

Come to Me

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[0 : 00] So there's lots of puzzling things about this passage, right? A lot of puzzling things. The pigs. Like, what's going on with the pigs?

And Jesus sleeping through a deadly storm, and the paralytic man has brought the Jesus, and Jesus says, I forgive you. Lots of puzzling things in the passage, but none of them should sort of distract us from the main thrust of the passage.

And the main thrust is this. It's all centered around the identity of Jesus. And what Jesus is doing through this passage is he's taking these people deeper into who he is.

He's taking them deeper into who he is. Now, why is that important at this point in Matthew's gospel? Well, context is very helpful to us. So you have these three miracles here, and they're sandwiched between two commitment passages.

What I mean by commitment passages is this. Immediately before this, Jesus says to the guy, let the dead bury the dead. Follow me, right? That's a commitment passage, a call for commitment, radical commitment.

[1 : 08] Immediately after this passage, Jesus calls Matthew the tax collector and says, follow me. So there's two commitment passages, and in the middle you have these three miracles.

Now, who can make a demand like this? Follow me. Who can ask that kind of thing of somebody? Who can make such an outrageous request of us?

Well, God can. Like, a God could do that, right? Yeah. And we know what's God asking because of these miracles. So let's dive into these stories a bit.

That's a bit of an overview. Let's dive into these stories a bit and unpack them. And you'll see, as we unpack them, there's basically these three miracles, which are quite unusual miracles, and they're quite wild. There's the storm, and then there's the people that want to kick Jesus out, and there's the crazy demoniac people, and the paralytic.

That's the story in other Gospels where they undo the roof of the house and lower them. It's all quite wild stories. But they each share two significant elements, these miracles. The first element is God is demonstrating, or Jesus is demonstrating God-like behavior.

[2 : 22] Jesus is doing things that only God should be able to do. And the second thing, the second thing is people failing to recognize that. They're often just amazed or perplexed, or they reject him.

You could say it like this. Jesus takes people deeper into who he is, and most people miss it. So he's exposing who he is through these miracles, and he's exposing our hearts as well through these responses.

So first, let's look at these two elements, the God-like behavior in all of the stories. All right, so Jesus shows us through basically his authority. Now, you remember in the previous miracles, we had just a couple of weeks ago, they were healing miracles.

These are not healing miracles, but they equally show his authority, but in three different spheres. First, his authority over nature, then his authority over evil, and then his authority to forgive.

So God-like behavior, God-like behavior. First, in the storms. You have Jesus is in a boat, he's asleep, storm comes up, the disciples are freaking out, and it must have been a pretty, a bit of a doozy of a storm, because some of these disciples were fishermen, we know this, and they are freaking out.

[3 : 30] So it must have been a pretty serious sort of situation here. They think they're going to die. They wake Jesus up, Jesus rebukes the wind, and the storm is over with just a word.

I like to play golf, and I very rarely get to play it nowadays. But when you're a golfer, what you do is you often talk to the wind.

So you'll hit a shot, you'll hit a shot, and it's not going where you want, and you'll start demanding the wind take the ball where you want it to go. So I've done that, you know, probably 500 times, and at this point, nothing.

At this point, I haven't got a result. We can't command the wind, right? I mean, that's just a... We know that. But God commands the wind.

We just talked about it in our psalm. The psalm that we read out together is like people in a boat, and it's a storm, and it's terrible, and these people, they think they're going to die, and they call on God, and he stills the storm.

[4 : 30] Controlling the weather, that's God-like behavior, isn't it? The demon-possessed men. I want to begin with a little aside about the demon-possessed men.

I want to caution you against thinking this, that this is pre-scientific thinking, that of course these men weren't demon-possessed, they were just really mentally unwell.

Matthew, I mean, it's tempting to think that, right, because we're moderns, but Matthew doesn't let us think that. I mean, in Matthew 4, if you went back a few chapters, there's this description of Jesus healing all these people, and with a number of different problems, and he makes a distinction between people who have things wrong with their bodies, and people who have things wrong with their brains, and also people who have evil problems.

The New Testament doesn't attribute all sickness to evil. It attributes sickness to sickness, and it attributes evil to evil.

And also in the story, we see Matthew makes a point of letting us know that Jesus is not talking to the men, the hosts, you know, that's a terrible way of talking about it, but the hosts. In fact, the men in the story, the possessed men, are really furniture.

[5 : 51] They're just in the background. Jesus talks to demons, and they respond. God has helpers. He has agents, and so does the devil, and these men are possessed by them.

And the goal of these demons is to kill. It is to destroy. It is to destroy the lives of the people they enter. And how do we know that's the goal? This is where the whole pig story comes in.

This is why this is included. Of all of the stories that Matthew could have included, all these amazing miracles, he includes this particular one because it tells us something very important. That the goal of the demonic is to destroy.

The evil spirits, they recognize Jesus, and they say to him, it's really, it's interesting. They say in verse 29, basically they say to him, you've come too early. You've come too early, Jesus.

See, they know that one day Jesus will come and he judge, and he will ruin them. The issue really here is a timing issue. They think it's too early. So they beg, they say, Jesus, we don't want to be outside of something.

[6 : 54] Can you just chuck us into those pigs? And Jesus does that. Now why does he do that? Why does he agree to this?

You know, the pigs rush off. They run and they find a cliff, and they jump off the cliff, and they all die. Jesus allows the demons to enter these pigs to show us that the intention of the evil one is destruction.

If Jesus had not interfered, the demons would have done to the man what they did to the pigs. They would have destroyed these people. Okay, now back to the point, the main point.

Jesus is confronted by evil, this wild situation. He's in an unclean part of the Middle East.

He is, these demon-possessed men living in tombs, it's all unclean and evil and horrible, and all he has to say to them is go. Go.

[8 : 01] One word, go. And we sung about this. I love that we sung this song at the start. The first hymn we sung, which is a very old hymn, a mighty fortress is our God. The second or third cross there.

The prince of darkness grim, we tremble not for him. His rage we can endure, for lo, his doom is sure. One little word shall fell him. One word.

Jesus says go. See, Jesus has complete authority over nature, over the storm. He has complete authority over evil. This is God-like behavior. There's no rites, there's no incantations, there's no amulets, there's no, it's just a word, go.

Now the final demonstration of his authority is the healing of the paralytic. And it's interesting, the paralytic is brought to Jesus and Jesus says, your sins are forgiven. And he's probably thinking, the legs, the legs, the legs, it's the legs.

Everyone's thinking, it's the legs, it's the legs. That's the big problem here. And he says, no, your sins are forgiven. And he goes on to heal the man, which is wonderful enough. But the man's biggest problem was his standing before God.

[9 : 04] And Jesus says, take heart, which is such a wonderful thing to hear, isn't it? And I want you to hear that tonight if you came into the service carrying shame, shame. If that is on you tonight, I want you to hear these words, take heart.

Your sins are forgiven. And notice Jesus doesn't say, God forgives you. Jesus assumes the right to forgive. And only God can do that. Which is why the religious leaders call him a blasphemer.

So Jesus has authority, authority over nature. He has authority over evil. He has the authority to forgive. At the start, I said there's two elements, right?

There's these two elements through all of these stories. The first one is Jesus demonstrating his God likeness. We've just talked about that. The second shared element is people failing to recognize it. They miss it.

So we have the storm. Jesus' disciples, they're begging Jesus to save him from the storm. And they believe Jesus could do these amazing things, that he was special, but they didn't take it far enough.

[10 : 06] And this is a problem for Christians sometimes, isn't it? We don't take Jesus far enough. Anyway, they didn't take him far enough, which is why they say in verse 27, who is this guy? Who is he?

Who's this guy? They knew enough already, though. That's the thing, I think. They knew enough. They should have realized God was not going to let Jesus die in a boat on a lake en route to the cross.

This is why Jesus could sleep. It wasn't like that he was, I'm sure he was really, really tired, but the big reason he could sleep is that he knew it wasn't his time. He had stuff to do.

Now, if the disciples have understood that, they would have realized, we don't need to wake him up. We're not in any danger. But they didn't get it. See, they didn't take who Jesus was far enough.

Okay, the demon possessed.

Now, we don't know how the men responded because they're not the focus of that story. We said they're kind of this furniture in the background. But we do hear about the townspeople, and it's so bizarre. They say, Jesus, please leave us alone.

[11 : 19] So these folks, they exercise, and they go, and they tell everyone what happens. And all the town folks come to meet Jesus, and they beg Jesus.

They beg him, please leave. Verse 34, that begged word, it's the same word that the demons use, to beg. They beg Jesus. The demons beg Jesus, put us in the pigs.

They beg, they both beg. Please, Jesus, just get out of here. Why is that? Why weren't they throwing a party? These crazy men were living in tombs, which were like natural kind of caves where you'd bury people.

And they were restored. Why wasn't everyone celebrating, throwing a party? Why did they want Jesus gone? Well, they wanted Jesus gone because pigs cost money, and they couldn't get past thinking about all the money they'd lost.

So the Messiah turns out to this podunk town, demonstrates he is God, and all I could think about was money. Money had such a grip on them.

[12 : 35] There was room for one God in their life, and it was gold. Now the religious leaders, we've already talked about them, but this is right at the end, the paralytic. You know, Jesus does this amazing thing, and all they're doing is kind of, they just can't get past their own religion.

They can't get past, they cannot bring themselves to believe who Jesus is. They're so tied up in the law and the rules to see that salvation has arrived. I mean, they should have been the first people to recognize Jesus.

They're the religious experts. They've got the texts. things should have been falling into place for them, you know? And yet they get Jesus the most wrong.

They call Jesus a blasphemer, that Jesus is anti-God. And then there's the crowd, the crowd in verse 8 of the next chapter.

They're afraid and they praise God, but they say, ooh, look at this man. This is a man, he's a pretty amazing man. So Jesus fronts up with his divinity, and nobody gets him.

[13 : 43] The responses are at best inadequate and at worst completely wrong. So let's pull this together. Through these stories, what do we learn?

Jesus, this is just lovely, Jesus is more powerful than anything that can unravel us. Jesus is more powerful than anything that wants to bind us up.

He has authority over it all. Evil, unforgiveness, sickness. But it's not good enough just to believe that. Because the disciples believed he could do miracles, that's why they woke Jesus up.

They thought he can get us out of the storm. This podunk town, they saw him do a miracle and they asked him to leave. The scribes, they saw him do a miracle, they believed he could do these things, and what did they? They said he hated God.

So we can't just look at this and we can't just be impressed by the capacity of Jesus. We had people that lived downstairs from us one day and she had this sort of, these weird, evil occurrences and she wanted to come down and she says, I know you're a holy man.

[14 : 54] It's the words, I know you're a holy man and I want you to pray, you know, Jesus over us or something. You know, she believed, but she wasn't submitting her life to Jesus. She believed he could do some stuff, but wasn't submitting her life to him.

So we must ask ourselves, what are these stories, what are they trying to say to us? Because it's not just saying to us Jesus can do great things, all right? What do they mean? They mean Jesus is Lord of all. That's what it means.

Jesus is Lord of all and his goal is to restore the world, restore creation, cast out evil. Heal the sick. He wants to destroy all the things that bind us. He wants to put the world completely under his control, his good control. That's what a Messiah does and it's wonderful. We must respond rightly to that.

We must take who he is very seriously. We must ask ourselves, what does it mean for us? And it means this. It means this person has the right to say, follow me. It means that Jesus has the right to say, follow me and it means we walk away from things that would stop us.

[16 : 05] We walk away from things that we might really like and make us feel good. He has the right to do that. Say, follow me into this adventure. Throw everything in with me.

He can make that kind of outrageous demand of our life because he's the Lord of all. Our folks, they responded poorly.

Their responses were inadequate. They didn't fully get who he was but we do. We do know who he is. What's our excuse? He's the Lord of all.

We can trust him with everything. We can. He deserves our trust because of what he's done and who he is. Amen.