indicating also the need for and importance of faith in Christ.

The two exhortations are followed by the promise, she will be healed; again, the Greek word can mean either heal or save, but several times in these miracle accounts it seems to mean that both physical healing and spiritual salvation have taken place.

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.

Luke 8:51

Peter, John and James. This is the first mention of this inner group of disciples in Luke. They will again be mentioned at the time of the transfiguration in Luke 9:28-36.

⁵² Meanwhile, all the people were wailing and mourning for her. Stop wailing, Jesus said. She is not dead but asleep.

⁵³ They laughed at him, knowing that she was dead.

Luke 8:52-53

Wailing and mourning. Professional mourners were customarily hired to assist at funerals usually including flautists and wailing women to make a commotion. Since bodies decomposed quickly in Palestine, mourners had to be assembled fairly soon after a death. There would have been a similar scene in Luke 7:13 at the funeral of the widow's son.

She is not dead but asleep must be understood in light of v.49 and v.53. The ridicule Jesus received affirms the girl's death but misunderstands his metaphorical use of sleeping. The mocking and laughing crowd takes Jesus' statement literally, as confirmed in these words: <<The spirit shrieked, convulsed him violently and came out. The boy looked so much like a corpse that many said, "He's dead" >> (Mark 9:26), supposing that Jesus cannot accept the reality of death. The child had indeed died (v.55), but from Jesus' viewpoint, her real death is but sleep.

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.

Luke 8:54-55

Took her by the hand. Touching a dead person renders one ceremonially unclean as noted before, and recorded in both Leviticus 22:4 and Numbers 19:11. But once again, Jesus overcomes uncleanness for the girl comes back to life.

Jesus' attitude towards the Law of Moses does not show any disregard or disrespect for it, as is God's Word. What he is again demonstrating is that the Law is there to serve God and his people. It is not for the people to serve the Law which was the attitude of the Pharisees.

My child, get up! As we saw with the widow's son in Luke 7:14b: <<He said, Young man, I say to you, get up!>>.

Her spirit returned. The reuniting of the girl's spirit and body resulted in the return to her former earthly life.

At once she stood up. Along with the fact of her eating, this offers immediate proof of the miracle.

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

Luke 8:56

He ordered them not to tell anyone. A sharp contrast to v.39 for Jesus is now back in a Jewish region, where mistaken expectations about a political and revolutionary Messiah could make Jesus' ministry much more difficult.