

A Study in Luke

Week Thirteen

Luke 8:9-39

Day One

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.' 11 "This is the meaning of the parable: The seed is the word of God. 12 Those along the path are the ones who hear, and then the devil comes and takes away the word from their hearts, so that they may not believe and be saved.

v. 9 – When I don't understand something in the Bible, I can go to a commentary, or research the passage in books, or I can ask an associate or even research it on my Bible computer software. When the disciples didn't understand something, they went to Jesus. I think the disciples had a better source than any of the ones that I use. I should ask Jesus if I don't understand something and He can reveal the meaning to me in the power of the Spirit. But it's easier to consult all those other sources than it is to talk and listen to Jesus. I had a friend who jokingly said, "It's amazing how much light the Bible brings to all the commentaries!" So true! I should not put my faith in someone else's insight, but in the insight that God can give.

v. 10 – God chose to give insight to the disciples not because of who they were, for there was nothing special about or in them. He gave them insight because that is what He chose to do. Whatever we know about God and the Bible cannot be a source of pride, for we did not earn that knowledge. It is a gift from God. But those who have confidence in themselves may that that they have heard and understand but they do not. Jesus obscured His lessons just enough that those who truly wanted to understand had to do a little seeking to completely understand.

I have heard people say, "We had great church today." When asked what the message was about, they have said, "I can't remember, but boy, was it good!" I can only imagine that the same thing happened after Jesus spoke. Some really enjoyed the meetings, but had no idea what was said. By the way, what is Jesus saying to you these days?

vs. 11&12 – We can confidently interpret the details in this parable only because Jesus interpreted them for us. Don't try to do this with parables for which Jesus hasn't done the same. Instead, find the main lesson of the parable and focus on that. Otherwise we are in danger of finding things in the lesson that Jesus did not intend to teach.

Day Two

13 Those on the rock are the ones who receive the word with joy when they hear it, but they have no root. They believe for a while, but in the time of testing they

fall away. 14 The seed that fell among thorns stands for those who hear, but as they go on their way they are choked by life's worries, riches and pleasures, and they do not mature. 15 But the seed on good soil stands for those with a noble and good heart, who hear the word, retain it, and by persevering produce a crop.

vs. 13&14 – We all have probably known people who were so excited about Jesus, but the message didn't take root and they faded away. Or the worries of this life caused them to lose focus on Jesus and focus on their own needs. Following Jesus isn't a sprint, it's a marathon. And everyone who receives the word will be tested. Perhaps you are being tested right now. If so, remember what Peter wrote:

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade-kept in heaven for you, who through faith are shielded by God's power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time. In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. These have come so that your faith-of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire-may be proved genuine and may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed. Though you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy, for you are receiving the goal of your faith, the salvation of your souls (1 Peter 1:3-9).

Dear friends, do not be surprised at the painful trial you are suffering, as though something strange were happening to you. But rejoice that you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when his glory is revealed (1 Peter 4:12-14).

v. 15 – The Word requires three things from us: hear, retain and persevere. The goal is to bear fruit, not to give intellectual assent to the message. There are some who like Jesus and what He had to say, but that is as far as the Word goes in their lives. For us to hear, retain and persevere, we must have a receptive heart that enables the Word to do its work in us. How is your heart? And how hard are you willing to work to produce the fruit that the Word requires? The fact that you are reading this is a good sign, but doesn't guarantee anything unless you are willing to read and apply the words of Jesus to everyday life. What I say in these studies isn't important. What you hear Jesus saying through them is. Listen to Him and hold on to what He is saying.

Day Three

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." 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."

vs. 16&17 – No one would light a candle and then cover it up. That just doesn't make sense. It wouldn't make sense to invite the light of Jesus into your life and then try to cover it up either. What's more, it is impossible to do. Eventually the life of Jesus that is the light of the world will come through you. When I first met the Lord, I would pray, "Lord, let people look at me and **know** that you are in my life!" While many use this verse in a negative sense that whatever evil is done will be revealed, I rather like to think of it in the positive sense I have interpreted it. Don't worry! Jesus will shine through you!

v. 18 – If you are eager to hear from God, you will hear! And as you are diligent to obey what you hear, you will hear more! As I have stated in previous studies, I put my faith in God's ability to speak to me, not my ability to hear Him. To hear God, the focus of my faith is **Him**, not me. But the focus of obeying God is **me**, not Him.

"Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them" (John 13:17).

vs. 19-21 – These two verses serve as a follow up to what Jesus just said about listening and obeying. Jesus family was outside, but He wanted to reinforce the point He just made about the critical nature of listening for and doing the will of God. God is close to those who hear and do. They are His family. I wonder if Jesus wasn't making another veiled reference to the Jews who thought that they had a special relationship with God just because they were Jews, because Abraham was their father. Relationship with God is based on obedience, not knowledge or family heritage.

I recently stated that if God didn't say another thing to me until I died or He returned, I would have enough to work on until then. But because I have attempted to carry out what I have heard from Him, He gives me more and more. *Lord, don't stop. I promise to obey; You promised to speak. I want to be your obedient servant and partner.* How about you? Can you make the same commitment?

Day Four

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."

v. 22 – This didn't seem like Jesus made an unusual request to go over to the other side of the lake. Has that ever happened to you? You set out to do something that seemed routine and suddenly there was a challenge with a spiritual lesson in it for you. Some of these men were fishermen, so getting into a boat was second-nature to them. But when Jesus is with you, there are no routine trips. It is always an adventure.

v. 23 – Did it ever know that Jesus was with you, but that it seemed like He was asleep? Things were happening that you knew He could control, but didn't seem to be controlling? It has always impressed me that Jesus was able to sleep in these conditions. He must have been very tired, but He also had peace in His life that overwhelmed the tumult of the waves. Jesus' peace was greater than the terrible storm He was in.

My son, preserve sound judgment and discernment, do not let them out of your sight; they will be life for you, an ornament to grace your neck. Then you will go on your way in safety, and your foot will not stumble; when you lie down, you will not be afraid; when you lie down, your sleep will be sweet. Have no fear of sudden disaster or of the ruin that overtakes the wicked, for the LORD will be your confidence and will keep your foot from being snared (Proverbs 3:21-26).

Jesus didn't just have unusual peace because He was divine. He obeyed God and left us a legacy of how to serve God in the power of the Spirit. If Jesus had peace while He was asleep in a storm, then we can have the same kind of peace. It is available to us as well if we fulfill the requirements for that peace.

Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus (Phil 4:4-7).

v. 24 – The disciples cried out to Jesus, He got up and then calmed the waves and winds. Just a word from Jesus calmed the storm. When I first started my business, I would fret and worry when the phone wasn't ringing for any work. Then the phone would ring and I was happy again. All it took was one phone call. I had to face the fact that I knew how to rejoice when the phone rang, but I had to learn how to rejoice when the phone wasn't ringing. All it took was one phone call—just a word from Jesus—and my situation was better in my eyes. But in Jesus' eyes, my situation was never as bad as I made it out to be. Whose perspective will you believe today—yours or Jesus?

v. 25 – Jesus asked them one question, but the disciples were preoccupied with other thoughts. Even though they had seen Jesus do tremendous things with and for people, they now beheld His sovereignty over nature. They were fearful and amazed. Remember that the disciples were still processing who Jesus was; they were understandably slow to

comprehend that He was God. Perhaps Jesus would ask you the same question today: Where is your faith? What would you answer? Could you show Him any situation in which you were trusting Him, some situation that unless He “came through,” you would look foolish?

Day Five

26 They sailed to the region of the Gerasenes, which is across the lake from 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. 28 When he saw Jesus, he cried out and fell at his feet, shouting at the top of his voice, "What do you want with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I beg you, don't torture me!" 29 For Jesus had commanded the evil spirit to come out of the man. Many times it had seized him, and though he was chained hand and foot and kept under guard, he had broken his chains and had been driven by the demon into solitary places.

v. 26 – Jesus led the disciples from one storm into another. The first storm had to do with a storm of nature, the second with a storm in the spiritual world. When you encounter storms, don’t think you have done something wrong or that God isn’t with you. He is and He may very well have been the One to lead you to the difficult situation you now encounter.

v. 27 – This human being was a frightening specimen, but it seems that Jesus went out of His way to come and help this man. Why? We’re not sure. Perhaps he was someone’s family member and they were praying for him. While everyone else had given up, his family had not and Jesus was responding to their prayers. But of course this is speculation. For whatever reason, Jesus sought out this unfortunate being. Thank God for His mercy that causes Him to pursue us when we are not pursuing Him!

v. 28 – I don’t think this was the man speaking, but the evil spirits speaking through the man. The spirits knew who Jesus was. Just because someone declares Jesus to be the Son of God doesn’t mean that person or entity is righteous. James wrote:

“You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that-and shudder” (James 2:19).

v. 29 – There are some problems that can’t be counseled or corrected with discipline. They are human problems caused by demons present in people’s minds and lives. This man had unusual strength, but the strength wasn’t natural; it was demonic. Some people deny the reality of the demon world and others deny its power over a believer. I disagree with both groups. I have seen the power of the demonic and there is only one way to deal with it—to cast the demon out in the name of Jesus!

There is also evil in the world that cannot be corrected with government money or the good intentions of others. This evil is premeditated and intelligent because it comes from

the world of evil where demons perpetrate their dastardly deeds. Are you dealing with the demonic at work, in your family or in church? Then determine to cast the evil out, not in your own power, but in the power of God. Be careful, but don't be too cautious either. The name of Jesus is powerful and can overcome anything that the world of evil can present.

Day Six

30 Jesus asked him, "What is your name?" "Legion," he replied, because many demons had gone into him. 31 And they begged him repeatedly not to order them to go into the Abyss. 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.

v. 30 – Demons have identity and names. Here the cluster of demons took on a description that described their numbers and corporate strength. This man had many evil forces living in him and they were intelligent enough to answer Jesus' questions.

v. 31 – These demons knew the spiritual authority that Jesus had and were begging Him for mercy! What a picture this is! These spiritual forces knew that they would eventually be taken from earth and placed in a place of eternal torment, but they were asking that they not be sent there now. For now, demons are free to roam the earth, but eventually they will be cast into the lake of fire with all unbelievers and evil-doers. Can you imagine spending eternity with the beings that were causing these problems in this man's life? That is how nasty hell will be!

v. 32 – It seems that demons don't like to live outside flesh of some kind, so they asked permission to go into the pigs. It is interesting to me that Jesus gave them permission. He did not prevent them from carrying out their mission on earth, but Jesus did direct their activity away from this man. That meant that they were free to continue their evil in another place, with another person, at another time. That means that those evil forces are still at work somewhere in the world today. Why would Jesus do that? Because in this Age people are still free to choose good and evil and both choices have their consequences. Jesus did not come to eliminate evil but to give those who wanted to be free from evil the power and wherewithal to do so.

v. 33 – Wow! We get a clear picture of the spiritual power that was in this man. It is amazing that this man could function at all! This shows that the man had some shred of free will left in him, for the minute these pigs got hit by the "legion," they hurled themselves down a hill and into the water. This behavior is highly unusual for pigs but shows the destructive nature of the world of evil. Jesus Himself said:

"The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full. I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep" (John 10:10-12).

The devil and his forces aren't out to hurt you; they are out to kill you. That is why we must "run into" Jesus for safety. We are not strong or smart enough to resist or overcome this evil empire.

Day Seven

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. 36 Those who had seen it told the people how the demon-possessed man had been cured. 37 Then all the people of the region of the Gerasenes asked Jesus to leave them, because they were overcome with fear. So he got into the boat and left. 38 The man from whom the demons had gone out begged to go with him, but Jesus sent him away, saying, 39 "Return home and tell how much God has done for you." So the man went away and told all over town how much Jesus had done for him.

v. 34 – I doubt if the pig herders had any herd insurance that would cover an “act of God” like this! But of course, what were they doing herding pigs, which were an unclean animal by Jewish law. They did go off to notify the countryside of what had happened.

vs. 35&36 – The people came to check out the story they had heard and there was the evidence sitting clothed and in his right mind. Instead of being happy for the man who was delivered, they were afraid—perhaps afraid that their own inner secrets or problems would be confronted. It is interesting to me that not everyone wants to be set free from his or her problems. One man said that God won't separate you from your friends. By that he meant that if you have a spiritual problem and you like that problem, God will let you keep it! He won't force you to be set free.

These people weren't happy that this man was helped. They were afraid and mourned the economic loss of the pigs rather than the healing of the man. In other regions, the people would have brought all their sick and infirm to be touched by Jesus. The Gerasenes weren't like that. They were a closed community that did not welcome this outsider named Jesus, even if He had spiritual power.

v. 37 – Jesus did not try to talk the people out of his eviction. He got in the boat and left. He had done what He could for one man and it was time to move on. Jesus never chased anyone who didn't want what He had to offer. This was no exception.

"Do not give dogs what is sacred; do not throw your pearls to pigs. If you do, they may trample them under their feet, and then turn and tear you to pieces" (Matthew 7:6).

Who were the real pigs in this area—the animals or the people?

vs. 38&39 – Jesus had a plan for this man’s life and it didn’t include him coming with Jesus. Instead, Jesus sent the man home to give testimony to God’s healing power in his life. And the man obeyed Jesus’ directions and did indeed go home to tell his home about the Lord. What is Jesus plan for your life? Are you obeying it like this man did? Do you have things that God has done for you? I’m sure you do, but are you telling others about those things?

Jesus made a special trip to help this man. On the way over, He encountered the serious storm that almost swamped His boat. Some have felt that the storm was caused by demons who knew where Jesus was going and what He was going to do. But my point here is that this story highlights God’s love for each person. Jesus went through all this to go and help one crazed man, who was under the influence and control of the devil. He sent the man free, but was rejected by the community where the man lived. So Jesus got in His boat and returned home. God’s love isn’t always efficient. By that, I mean that God went through a lot of trouble to help just one person. He can ask you to do the same. Are you willing to go through a lot of trouble to help just one? I hope so.