

# Salvation, disaster and evil

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[ 0 : 0 0 ]     One day Jesus got into a boat with his disciples and he said to them let us go across to the other side of the lake. So they set out and as they sailed he fell asleep.

And a windstorm came down on the lake and they were filling with water and were in danger. And they went and woke him saying master, master we are perishing. And he awoke and rebuked the wind and the raging waves and they ceased and there was calm.

He said to them where is your faith? And they were afraid and they marveled saying to one another who then is this that he commands even winds and water and they obey him.

Then they sailed to the country of the Gerasenes which is opposite Galilee. When Jesus had stepped out on land there met him a man from the city who had demons.

For a long time he had worn no clothes and he had not lived in a house but among the tombs. When he saw Jesus he cried out and fell down before him and said with a loud voice What have you to do with me Jesus son of the most high God?

[ 1 : 1 3 ]     I beg you do not torment me. For he had commanded the unclean spirit to come out of the man. For many a time it had seized him. He was kept under guard and bound with chains and shackles.

But he would break the bonds and be driven by the demon into the desert. Jesus then asked him what is your name? And he said legion for many demons had entered him.

And they begged him not to command them to depart into the abyss. Now a large herd of pigs was feeding there on the hillside and they begged him to let them enter these.

So he gave them permission. Then the demons came out of the man and entered the pigs and the herd rushed down the steep bank into the lake and were drowned. When the herdsmen saw what had happened they fled and told it in the city and in the country.

Then people went out to see what had happened. And they came to Jesus and found the man from whom the demons had gone sitting at the feet of Jesus clothed and in his right mind.

[ 2 : 2 2 ]     And they were afraid. And those who had seen it told them how the demon possessed man had been healed. Then all the people of the surrounding country of the Gerasenes asked him to depart from them.

For they were seized with great fear. So he got into the boat and returned. The man from whom the demons had gone begged that he might be with him.

But Jesus sent him away saying return to your home and declare how much God has done for you. And he went away proclaiming throughout the whole city how much Jesus had done for him.

Last year the Goldsmith's Prize for Fiction was won by Nicola Barker for her novel called Happy. It was praised by the judges as a work of vaulting ambition.

It's set in the far future in an apparently perfect world free from poverty and suffering. The heroine Mira explains.

[ 3 : 27 ] When darkness threatens darkness. Can there ever truly be darkness again? They simply adjust the chemicals. The result?

A world where everyone is happy. Where poverty and suffering can be controlled with a few chemicals. Well it is so obviously fiction.

And yet humanity has always longed for a better future. A new world. And yet every time someone presents a new vision for the future.

It is by itself a recognition that previous visions have failed. Because of course there is so much that we cannot control. We can't control nature.

The forces of nature. We can't control evil. We can't control evil. The powers of evil. Disease. Or death. If only it was as easy as just changing the chemicals to control those things.

[ 4 : 31 ] And yet Jesus claims he can and will deliver this current world. And he will deliver a new world order. A new creation.

When he returns the second time at the end of history. But I guess that can sound rather fanciful can't it? Perhaps rather like the novel Happy.

Fanciful most obviously to those who are looking into the Christian faith perhaps. Or those who aren't yet followers of Jesus. But I guess even for those who are. The idea of a new creation. Why it can sound so remote.

So distant. That actually so many of us we just find ourselves living for this creation. And for this world instead. And so what we have in Luke chapter 8 verses 22 to 56.

Is Luke gives us four snapshots of what the new creation will be like. And we have the great privilege of looking at two of them this Sunday morning. And two of them next Sunday morning.

[ 5 : 32 ] You'll see there's an outline on the back of the service sheet as usual. I hope that is helpful. First of all salvation from a disordered creation. Have a look at verses 22 and 23.

One day Jesus got into a boat with his disciples. And he said to them let us go across to the other side of the lake. So they set out. And as they sailed he fell asleep.

And a windstorm came down on the lake. And they were filling with water. And were in danger. Imagine the scene. Here is Jesus exhausted after a day's teaching. He and his disciples get into a boat.

To find some quiet away from the crowds. Suddenly a huge storm hits them. As if from nowhere. Even today I gather the Sea of Galilee is notorious for sudden storms.

It is just 200 meters above sea level. It is set between high hills on either side. But rapidly moving air currents quickly caused the water to become choppy and turbulent.

[ 6 : 33 ] Luke describes it doesn't he as a windstorm. It is literally a whirlwind. The disciples are terrified. Verse 24.

And they went and woke him saying master, master. We are perishing. Amongst them of course professional fishermen. Who are used to rough weather. Presumably they know the difference between the kind of storm that you are likely to survive.

And the kind of storm you may not survive. Maybe you have had an experience like this yourself. I think the closest I got to it was on a ferry crossing.

Crossing the RSC. On a car ferry from Dublin. Big waves. An angry sea. The vessel pitching. The bottles and the glasses in the bar smashing.

And the normal chatter and laughter replaced by an uneasy silence. Well Jesus' response.

- [ 7 : 33 ] It's extraordinary really isn't it? No histrionics. No grandstanding. Just a word. An authoritative command.
- And immediately we are told the wind ceases. The waves cease. And there is calm. Where normally of course after a storm. The swell in the sea. Might carry on for several hours.
- Possibly days. It's no wonder that Luke tells us in verse 25. The disciples were afraid. Because whatever fear they had experienced.
- Before the storm. Has now been replaced by an even bigger fear. A who is this that he commands even the wind and the water. And they obey him.
- Kind of fear. On New Year's Day down in Cornwall. We went for a walk on the north coast. And it was stormy.
- [ 8 : 34 ] We've never seen anything like it. I don't think. The waves crashing up almost as high as the cliffs. The wind so powerful. That Jemima was blown over. The raw power of nature.
- And the idea at that point. That one of us might have tried to rebuke the waves. Get down. And say to the wind stop.
- And least of all to try and do that simply with a word. Why? It was ridiculous. It's no wonder the disciples marvel.
- Who then is this? Because only God can do this. Psalm 33. By the word of the Lord the heavens were made.
- And by the breath of his mouth all their hosts. He gathers the water of the sea as a heap. He puts the deeps in storehouses. Let all the earth fear the Lord.
- [ 9 : 32 ] Let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of him. For he spoke and it came to be. He commanded and it stood firm. God created the seas by speaking.
- Psalm 107. Then they cried to the Lord in their trouble. And he delivered them from their distress. He made the storm be still. And the waves of the sea were hushed.
- God controls the seas by speaking. Who but God himself can handle the raw power of nature like this?
- Now we could stop here. We could move on to the demon at this point. Having seen so clearly I guess. That here is Jesus Christ. God in the flesh.
- But Luke wants us to be convinced of more than that. Because it is not just a question of Jesus' identity. Just look back a page to Luke chapter 7 verse 20.
- [ 10 : 38 ] And do you remember how we saw a few weeks ago Luke chapter 7 verse 20. How John's disciples come and ask Jesus a question. Are you the one who is to come?
- Or shall we look for another? What does Jesus then do? In verse 21. In that hour he healed many people of diseases and plagues and evil spirits. And on many who are blind he bestowed sight.
- And then what does he do? Well he quotes from Isaiah. From various passages in Isaiah. As he paints a portrait in Isaiah language.
- Of what the new creation will be like. Chapter 7 verse 22. Go and tell John what you have seen and heard. The blind receive their sight.
- The lame walk. Lepers are cleansed. And the deaf hear. The dead are raised up. The poor have good news preached to them. Because if there's going to be a perfect future world.
- [ 11 : 39 ] It does need to be a new world. A new creation. Rather than simply this present disordered creation.

In the big picture of the whole Bible. When Adam and Eve rebelled against God. And sin came into the world. The whole of our creation. The whole of this creation. Was thrown out of kilter.

Now of course you and I see that don't we? Every day of our lives. We see it on the big scale of things. Droughts. Storms. Tsunamis. Flooding.

And we see it on the small scale of things. Just the things that happen in our own lives. The suffering that comes from living in a disordered world. Indeed in Romans chapter 8.

The apostle Paul says that the whole of this current created order. Longs for the new creation that is to come. And so the question is.

[ 12 : 39 ] Can Jesus deliver? And the answer. Yes. Just as at the beginning. God spoke. And this creation came into being.

Just as here in Luke chapter 8. Jesus commands the wind and the waves. And they do exactly what he says. So at the end. He will speak.

And a new creation. will come into being. So I wonder what you make of Jesus' question. In verse 25.

Where is your faith? It's just what we've been seeing. Isn't it? Over the last few weeks. If you've been following this series of talks. The link between our view of Jesus. And discipleship.

Their faith was too small. Because their view of Jesus was too small. It's just the same for us. If you have a small view of Jesus. You'll end up with a small faith. A small trust in Jesus.

[ 13 : 39 ] A small discipleship. Which won't be up to the challenges. Of living in this disordered world. Whereas if you have a big view of Jesus. You'll have a big faith.

A big trust in Jesus. A big discipleship. Because you'll know. That Jesus is up to anything. That this disordered world throws at us. Even in the midst of the storms of life.

Even when Jesus seems asleep. Or unconcerned. Or unaware of the situation. As he does here. In the midst of the storm. Indeed.

I guess there may well be some of us here this morning. And actually that is precisely. Where we find ourselves. At the moment. And it may well be that Jesus has taken us there.

To that point. So that like the disciples here. We learn to trust him. And not to fear. And things may work out.

[ 14 : 39 ] As we hope they do. Or they may not work out. As we hope they do. But ultimately. Will we trust him? Will we trust him?

To bring in. Well not only for now. But will we trust him? To bring in a whole new creation. At the end of history. Salvation from a disordered creation.

Secondly. Salvation from evil. Because behind the physical world. The physical world that you and I can see. Lies the invisible spiritual world. That you and I cannot see.

Verses 26 to 29. Then they sailed. To the country of the Gerasenes. Which is opposite Galilee. When Jesus had stepped out on land.

There met him a man from the city. Who had demons. For a long time. He had worn no clothes. And he had not lived in a house. But among the tombs. When he saw Jesus. He cried out.

[ 15 : 40 ] And fell down before him. And said with a loud voice. What have you to do with me? Jesus. Son of the most high God. I beg you. Do not torment me. For he had commanded the unclean spirits.

Come out of the man. For many a time it had seized him. He was kept under guard. And bound with chains and shackles. When he would break the bonds. And be driven by the demon. Into the desert.

Now I imagine that some of us. Find this very hard to relate to. After all. This is not an everyday event for us. But it's not an everyday event in the Bible either.

And yet. Demon possession. We see it frequently in the Gospels. Not in the rest of the Bible. But frequently in the Gospels. As if the coming of God into the world.

Provokes a sort of deliberate. And sustained attack. By the forces of evil. And by the devil. On Jesus. And that is certainly the case here.

[ 16 : 37 ] Verse 30. Jesus then asked him. What is your name? And he said legion. For many demons had entered him. A Roman legion.

Was made up of 6,000 soldiers. So this is Jesus. Against many. The war. Is on. And yet.

Very strikingly. There is no contest. Is there? As Luke. Presents us. With the. Before. Jesus intervened.

Man. And the. After. Jesus intervened. Man. It's very vivid. Notice that before. He's. Before.

When he was under the influence of demons. He had no shame. He was naked. He couldn't live in normal society. Just amongst the dead. He couldn't be restrained. He couldn't enjoy meaningful human relationships.

[ 17 : 33 ] Let alone relationship with God. He was completely alienated. And outcast. And alone. Just picture him. Will you. In your mind's eye.

Because that reflects. The devil's ultimate purpose. Which is to destroy. And to deface. The image of God. In men and women. But then the after scene of the man.

In verse 35 to 39. White. No less dramatic. Here he is. He is now clothed. Whereas before he had been naked. He is now seated.

Whereas before he had been roaming. He now associates with others. As he sits at Jesus' feet. Whereas before he sought solitude. He is now of sound mind.

Whereas before he had been crying out. In a loud voice. He is now comfortable. In the presence of Jesus. Whereas before he had wanted. Completely nothing to do with him. Luke presents us with a.

[ 18 : 35 ] Before and after. The like of which. You and I have never seen. Yes I know you get. Before and afters. On garden.

Makeover programs. Whether it is the garden rescue series. On TV. With Charlie Dimmock. Giving people a garden makeover. You have the complete wasteland. Beforehand. And then you have the oasis afterwards.

Or there is DIY SOS. Now in it is 29th year. I am told. That before. The DIY disaster. And afterwards. The sort of perfect project.

Completely done. To the exact specification. Not to mention wardrobe makeovers. You know. Out with all the old shirts. In with all the new shirts. Or the.

Before and after photos. Of the fitness makeover. Makeover. Whatever it is. But this is no mere makeover. Is it? This is a completely. Transformed.

[ 19 : 31 ] Individual. A new. Person. And as such. It is hard to miss the point. That when Jesus gets to work in someone.

He makes them saner. Saner. And more human. Reconnected with God. Reconnected with others. Reconnected with himself.

He is saner. And more human. Perhaps. You can think of someone. Like this. You think of someone. What they were like. Before they came to put their trust in Christ.

What they are like now. Saner. And more human. Or perhaps you think of yourself. The before. And after. You came to put your trust.

In Christ. Notice will you. That Luke debunks. Three common myths. About evil. Firstly. That there is no such thing as evil.

[ 20 : 32 ] That the devil doesn't exist. That is the secular view. But it is of course. A very blinkered view. If we lived in South America. Or Africa. Or Asia.

In other words. Much of the rest of the world. There would be no doubt. At all. In our own minds. That there is. A personal force. For evil. Here is C.S. Lewis.

Writing in the screw tape letters. There are two equal. And opposite errors. Into which our race. Can fall. About the devils. One is to disbelieve. In their existence. The other is to believe.

And to feel. An excessive. And unhealthy interest. In them. They themselves. Are equally pleased. By both errors. And hail. A materialist.

Or magician. With the same delight. I guess. In some cultures. There may well be. An excessive interest. In the forces of evil. But in ours. Surely we have made.

[ 21 : 26 ] Exactly the opposite. Error. Of disbelieving. Their existence. Altogether. Second. Luke debunks. The myth.

That the devil. And Jesus. The devil. And God. Are equally. Matched. Notice. Will you verse 28. Legion recognizes.

Who Jesus is. Jesus. Son of the most. High God. In the Bible. The son of God. Is the one. To whom God.

Has given. All authority. Over all people. For all. Time. In verse 31. Legion again. Recognizes. The authority. Of Jesus.

As they. Beg Jesus. Not to command them. Into. To go into the pigs. And into the abyss. In verse 32. They then need permission. None of which.

[ 22 : 19 ] Is the language. Of an evenly matched. Contest. Third. Luke debunks. The Halloween view. Of evil. The view.

Which is. That the devil. Is simply. A figure of fun. And not really. To be taken. Seriously. I take it. That's the point. Of verse. 33. As we see.

The sheer. Destructive. Force. Of evil. Verse 33. Then the demons. Came out of the man. And then to the pigs. And the herd. Rushed down. The steep bank.

Into the lake. And were drowned. At which point. If you are. A sensitive person. Or if you love. The film. Babe. And you're thinking. Babe.

And sweet little piggies. Then of course. This raises all kinds. Of problems. But it's not as if. I take it. Jesus has a callous. Disregard. For animal welfare.

[ 23 : 14 ] Rather. He is showing us. That the devil. Is not a figure. Of fun. But is bent. On evil. And. Destruction. So. Three myths.

About evil. That are debunked. And that. Sets us on a trajectory. Here in Luke 8. The devil. Is put on notice.

And it's then. At the cross. As Jesus Christ. Dies. For our sins. That the devil. Is defeated. Just before he was. Crucified.

Jesus says. John chapter 12. Verse 31. It's there. On the outline. Look at the words of Jesus. He says. Now is the judgment. Of this world. Now will the ruler. Of this world.

Be cast out. Which means. That if you are. A disciple. Of Jesus Christ. You cannot. Be demon possessed. And we needn't.

[ 24 : 11 ] Fear. The powers. Of evil. As the apostle. Paul says. Colossians chapter 1. Verse 13. He has delivered us. From the dominion. Of darkness.

He has transferred us. To the kingdom. Of his beloved. Son. And as such. We long. For the new creation. Where the devil.

Who has already. Been defeated. Will finally. Be destroyed. But notice.

For you. That there's more. For. Because just as. With the calming. Of the storm. So again. Luke puts the spotlight. On people's. Responses.

In verse 35. The people from the city. Go to see what's happened. Are they overjoyed? No. They're afraid. In verse 37.

[ 25 : 08 ] Do they want Jesus to stay? No. They tell him to go. It was more comfortable. To ask Jesus to leave. Than it was.

To ask him. To stay. And as such. They. Turn down. And reject. The greatest. Opportunity. Of their lives. And Jesus leaves.

He gives them. What they want. Do you see. How. How Luke is showing us. Two. Two very different. Faces of evil. Such that.

In one corner. We have. That legion. In whom. Evil is so very. Obviously. And dramatically. At work. But in the other corner. We have those.

Who. Well. They've seen the goodness. And power. Of Jesus. And yet. Actually. They decide. They prefer life. Without Jesus. Than life.

[ 26 : 03 ] With Jesus. Now. I don't know about you. But. I think it's hard to know. Which is the most disturbing. I mean. Legion is kind of. Obviously disturbing.

But surely. Those who ask Jesus. To leave. Why that is equally. Disturbing. Isn't it? Because of what it reveals. About. Their hearts. As such.

Is a terrifying picture. Of the way. In which the forces of evil. Are at work. Every day. Every day. In the. Ordinary person. Who hears the gospel. Who hears the words of Jesus.

The message of forgiveness. The call to follow him. And yet. They prefer. The status quo. They prefer. Life. Without Jesus. To life.

With Jesus. At which point. Of course. Their hearts. The evil. Within their hearts. Is revealed.

[ 27 : 00 ] The evil. Which means. That if you are. Investigating. The claims of Jesus. And we're always. Delighted. If week by week. There are those. With us.

And if you've got. The point. Of saying. Or you think. You're probably. About to say. To Jesus. That. Really. I'd rather. My life. Stayed. As it is. Then please.

Will you. Think. Why? Why? Why? Are you saying. That? Look at your heart. Look at your heart. Carefully.

And don't assume. That there will be. Another opportunity. To consider. The claims of Jesus. I think that's the temptation. You know. I'll come back to this. Later on in life. When I'm a bit older. Or when I'm less busy. Or whatever it is.

But that wasn't going to be. An option for the Gerasenes. And it may not be. An option for you. Either. Or. Whereas the response.

[ 27 : 58 ] Of this man. Well it's wonderful. Isn't it? It's. It's overwhelming. Verse 38. The man from whom. The demons had gone. Begs.

That Jesus might be with him. But Jesus sent him away. Saying. Return to your home. And declare. How much God has done. For you. And he went away. Proclaiming.

Throughout the whole city. How much Jesus had done. For him. If we prefer life with Jesus. It's because he has changed our hearts.

This man longs to stay with Jesus. But strikingly. Whereas Jesus. He grants the request to the Gerasenes. That he leave. But he doesn't. Does he grant the request of this man.

Who wants to stay with Jesus. Because Jesus has work for him to do. Jesus has done much for him. He's experienced how big Jesus is.

[ 28 : 55 ] He's experienced how big the salvation is. That Jesus brings. And it leads to a big. Life transforming discipleship. As he then goes away.

Proclaiming. Throughout the whole city. How much Jesus has done. For him. Thank you. Thank you.