

“WHO IS THIS?”

Luke 8:22-39

Key Verse: 8:25

“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 waters, and they obey him.’”

In today’s passage Jesus revealed himself as the Creator by calming a stormy sea and the Redeemer by restoring a demon-possessed man. As the disciples experienced Jesus, they said, **“Who is this?”** In Luke’s gospel, the expression, **“Who is this?”** was also used by the religious leaders and Herod. Though the words are the same, the meaning is quite different in each case. The religious leaders were derogatory in saying, **“Who is this fellow who speaks blasphemy? Who can forgive sins but God alone?”** (5:21; 7:49). Herod, upon hearing of Jesus’ great work, was terrified due to guilt and asked, **“Who, then, is this I hear such things about?”** (9:9). Though the religious leaders and Herod were surprised by what Jesus did, they did not see God in Jesus. On the other hand, when the disciples experienced Jesus’ power, they were filled with awe and said, **“Who is this?”** They began to perceive deity in Jesus; he was more than a man.

When the disciples followed Jesus, they thought they knew who he was. But through being with them, Jesus revealed that he was much more than they thought. Many of us may think we know who Jesus is based on experience and develop a fixed mindset. Such a mindset is always too small. It blinds us to what Jesus is doing and fosters a critical attitude. We need to open our hearts, see Jesus, and experience the fullness of his presence. Then we can see the bigger picture of what God is doing. Jesus is much more than we imagine. Jesus wants to encounter us so that we may know him more. As we do, we can experience a more vibrant and dynamic Christian life. We can grow to embrace all kinds of people and be useful to God.

First, Jesus demonstrated his power as the Creator (22-25). In this passage Jesus uses the occasion of a storm at sea to teach us how to navigate our voyage of life. As Jesus taught the word of God, so many people came and crowded around him that his mother and brothers could not get near him. As the disciples watched Jesus working so hard, they also became tired. One day Jesus said, **“Let us go over to the other side of the lake.”** They were very excited. So they quickly got the boat ready and set out (22). As they sailed, Jesus fell asleep (23a). Jesus worked hard from early morning to late night. Though he is God, he was limited in human flesh. He got tired. So when he had an opportunity, he slept. He slept so

“WHO IS THIS?”

soundly and peacefully that nothing could wake him. A squall came down on the lake. This was common for the Sea of Galilee, which has the lowest elevation of any freshwater lake in the world, and is surrounded by plateaus with deep ravines. Squalls arise suddenly and unexpectedly and can be quite strong. Such a squall came upon their boat. Though some disciples were experienced fishermen, they could not navigate through this storm. The boat was being swamped and they were in great danger (23b). Before the storm, their skill, experience, knowledge, strength and effort were useless. They felt that they were going to drown. Then all the sad stories of drowning fishermen came to their minds. A storm began to arise in their hearts; it was a storm of fear and doubt. After doing their best, they reached their limitation and began to panic. So they went and woke Jesus, saying, **“Master, Master, we’re going to drown!”** (24a)

Jesus was enjoying sweet sleep in the midst of the storm. The storm did not awaken Jesus, but his disciples did. Jesus got up and rebuked the wind and the raging waters; the storm subsided and all was calm (24b). Jesus revealed his power as Creator and Sustainer of all things. Colossians 1:16 says, **“For in him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities, all things have been created by him and for him.”** Hebrews 1:3a says, **“The Son is the radiance of God’s glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word.”** No matter what storm we face, Jesus can calm it because he is the Creator and Sustainer of all things. As long as Jesus is with us, we have nothing to fear. Nothing can harm us.

Life can be compared to a voyage. Herman Melville said, “Life’s a voyage that is homeward bound.” These words sound poetic and beautiful. The problem is that many people don’t know what “homeward bound” means. But when we are in Christ, we know our destiny is the glorious kingdom of God. So our voyage is very meaningful. Along the way we experience many kinds of events through which God reveals himself to us personally. There are many kinds of storms, such as cancer, huge school loans, marital strife, wayward children, negligent parents, miscarriages, accidents, deaths, failures, natural disasters and more. One woman I know has just been diagnosed with cancer. One man just found he has a brain tumor. It is not malignant, but it affects his vision. When such things happen, the more serious matter is that fear and doubt overwhelm us. Our first response may be, “Why me?” Then we doubt God’s love and become distant from God. Yet this kind of storm comes to draw us near to God to experience his presence. When John Wesley was returning to England from a short-term mission to America, a violent storm arose. Wesley was terrified. A group of Moravians on the same ship joyfully

“WHO IS THIS?”

sang hymns. They were not afraid to die. Wesley was convicted that he did not really believe in Jesus, even though he was an ordained minister and a missionary. He began to learn from the Moravians. While listening to Luther’s preface to Romans, he felt his heart strangely warmed and trusted in Christ alone for his salvation. As we know well, during storms of health, Michelle Li and David Kim experienced Jesus’ presence and were healed. But not everyone is healed in this way. Timothy Park experienced the Jesus’ presence in his health crisis, and then went to be with the Lord. The point is not the outcome on earth, but that we experience Jesus’ presence in the storms.

To experience Jesus’ presence in the storm, what do we need? After calming the storm, Jesus asked his disciples, **“Where is your faith?”** Jesus did not comfort them at all, saying, “I am sorry that I slept during the storm and you were so frightened.” Rather Jesus asked, **“Where is your faith?”** Jesus wanted them to overcome fear by faith. We must recognize fear as our enemy and not let it rule our hearts. One person I know had to spend some time in prison. If he revealed fear in prison, he would be badly mistreated. So whenever someone tried to make him fearful by threats or intimidation, he responded immediately with a fighting spirit. In this way he survived. Though my friend’s strategy worked in some way, it did not solve his inner fear problem. When storms arise, Satan plants fear in people’s hearts. It is because he holds the power of death and enslaves people through the fear of death. But Jesus breaks the power of death through his death and resurrection and sets us free. We can have real victory over fear by faith in Jesus. When we believe in Jesus, the Holy Spirit comes into our hearts and drives out the spirit of fear. God gives us a spirit of power and love and self-control (2Ti 1:7). We can ride the storms of life when we trust in Jesus. We can always give thanks to God because he gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ (1Co 15:57). Let’s listen to Jesus’ question, **“Where is your faith?”** Did you leave it in your prayer closet at home? At the church? Or in the car? Jesus wants us to carry faith in him in our hearts. When the disciples experienced Jesus’ presence in the storm, they were filled with holy fear and awe. They saw God in Jesus. So they asked one another, **“Who is this? He commands even the winds and the waters, and they obey him”** (25b).

Second, Jesus demonstrated his love as the Redeemer (26-39). After finishing the storm training, the disciples might have breathed a huge sigh of relief and wiped their foreheads, saying, “Whew! Thank God that we crossed the lake safely.” Little did they know that another kind of stormy trial awaited them. They landed in the region of the Gerasenes, which is across the lake from Galilee (26). This was Gentile territory. It had been conquered by Alexander the Great, who

“WHO IS THIS?”

established the region of Decapolis (ten cities) which reflected Greek culture. In the time of General Pompeii (63 B.C.), Rome conquered this area and the 14th Roman Legion occupied it, and still held it in Jesus' time. When Jesus and his disciples stepped ashore, they were 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 (27). Why didn't he wear clothes? Maybe his body temperature was too high. Or maybe he was making an anti-cultural statement against the wealthy. Maybe he wanted total freedom. Why did he live in the tombs? They were not beautiful like many cemeteries we know of. They were small man-made or natural caves. They were very scary places, and isolated. Most likely he lived there because he had been ostracized by the community and this was the only place he could find shelter.

Luke does not tell us how this man had become demon possessed, but simply states that he was under the demon's power. At any time, the demon would take control of him and drive him to do evil. He was unpredictable and prone to violence. People were scared of him. So they tried to bind him with chains on both his hands and feet and put him under guard. They tried to control him so he would not cause trouble. But the demon gave him supernatural strength by which he could break chains. Once he escaped, the demon drove him into solitary places (29). He was extremely lonely. He could not escape the inner torment caused by the demon. He may have been the most miserable man on earth. When the disciples saw him, they wanted to get back in the boat and leave. But Jesus was different. Let's see how Jesus restored him.

Verse 29 indicates that as soon as Jesus saw this man, he immediately commanded the impure spirit to come out of the man. While people saw this man as a dangerous menace to society, Jesus saw him as a man who could be fully restored. Jesus was like a doctor who distinguishes between the disease and the patient, knowing that if the disease is cured the patient will be fine. Though people had abandoned him, Jesus never abandoned him. Jesus saw him with great compassion and committed himself to help this man at any cost. This demon was very strong. It did not come out right away. The man cried out and fell at Jesus' feet and shouted 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!”** (28) The demon knew precisely who Jesus was. But it did not submit to and worship Jesus. The demon was terrified before Jesus. In expressing great fear, it tried to make everyone very fearful. Though the demon's resistance was strong, Jesus did not draw back. Instead, he exposed the demon's identity by asking the man, **“What is your name?”** Jesus' word has such great authority that the demon had to reveal itself.

“WHO IS THIS?”

So he replied, “**Legion,**” for many demons had gone into him (30). Now we can see why he was so violent and miserable and did many strange things. He was not normal because demons controlled him. Jesus’ question, “**What is your name?**” not only exposed the demons in the man, but restored his identity as a person. Jesus began a personal relationship with him.

The demons realized they had to leave the man. They knew their destiny was the Abyss, a place of torment prepared by God for the disobedient (31). They wanted to avoid this and begged Jesus again and again to let them go into the pigs instead (32). Jesus gave them permission. It was not to have mercy on the demons, but to show his willingness to sacrifice these pigs as a ransom to free the man. The demons came out of the man and went into the pigs. The demons drove these pigs crazy. They lost their joy of eating on the hillside and rushed down the steep bank into the lake and were drowned. When those tending the pigs saw what had happened, they ran off and reported this in the town and countryside. It was front page news. Many people came 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. He was wearing a suit with a necktie. His hair was neatly cut, and he was clean-shaven. He was talking reasonably about Jesus’ great compassion on him. People should have rejoiced that he was healed. They should have retrieved the pigs and had a barbecue for the whole town. But instead, they were afraid and asked Jesus to leave (37). Fear and a sense of loss had made them spiritually blind. Jesus was not upset with them. He understood them and got into the boat and left. The man wanted to follow Jesus wherever he went. But Jesus sent him away, saying, “**Return home and tell how much God has done for you**” (39a). So the man went away and told all over town how much Jesus had done for him (39b). Jesus restored the man and gave him a clear mission to share the good news of the kingdom of God with those he had hurt in the past. In truth, Jesus was not helping just one man, but people of the entire region through him. That is why Jesus crossed the lake.

Through this event we can learn two things about Jesus. First of all, Jesus is the Ruler of the unseen spiritual realm. Many people want to ignore the spiritual realm and focus on the material and visible. The existence of demons and Satan seems too terrible to think about. But that is reality. Whether we recognize it or not, the spiritual power of darkness is real and is now at work in those who are disobedient to God (Eph 2:2). This power is so strong that we cannot defeat it with human strength and wisdom, military power, or money. Only Jesus can rule over

“WHO IS THIS?”

the spiritual forces of evil. That is why we must depend on Jesus alone as we confront evil forces.

Secondly, Jesus values one person highly. In a materialistic society, people are valued according to economic significance. With this mindset, one pig can be valued more highly than a person. Many people are so ruthless that they don't care about damaging others in order to make money. Jesus challenged this mindset by sacrificing a herd of pigs to save one seemingly useless man. Actually, this was a prelude of his own sacrifice on the cross. In order to save useless sinners, Jesus poured out his blood and gave his life as a ransom sacrifice. While we were still sinners, Christ died for our sins. In this way Jesus demonstrated his love for even one seemingly useless person. What great love! This love can redeem anyone.

One young African American man, named L.D. Moore, grew up without ever knowing his father. He suffered from a deep feeling of insignificance and turned to gangsters as role models. As a teenager he got into trouble for drugs, drinking, womanizing, and fighting. He ended up on a criminal watch list. The only thing he did well was write and sing rap songs. Other than that he felt completely useless. One day his mother told him, “What you need is to read your Bible.” He was very upset and began to tear out the pages. Later he was invited to a Christian conference and went mainly because it was in a big city. There he listened to one person's testimony about Jesus and heard that Jesus loves each person so much that he took up his heavy cross and suffered and died for us. The young man realized that Jesus valued him highly and he was significant to Jesus. The testimony remained in his heart and he could not forget it. Soon afterward he accepted Jesus as his Lord and Savior by the help of Christian friends. He learned to use his skill as a rapper to glorify Jesus. By the way, his name is Lecrae. He was recognized as the top gospel artist of 2013, and has been testifying about Jesus all over America. There are countless such stories, including each of us. Jesus loved each of us so much that he shed his precious blood on the cross and died in order to redeem us from Satan's power and make us God's children. Thank you, Jesus!

In this passage we have seen Jesus rule over nature and the powers of the unseen spiritual realm. Jesus is our Creator and Redeemer. When we trust in him, the storms of life are the opportunity to experience divine love and power and to know him better. Let's put aside our fixed ideas and see Jesus who is greater than we imagine. Then we can exclaim, with amazement and awe, **“Who is this?”**