



THE GOSPEL OF
Luke

SESSION OBJECTIVE: LUKE 8:22-56

To understand how Jesus' healing ministry was for *all* of creation.

The Way Out

There is a ton of great dialogue in Aaron Sorkin's serial political drama *The West Wing*. There is a great scene where the White House chief of staff Leo McGarry (played by John Spencer) reaches out to his deputy, Josh Lyman (played by Bradley Whitford), who is struggling with PTSD. He tells him a somewhat well-known parable of sorts about a man in a hole. He says, "This guy's walking down the street when he falls down a hole. The walls are so steep he can't get out. A doctor passes by, and the guy shouts up, 'Hey, you! Can you help me out?' The doctor writes a prescription and throws it down in the hole and moves on. Then a priest comes along, and the guy shouts, 'Father, I'm down in this hole. Can you help me out?' The priest writes out a prayer, throws it down in the hole, and moves on. Then a friend walks by. 'Hey, Joe, it's me! Can you help me out?' And the friend *jumps in the hole*. Our guy says, 'Are you stupid? Now we're both down here.' And the friend says, 'Yeah, but I've been down here before, and I know the way out.'"

Whether it is sickness, physical malady, demonic possession, or something else, Jesus continuously demonstrates that He "knows the way out" through His supernatural healing ministry. Luke pays careful attention to many of these encounters, and several are lumped together in Luke 8:22-56. Jesus' healing ministry is important because it not only confirms He is the coming Messiah as predicted by the prophet Isaiah (See: Isaiah 29, 35, and 61), but it also demonstrates that He is more than merely a rabbi, but the perfect, Divine Son of God. Who else can heal the weather? Who can cast demons away? Who can heal sickness and death? Only God. Well, and Jesus... because Jesus *is* God.

Healing Escapades

Beginning in verse 22, Luke records how Jesus goes on a sort of healing rampage. Below is a breakdown of each of the instances recorded, and how they are significant.

A STORM (VS.22-25)

The first “healing” in this passage is not of a person but creation. Jesus gets into a boat with His disciples and falls asleep (Lk. 8:22-23). While asleep, a storm developed and began to sink their boat, threatening their lives. Upon awaking Jesus, He “rebuked the wind and the raging waves, and they ceased and there was calm (Lk. 8:24), and then rebuked them for not rightly recognizing Jesus’ authority over such a threat. How is this a “healing?” Creation is fractured as a result of sin and is awaiting restoration like the rest of us: “For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God. For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now.” Just as people are broken and riddled with sickness and death, so is creation. The only person who can calm the raging sea and the violent storm is God Himself (Ps. 89:9; 107:28-29). Jesus’ healing of the storm is a clear indicator of His Divinity.

AN EXORCISM (VS.26-39)

The next healing is the so-called *Gerasene Demoniac*. He had been possessed by “many demons” (Lk. 8:30) and relegated to the cemetery away from society (Lk. 8:27). There are a couple of interesting points to be made in this story. Jesus is often not recognized throughout His ministry by the Jews, but is widely recognized by the Gentiles and also the demons. This one called himself “Legion” (Lk. 8:30) and immediately knew who Jesus was when He arrived (Lk. 8:28). The other interesting detail that should not be missed is that the demon asks Jesus for mercy (Lk. 8:31) and Jesus gave it (Lk. 8:32-33). It’s a strange thing to think about Jesus being merciful even to demons, but God’s mercy is more than we can imagine. It doesn’t mean the demons are forgiven, but relieved of the immediate consequences they will soon face. The man, now free of demonic possession, is told by Jesus to “Return to your home, and declare how much God has done for you” (Lk. 8:39). The man, once possessed by demons, becomes an evangelist after being healed.

AN UNCLEAN WOMAN

Jesus is then beckoned by a “ruler of the synagogue,” named “Jairus” (Lk. 8:40-41). Jairus “had an only daughter, about twelve years of age, and she was dying” (Lk. 8:42). Jesus began to make His way towards Jairus’ home, but the people “pressed around Him” (Lk. 8:42b). Luke introduces another woman in need of healing, who “had a discharge of blood for twelve years, and though she had spent all her living on physicians, she could not be healed by anyone” (Lk. 8:43). Given this discharge of blood, the woman would have been unclean according to Leviticus 15:25-30. In a strange turn of events, she reaches out and touches Jesus and is almost unintentionally healed. Jesus asks in verse 45, “Who was it that touched me?” The idea in this passage is that in the same way blood flows continuously from the woman’s body, grace flows from Jesus’ body. Her faith in who He is moves her to simply touch Him, believing that is all it will take, and she is right; she is instantly healed. Her healing is not significant for only physical reasons. Her unclean state would have prevented her from having contact with other people. It was an isolating malady, and because of Jesus’ healing power, there are no more barriers in her life.

A RESURRECTION

Luke then brings us back to the objective of Jairus’ daughter. While all of the commotion with the bleeding woman unfolded, someone from Jairus’ house came and said, “Your daughter is dead; do not trouble the

Teacher anymore” (Lk. 8:49). Jesus responds to this statement by connecting the concepts of fear and belief together (Lk. 8:50). There is a principle here: *The more one believes in the promises of God, the less one will succumb to fear.* If one believes in the ultimate promises is God, resurrection, then even death is not a threat. Jesus went into the house along with “Peter, John, and James, and the father and mother of the child” (Lk. 8:51). As those who loved the now deceased little girl were mourning, Jesus responded: “Do not weep, for she is not dead but sleeping.” In the New Testament, because of the promise of eternal life, death is always referred to as sleep for Christians. In this instance, the little girl is obviously not a Christian (at least not yet), but she still experiences the same promise of resurrection that all believers will one day experience, hence she is only sleeping and is about to awake. The response to Jesus saying she is sleeping is met with laughs (Lk. 8:53), but those laughs are soon turned into awe. Jesus says simply, “Child, arise” (Lk. 8:54). She immediately got up, and began to eat food. Jesus, in usual form, “charged them to tell no one what had happened” (Lk. 8:56), knowing that His time was not yet at hand.

Believe

Often passages like these are taught as if personal belief is the acting agent necessary for a miracle to happen, as if God were limited by our ability to believe what He can and cannot do. This is not correct at all. The point of faith and belief in these passages in conjunction with the miracle healings is to connect belief in God with belief in *Jesus*, because *Jesus is God*. Everything Jesus does in Luke 8:22-56 is only possible if God is the One doing it. Jesus is demonstrating His claim to deity by doing that which only God can do. It is not that God is limited by our belief, but that we are limited in rightly making sense of the world around us without Christ at the center of it all.

What About Now?

One of the big takeaways from this passage is the *deity of Christ*. Jesus is God and He so demonstrates this reality by doing that which only God can do. Only God can control the weather. Only God has dominion over demons. Only God can stop biological breakdowns from happening. Only God can bring life forth from death. Yet, Jesus does all of these things. Beyond that, this passage reminds us of the profound mercy that Jesus possesses. If Jesus can show mercy to demons, we should be able to show mercy to anyone. Third, mercy does not necessarily entail forgiveness. Jesus shows mercy to the demons, but that does not mean they have received forgiveness. This means that we can be merciful to those who are unrepentant and trust God to execute the appropriate judgment in His timing.

Study Questions

Day One

1. Read Luke 8:22-23. Why were Jesus and His disciples on a boat? What happened while they were on the boat?

2. Read Luke 8:24-25. How did the disciples respond? How did Jesus respond? What did Jesus say to them afterwards? What did they think of Him afterwards?

Day Two

1. Read Luke 8:26-29. Where did they sail next? Who did Jesus meet upon His arrival? What was significant about this man? Where had this man been living? When the man saw Jesus, what did he say? What did Jesus do when He saw the man?
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2. Read Luke 8:30-33. What did Jesus ask the man? What was the demons' response? What did they beg Jesus to not do? Did Jesus have mercy on them? What did He do with them instead?
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Day Three

1. Read Luke 8:34-39. Who reported what they saw? What did the people find when they came to see the man? How did the people respond to Jesus? What did Jesus tell the man to do?
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2. Read Luke 8:40-48. Who was Jesus asked to heal in this passage? What happened while He was on His way to heal her? What did Jesus say to the woman?
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Day Four

1. Read Luke 8:49-51. What happened to Jairus' daughter? What did Jesus say in response to this?
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2. Read Luke 8:52-56. What did Jesus say to calm the people with Him? What did He do with the little girl? What was the general response from the people who saw it? What did Jesus ask them to not do?
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Week 32 Discussion: Mercy

One of the most shocking turn of events in this passage happens when Jesus shows mercy to the demons. They beg Him not to send them back to the abyss and He does not. This speaks to two realities: 1. Hell is so terrible, even the demons beg to not be sent back there. 2. Jesus is so merciful, even the demons are beneficiaries of it. If Jesus can show mercy to demons, we can show mercy to anyone. Talk as a group about the challenges of showing mercy to those you don't believe deserve it and how actually no one deserves it.

1. Icebreaker: Talk about a time when another person showed you mercy when you didn't deserve it.
2. Would you describe yourself as "merciful?" Why or why not?
3. Should our mercy be conditional? In other words, should we withhold mercy until people deserve it?
4. In your opinion, how are mercy and grace connected?
5. Is mercy a sign of weakness or strength? Why?

6. How can the church demonstrate the mercy of God in practical ways on a weekly basis?

Takeaways:

1. Jesus healed the weather, a demon-possessed man, a sick woman, and a dead girl.
2. Jesus demonstrated power that belongs to God and Him alone to show that He is God.