

Luke's Gospel: Chapter 8

The power of Jesus' word...

Women accompanying Jesus (Luke 8 v 1 to 3)

“And also some women...” (v 2) – why does Luke mention the women who served Jesus? Because in that day Rabbis refused to teach women, and regarded them as inferior. “And many others, who provided for them out of their means” (v 3) – here we see the humility of Jesus, who made himself dependent on others.

The parable of the sower and the purpose of the parables (Luke 8 v 4 to 15)

Jesus describes something his listeners are familiar with: a farmer casting seed on the ground, and the seed falling on different types of soil. The seed fell on three areas without success: on the path, on rocky ground, and on thorny ground, but some of the seed fell on good ground. This should be called the ‘parable of the soils’ – the difference is never the seed, but the kind of soil it lands on...

- Who is the sower? What is the seed? Who are the birds (v 5)? Why did the same seed produce such different results? According to verses 9 and 10 (including the quotation from Isaiah 6 v 9, 10), what was the primary reason why Jesus used parables? What are the “secrets of the kingdom of God” (v 10)?

“He who has ears to hear let him hear” (v 8) – this is not a call for all to listen, but a call for those who are spiritually sensitive to take note: (a) the path – without understanding, birds steal the seed away; (b) rocky ground – without root, fail under pressure; (c) among thorns – entangled in the cares of the world; (d) good soil – hearing and understanding lead to bearing much ‘fruit’: “As for that in the good soil, they are those who, hearing the word, hold it fast in an honest and good heart, and bear fruit with patience” (v 15).

A lamp under a jar (Luke 8 v 16 to 18)

- How does the illustration of the lamp help us to understand more clearly the purpose of the parables?

If you have the truth of God, you have a responsibility to spread that truth in whatever way God gives you opportunity. God didn't light your lamp so that it would be hidden. When we hear the word, we become accountable; so we must take care how we hear. If we want to hear more from God, we must obey what we have already heard...

Jesus' mother and brothers (Luke 8 v 19 to 20)

- Jesus' mother and brothers came to him because they thought he was out of his mind (see Mark 3 v 20, 21). How do you think this made Jesus feel? Did Jesus despise his earthly family? How can we become members of God's true family? What are the privileges of being his family members?

Jesus calms a storm (Luke 8 v 22 to 25)

The Sea of Galilee is well known for its sudden, violent storms: the severity of this storm is evidenced by the fact that the disciples (many of whom were experienced fishermen) were terrified (Mark 4 v 39, 40).

- Why do you think the disciples were put in this place of danger? The disciples were naturally afraid of the storm, and disturbed that Jesus seemed not to be concerned about their drowning. Once Jesus calmed the storm, they were still terrified. How did their fear after the storm differ from their previous fears?

[MORE OVER...]

Jesus heals a man with a demon (Luke 8 v 26 to 39)

“For a long time... he had not lived in a house but among the tombs... he was... bound with chains and shackles, but he would break the bonds and be driven by the demon into the desert” (v 28, 29) – this passage contains the most detailed description of a demon possessed man in the Bible. It is the classic profile of demonic possession: the effect was to cause this man to live like a wild animal.

- What did the demons know about Jesus? What did they understand about their destiny? Why do you think Jesus allowed the exorcised demons to enter and destroy the (2,000) pigs?
- What does this episode tell us about the destructive intentions and power of demons? What does it tell us about the value Jesus places on a human life? But wasn't it unfair on the herdsmen who owned the pigs? What do these verses tell us about the Gerasene people's priorities?
- Why did Jesus not allow the healed man to stay with him, but instead sent him away (v 38)?

“They begged him not to command them to depart into the abyss” (v 31) – the demons did not want to be imprisoned in the abyss, which is the “bottomless pit” described in Revelation 9 v 11, a kind of ‘holding cell’ for demonic spirits. “The demons came out of the man and entered the pigs” (v 33) – this was appropriate, as pigs are non-kosher animals. “The herd rushed down the steep bank into the lake and drowned” (v 33) – the destructive nature of the demons is shown by their effect on the pigs: they are like their leader, Satan, whose desire is to steal, to kill, and to destroy (John 10 v 10). “The man... begged that he might be with him, but Jesus sent him away” (v 38) – Jesus would not allow the man to follow him, because he had a more important ministry with his own family and community. This man had a great message to tell: “how much Jesus had done for him” (v 39). This is a gospel everyone should be able to preach.

Jesus heals a woman and Jairus' daughter (Luke 8 v 40 to 56)

“And falling at Jesus' feet, he implored him to come to his house” (v 41) – when the centurion came to Jesus in a similar situation (Luke 7 v 1 to 10), Jesus didn't even go to the centurion's house to heal the servant: he simply pronounced him healed from a distance. Jesus did not demand that Jairus show the same faith as the centurion: he went to Jairus' house (v 42). Jesus responds to the faith that we have.

- These two stories are woven together. How did the woman's motives for following Jesus differ from those of the other people crowding around? Why did Jesus make the woman publicly admit what she had done? Why do you think she wanted to go unnoticed?

“A woman who had had a discharge of blood for twelve years” (v 43) – this woman was in a desperate condition. Her bleeding made her ceremonially and socially unclean, and this would be quite a burden to live under for 12 years. According to the Jewish ideas of the time, if this woman touched anyone, she imparted her uncleanness to them, an uncleanness that would not allow them to take part in any aspect of Israel's worship. Luke the physician also tells us that she had spent all her living on physicians (v 43) – he knew how doctor's bills could take all that you had!

- What do you think Jairus' reaction would have been to the delay caused by the woman? What do you think Jairus felt when he was told that his daughter was not dead but asleep?

“All were weeping and mourning for her” (v 52) – in that day, it was customary to hire professional mourners to add to the atmosphere of grief and pain. But the professional mourners could only grieve superficially. They quickly turned from weeping to scornful laughter (v 53). “But taking her by the hand he called, saying, ‘Child, arise’” (v 54) – Jesus, with the authority of God, speaks to the girl as if she were alive, because God “gives life to the dead and calls into existence the things that do not exist” (Romans 4 v 17), and she is raised from the dead. Jesus didn't fail Jairus, and he didn't fail the woman who needed healing. But in ministering to both, he stretched Jairus' faith, causing it to grow. Sometimes our faith is stretched, and we need to pray that God will use such times to help *our* faith and love to grow strong...