

THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE

APRIL 25TH-26TH, 2020 // BOOK OF MATTHEW

THE WINDS & THE SEA OBEY (MATTHEW 8:23-27)

After Jesus filtered out the uncommitted and impulsive from among His disciples (vs. 18-22), He got into a boat to go to the other side of the Sea of Galilee (vs. 23).

- The Sea of Galilee is a freshwater lake that's about 13 miles long and 8 miles wide.
 - It's not unusual for violent storms to suddenly sweep across the water.
- It was a "great storm" (seismos megas) that led to the boat being swamped by waves.
- The disciples knew about storms and the best way to navigate through them.
 - But this storm was too big even for them- so they appeal to the man who had little experience with boats but seemingly great power and authority.

They were looking for His participation in and leadership through this crisis.

- But surprisingly, through this entire ordeal, Jesus was asleep (vs. 24).
- Why was He asleep? He was tired! The demands of constant ministry took their toll on Him
- Secondly, He was asleep because He rested confidently in the will of His Father.

As the disciples wake Jesus up, He finds them frantic, fearful, and full of anxiety (vs. 25).

- To which Jesus responds with surprise & disappointment- "why are you afraid?" (vs. 26).
- His question was justified because of His previous teaching on the absurdity of anxiety (6:25-34) and His clear demonstrations of authority (8:1-17).

It's in our nature as humans to disbelieve the Word of God and the testimony of God's work in our lives whenever storms come.

- But the strength of our faith and the presence of God is revealed during the storms.
- When Jesus rebuked the winds and sea, there was a great calm (vs. 26), and as a result the disciples marveled.
- There was a new revelation of Jesus' identity & power (vs. 27).

The point of this text is not that it gives us a promise that Jesus will calm every storm

- The point of the passage is deeper and more profound than simply a promise of better circumstances- it's in the identity & nearness of Jesus.
- It's the reality that it was God who was in the boat with them during the storm!

DEMONIZED (MATTHEW 8:28-29)

While the disciples are still wrestling with the question of Jesus' identity, the boat arrives at its destination at the "country of the Gadarenes" (vs. 28).

- The entire region was predominantly Gentile, although some Jews did live in the area.
- Jesus purposefully enters Gentile territory to confront two demon possessed men (vs. 28).

We learn a few things about the nature of demons and the demonic from this passage.

1. Demons can **influence or even control the bodies and minds of human beings** (vs. 28a).
2. Demonic influence **defiles, isolates, and seeks out darkness** ("in the tombs", vs. 28a).
3. Demonic presence/influence **manifests in violence** ("no one could pass that way", vs. 28b).
4. Demons **know exactly who Jesus is** ("O Son of God", vs. 29a).
5. Demons **know that there will be an appointed time for their judgment by Christ** (Matt. 25:41, James 2:19) and their eternal torture ("...before the appointed time", vs. 29b).
6. Demons are afraid and know that **He holds ALL AUTHORITY!** ("they cried out", vs. 29a).

Ephesians 2:2 tells us that before a person comes to Christ, they "follow the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience."

- In other words, without Christ we all in bondage to Satan and are unable to free ourselves.
- Our bondage robs us of our true humanity & self-control, fills us with darkness & perversion, and condemns us to hell.

What Jesus does for these two demoniacs He will do for anyone else.

- He came to them and delivered them through the power only He possesses.
- He can deliver any person from their bondage to Satan, sin, darkness, & perversion.
- As Christians we don't open the door to any demonic influence in our lives.

Doors to the Demonic. As Christians... "take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness." (Eph. 5:11)

A HERD OF PIGS (MATTHEW 8:30-34)

The demons beg Jesus to allow them to inhabit the bodies of pigs in a nearby herd when He forces them out from their present hosts.

- We learn a few more things about the nature of demons in this account.
- The first is that they don't like to be homeless (vs. 31) - they desire to inhabit ("possess") physical bodies (Matt. 12:43-45).
- Secondly, we learn that they need Jesus' permission and recognize His authority (vs. 31).

Finally, we learn that Jesus had the power to drive them out and leave them without a home or host if He so wished.

- This is ultimately what happens as the pigs are driven mad by the presence of the demons and rush down the bank and drown in the sea, leaving the demons without a host (vs. 32).
- The behavior of the pigs is recorded as a visible and dramatic proof of the exorcism.

Imagine being a herdsman or a local farmer witnessing this scene.

- You're obviously well acquainted with these demon possessed madmen, and then here comes a Jewish stranger that exorcises their demons, frees them, but it comes with dramatic flair, great chaos, and economic loss (vs. 31-32).

- The herdsman flee running to the city to tell everyone about what happened (vs. 33).

All of the city came out and begged Jesus to leave their region (vs. 34).

- We're tempted to judge them for their fear and for asking Jesus to leave, but we can't superimpose our comfortable understanding of Jesus onto the story too quickly.
- They don't know who He is- only that He's done a mighty miracle that's cost them quite a bit and they don't want to found out more.

So they ask Him to leave- maybe out of fear of what other things He may do.

- We see a bit of human nature in the residents of this city.
- When Jesus saves and delivers us, nothing in our lives is ever the same.
- However, some of us would rather stay in bondage and darkness than allow Him to free us and take control over our lives.

Out of fear of what Jesus may require from us, take from us, or change about us, we often don't want Him to take His rightful place as the King in our lives.

- We prefer the familiarity of our own brokenness over the true freedom that Christ provides.
- The fear of what it may cost us prevents us from experiencing the beauty of true freedom.

A PARALYTIC (MATTHEW 9:1-8)

Jesus honored the requests of the people of the Gadarenes and returned to Capernaum (vs. 1) where He was met by a paralytic (vs. 2).

- The man was unable to help himself, but fortunately he had a community that brought him to Jesus in faith that he might be healed.
- Jesus "saw their faith", but addressed the paralytic with some very surprising words- "take heart, my son; your sins are forgiven" (vs. 2b).

What the man's friends were wanting from Jesus was fairly obvious- a physical healing.

- However, Jesus looked deeper and saw the man's ultimate and greatest need.
- Our ultimate needs are never physical; they're always spiritual.
- Even if we're suffering physically, the need we address first must be spiritual- where we are in our relationship with God.

Many at that time would've equated this man's disability with sin (Even his parent's, John 9).

- The text doesn't tell us whether or not his sickness was due to a particular sin in his life.
- The point is that all suffering in this broken world has ultimately been caused by sin and Jesus' authority penetrates to the root of all brokenness- sin.

Jesus' pronouncement that the man's sins were forgiven caused some of the scribes to believe that He was blaspheming- for only God can forgive sins (vs. 3).

- By Jesus claiming to have authority over sin, He was claiming to be God.
- To prove that He had authority over sin, He healed the paralytic instantly (vs. 5-6).

When the crowds saw this healing, they weren't quite ready to acknowledge Jesus as God.

- They were instead "afraid", and "glorified God, who had given such authority to men" (vs. 8).
- There was no mistake that Jesus' authority to heal came from God, so they probably saw Him as a prophet of some sort.
- They were "afraid"- maybe of Jesus' claims to deity and what He might do say or do next.

NOT A TAME LION.

- The message of the Gospel of Jesus Christ is that **your greatest need is forgiveness of sins**- which is exactly what Jesus has come to bring you (9:1-8).
- When Jesus saves & delivers you from sin and bondage, He will not play nice with your idols and He will not conform to your will. **There's only room for one King in your life- and that's Him (8:30-34).**
- Once He frees us from our sin, darkness and bondage to Satan, we must make sure we walk in **freedom** and **don't open the door to any demonic influence** in our lives (8:28-29).
- The God that has authority over sickness, demons, sin, and death itself is near you and with you even in the midst of the worst storms- **you don't have to be afraid** (8:23-27).