

Don't Be Afraid; Just Believe (Luke 8:26-56)

We are studying the gospel of Luke. Last time, we have studied the first half of Chapter 8.

Jesus said to his disciples, "Let's go over to the other side of the lake." They set out following Jesus' word.

But as they sailed, a squall came down on the lake, the boat was being swamped, and they were in great danger. They said to Jesus, "Master, Master, we are going to drown!"

Jesus first quieted the winds and the water. And He said to his disciples, "Where is your faith?"

They believed Jesus, but they only knew part of Jesus. Jesus is much more powerful, and much greater than they knew He was. Because they heard Jesus' Word and did it, they experienced His amazing greatness. Because they obeyed the Word of God by faith, their faith grew once again.

"Who is this? For He commands even the winds and water, and they obey Him!" With this thought in mind, they arrived at the other side of the lake. And they continued to follow Jesus.

Today we will learn what happened after that in the latter half of Luke chapter 8. The title of the message is "Don't be afraid; just believe."

1. Loneliness in the graveyard, loneliness in the town

27-28

²⁷ 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. ²⁸ When he saw Jesus, he cried out and fell at his 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!"

As he can speak like this, we can see that he is not completely out of his mind. He is possessed by demon and sometimes he could not control himself. He must have been very sad about himself, and suffered much because of that.

At times, he may have shared his honest feelings with someone. But

there may not have been anybody who bothered with him. They may have thought he was weird and avoided him. He was lonely.

And he chose to live in the graveyard. He might have felt he would rather live in the graveyard than among people in the town. He chose to stay in the place for the dead. He lost his dignity as human being.

29

²⁹ For Jesus had commanded the evil 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.

He has been chained hand and foot and kept under guard many times. That was really painful experiences for him. How much was he feeling hurt and tired after such experiences, not just once but many times?!

He didn't want to suffer any more. It is just my imagination, but when Jesus commanded the evil spirit to come out of the man, the evil spirit inside him might have started to act violently. He might have suffered again.

He must have never thought he would ever be completely free from the evil spirit. Then, it would have been easier for him to be left alone than to arouse the evil spirit and suffer.

30-32

³⁰ Jesus asked him, "What is your name?" ³¹ "Legion," he replied, because many demons had gone into him. And they begged him repeatedly not to order them to go into the Abyss. ³² A large herd of pigs was feeding there on the hillside. The demons begged Jesus to let them go into them, and he gave them permission.

Luke distinguishes the man's words and the evil spirits' words.

The man called himself "legion". He knew that there were many demons in him. And that became his identity.

I feel his despair in the fact that he called himself "legion". In order to accept his hopeless situation, he tried to persuade himself, saying, "This is me, I was destined to live like this." But somewhere in his heart, he knew that that is not real him. Trying to deny this thought, he calls himself "legion".

33-36

³³ When the demons came out of the man, they went into the pigs, and the herd rushed down the steep bank into the lake and was drowned. ³⁴ When those tending the pigs saw what had happened, they ran off and reported this in the town and countryside, ³⁵ 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' feet, dressed and in his right mind; and they were afraid. ³⁶ Those who had seen it told the people how the demon-possessed man had been cured.

The man recovered his dignity as a human being. He recovered his true self. He started to show God's glory where he was supposed to live as he was created in the image of God. That is Salvation through Jesus. Salvation is not simply liberation from evil spirits. It is not just forgiveness of sins or receiving a ticket to heaven. Salvation through Jesus is the recovery of the image of God.

38-39

³⁸ The man from whom the demons had gone out begged to go with him, but Jesus sent him away, saying, ³⁹ "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.

After he was saved by Jesus, he went home. And he told people about Jesus. What kind of people were they?

They were the people who rejected Jesus. They asked Jesus to leave from them. They didn't rejoice when they saw the man in his right mind after released from demons. Instead, they were afraid.

Will they gladly receive what the man says to them? What do you think? They will most likely reject him, just as they had rejected Jesus.

Before, he was lonely living in the graveyard. Now that he was saved, he is lonely in the town. Before, many demons lived inside of him. Now, the Holy Spirit lives in him, and the Holy Spirit encourages and comforts him and gives him strength and life.

2. A woman in the crowd

40-45

⁴⁰ Now when Jesus returned, a crowd welcomed him, for they were all expecting him. ⁴¹ Then a man named Jairus, a ruler of the synagogue, came and fell at Jesus' feet, pleading with him to come to his house ⁴² because his only daughter, a girl of about twelve, was dying. ⁴³ As Jesus was on his way, the crowds almost crushed him. And a woman was there who had been subject to bleeding for twelve years, but no one could heal her. ⁴⁴ She came up behind him and touched the edge of his cloak, and immediately her bleeding stopped. ⁴⁵ "Who touched me?" Jesus asked. When they all denied it, Peter said, "Master, the people are crowding and pressing against you."

People are crowding and pressing against Jesus, almost crushed him, as he was going his way. There must have been many people who physically touched Jesus.

46

⁴⁶ But Jesus said, "Someone touched me; I know that power has gone out from me."

Many people had touched him, but Jesus felt power had gone out from him only when this woman touched him.

47

⁴⁷ Then the woman, seeing that she could not go unnoticed, came trembling and fell at his feet. In the presence of all the people, she told why she had touched him and how she had been instantly healed.

She came out of the crowd, trembling. She felt fear of God.

When we look at Numbers 5:2, we can see that she was isolated socially. She supposed to not be in the crowd.

If she was afraid of men, she could have secretly touched Jesus in the crowd, received healing, gone home and pretended as if she was suddenly healed somehow.

But she feared Jesus more than men. Her attitude shows that she acknowledged Jesus' authority, which is much higher than men's. She

completely surrendered to him.

48

⁴⁸ Then he said to her, "Daughter, your faith has healed you. Go in peace."

Jesus accepted her as she was, gave her salvation, sent her off in peace.

Are we like this woman? Or are we like the crowd?

Are you just concerned about your need? And when your problems are solved, will you forget about Jesus? Or do you worship Jesus as your God, and live your life, surrendering to him?

Do you decide what you do, fearing men and how they think? Or do you fear God and follow Jesus' word, even though you have to pay the cost?

Do you follow the crowd, and hide yourself in the crowd? Do you evaluate yourself according to other people's opinions? Or do you evaluate yourself according to the Word of God, remain in Jesus' word and in peace that comes from God?

3. Preparation for being sent

We looked at two incidents, a man in loneliness and a woman in the crowd. Luke recorded them in a context. Let's look at the context.

8:1

¹ After this, Jesus traveled about from one town and village to another, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom of God. The Twelve were with him,

9:1-2

¹ When Jesus had called the Twelve together, he gave them power and authority to drive out all demons and to cure diseases, ² and he sent them out to preach the kingdom of God and to heal the sick.

That is, chapter 8 is about preparation before sending the disciples out. What about the people whom they were sent out to?

V.37 talks about people in Gadara.¹ They heard how the man who used to be possessed by demons was saved. And they asked Jesus to leave.

V.40 talks about people in Galilee. They waited and welcomed Jesus. They crowded and pressed against Jesus. But when they heard Jesus' word, they laughed at him (v.53).

The disciples were about to be sent to those kinds of people.

It is a bit of digression but I'd like to look at. Do v.39 and v.56 contradict to each other? Why did Jesus stop them to tell what had happened in v.56?

39

³⁹ "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.

The man is a lonely witness for Christ in the town. Jesus sent him out, encouraging him to keep witnessing even though people in the town might misunderstand him or reject him.

52-56

⁵² Meanwhile, all the people were wailing and mourning for her. "Stop wailing," Jesus said. "She is not dead but asleep." ⁵³ They laughed at him, knowing that she was dead. ⁵⁴ But he took her by the hand and said, "My child, get up!" ⁵⁵ Her spirit returned, and at once she stood up. Then Jesus told them to give her something to eat. ⁵⁶ Her parents were astonished, but he ordered them not to tell anyone what had happened.

Let's think about this situation. It starts from v.40.

40

⁴⁰ Now when Jesus returned, a crowd welcomed him, for they were all expecting him.

The crowd welcomed Jesus. Why did they welcome him?

¹ Gadara was one of the Decapolis, or "Ten Cities," that were originally inhabited primarily by Greek people who settled in the region after the time of Alexander the Great's conquest. (Wayne Blank) <http://www.keyway.ca/htm2001/20010621.htm>

This is a hint.

John 2:23-25

²³ Now while he was in Jerusalem at the Passover Feast, many people saw the miraculous signs he was doing and believed in his name. ²⁴ But Jesus would not entrust himself to them, for he knew all men. ²⁵ He did not need man's testimony about man, for he knew what was in a man.

Jesus would not entrust himself to them, for he knew all men and what was in a man. What was in a man? What was the motivation to come to Jesus?

John 6:2, 15, 26

² and a great crowd of people followed him because they saw the miraculous signs he had performed on the sick.

¹⁵ Jesus, knowing that they intended to come and make him king by force, withdrew again to a mountain by himself.

²⁶ Jesus answered, "I tell you the truth, you are looking for me, not because you saw miraculous signs but because you ate the loaves and had your fill.

That is, people welcomed Jesus, for they were expecting "free food, free healing, free entertainment – miracle show". Jesus admonished their motives. He was not pleased with them.

Now we go back to cp. 8. The crowd pressed against Jesus. Think about it. If the parents told people about the recovery of their daughter's life, Jesus' miracle, the people would even more crowd around Jesus for wrong motives. Now they already almost crashed him. If the parents told about his miracle, it would be like throwing fuel on the fire.

Jesus was not pleased that people would come to him for "free food, free healing, free entertainment – miracle show". So, he didn't allow them to tell others.

Let's go back to the main thread of the story.

The disciple were about to be sent to people who reject Jesus even when they see the work of his salvation, people who seek Jesus with wrong

motives, people who looked as if they welcomed him, but actually didn't acknowledge his authority as God, and laughed at him.

Before sending his disciples to people like that, Jesus prepared them for the mission. Besides hearing and driving out demons by the name of Jesus, what did they learn?

(1) Jesus is God.

In v.39, it is said, "how much God has done for you." What actually happened for him?

Jesus commanded the demons to come out of the man. He was set free from the demons and recovered his humanity. What Jesus did for him is how much God has done for him. That is, Jesus is God.

(2) Sometimes "salvation" is taken for negative-thing.

When Jesus was about to drive out the evil spirit from the man, he thought he would be tortured (v.28).

When we share the gospel, salvation, forgiveness of sins, freedom from the rule of sin or evil spirits, some people just think Jesus troubles their life.

This is the lesson. Don't be discouraged, or surprised when people respond negatively. That is quite normal. But Jesus can release them from their old way of thinking, change them and make them new.

(3) Even when people see miracles, they don't necessarily understand God.

Even when people see Jesus drive out demons and a man recover his right mind, they will not necessarily be happy. Actually, they asked Jesus to leave them. Even when people see miracles, they don't necessarily understand God, they don't necessarily come to Jesus. What is important is keep testifying for Jesus.

(4) Jesus' focus is to grow true worshippers.

Jesus stopped among the crowd because of one woman. He is not that excited because the large crowd gathered around him. He doesn't care so much about numbers.

You may be able to gather large crowd, it may seem quite exciting at first, but they may ridicule Jesus, they may laugh at you. But don't be discouraged!

Focus on to grow true worshippers and witnesses of Christ.

(5) Don't be afraid. Just believe.

We have faith in Jesus. He is God who rules nature, evil spirits and life. We are entrusted with the authority and power in the name of the Lord. To proclaim the kingdom of God, that is not just talk about it with words, but to use the name of Jesus and to do things in the name, and to bring about the reality of the kingdom of God in our daily life. He is with us. Don't be afraid. Just believe.