

Three Stories of Healing and Faith
Luke 8:26-56
Encountering Jesus Today

By Dave Urbanski

Sometimes as Christians we may view reading and studying the Bible as a mere task or something to cross off our lists or an obligation to “get through” — of course, depending on the day, what’s happening during that day, and our moods and circumstances, to name a few factors.

But as Pastor Scott emphasized in our study together this past Sunday, the Scriptures are full of treasures the Lord wants us to find — no matter how busy or stressed or preoccupied we are with our lives. While we may view meditating on them as a challenge due to how busy life gets, we can all trust that standing firm in the Lord for just a little longer is going to show us things we might otherwise miss if we allow life’s roadblocks to obscure how Jesus is communicating with us.

Pastor Scott urged us that as we read and study the Bible, we should actively seek its treasures by making sure of three things:

- ~ Ask ourselves questions about the text — even details such as, “What does this word mean?” — as well as how our current text relates to other passages in the Bible;
- ~ Pay attention to the “wow” factor;
- ~ Embrace the “takeaway” and ask ourselves, “What things should I do differently or rethink?” based on this scriptural truth?

In our passage — Luke 8:26-56 — Jesus meets three people with very different, very serious needs.

In the wake of Jesus calming the storm on the lake when the disciples thought they were dead men (from the previous week’s study), Jesus and his disciples get back in the boat and cross the lake again. This time into a Gentile country — Gerasenes — where there were no restrictions on eating pork.

“When Jesus had stepped out on land, there met him a man from the city who had demons. For a long time he had worn no clothes, and he had not lived in a house but among the tombs. When he saw Jesus, he cried out and fell down before him and said with a loud voice, ‘What have you to do with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I beg you, do not torment me.’” (vv. 27-28)

Not only is that a scary sight, but also it’s also incredibly sad. Pastor Scott told us that demons leave paths of brokenness wherever they end up dominating. Demons can

even get a foothold in the lives of Christians, as Paul's letter to the Ephesians reminds us: "Be angry and do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, and give no opportunity to the devil." But this poor man was going through something much worse. Mark 5:5 describes the same scene, noting that "night and day among the tombs and on the mountains he was always crying out and cutting himself with stones." Terrible! Pastor Scott shared what we know all too well; that there are people like this ALL OVER, even today. Such pain has not subsided. Many, many people are angry, depressed, and moving from one self-defeating activity to the next, while Satan no doubt rubs his hands together, feeling triumphant.

Yet, Jesus remains in control — not only back then when this event took place, but also TODAY.

With that, Jesus in this passage gives the demons *permission* to enter the herd of pigs, and the animals drown themselves in the lake.

What an otherworldly scene!

Did you notice that Jesus gave the demons "permission"? What does that tell you? It should say to you, as was just noted, that Jesus is in control. That should give all of us a great deal of hope and comfort.

Now, this poor man suddenly is no longer possessed; he quickly is sitting at the feet of Jesus, clothed, and in his right mind. Pastor Scott noted that Paul uses those two words "right mind" in a letter to Titus, sharing that being in control of one's emotions is an important quality. These days, whether it's video games, anger, or popular opinions, many forces around us are vying for our attention — but the best place to be is sitting at Jesus' feet at peace, like the man he saved from demon possession.

Also, Pastor Scott shared that — amazingly — Jesus tells the formerly demon-possessed man, who badly wanted to stay with Jesus, to return home and tell others how much God had done for him. (That's also quite an endorsement for spiritually blooming where you're planted!)

The next person Jesus meets is Jairus whose 12-year-old daughter is near death. Like every dad in such a devastating circumstance, Jairus can't do what he most wants to do: Make his daughter well.

But Jesus can.

So Jairus seeks out Jesus, and asks him to help. But things get complicated very quickly.

As Jesus is walking toward Jairus' house, a woman who has been suffering for 12 years with a discharge of blood is at the end of her rope, too.

(Side note: As we know, Luke is the author of this Gospel — but even more than that, he knows a thing or two about what is medically possible since he's also a medical doctor! So paying close attention to his account is vitally important.)

Somehow this poor woman, full of faith, realized that if she could just touch the hem of Jesus' garment, she would be healed.

Such jaw-dropping faith was expressed earlier in our study of Luke's Gospel when a Roman centurion offers to Jesus that he can simply "say the word" and heal his very ill servant without ever having to lay eyes upon him. Wow!

Sure enough, Jesus notices that someone touches him — and that power has come out of him. Not surprisingly, when the trembling woman admits to Jesus that it was her, Jesus expresses nothing but love. The woman's faith has made her well, Jesus tells her, and she can now go in peace.

How amazing is that?

But hey! Have we forgotten Jairus? The very concerned father who's also at the end of his rope with a dying daughter? He probably has wanted Jesus to hurry up with the woman with the blood problem from the get go!

Sadly, as they get close to Jairus' home, he's informed that his daughter already is dead. (Hint: A quick review of how Jesus' handles similar news about the death of his friend Lazarus, which contains similar precursors, can tell us a lot about how this situation gets resolved.)

Despite the news about the girl's death, Jesus responds, telling everyone to not fear — but instead, to only believe.

She's only sleeping, after all, Jesus declares to them.

Um, *what?*

Those who've seen the dead girl know better — at least they believe they do.

Pastor Scott let us know that here Jesus compares death (which is permanent) to sleep (which is temporary). For Christians, Pastor Scott continued, the moment of death really is quite temporary — as our "waking up" moment represents our souls being ushered into the presence of Jesus. And here, Jesus obviously determines that it's not this little girl's time. So, he raises her from death and commands the astonished people to tell no one about what happened. Pastor Scott said Jesus gives this command because, as the Gospels underscore, a lot of times people get caught up in Jesus' miracles rather than his message.

In conclusion, Pastor Scott shared with us another familiar parable — about a man who finds treasure buried in a field, and afterward the man spends all his money to buy the field so he could possess the treasure.

Isn't that what the Christian life is all about? After all, if the treasure you find is worth more than everything you have and would ever have, wouldn't you be willing sell everything you owned to buy such a field?

(Hand is rising over here!)

But still, Pastor Scott warned us that there's a cost we all must count when it comes to laying hold of the kingdom of God in our lives. In fact, every person who follows Jesus pays a price for that decision, in one way or another.

So ... let's ask: *Have you given up everything to follow Jesus? Forfeited all your resources just to be able to fall at his feet?* If not, what are those things you're still holding on to?

This week, let your mind and heart reflect on where you are right now with Jesus — and let him rule your heart and mind!