

Peace and Healing

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Preacher: Derek Lamont

[0 : 00] Look back at the passage in Luke's Gospel chapter today. James last week looked at the parable of the sword there at the beginning and we're going to look at that big section, which means we're just going to kind of scan our way through it quickly and learn what is happening.

Because for those of you who are visiting here today in our Sunday morning services, we're looking through Luke, we're looking right through the Gospel of Luke, and learning about Jesus Christ and his message and his character and the picture that's been built up by his disciple here, by Dr Luke, as he writes down for us here about Jesus Christ in an orderly account.

We'll see that in a minute. But Luke's building up a picture as we go along all the time. He's building up a picture. And in this chapter, particularly from where we read from verse 22, which is on page 1037, we see Jesus beginning to move his emphasis from speaking to big crowds and to challenging big crowds.

Now he's kind of focusing a little bit more on his disciples and he's wanting to teach them certain things and prepare them for what's going to lie ahead and for faith and other issues like that.

And we can learn a lot about him through that as well. And what I want to do is give a general overview. Can't go into any detail really. There's four different miracles here that's going on.

[1 : 25] But let's get a general overview of what Luke is trying to do. What's he trying to tell us about Jesus here? And then I'm going to pick out one or two slightly more detailed points.

But the general overview, if you were to look at these four passages that we read and if someone asked you, say, if you're in school, for example, if you're doing an English interpretation and someone asked you, what's the main point that's coming across here?

What is Luke trying to say? Well, I think I would hope that at least some of us would say, well, it's speaking about Jesus' power that is a very powerful person, that he is uniquely powerful.

That's the main message. And that's really important today when we read the Bible, especially because lots of people see Jesus as weak and irrelevant and a kind of sappy character.

Whereas Luke is revealing here a strong, powerful person and he wants to build up that picture of who Jesus is.

[2 : 34] And what we've got is four chronic situations that Luke is unfolding for us here. Don't we? They're horrible. We've got a natural disaster, a storm and a lake.

We've got the darkness of demon possession. We've got a woman with a long-term illness that would have stigmatized her in the community. And we've also got the death of a child, a 12-year-old.

So Luke is leading us into uncomfortable areas, places we would rather not be. Now, Sunday morning, you'd rather not hear about these things. We'd rather deal with something nice and gentle and kind and soft and we'd like to learn about gentle Jesus, meek and mild.

But Luke is leading us into kind of areas that, well, we're not that comfortable with. And is it a case that there's chaos around Jesus?

Or is He in control of the situation? Well, clearly we can see that He's not just reacting to random events that are happening. Christ is very much in control.

[3 : 35] He is taking His disciples and He's leading them where He wants them to go. He makes a decision to go in the boat. He's got people to see on the other side and He knows exactly what's happening and He is dealing with the situation.

So things aren't completely out of control here. It's not a chaotic situation. Jesus is powerfully in control. In fact, He is leading this situation forward, even though we might find that difficult.

But what is more important in these things is what Jesus does in these situations because He's a deliverer here, isn't He? And you'll not find anyone as long as you live, as far as you go, wherever

you travel, who will be like Jesus here and who has the power that Jesus here. It sets Him apart, absolutely and entirely in a world context. Nobody like Him for what He can do. So we have here a picture of a real Savior, not a weak Savior and not an irrelevant Savior.

So see the scenarios. He calms the storm. We've heard these stories so often, we've kind of taken Him for granted. But by the word of His mouth, He just calms a storm.

[4 : 53] He also heals someone with evil possession that has been abandoned and rejected by His society. He also heals again a woman who has spent all the money she has trying to get well.

And she just simply touches Him and He's healed. And then most powerfully of all raises a 12-year-old daughter of a couple from the dead.

He delivers them. He shows great power, power that is unnatural to us and that we have never come across in our own lives. You know, but it's not made up and it's not make-believe and it's not kind of wishful thinking.

Do you remember, it's ages ago now, but when we first looked at chapter one of Luke and verse three and we looked at Luke himself, and he was a doctor, he was a clever guy, and he was a rational man.

And we're told in verse three of chapter one, therefore, since I myself have carefully investigated everything from the beginning. And he's heard from eyewitnesses who have passed down the truth that he heard.

[6 : 03] It seemed good to me to write an orderly account. So there's nothing flash about what he says. He doesn't embellish it. He doesn't use fancy language. He doesn't make it out to be really dramatic.

He's simply is giving an orderly account of what happened. He's going through the events here and is wanting to get across this picture of Jesus Christ, who is very powerful.

Take it into our own lives and into our own experiences because we face these kind of things, maybe not to the intensity of the situations here. But in our own lives, if we are willing to recognize that and face up to it, disasters, darkness, disease, illness, death, these things are everyday occurrences in our lives.

We know that there's another side to life as well, of course. But these things are very powerful and much more powerful than we are. And sometimes they can break us.

And so what we recognize in Luke dealing with this and telling us about Jesus is he's saying that Jesus wants to help us in these situations and transform them and deliver us.

[7 : 25] These situations enslave us in many ways. We're powerless to a greater or lesser need, particularly, of course, to our own mortality.

But Jesus has come to set us free and to deliver us. So clearly, this is a passage that speaks about His power and the relevance of that.

And Luke wants us to know about that. And I think we need to rediscover that because he's very often for us weak and impotent and powerless.

And we don't go to him. We're not looking for him. When we struggle in our faith, we don't think of looking for Christ and His power to help us and deliver us through these things.

So power, the power of Jesus. There's another big lesson right through this. And it's the nature of faith. Because Jesus is beginning here to teach his disciples who believe and trust in him.

[8 : 25] And he's trying to teach them about the kind of faith that he wants them to have and the kind of faith that will survive in this world.

If you look at the different sections, in verse 25, Jesus says, where is your faith? He asks the disciples. In verse 48, he says, daughter, your faith has healed you.

Speaking about that lady who was healed. And then in verse 50, Jesus says to Jairus, the man, the father, and his wife, don't be afraid. Just believe.

So it's about faith. And these four stories, which we're just skimming through, talk about the power of Jesus, but also the faith that he's looking for.

And that's part of the big lesson of this passage. Not just for the disciples then, but for ourselves now. The nature of faith, the kind of faith he is looking for.

[9 : 22] And there's two things that I want to point out about faith here. The first is that if we are going to have faith in Jesus, there will always be a recognition that we need him.

That must always accompany faith, a sense of need for Jesus Christ. All of them come here to Jesus with great need. They've all got a lot of need, don't they?

They all come desperate for help. The disciples fall and their knees are going to drown. They're crying out. They need Jesus to help them. They believe he can. And the women and legion, the evil possessed man, and a gyros and his wife come, because no one else can help them. No one else can deliver them. No one else can bring the answers that they need. So they believe in Christ that he can answer. They've seen something in Christ that makes him different. And they go on then, obviously, to see great power in his answers. Recognition of need. Now, faith isn't, you know, people talk, oh, yeah, I've got faith.

[10:31] You know, a kind of wispy thing that flies about in there. But it's not a nebulous sort of vague thing, faith. It's faith in Jesus Christ, because we have seen that we need him.

And I hope that being here today for you as Christians is a recognition that you need him. You've recognized that you need him. You need him not just for these external kind of disasters and darkneses and powerful enemies that we face, but we need them in our own hearts, because we can't give ourselves a new heart, a heart that is clean and a heart that is where the sin has been forgiven and allows us to have a relationship with God.

We need him. And that, of course, is what Luke is pressing on to talk about the Christ who came to die and the cross for our sins. He is the way back for us.

But if we don't see any need for Jesus in our lives, then we will never have faith in Jesus. We will never trust in the Christ of the Bible.

And if you as a Christian, and if I as a Christian don't have an ongoing sense of need, we will never stick to being a Christian. We will give up. We don't need him.

[11:52] But why would we bother? Why would you bother coming to God and to Christ if we didn't need him? If there wasn't any sense of our own sin and our own hearts, but also the powerlessness over disease and ultimately over death, that is something we all face.

So a recognition of need is a prerequisite to faith in Jesus Christ. But the other thing also is the reality of testing.

Because this is a passage where Jesus is speaking about the kind of trials and the difficulties and the problems that we will face even when we have faith.

Now, I'm sure the disciples were very uncomfortable at being stuck in a boat that was threatening to capsize or sink.

I'm sure that they didn't really want to face someone who was potentially violent and dangerous when they got to the other side. And then they were faced with illness, and then they were faced with death and all these things.

[12:58] And I'm sure they didn't want to face up to these things. But there's no doubt that the Bible teaches, and the Bible teaches clearly, that we will not be trouble free in our lives.

And Jesus is beginning to educate His disciples in that way, that they need to face up to these things in their lives. And if we are going to grow in our faith, then it will not be that our Christian life is trouble free, but it will be that we will learn how to deal with trouble in a faithful way, in a way that shows and displays that we've got faith.

What the disciples were learning was that whether the storm was calmed or the people were healed or the boy was raised, the girl was raised from the dead or not, what was important was Jesus is there, and He is more powerful than all of these things.

And He was wanting them to learn to depend on Christ whatever situation they faced. And that's clearly the teaching throughout the Bible that we suffer in our Christian lives, that we must go through many hardships to enter the kingdom of God.

And then in 1 Peter 4, dear friends, do not be surprised at the painful trials you're suffering and so on. It's part of the journey of faith that we're in. Why?

[14:30] Because when we face these things, Jesus promises us the power to cope, to overcome. Not just not necessarily to be free from them.

It's not that our Christian life will be a bed of roses, but He promises us the power to cope in disaster and darkness, disease and death. He promises us victory through these things.

And ultimately, He promises us a release from their power in the new heavens and the new earth, so that we live free from all the opposition and the darkness that we face in our lives today, particularly death.

A great picture of heaven, what does Apostle John say? There's no more death. And that great enemy that we face, and we trust in Jesus Christ, is ultimately taken from us.

But in this life, we will know people that we know and love who die. We will suffer from illness ourselves. We will be surrounded by evil events and heartbreak.

[15:41] And there will be natural disasters, because it's all part of this world being mixed up and under the curse of sin. But Jesus wants us to recognize that it's through testing and through facing up to these things and trusting in Him that our faith becomes stronger.

And He says He's more, He's shown us here that He's more powerful than all of these things. You'll not always go like that, and they'll be finished and over, but He'll never leave us, and He'll be with us through them.

We'll often use them to make us see our need. They're never random. And so when we're going through trials and difficulties and problems, you have two options.

You can say, well, stuff this. I'm not going to be a Christian anymore. I thought being a Christian meant that God made life easy for you, and there's no problems anymore. Not so.

Or we can say, what's God teaching me through this? Can I depend on Him more? Well, I'd be given the strength to come through it. And while other people see that, and will see that my faith is real, and will see that my Savior is a Savior who will never leave, nor forsake.

[16:55] OK, so there's the big picture that Luke is getting across here. It's about the nature of faith and the power of Jesus.

Can I just look for a moment here at a more specific focus? A couple of things here before we finish, OK? The first is the different emotional responses to Jesus.

See, you've got four quick stories here. We could look at them all in detail. We'll take longer than just one sermon. We look quickly. We see that there's a kind of pattern developing through this account.

We've got different emotional responses to Jesus in this passage. One that's prevalent is fear. Disciples are afraid.

You know, when Jesus calms the storm, they're not quite sure how to react. And also, particularly the people in the area, in that strange kind of account where the demon-possessed man, the spirits are sent into the pigs and they jump over the edge of the cliff.

[18:00] And the people of that area, when they see that, they're really afraid and they want Jesus to get out of the area altogether. And so there's fear.

And that is one of the emotional responses here to Jesus, mixed kind of fear. And I think that's often how people respond to Jesus.

Maybe even reading a passage like this or thinking about these things like disasters and darkness and disease and death, that takes us out of our comfort zone, doesn't it? We don't really want to be thinking about them.

And so we're a bit afraid and uncomfortable when we're confronted with them. And we can be afraid because also Jesus in His Word particularly exposes our hearts and maybe challenges our lifelong beliefs and practices so that we are just afraid of that and we just don't want to deal with it.

Or when we read about His spiritual power here, it kind of spooks us a little bit. And we're not sure how to cope with it. And we're afraid of that. It's out of our normal kind of thinking and our normal way of living.

[19:06] And fear is a response. And I know that's a response that a lot of people have. And I know that's why a lot of people wouldn't come near to church, for example, because they're afraid of the message, they're afraid of what the Bible says.

And it brings them into contact with someone that is uniquely different and uniquely challenging in many ways.

And fear. And Luke wants us to know that and that's a perfectly natural response to Jesus. But can you look at the words of verse 50, where Jesus knows that and he says, Don't be afraid.

And he's speaking to the parents of the little girl. Don't be afraid, just believe. Okay? And that's what I would say to you today if you're afraid of Jesus Christ.

Afraid of His challenge and afraid of trials and difficulties. Or afraid of the demands that you feel He will make on you.

[20:06] Don't be afraid. Just believe. Hear His voice. If you're afraid of committing to Him, don't be afraid. Just believe. So fear is definitely one of the responses.

But also amazement. Amazement is quite common in this passage. The disciples, after they've done the miracle, they are fearful, but they're also amazed.

And also in verse 56, we're told that the parents obviously were astonished. They were amazed at the great miracle that they'd done. And there's amazement when Jesus works powerfully and it's a kind of worshipful thing.

The lady falls at her Jesus' feet and looking, you know, having to admit that it was her that touched Him. And there's a kind of worshipful amazement as well in her.

That's because this man, Jesus Christ, had changed her lives. And there was amazement in that. I wonder if there's amazement in our response to Jesus Christ.

[21 : 10] And as an ongoing emotional reaction to Jesus, is there amazement at His power in our lives? Has He answered your prayer recently in some way that's just amazing?

That's amazing. That's great. So it kind of bolsters your faith in you, that's tremendous. And you want to come and worship Him with a sense of amazement. Ah, I wonder, eh?

Or is it just all that we're not entrusting ourselves to Him and not looking for powerful deliverance in our lives?

So there's maybe not amazement. And the third thing is enthusiasm. Legion is guy who's healed having been demon-possessed. What a change, he's incredibly enthusiastic.

And he wants to follow Jesus and go with Jesus, but Jesus says, no, go back to your own country, go back to your own people, tell them how much I've done for you. And he enthusiastically goes off and does that.

[22 : 08] And Christ encourages him in it. A few weeks ago we looked at that verse which says, he who is forgiven little loves little. Well, I think you could apply it here as well.

He who is forgiven much has much enthusiasm. Isn't that right? I think we can say that. If we know that our lives have been changed, then there's going to be an enthusiasm about us to share that with other people.

And it would be great to be more enthusiastic. And let's pray for a church of enthusiasts in a world of cynics. Good to be enthusiastic because we've been changed ourselves, and so he's changing us.

So that's another emotion. The last emotion here is there's mocking laughter, isn't there? And this passage, and you can understand it, the crowd are mourning, probably the professional crowd that are mourning the passing of this little girl.

And Jesus says, stop wailing. Jesus said, she's not dead, but asleep. And they laughed at him knowing that she was dead. It's a kind of mocking laughter. Don't be ridiculous.

[23 : 15] She's not just sleeping at all. Jesus was nuts, according to them. But a claim to make, who's he coming into this poor family's house and unsettling them with such a ridiculous claim?

The facts, the science was against him. This young 12-year-old girl wasn't asleep. It was plain obvious that she had no life, no breath in her body.

So there's mocking laughter. And I think as well, many people laugh today, don't they? And they laugh at our faith. And they laugh at, how can you call yourself intelligent?

I'll still be a Christian. How can you believe when all these things are happening? How can you trust? And there's a kind of slightly maybe arrogant laughter and derisory mocking of people of faith. Jesus here, he kind of just ignores them, doesn't he? Not in an impolite way, but he just ignores their kind of mocking laughter and goes on to raise the girl from the dead.

[24 : 33] He doesn't change it at all. Doesn't change his power. It doesn't change the facts of what he does. He just goes ahead and does it. He just heals her.

And I'm sure the laughing stopped fairly abruptly at that point as they learned about who Jesus was. And that will be the case too.

One day the laughter and the mocking laughter will stop when people will realize, you know, it doesn't make any difference to the truth. Jesus is still true. However many people mock and laugh at Him.

And we must take encouragement from that. And not in any way be derisory or defensive in a wrong way, but simply allow the reality of Jesus in our lives to maybe change people's laughter and see what there is something real and genuine and living about their faith.

They do believe not in a dead and rubbish savior that, you know, is a fact or a figure from the past, but a living savior, resurrected Christ who has changed lives.

[25 : 46] So we see here that emotional response to Jesus. And we also see Jesus making and molding disciples right through this chapter.

And that's, Luke is wanting us to see that focus that never forget that Jesus has come for a purpose. He's redeeming people, He's saving people.

He's teaching His disciples. It's personal. See these lovely examples, isn't it? He's dealing one to one with people, changing them one at a time with different needs.

People that society had rejected, had abandoned, had thrown out the door, said, there's nothing more we can do. Jesus took them aside. He loved them. He cared for them. He dealt with them personally, one by one.

Personal salvation, working itself out through this passage. That's how He deals. That's how He'll deal with you one at a time. And with me one at a time.

[26 : 45] And what about your friends and your colleagues and the people close to you? Do you believe in the power of Jesus to deal with them one by one, that they might know Him and be saved by Him and be changed and transformed by Him?

Don't give up, because that's how Jesus works. Personally, one at a time. And it's ongoing. He's not only saving redeeming people, He's teaching His disciples.

And we'll see that throughout the book as it goes on, that He's training them, He's molding them, He's educating them about the nature of faith. So when we come to God's house, where we worship and church, and read the Bible, when we know that we've been gifted faith, then we're always looking to be learning from Him and a disciple is just a learner.

Always learning. We're always learning. That's one thing, it's funny, I've learned in the last week while Scott learned to drive just now. And obviously he's a learner, he's got L in the cars.

So he's very kind of intense learning. And it's quite knuckle sometimes when you're on the other side as he's learning. Because there's not much margin for error really, and quite close to the edge sometimes.

[28 : 01] In the last couple of weeks. But the amazing thing is that when you get in the driver's seat, you begin to learn anew again, because you're looking with different eyes, and you maybe try a bit harder not to do the bad habits that you've learned over the last 25 years or whatever, because you know you're an example as well.

But you're also learning, and you keep on learning. I think we always are learning in that area of life, and generally. And Jesus wants us to know that here as well, as Christians, we're always learning. Maybe today you've remembered or been reminded of the power. Maybe you needed to learn that again, the power of Jesus, or the nature of faith.

Maybe you're struggling particularly with something today, and you've thought, well where is Jesus? He abandoned me. Has he left me? I said, no, I've not left you. There's a reason for what you're going through. Take it to me.

The most important thing is I'm going to be beside you in it. And I've got the power to take you through that and to learn. Maybe you've learned about enthusiasm. Maybe you've learned about amazement in our faith.

[29 : 14] Are we still learning from the Master? Because you know, it'll be a really sad day here if everyone comes to church, and we're no longer learning from our Master. Because I wouldn't be able to teach you anything.

I wouldn't be able to learn anything myself if you're not coming with a prayerful learning spirit and having prayed beforehand to hear what God has to say.

So as we go through Luke, I hope we see that we are learning from him and learning from Jesus Christ, who is revealed to us there. And I do encourage you to respond to Jesus and hear his voice, particularly that voice, which says, do not be afraid, just believe.

Let's bow our heads and pray. Lord God, we ask and pray that you would teach us to trust in you and to believe in you and to learn about you and to keep on learning from you.

And we pray that we would take great comfort recognizing that the faith that you have given us is indeed a gift. It's not something we've earned or merited or just worked up in our own heads.

[30 : 25] It's your gift. And you promised to help our faith to grow. And you've given us your Holy Spirit in our hearts to enable that to happen. And we pray for a sense of that today in our lives.

And we pray for a sense of your company and your love and your care and your protection over us as we go on in our Christian lives.

And we ask that we would be challenged afresh, not to be afraid, but just to believe. Because we know that you are a loving and caring and committed Savior for us.

We ask these things in Jesus' name. Amen.