

## Matthew 8:28–34

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[ 0 : 00 ] Again, that's Matthew chapter 8, verses 28 through 34. And it reads like this. When he came to the other side, to the country of the Gadarenes, two demon-possessed men met him, coming out of the tomb so fierce that no one could pass that way.

And behold, they cried out, What have you to do with us, O son of God? Have you come here to torment us before the time? Now a herd of many pigs were feeding at some distance from them. And the demons begged him, saying, If you cast us out, send us away into the herd of pigs. And he said to them, Go. So they came out and went into the pigs.

And behold, the whole herd rushed down the steep bank into the sea and drowned in the waters. The herdsmen fled. And going into the city, they told everything, especially what had happened to the demon-possessed men.

And behold, all the city came out to meet Jesus. And when they saw him, they begged him to leave their region. This is the word of the Lord. Thanks be to God.

[ 1 : 16 ] You may be seated. Well, good morning. It's good to be here with you.

I wonder if you have any hobbies. I have lots of hobbies. I love hobbies. I think maybe one of my favorite things about hobbies hobbies is the very special vocabulary that belongs to each hobby. And as you get a new hobby, you get to learn all the new vocabulary. For example, baste, blanch, and braise are all terms that might mean something to you.

But if you're into cooking, you know that those are all ways of cooking things. Or capture, center file, and, of course, the counter gambit. If you play chess, you know what that means.

But if you don't, you're like, I don't know what any of that stuff means. Christianity is far more than a hobby. But it does have its own special vocabulary.

[ 2 : 25 ] There's a lot to get your arms around. Now, maybe you're a new Christian. Maybe you're a curious non-Christian. I mean, shoot, you are here this morning, so you've got to at least be a little curious.

Or maybe you're a mature, stable Christian. Regardless of who you are today, it would be good to go back to basics.

It would be good to go back to the basics of the Christian vocabulary, especially surrounding who this Jesus guy is that people talk about in church all the time. And we get such an opportunity here in the text that you heard read in Matthew chapter 8, verses 28 through 34.

Our teachers for this vocabulary lesson are a rather unlikely pair. That's right. We are going to let the demons be our guide this morning, which is not something that preachers get to say too often. And I would not, you know, encourage you to follow that advice always. Take my title from this text.

[ 3 : 35 ] I want you to have a demon-like faith. Hey, here's what I want to argue from this text. Believe it or not, that Christian faith equals and exceeds that of demons.

I wonder if you believe that. I wonder if you have that kind of faith. I wonder if you have even a demon-like faith. Now, you might be asking yourself the question, man, what the heck are we focusing on the demons for this morning?

And the answer is simple. That's what Matthew does. I mean, except for Jesus, the only people who are in the very center of the picture in the movie that is Matthew chapter 8, verses 28 through 34, are the demons.

You see, Matthew has given us kind of a three-part trilogy of short films. Last week, we saw one of them.

We saw that Jesus has authority over the seas. This week, the second movie, we see that Jesus has authority over the spirits.

[ 4 : 46 ] And heads up for next week, you're going to see that Jesus has authority over sickness and even sin. And Matthew wants you and me to be real clear about one thing in this little section.

Jesus has all the authority. The demons got it. I wonder if you do. The story revolves around two interactions, Jesus and the demons, and then Jesus and the crowd.

We'll spend the vast majority of our time in the first interaction. And as we'll learn, Christian faith equals and exceeds the faith of demons.

So let's think about it. This Jesus and his demons. It's in verses 28 through 32. And let me just admit from the outset, if you heard this story and you were thinking, this story sounds weird, then you are right.

It's like demon-level weird. Now, if you're not really familiar with the Bible, there's something you need to know. According to the Bible, demons are real. Like real, real.

[ 5 : 56 ] Like as real as you sitting in this chair reel. They are spiritual forces opposed to God. They don't show up very often in the Bible. But they're real.

And you might be thinking, well, okay, here's the thing, though. I think it is crazy to believe in demons in an age of self-driving cars.

Well, I get it. It's strange. But why is it that spiritual things and spiritual beings have been the subject of literature, music, and art in all kinds of cultures all over the world through all of time?

Why is that? Maybe Charles Baudelaire was right. Maybe the greatest trick the devil ever played was convincing us that he doesn't exist.

This moment between Jesus and the demons happens on the heels of an eventful boat ride in which Jesus' followers, his disciples, thought they would drown but were saved by Jesus in the midst of the storm telling the storm to simmer down.

[ 7 : 29 ] In the chaos of the calm, the disciples asked a very important question. Probably the same question you would ask. I know I would ask it if that was the situation I was living in.

It's in verse 27 right before this text. What sort of man is this that even winds and sea obey him? It's a good question. What sort of man is this? Our text today answers that question. He's a man who has authority over demons.

Now these demons are clearly a menace to society. It's right there in verse 28. They were so fierce that no one could pass that way. We don't know hardly anything about these demons.

We don't know anything about these men. We don't know exactly what they were doing. None of that is important. Matthew fast forwards past all of that and just gets you to the interaction with the demons.

[ 8 : 33 ] It's here that we run into our vocabulary lesson. I want to give you a heads up. The demons are exactly right in this passage about what they think and believe about Jesus.

Verse 29. What have you to do with us O son of God? Here's the first thing you need to know. Ready for it? Jesus and demons are different. Now you might be like shoot man I got up early this morning with the whole daylight savings time thing.

I never even been to church and I know that already. What are you talking about Jesus and the demons are different? Well I don't know. The demons think it's important? Let me be clear.

The demons recognize Jesus as more than a mere man. As more than a good man. They recognize he's a God man. A spiritual being in human flesh.

[ 9 : 38 ] A creature like them but vastly superior to them. What do you have to do with us? Oh son of God. You see Matthew has already told us in chapter 3 verse 17 that God himself thinks that this Jesus guy is his son pronounced in the baptism and here the demons agree with God.

I wonder if you do. Again friends get on the level of the demons. Friends friend do you believe that Jesus is the son of God?

Not only is he God's son distinct from the demons but the second thing we learn about Jesus is that he is going to judge the spiritual powers that are opposed to him.

It's right there in the back half of verse 29. Have you come here to torment us before the time?

Let me just be really clear. Before the time assumes that there is a time and that the demons know that there's a time. They have faith that there's a time. They are not upset that Jesus has come to judge them.

[ 10 : 59 ] They just think he came a little early. Kind of like some of you didn't come to Sunday school this morning because it was a little early. Which is fine.

Daylight savings time should be abolished. Let's just put that out there. Matthew tells us about this time in his gospel near the end of his gospel.

If you stick around here long enough and we keep preaching through Matthew we'll get there eventually. In chapter 25 verse 41 we learn this about that time that Jesus will cast the devil and his demons into eternal fire.

Now you might be asking yourself the question well what the heck is eternal fire like? And my answer is I don't know and I do not want to find out. And I would encourage you not to find out. There are some things that are better left a mystery. Whatever that is it's bad. Let's just put it that way. Now this isn't all bad news about the end of time.

[12:05] This judgment that comes at the right time is a division between those who are on Jesus' side and those who are opposed to Jesus. The demons know where they stand they are on the opposed to Jesus' side and for them it will be eternal fire.

Those who are on Jesus' side will be blessed forever. Friend where do you stand with this Jesus guy? Let me confess this idea of judgment day is unsettling.

But friends don't you long for a day when everything gets put right? And if not like you know let me just be clear what's wrong with you?

You really think this is as good as it gets? Aren't you frustrated at how little justice we see in this world?

I am. The good news is there is coming a day when it will all get sorted out and Jesus is the one who's doing the sorting.

[13:18] The demons know it. Do you? Now at this point in the story Matthew does something rather strange.

In verse 30 he just kind of takes a little pause and points out that over there in the middle distance there's some pigs hanging out. And you ask the question okay thank you for the voiceover but why do we need to know that there are pigs over there just chilling?

And the answer comes in the third thing we learn about Jesus not only is he the son of God not only is he going to judge everything at the end but he's in absolute control.

It's right there in verse 31 notice what the demons say if you cast us out send us away into that herd of pigs notice the demons know Jesus is in control there's no gearing up for battle here there's no like okay why don't you do what you're going to do and we're going to do what we're going to do and we're going to see who wins at the end they're just like man okay if we're not going to we can't require anything from you we just have a prayer request we know we're going to leave here but like if we could get sit anywhere just over into the pigs over there that'd be nice thank you from beginning to end the Bible is clear there is only one power in the universe that is in control of everything it is God and even the demons are God's demons they do not exist apart from him they do not exert control apart from him he is in control of them he does what he wants with them I don't understand everything but friends if that ain't good news I don't know what is the demons submit to God and to his son Jesus you want to know how much authority Jesus has well just look at how many words Jesus speaks in this story exactly one and it's a short one here's all he does he doesn't bust out a crucifix and throw some holy water at him doesn't like speak in Latin or whatever he just looks right at him and goes go and they do well but how do you know that like how do you know that the demons left these two men good question enter the importance of the pigs verse 32 so they came out and went into the pigs and behold the whole herd rushed down the steep bank into the sea and drown in the waters

[16:32] I will freely admit to you that this statement raises more questions than I could possibly ask in a lifetime for example why do the demons want to go into pigs number two do all demons have or do all demons in pigs and do all pigs have demons I hope not because they are delicious why did the pigs chuck themselves off the cliff did any of them do backflips why they all drown what happened to the demons after the pigs died I don't know and Matthew's like don't worry about it I don't know either I do know that it was an important act for everyone why well how else would we know that the demons left it's important it's important for Jesus' disciples who were with him it was important for the people in the area who were menaced by the demons it was important for the two demon possessed men maybe the demons just went quiet send us to the pigs you go to the pigs the pigs clearly do something looks like the demons are gone you see friends

Jesus doesn't just claim to have authority he shows it he didn't just say he could control creation he stilled the seas he didn't just say he could control the demons he dispatched them with a word

friends in a day and age so full of talk isn't it good to know that there's someone who can just take charge friends here's the thing Jesus has got all the authority the demons knew it do you friend what are you going to do with Jesus it's the most important question you will ever answer in your life what are you going to do with Jesus why is it the most important question well because remember verse 29 there is coming a day when

Jesus will sort everything out you can have the faith of demons and fear him or you can have the faith of disciples and follow him but friends those are the only two options you got to pick a side and I would urge you to follow Jesus like a disciple in other words I would urge you to have a faith that equals and exceeds the faith of demons there's every reason to do so why it's primarily because of what Jesus does with his authority you see it's one thing to calm the seas and it's another thing to cast out the spirits but it's a very different thing to save people like you and me you see here's the crazy thing what Jesus does with his authority is give up his own life for all who would follow him why did he have to do something like that well between friends let me just be real honest it's because way too often you and me we act just like demons there was no amens at that one what do you mean well we take whatever we know about God and we live in rebellion to him

I don't know how much you know about God heads up you just learned a whole lot about God but so often what we do is we take what we know about God and then we utilize that to live against him we do what we know we're not supposed to do and we don't know do what we know we're supposed to do now I grant you that you might not be as bad as a demon congratulations but if God is just if he's really going to be the one who comes at the right time at the end of time to sort everything out the way you've always wanted the way I've always wanted then it means that he's going to be perfectly fair which means that all those who are against him or have ever been against him deserve punishment and Jesus with all his authority takes on that judgment for all who would follow him like a disciple why should you believe it well it's because Jesus didn't just say he would do it he showed it by dying on a cross and for a minute I'll admit to you that it looked like the only place that Jesus authority got him was the ground that is of course until he rose from the dead with all authority in his hands having beat the devil demons death and everything else and demonstrates that he's the one who has all authority and he uses it to save people like you and me friend do you believe this it is what it means to have faith in

Jesus to have a faith that equals and exceeds the faith of demons don't disbelieve but believe the importance of doing this is really found in the fallout of Jesus' interaction with the demons remember I told you there were two interactions there's Jesus and the demons and very briefly there is Jesus and the crowd in verses 33 and 34 this second interaction is sparked by the herdsmen of the pigs running to the town and telling everybody what had happened there isn't much that goes on in the first century there's no cell phones there's no electricity it's pretty boring so all of a sudden you got a guy who comes into town and casts out the menace to society all of a sudden that's news and notice they told him everything that happened especially what happened to the demon possessed men how does the crowd react verse 34 and behold all the city came out to meet

[ 23 : 42 ] Jesus and when they saw him they begged him to leave their region did you catch it they begged him just like the demons begged him but in this case the crowd acted worse than the demons you see at least the demons said send us away and the crowd goes hey you you go away this crowd serves as a warning to us friends fearing Jesus is not enough you must follow him you must follow him with a faith that equals and exceeds the faith of demons friends do not disbelieve but believe let's pray and I pray for those who are hearing this and having heard it realize that their faith doesn't even equal the faith of demons open their eyes help them to believe not just to fear

Jesus but to follow him and for those of us who do follow Jesus give us the confidence to keep on following knowing that he has authority even over the demons we pray these things in Jesus name amen