

Lesson 26 Luke 8:4-56
“Authority over Disease and Death”

May 24, 2009

Introduction

As we approach the Word this morning I want to pay attention to Luke’s description of the transition between the stories of last week and the stories of this week. There is something about this transition that invites a response. Last week we noted that the people in the region of the Gerasenes were overcome with fear and asked Jesus to leave their region – and so Jesus got into a boat and crossed back over the Sea of Galilee.

Luke ties the events together by recording in verse 40: “Now when Jesus returned...” He is returning to Galilee where He has been doing all of His ministry to date. Look at the response and consider how it stands in contrast to the crowd on the other side of the lake. “...*a crowd welcomed him, for they were all expecting him.*”

I want us to begin our reflection this morning by simply noticing these 2 responses and looking into our hearts and asking the question, “Am I a part of the rejecting crowd or the welcoming crowd?” My prayer is that every one of us here would truly in our hearts be ready to welcome what the Holy Spirit of God wants to teach us about Jesus today. A couple of weeks ago Dennis Scott was teaching us about the parable of the 4 different kinds of soil. Some of the soils were resistant to hearing the Word of God; some heard it but it was quickly choked out by other worries or pleasures of this world. The good soil welcomed the Word and allowed it to take root and produce a good harvest.

Please join me in a moment of silent prayer and let us ask God to prepare our hearts so that we will be part of the welcoming crowd and that will even today receive the Word into good soil so that God may produce good fruit in our lives... Please join me in prayer...

Background

Before we read the text together, let us get a feel for what this master story-teller Luke is doing at this point in His narrative of the life and work of Jesus.

I want you to use your imaginations with me as we try to get the feel of Luke's writing to this point. I want you to picture the recent sections of Luke as a **musical score**. We're going to travel back as far as 5:17 and identify 3 broad movements in this musical masterpiece.

Movement #1 – Jesus' dealing with the Pharisees – 5:17 to 6:11

1. The musical score here is loud and splashy. It is characterized by lots of staccato notes; sharp bursts of noise; and even some discordant notes.
 - a. Jesus is pressing His identity upon these religious leaders; these guardians of the institution of faith. He is not allowing them to simply ignore Him; He is making claims that are outrageous to them; claims that are shaking them to the core and getting them worked up.
2. The tension builds throughout this section until it closes in 6:11 with these words: *"But they were furious and began to discuss with one another what they might do to Jesus."*

Movement #2 – Jesus teaching the broader group of disciples – 6:12 to 8:56

1. The music more gentle in this early part of this movement; not so many staccato notes; more harmony; less discordant notes.
 - a. Jesus is still pressing His identity, but His style is not so confrontational. He's teaching; He's telling stories; He's healing sick people and even raising the dead in order to show to this larger band of disciples that He really is different from any other human who has ever lived.
 - b. As we approach the end of this 2nd movement in our story today what I suggest we find is a crescendo happening. Jesus displays His authority over every area of life imaginable. And so these last 4 miracles represent a crescendo in the music score with the authority of Jesus becoming more and more evident; more and more unmistakable. What we will discover, however, as we look at these 2 final miracles today is that the authority of Jesus is inextricably linked to His compassion. Jesus evident authority causes people to respond in fear and yet He consistently uses that authority to reach out and show compassion to those early disciples.
 - c. In our musical analogy, let us think about this as a crescendo of authority and compassion.

Movement #3 – Jesus focuses attention on the Twelve disciples – 9:1 to 9:50

1. The music grows quieter in this section but at the same time it gains intensity. Jesus has some quite strong lessons to teach His close friends and He uses strong words to get their attention. We'll come to that over the next few weeks.

Once we get to Luke 9:51, we have a major geographical shift in Luke's writing. This is where Luke records that Jesus leaves the region of Galilee and '*resolutely set[s] out for Jerusalem*'.

Reading with observation

As we read the text together let us notice that this is a 'sandwich story'. The story about the woman being healed from her hemorrhaging is sandwiched right in the middle of this story about the daughter of a man named Jairus. All 3 synoptic Gospels (Matthew, Mark & Luke) records these events in this way, though each with a slightly different perspective.

Luke 8:40-56

40Now when Jesus returned, a crowd welcomed him, for they were all expecting him. 41Then a man named Jairus, a ruler of the synagogue, came and fell at Jesus' feet, pleading with him to come to his house 42because his only daughter, a girl of about twelve, was dying.

- Jairus was a highly respected man; he likely was the one who organized the 'goings on' in the synagogue – who was teaching when etc. We note at this point that Luke presents Jesus as touching every aspect of society – we've observed that Jesus has a special place in His heart for the outsiders and the neglected of society, but we've also seen Him eat dinner at a Pharisee's house and now we see Him caring for a person of stature in the community.
- We also note that Jairus has only 1 daughter, 12 years of age, who is gravely ill. Earlier, back in chapter 7 we saw Jesus moved with compassion for a widow who had just lost her son – now it's the opposite – a man who is about to lose his daughter. Luke is presenting us with Jesus who has equal time for men and women; adults and children.

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

45"Who touched me?" Jesus asked.

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

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

47Then 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. 48Then he said to her, "Daughter, your faith has healed you. Go in peace."

- We need to pay attention to what Jairus must be feeling as this takes place. Having come urgently to Jesus with his only daughter quickly passing from this life – we can imagine that his anxiety level must have gone through the roof at this point. Jesus, by contrast appears to be in no hurry.
- The plight of this woman makes her stand in sharp contrast to the upstanding ruler of the synagogue. One only has to read Leviticus 15 to discover that apart from the physical complications such a malady produced there were also serious social consequences – she would be pronounced perpetually unclean and therefore be excluded from any temple worship activities of any kind. Here is Jesus reaching out to the top and the bottom levels of society at the same time!
- One more thing to notice before we pick up the reading – given what we know about Jesus so far, wouldn't you suppose that Jesus would have known exactly who had touched Him? Shouldn't this One who commands the wind and the waves and also controls the evil spirits also know the identity of the woman in the crowd? Why did He ask and then wait for her to come forward?? Ponder this important question as we continue to read... we will come back to it.

49While 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."

- Jairus' worst fears have come to reality.

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

51When 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. 52Meanwhile, all the people were wailing and mourning for her. "Stop wailing," Jesus said. "She is not dead but asleep."

53They laughed at him, knowing that she was dead. 54But he took her by the hand and said, "My child, get up!" 55Her spirit returned, and at once she stood up. Then Jesus told them to give her something to eat. 56Her parents were astonished, but he ordered them not to tell anyone what had happened."

- This is the first instance where we find Jesus singling out Peter, John and James. As the story of Jesus develops we'll find Him paying special attention to these 3 and giving them special duties and responsibilities.
- Once again we see Luke describing momentous and unbelievable events with an astonishing economy of words; he totally understates the magnitude of the miracle which ironically gives it even greater emphasis. Having come into the room with only His 3 close friends and the parents,

Luke simply records, *“he took her by the hand and said, “My child, get up!” 55Her spirit returned, and at once she stood up. Then Jesus told them to give her something to eat.”*

- This is one of 3 instances where Jesus uses His authority to raise people from the dead – the widow at Nain’s son (ch. 7) and later, Lazarus, the brother of Mary and Martha. We might ask the question at this point – were there not a lot of other children and adults who died prematurely in Israel during that time? Why didn’t Jesus also raise them from the dead or heal them before they died??
- Jesus tells those in the room not to tell anyone what had happened? This seems mysterious after just over on the other side of the lake Jesus had told the man delivered of all the demons to go and spread the word to everyone he knew. What is going on here?
 - Quite honestly, the text does not provide a clear answer to this question and so we are left to look for clues. Without taking the time to explore the various ideas that have been put forward by various commentators, let me simply suggest that one possible factor could have to do with the environment. The man delivered from the demons was a Gentile living in an environment where most people had rejected Jesus or may have not heard about Him. By contrast Jarius and family lived in an environment where already there was a lot of animosity toward Jesus from the Pharisees and other religious leaders. A story like this would simply stir up more controversy and could have led to more and perhaps unnecessary confrontation.

Implications of these stories

I want you to think of 3 words when you think of this ‘story sandwich’ as Luke presents it to us:

- Authority
- Compassion
- Belief/Faith

1. Authority

- a. Luke is bringing this whole idea of the authority of Jesus to a climax.
- b. Last week we saw that He clearly holds power over the physical creation as we saw Him command the wind and the waves and they immediately obeyed Him. Then we also saw Him hold unquestionable authority over the spirit world.
- c. Today we see Him holding absolute authority over disease and sickness.

- i. Luke’s description of the healing of the woman with the hemorrhage emphasizes the immediacy of the miracle – upon touching Jesus’ garment she is instantly healed of this disease which had plagued her for 12 years.
- ii. The picture is unmistakable – Jesus has the power to bring instant and complete healing.
- d. But the last is the most powerful. Not only does Jesus have authority over the physical world, the spirit world and over all kinds of diseases, He also now displays his authority over death itself.
 - i. Once again we pay attention to the reality that Luke is not giving us the opportunity to simply to accept Jesus as a nice man and a good teacher. He either holds all of this divine authority or He is an imposter.
 - ii. As St. Bonaventure noted last week, Jesus is described in these verses as holding unequivocal and universal power.
- e. There is a saying based on the observation of human behavior that ‘power corrupts and ultimate power corrupts absolutely’.
 - i. Luke’s picture of Jesus is of One who is NOT corrupted by the power that He holds; instead He displays great compassion.

2. Compassion

- a. In both of these stories, even in the midst of exercising such power and authority, Jesus displays a tenderness that prevents any notion of the abuse of power.
- b. In the story of the woman, Jesus, having called for the woman to step forward uses a term of endearment as He addresses her – He uses the term ‘daughter’. No one else is ever addressed using this term in all of the Gospels.
 - i. His words to her also reflect the compassion of His heart – ‘your faith has healed you; go in peace’
 - ii. What a picture of God – the One who holds ultimate authority and power is the same God who longs to say even to us – ‘your faith has healed you; go in peace’.
 - iii. Once again I am reminded of one of my most favorite verses in Scripture – 2 Peter 3:9, “*The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.*”
 - iv. The all powerful God of the universe is also a God of infinite compassion.
- c. Jesus also displays this same compassion toward Jairus and his family.

- i. Upon receiving the news that his daughter is dead, Jairus respectfully tells Jesus that it is no longer necessary for Him to come to His house, thinking that He would not be able to do anything.
- ii. The words of Jesus are full of compassion: *‘Don’t be afraid; just believe and she will be healed’*.
- iii. Then His words spoken to the girl herself reflect a deep level of tenderness as He takes her by the hand and says, *‘My child, get up’*.
- d. In both stories, then, even as the crescendo is developing as Jesus performs these increasingly amazing feats of power, there is an accompanying theme developed of the tenderness and compassion of our God.

3. Belief / Faith

- a. This is where the response of the people comes in... this is where our response is invited.
- b. We asked earlier – why did Jesus say ‘who touched me’ when He knew very well who had touched Him?
 - i. He was inviting her to express her faith herself.
 - ii. We ought to try to put ourselves into this dear woman’s predicament – for 12 years she has been declared unclean. She has heard about the healing power of Jesus and yet her sickness is so private; so embarrassing. Deep inside she truly believes that He can heal her and so in desperation she simply joins the throng in order to touch the hem of His garment.
 - iii. We must be very careful not to misread this story so as to believe there was some magical powers associated with Jesus’ garments. Jesus says very clearly – your faith has healed you. It is not the fact that you touched me; it is the fact that you believed with all your heart that I was able to heal you...
- c. The same dynamic is true for Jairus but it is given to him in the form of an invitation as we noted earlier – *“Don’t be afraid; just believe and she will be healed.”*

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Conclusion

And so what of us? How ought we to respond to this amazingly powerful and yet tender picture of Jesus the Healer and the One who even raises the dead!

We likewise are called to respond in faith. But let us be honest about this. This call to have faith is perhaps harder than what appears on the surface. How can we pray in faith for healing when God

seems sometimes to not answer our prayers? Several years ago we as a church body prayed fervently for the healing of Mark Field. God took Him to be with Himself. More recently we prayed for Gary Watkins and once again God took him away from us. There have been other cases where God has more directly answered our prayers. Deb Darling is here today as an answer to our prayers many years ago. I was talking with Gordon Steer just this week and he was saying how God has given him several more years than the doctors expected Him to live and so he is living with great thankfulness. Even now as we pray earnestly for Barb's healing we find it hard to say with confidence what God will do.

What can these stories teach us?? I believe they teach us that no matter what happens that God is trustworthy. Even in what seems to be unanswered prayers Jesus remains the One who holds the victory over sin and death; over the physical world and the spiritual world. We are called to trust Him no matter what happens. One of the most encouraging words I heard someone say to me recently was a story of a man who passed away not too long ago who said to a brother upon receiving his terminal diagnosis, 'if you pray with all your heart for my healing and the Lord takes me home to be with Himself; consider your prayers answered.'

In the midst of all of these uncertainties of life, I believe these stories about Jesus lift our eyes and our hearts to this majestic and powerful God who loves us and is working something out that is much bigger and better than we can imagine. Our part is to have faith – faith that will cause us to come to Him and pour out our hearts to Him.

It is this faith with allows us to become children of God. As we now approach the Table of Communion let us hear these words from John to remind us how our faith in Jesus brings us into an amazing relationship with God.

“Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God— children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God.” John 1:12

Let us be thankful as we approach the Table and remember...