

The Son's Authority to Save

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[0 : 00] Well, people have different levels of authority depending on who they are, don't they? For example, teachers have authority over students.

Not as much as they'd like and too much than the students would like, no doubt. But I remember our kids telling us during online schooling last year that some people in their class managed to mute the teacher without the teacher realising.

The class thought it was hilarious. The teacher did not. Clearly the teacher's authority didn't instil much fear in the class. But I tell you what, they didn't do it to the principal.

He has a whole lot more authority which does provoke fear. And today Luke shows us just how much authority Jesus has which also provokes fear.

Some with a right fear that reveres him but also some with a wrong fear that rejects him. And Luke shows us this so that, remember his purpose statement, that we may know.

[1 : 05] There it is. That we may know the things we have taught. That we may know who Jesus really is. That we may know he can deliver on his word that we heard last week that promised more.

That we may know who he is and respond with a right fear too. Because he's no school principal.

As we heard in that excellent little skit there, I kind of thought I should just get up and go, let's pray.

The end. Sit down. As we heard there, he is God. God the Son who has authority over creation.

Point one.

So he's picking up in verse 22 of the first paragraph there of your readings. One day Jesus said to his disciples, let us go over to the other side of the lake. So they got in the boat and set out. As they sailed, he fell asleep.

A squall came down on the lake so that the boat was being swamped and they're in great danger.

The disciples went and woke him up saying, Master, Master, we are going to drown.

[2 : 06] In verse 22, it's literally on one of those days, which links us to the days that we saw last week where he was going around preaching and teaching village to village.

And it seems he is tired from doing that teaching because he falls asleep in a boat and then the storm hits. Although the word squall there in verse 23, it sounds a bit like a weak translation, doesn't it?

I mean, take the footy team, Melbourne Storm. Imagine they were called Melbourne. I mean, it doesn't kind of instill fear and gravitas, does it?

In fact, the text literally says a hurricane of wind came down, which is why buckets of water filled the boat to the point.

The disciples woke Jesus and said, Master, we are perishing. The disciples were in real danger.

This is life and death.

[3 : 06] The kind we've sadly seen in New South Wales and Queensland with the floods. But then we read in the second paragraph that Jesus got up and rebuked the wind and the raging waters.

The storm subsided and all was calm. Where is your faith? He asked his disciples. In fear and amazement, they asked one another, who is this?

He even commands the wind and the water and they obey him. Notice the language of authority here. Jesus rebukes and commands and the wind and the waves obey.

Jesus has authority over creation. I mean, for us parents, we're lucky to have authority over our kids, aren't we? Get them to do what we want them to do.

And I was talking with the early morning service and they were saying it doesn't change when they get adult kids either. They're still telling you what to do. We've got all that to look forward to. But Jesus has authority even over creation.

[4 : 13] And unlike President Putin, who is using his authority to invade and destroy, how does Jesus use his authority? To save and restore. He saves his disciples from this natural disaster and he restores creation, doesn't he?

Restores it to calm. From raging waters to subsiding and calm. But such authority also provoked fear, didn't it?

No doubt the disciples were afraid of the storm. After all, they woke Jesus saying we're going to drown. But that's not what Luke highlights. That's not the fear Luke highlights. Rather, Luke highlights not their fear of the storm, but their fear of the one who calmed it with just a word. Because in the Old Testament, only God could control the waters with his word. That's what we saw in our first reading. So there is, by the word of the Lord, the heavens were made.

And he gathers the waters of the sea into jars, as it were, separates them and so on. And the right response is to fear God, as the psalm goes on to say on the next slide.

[5 : 29] It says, let all the earth fear the Lord, revere him. Why? Because he spoke and it came to be. He commanded and it stood firm.

Well, here is Jesus who commanded and it stood still. In other words, when Jesus shows a similar authority to God with just a word, it provokes a right fear of awe and amazement from the disciples. And they ask, who is this? Of course, they should have known by now. After all, Jesus had done quite a few miracles by this stage.

Miracles, by the way, we do have historical evidence for. I'm not going to go into that side, but I'm happy to talk about that more later. But we've seen him do miracles, even raise the dead. Which is why Jesus said to them, where is your faith?

Don't you trust me by now? Don't you know who I am yet? God, the son, who's authority to save. But if Jesus is that, then perhaps we might be wondering why Jesus didn't rebuke the rain and save New South Wales and Queensland from the floods.

[6 : 48] Well, with more rain predicted, he may. That's why it's worth praying, isn't it? But floods are sadly part of this fallen world.

It's why we need a new creation. And this particular event in history is not to promise that he'll save us from every disaster in this creation because it's fallen, but to show us that he is God, the son, who has authority to deliver the new creation, where it will be completely restored.

No more floods or fires or any disasters. And since he has that authority to deliver a new creation, then ought we not fear him rightly?

How? How? How? Well, firstly here, by revering him as bigger than any disaster or anything else we face in life.

Remembering that he is the son who has God's authority over these things. Because then we'll trust him instead of being consumed by fear of that disaster.

[8 : 01] You see, if the disciples revered Jesus as God's son who had the authority to save, if they had a bigger view of Jesus before the storm, then would they not have put more faith in Jesus during the storm?

Rather than fearing they'd be drowned. Instead of crying out, Master, Master, we're drowning, would they not have perhaps just tapped Jesus on the shoulder and say, look, we know you're God the son who has authority to save, so please save.

Now to be clear, just as there's a right and wrong fear when it comes to Jesus, so also there's a good and bad fear when it comes to disasters we face in life.

There's a good fear that helps protect us, that helps us be careful with COVID, or it makes us seek safety in floods, or helps push us through a busy period of life.

It's that fight or flight response that we've all got built into us. It gets the adrenaline pumping and makes us wary and cautious. That's a good fear, it protects us.

[9 : 09] But a bad fear is a fear that then consumes us, paralyzes us, dominates our waking thoughts, keeps us locked at home or up at night.

and can cause us to despair. But if we revere Jesus as big, if we remember his God's son who's in control, then it prevents us from fearing things badly like that, being consumed with that bad sort of fear.

Even if a natural disaster takes our life, because we can keep trusting in the one who can bring us back to life in the new creation. A right fear of Jesus reveals, reveres him as God's son with the authority to save, and prevents us from fearing things badly.

Let me see if I can illustrate. Some years ago, when we used to live in Sydney, there was another massive flood. And at the start of the floods, a guy I know was on his way to Bible study one evening with his girlfriend or fiancée, I can't remember now.

But he was slowly driving up the main road and turning off the main road. And the road that he was turning off started having those concrete barriers on one side, and there was a riverbed on the other side.

[10:30] And the water had risen so much that as he turned the corner, he was met with a river channeled by the barriers that kind of hit the car and flooded his old engine dead still.

And so there they sat, not sure what to do. The water was just at the bottom of the door, but rising, starting to seep through the seals. If they'd opened the door and tried to wait to safety, they weren't sure that they wouldn't be swept away because this, you know, channeled water was rushing quite strong to the point that the car had actually started moving.

And so there was a right fear such that they were alert, looking for a rescue and ready to bail if they had to. And then a news crew came along from channel nine, it was, and a cameraman stood on the barrier and shone his light through the window.

The guy didn't know what it was. So he wound down the window and was greeted with, what happened? Are you scared? Camera in face, respond. And the guy replied, well, we suddenly hit this river of water and yeah, a little, but God is bigger than floods.

He's in control. At that, the cameraman grunted at the God stuff and left without offering any help. And when it aired on TV, they cut out the God bit.

[11:54] The point is though, this guy feared Jesus more than the flood. He revered Jesus as bigger, the one with authority. And it prevented his good fear that kept him alert from becoming a bad fear that consumed him and stopped him from trusting in Christ.

You see a right fear of Jesus reveres him as bigger than anything else we face in life. And it keeps us trusting in him instead of fearing things badly.

Well, next we see the son's authority over evil. So point two, verse 26. They sailed or arrived to the, in the region of the Gerasenes, which is across the lake from Galilee.

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.

Now, the region of the Gerasenes was a Gentile place. And so it had lots of things that were unclean for Jews, like a herd of pigs. Pigs were unclean for Jews.

[13:09] And sadly, they also meet a man with an unclean spirit or demon. I'm not going to go down the rabbit hole of demons and stuff. I'm happy to talk about that with you later as well.

But it must've been a pretty scary scene. I mean, he lived naked among the tombs. And in Mark's gospel, he adds that when this man saw Jesus, he came hurtling towards Jesus.

I mean, can you imagine if I was one of the disciples and I was just about to step out of the boat, I'd be going, Oh, I'm back in. But notice Jesus's authority again. Verse 28.

When the man saw Jesus, he cried out and fell at Jesus's 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. For Jesus had commanded the unclean 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.

[14:15] Jesus asked him, what is your name? Legion. He replied, because many demons had gone into him and they begged Jesus repeatedly not to order them to go into the abyss.

A large herd of pigs was feeding there on the hillside. The demons begged Jesus to let them go into the pigs and he gave them permission. When the demons came out of the man, they went into the pigs and the herd rushed down the steep bank and into the lake and was drowned.

Do you notice all that language of authority again here? Man fell at Jesus's feet. Jesus commanded, the demons begged and Jesus gave permission.

Here's Jesus's authority over evil. And again, he uses it to save and restore, doesn't he? See verse 34. When those tending the pigs saw what had happened, they ran off and reported this in the town and countryside.

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's feet, dressed and in his right mind.

[15:27] And they were afraid. Those who had seen it told the people how the demon possessed man had been cured. And the word cured there is literally saved.

Jesus has saved him from evil and restored him to life. And did you see that picture of restoration here? He was once restless, naked and possessed, but now he is sitting, dressed in his right mind. Jesus saves and restores. But again, it provokes fear, doesn't it? At the end of verse 35, the people of the town were afraid.

You see, they had tried to control this man with guards and chains, make him sit in one place, but they couldn't. And then along comes Jesus.

And with just a word, he can. The demons knew this was because Jesus is the son of the most high God.

[16:32] But instead of asking who he is, like the disciples did in amazement, the people instead ask him to leave. Verse 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. Here is a wrong fear of Jesus. A fear that doesn't revere him, but rejects him.

Now it's hard to know why, after all, someone with such authority could come in handy, couldn't he? You know, the next time a demon possessed person comes along, don't worry about the change, just grab Jesus. But I suspect they feared what Jesus's authority might cost them next.

It had already cost them a whole herd of pigs, hadn't it? But for Jesus, the man is much more important than a herd of pigs. In fact, it's interesting that Luke tells us that it's the pig herders who run off to tell the town.

And if his authority has already cost them that, what might it cost them next? At least the possessed man kept to himself in solitary places and didn't bother them.

[17:50] It seems they preferred to have evil over there than have Jesus's authority that might cost them something here. It's a wrong fear of Jesus.

A fear that sees something in him, but fears what it could cost them. So ends up rejecting him. And I've seen people have this kind of response or fear before.

And people have started coming to church because they see something that's good about Jesus, because he is good. Jesus uses his authority to save us from evil and restore us to life.

And not from evil demons in us, but from sin and sin's judgment. For Jesus pays for our sin at the cross so that we can be saved from it.

And then restored to new life, new spiritual life with God now and the guarantee of new physical life later in the new creation. But the people who sense that they soon start to fear what his authority might cost them in their lives, like their priorities, their time, their reputation or social standing with their friends or family.

[19:07] And so they, like these townspeople, ask him to leave or prefer to be left alone. And if people don't want God to be part of their life, that's okay.

God will give them what they want. Just as Jesus gave these people what they wanted, he got in a boat and left. The only problem with that is he takes salvation with him.

And so these people have missed out on it. If you're tuning in online or here in the room and you think there's something about Jesus, don't give up your investigation.

Don't walk away from him or ask him to leave you alone. Because if Jesus goes, salvation goes with him. But the man who was saved, well, verse 38, the man from whom the demons had gone out begged to go with him.

But Jesus sent him away saying, 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.

[20:21] Here is a right response to being saved, isn't it? And I think this man shows a right fear of Jesus. Luke doesn't use the word fear here, but the man seems to sense who Jesus is.

Did you notice in verse 39, the man is told to tell what God has done for him. So the man goes and tells what Jesus has done for him.

He seems to equate the two. Perhaps he was conscious when the demons called out Jesus being, you know, son of the most high God. Either way, he seems to know Jesus is somehow God.

And the man certainly shows a right fear that reveres Jesus. Doesn't he? I mean, he begs to follow Jesus. How many of us want to follow Jesus so much that we beg to do it?

How many of us see Jesus so good that we can't wait to get up and follow him each day? But Jesus had other work for him to do.

[21 : 25] And so he obeys, doesn't he? Without fearing what Jesus's authority might cost him, he obeys and tells of all Jesus has done for him.

Which, by the way, is a great way to share the gospel. No one can argue with your story. It's yours, particularly in this postmodern world.

It's why testimonies are such a great, great way to share the good news about Jesus. But the point is, here is a right fear of Jesus. One that reveres him as God, the son, such that he joyfully obeys. Without fearing what Jesus's authority might cost him. But being willing to tell all that Jesus has done for him. Jesus is God, the son who has authority to save.

And so will you rightly fear him? Will you revere him as bigger than the disasters we face?

[22 : 28] Will you obey him joyfully in life? Without fearing what he might cost us. But being willing to tell all he has done for us.

Let's pray we would. Let's pray. Our gracious father, we thank you for showing us again who Jesus is.

We thank you that these events took place in history, that there were eyewitness accounts that they could be quizzed on, but they've been written down for us, reliably passed on, that we might know with certainty who Jesus is.

And so being reminded of that today, help us, we pray, to have a right fear of him. We ask it in his name. Amen.