

10. Luke 8:22 - 9:36



Nothing can separate us from God's love in Jesus

‘If God is for us, who is against us? He who did not withhold his own Son, but gave him up for all of us, will he not with him also give us everything else? ...

Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will hardship, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? ...

No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that

neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come ... nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord’ (Romans 8:31-39).

1. The chaos around us cannot keep God's word from us

The storm on the sea Luke 8:22-25 (Mark 4:35-41)

One day Jesus got into a boat with his disciples, and he said to them, "Let us go across to the other side of the lake." So they put out, and while they were sailing he fell asleep. A windstorm swept down on the lake, and the boat was filling with water, and they were in danger.

They went to him and woke him up, shouting, "Master, Master, we are perishing!" And he woke up and rebuked the wind and the raging waves; they ceased, and there was a calm. He said to them, "Where is your faith?" They were afraid and amazed, and said to one another, "Who then is this, that he commands even the winds and the water, and they obey him?"



It is clear from the primeval narratives of creation (Genesis 1:2,6-8) and the flood (Genesis 6-9), that the sea was for the Jews a symbol of chaos, and therefore of the forces of evil which resist God's creative and redeeming action.

Jesus is with his disciples as they venture out into the midst of chaos and the waves hurl themselves against the boat, seeking to destroy them. Jesus is clearly unafraid. The same cannot be said of his disciples. Jesus appears not to hear the cry, but the awakened Christ (the Greek could be translated 'risen Christ') is truly caring, and at his command the forces of evil fall silent. We are watching the Creator vanquishing the sea monster: 'You rule the raging of the sea; when its waves rise, you still them. You crushed Rahab like a carcass; you scattered your enemies with your mighty arm' (Psalm 89:9-10; see Jonah 2:2-9).

2. The chaos inside us cannot keep God's word from us

The deranged man of Gerasa (50ks SE of lake) Luke 8:26-31 (Mark 5:1-10)

Then they arrived at the country of the Gerasenes, which is opposite Galilee. As he stepped out on land, a man of the city who had demons met him. For a long time he had worn no clothes, and he did not live in a house but in the tombs. When he saw Jesus, he fell down before him and shouted at the top of his voice, "What have you to do with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I beg you, do not torment me" – for Jesus had commanded the unclean spirit to come out of the man. (For many times it had seized him; he was kept under guard and bound with chains and shackles, but he would break the bonds and be driven by the demon into the wilds.) Jesus then asked him, "What is your name?" He said, "Legion"; for many demons had entered him. They begged him not to order them to go back into the abyss.

Luke 8:32-36 (Mark 5:11-15)

Now there on the hillside a large herd of swine was feeding; and the demons begged Jesus to let them enter these. So he gave them permission. Then the demons came out of the man and entered the swine, and the herd rushed down the steep bank into the lake and was drowned. When the swineherds saw what had happened, they ran off and told it in the city and in the country. Then people came out to see what had happened, and when they came to Jesus, they found the man from whom the demons had gone sitting at the feet of Jesus, clothed and in his right mind. And they were afraid. Those who had seen it told them how the one who had been possessed by demons had been healed.



Luke 8:37-39 (Mark 5:16-20)

Then all the people of the surrounding country of the Gerasenes asked Jesus to leave them; for they were seized with great fear. So he got into the boat and returned. The man from whom the demons had gone begged that he might be with him; but Jesus sent him away, saying, “Return to your home, and declare how much God has done for you.” So he went away, proclaiming throughout the city how much Jesus had done for him.

The core of the narrative, however, is a simple story of Jesus conquering all that inhibits the fullness of life to which we are called. It is yet another miracle of love, illustrating the words of Isaiah: ‘Thus says the Lord, he who created you, O Jacob, he who formed you, O Israel: Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine’ (Isaiah 43:1).

The good news is that nothing — not even a psyche that has collapsed in despair before the onslaught of evil — ‘will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord’ (Romans 8:39). Under the broken psyche of this poor man was a self made by God in God’s image: a hidden self, an ‘inner being’ that yearned for communion with God and for a place in the community.

We might pray for each other the prayer of Paul: “I pray that God may grant that you may be strengthened in your inner being with power through his Spirit, and that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith, as you are being rooted and grounded in love. I pray that you may have the power to comprehend, with all the saints, what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, so that you may be filled with all the fulness of God. Now to him who by the power at work within us is able to accomplish abundantly far more than all we can ask or imagine, to him be glory in the Church and in Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen” (Ephesians 3:14-21).

3. Not even death can keep God's word from us

Luke 8:40-42 (Mark 5:21-23)

Now when Jesus returned, the crowd welcomed him, for they were all waiting for him. Just then there came a man named Jairus, a leader of the synagogue. He fell at Jesus' feet and begged him to come to his house, for he had an only daughter, about twelve years old, who was dying.

Luke 8:43-44 (Mark 5:24-29)

As he went, the crowds pressed in on him. Now there was a woman who had been suffering from haemorrhages for twelve years; and though she had spent all she had on physicians, no one could cure her. She came up behind him and touched the fringe of his clothes, and immediately her haemorrhage stopped.



Luke 8:45-48 (Mark 5:30-34)

Then Jesus asked, “Who touched me?” When all denied it, Peter said, “Master, the crowds surround you and press in on you.” But Jesus said, “Someone touched me; for I noticed that power had gone out from me.”

When the woman saw that she could not remain hidden, she came trembling; and falling down before him, she declared in the presence of all the people why she had touched him, and how she had been immediately healed.

He said to her, “Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace.”

The story of the woman who has been haemorrhaging for twelve years provides extra dramatic tension to the scene.

She has been losing blood for twelve years: her life (Leviticus 17:14), like that of the little girl, is draining away. Like so many others (see Luke 6:19), she wants to touch Jesus. She manages to do so and is healed.

Her ailment meant that she was considered ritually unclean (Leviticus 15:19). This in turn meant that anything she touched had to be excluded from the assembly for the period prescribed by law. There is something about Jesus that causes her, as it caused the leper (Luke 5:12), to ignore the law and approach him.

Jesus, knowing that her need is for even deeper contact, invites her to come forward. She does so, and through her communion with him, finds a more profound healing: the healing called here 'peace'.

Luke 8:49-53 (Mark 5:35-38)

While he was still speaking, someone came from the leader's house to say, "Your daughter is dead; do not trouble the teacher any longer." When Jesus heard this, he replied, "Do not fear. Only believe, and she will be saved."

When he came to the house, he did not allow anyone to enter with him, except Peter, John, and James, and the child's father and mother. They were all weeping and wailing for her; but he said, "Do not weep; for she is not dead but sleeping." And they laughed at him, knowing that she was dead.

Luke 8:54-56 (Mark 5:39-43)

But he took her by the hand and called out, “Child, get up!” Her spirit returned, and she got up at once. Then he directed them to give her something to eat. Her parents were astounded; but he ordered them to tell no one what had happened.



The Church is continuing Jesus' mission

Luke 9:1-2

(Mark 6:7)

Then Jesus called the twelve together and gave them power and authority over all demons and to cure diseases, and he sent them out to proclaim the kingdom of God and to heal. He said to them:

Luke has already introduced us to the twelve, and to the fact that Jesus called them 'apostles' (Luke 6:13). Here Jesus shares with them his own mission. Like him they are to 'proclaim the kingdom of God', to 'bring the good news' (see Luke 4:18,19,44; 8:1). Like him, they are to heal (see Luke 6:19).

Luke 9:3-5

(Mark 6:8-11)

Jesus said to them, “Take nothing for your journey, *no staff*, nor bag, nor bread, nor money – not even an extra tunic. Whatever house you enter, stay there, and leave from there. Wherever they do not welcome you, as you are leaving that town shake the dust off your feet as a testimony against them.”

They have already been warned to expect to be rejected because of their association with Jesus (Luke 6:22). There are those who refuse to welcome him (Luke 4:28-29); they will refuse to welcome his disciples too. Luke will give many examples of this when he comes to narrate the story of the early church (see Acts 4:1-22; 14:8-20; 16:16-24).

Luke 9:6 (Mark 6:12-13)

They departed and went through the villages, bringing the good news and curing diseases *everywhere*.

Luke 9:7-9 (Mark 6:14-16)

Now Herod the ruler heard about all that had taken place, and he was perplexed, because it was said by some that John had been raised from the dead, by some that Elijah had appeared, and by others that one of the ancient prophets had arisen.

Herod said, “John I beheaded; but who is this about whom I hear such things?” And he tried to see him. (see Luke 23:6-17)

On their return the apostles told Jesus all they had done. He took them with him and withdrew privately to a city called Bethsaida. When the crowds found out about it, they followed him; and he welcomed them, and spoke to them about the kingdom of God, and healed those who needed to be cured.

The day was drawing to a close, and the twelve came to him and said, “Send the crowd away, so that they may go into the surrounding villages and countryside, to lodge and get provisions; for we are here in a deserted place.”

But he said to them, “**You give them something to eat.**” They said, “We have no more than five loaves and two fish – unless we are to go and buy food for all these people.” For there were about five thousand men.

We approach this scene, as we must approach every scene in the gospels, with the eyes of one who is contemplating a mosaic, a fresco, a stained-glass window, or an icon. The primary question is not ‘What exactly happened?’, but rather ‘What is the truth about Jesus that the author wishes to convey in this portrait, and why did he choose to express it in this way?’

Luke 9:15-17 (Mark 6:39-45)

And he said to his disciples, “Make them sit down in groups of about fifty each.” They did so and made them all sit down. And taking the five loaves and the two fish, and looking up to heaven, he blessed and broke them, and was giving them to the disciples to set before the crowd. And all ate and were filled. What was left over was gathered up, twelve baskets of broken pieces.



Manna (Exodus 16; Numbers 11)

Elijah (1 Kings 17)

Elisha (2 Kings 4:42-44)

Jesus' close followers had stories to tell of the miraculous way in which he touched their hearts, fed their deepest hunger, and quenched their deepest thirst. There was no limit to Jesus' generosity in providing for them, as there was no limit to the love which he showed to them or to the Spirit upon which he drew in his own ministry. By the time the gospel was written, Jesus' disciples could also call on their own memories of how Jesus' Spirit, living in them, had worked similar miracles in their lives.

They had found that they too had been God's instruments in miraculous ways, in nurturing people as they journeyed towards God through the desert of this world. Think of the way Luke chose to introduce the first disciples (Luke 5:1-11). We might think also of Luke's statement in the Acts of the Apostles: 'Many of those who heard the word believed; and they numbered about five thousand' (Acts 4:4).

Mark 6:45 - 8:26 not in Luke

1. Jesus walks on the water
2. Cures at Gennesaret
3. Traditions of the Pharisees
4. The Syro-Phoenician Woman
5. Healing the Deaf man
6. Second Account of Miracle of the loaves
7. The Pharisees fail to accept Jesus see Luke 11:16
8. The disciples still fail to understand see Luke 12:1
9. Healing the blind man

Jesus is God's Messiah

Luke 9:18-20

(Mark 8:27-30)

Once when Jesus was praying alone, with only the disciples near him, he asked them, “Who do the crowds say that I am?”

They answered, “John the Baptist; but others, Elijah; and still others, that one of the ancient prophets has arisen.”

He said to them, “But who do you say that I am?”

Peter answered, “The Messiah of God.”

When Jesus calmed the sea, the disciples asked one another:

‘Who is this, that he commands even the winds compare and the water, and they obey him?’ (Luke 8:25).

Jesus is the Son of Man who must suffer and be raised to life

Luke 9:21-22 (Mark 8:31-32)

He sternly ordered and commanded them not to tell anyone, saying, “The Son of Man must undergo great suffering, and be rejected by the elders, chief priests, and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised.”

‘I am casting out demons and performing cures today and tomorrow, and on the third day I finish my work. Yet today, tomorrow, and the next day I must be on my way, because it is impossible for a prophet to be killed outside of Jerusalem’ (Luke 13:32-33).

‘He was raised on the third day in accordance with the scriptures’ (1 Corinthians 15:4).

‘and three days later rise again’ (Mark 8:32).

Hosea 6:1-2

‘Come, let us return to YHWH;
for it is he who has torn, and he will heal us;
he has struck down, and he will bind us up.
After two days he will revive us;
on the third day he will raise us up,
that we may live before him.’

Exodus 9:9-16

‘YHWH said to Moses, “I am going to come to you in a dense cloud, in order that the people may hear when I speak with you and so trust you ever after ... “Go to the people and consecrate them today and tomorrow. Have them wash their clothes and prepare for **the third day**, because **on the third day** Yahweh will come down upon Mount Sinai in the sight of all the people. You shall set limits for the people all around, saying: Be careful not to go up the mountain or to touch the edge of it. Any who touch the mountain shall be put to death. ... So Moses went down from the mountain to the people. He consecrated the people, and they washed their clothes. He said to the people, “Prepare for **the third day** ...” On the morning of **the third day** there was thunder and lightning, as well as a thick cloud on the mountain, and a blast of a ram’s horn [shofar] so loud that all the people in the camp trembled.’

We find life by following Jesus

Luke 9:23-26 (Mark 8:34-38)

Then he said to them all, “If you want to become my follower, deny yourself and take up your cross daily and follow me. If you want want to save your life you will lose it. If you lose your life because of me you will save it.

What does it profit you to gain the whole world, but lose or forfeit your self?

Those who are ashamed of me and of my words, of them the Son of Man will be ashamed when he comes in his glory and the glory of the Father and of the holy angels.

Luke 9:27 (Mark 9:1)

Truly I tell you, there are some standing here who will not taste death before they see the kingdom of God.”

Luke may be portraying Jesus as expecting the imminent end of the world as we know it. Paul appears to have been expecting this in his early writings (1 Thessalonians 4:1-13), and it is not impossible that Luke may have understood Jesus' words in this way. He may have thought of the conflict between Rome and the Jews which flared into open warfare in 66AD as the final struggle that would bring about the ultimate intervention of God to establish the promised kingdom.

It is also possible that Luke would have understood the words to be referring to Jesus' death and resurrection.

Jesus is God's Son - Chosen One, who fulfils God's promises

The transfiguration Luke 9:28-29 (Mark 9:2-3)

Now about eight days after these sayings Jesus took with him Peter and John and James, and went up on the mountain to pray. And while he was praying, the appearance of his face changed, and his clothes became dazzling white.



Luke 9: 30-31 (Mark 9:4)

Suddenly they saw two men, Moses and Elijah, talking to him. They appeared in glory and were speaking *of his departure (exodos), which he was about to accomplish at Jerusalem.*

The Israelites saw Moses, the skin of his face was shining, and they were afraid to come near him' (Exodus 34:30).

Luke 9:32-36 (Mark 9:5-8)

Now Peter and his companions were weighed down with sleep; but since they had stayed awake, they saw his glory and the two men who stood with him. Just as they were leaving him, Peter said to Jesus, “Master, it is good for us to be here; let us make three dwellings, one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah” – not knowing what he said. While he was saying this, a cloud came and overshadowed them; and they were terrified as they entered the cloud. Then from the cloud came a voice that said, “This is my Son, my Chosen; listen to him!” When the voice had spoken, **Jesus was found alone**. And they kept silent and in those days told no one any of the things they had seen.

The glory-cloud reminds us of the cloud that was a symbol of God leading his people through the desert (see Exodus 13:21). It was from within this cloud that God spoke to Moses 'that the people may hear when I speak with you and so trust you ever after' (Exodus 19:9). Luke is portraying Jesus as the new Moses to whom they must listen.

The cloud reminds us, too, of God's presence in the temple (see 1Kings 8:10). Jesus is God's new temple.

‘We did not follow cleverly devised myths when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we had been eyewitnesses of his majesty. For he received honour and glory from God the Father when that voice was conveyed to him by the Majestic Glory, saying, ‘This is my Son, my Beloved, with whom I am well pleased.’ We ourselves heard this voice come from heaven, while we were with him on the holy mountain’ (2 Peter 1:16-18).

An appropriate response to this scene can be found in Luke's magnificent portrait of the Annunciation. Like the apostles in the scene before us, Mary is caught up in God's glory. God wants to love her, to cover her with his glory-cloud and to breath the Spirit of his love into her. God does not ask her to do anything except to say Yes to being loved. That Yes will mean that the child she is conceiving in love 'will be holy; he will be called Son of God' (Luke 1:35). Her response is the perfect response from a disciple: 'Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word' (Luke 1:38). Her cousin Elizabeth praises God for Mary's faith when she exclaims: 'Blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfilment of what was spoken to her by the Lord' (Luke 1:45). We are asked to listen and to believe.