

LUKE – CHAPTER 8

PRAY

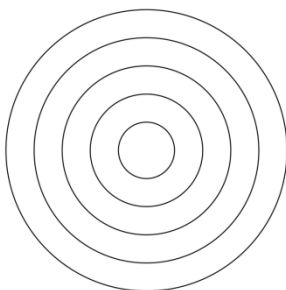
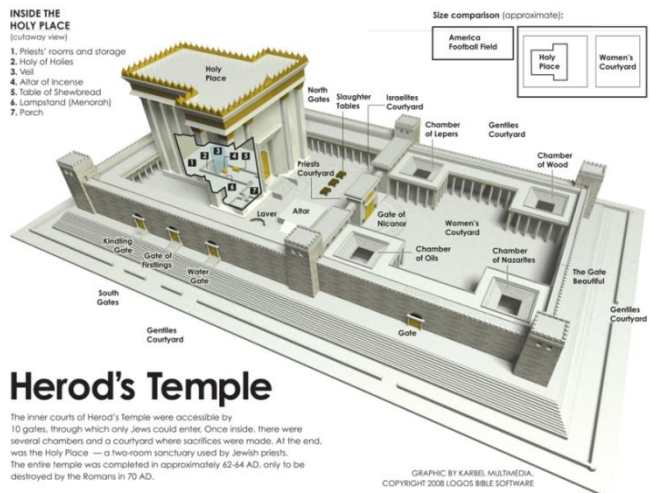
Spend a few moments together in prayer asking that you would be open to God's voice speaking through his Word today.

READ

Take time to read through Luke chapter 8

EXAMINE

For this study we will take a closer look at Jesus' encounter with the Gerasene Demoniac. The story follows on from Jesus calming the storm. What we may miss, though, is that the reason the Jesus and the disciples were in the boat at all was because Jesus had decided to head across to the other side of the lake (v. 22). Although the exact location is disputed the fact that it is "opposite Galilee" is important. This places the demoniac just *outside* the Holy Land. Holiness, in the minds of first century Judaism, came through proximity to God, as represented by the Temple. In the centre of the Temple (the centre most circle) is the Most Holy Place. Situated in the centre of this place was the Ark of the Covenant (in Solomon's Temple, the space was empty in the second temple of Jesus' time since it went missing during the Exile). Only one man, the High Priest, could enter that space, and then only once a year on the Day of Atonement. It was considered the Holiest place in Israel (indeed the world) and getting too close would be dangerous. The next court out is the Holy Place; the location where the priests did their work. The next court is the Court of Israel; here Jewish men could worship. Outside this court is the Court of Women where Jewish women were permitted. Outside of this was the Court of Gentiles; anyone was allowed in this location for worship (incidentally, this is the location that Jesus' clears ensuring everyone has access to worship at the Temple.



The diagram above shows the design of the Temple, but if we think it terms of concentric circles, with the Holy of Holies in the centre and each court moving outwards, and each move towards the outside represents a move *away* from the centre of Holiness in the minds of a first century Jew. Moving out from the Temple we find ourselves in Jerusalem (the Holy City). Moving out from Jerusalem we are located in Israel (the Holy Land). Moving out from Israel we are outside the last circle of holiness, having left the Holy

Land, and as far away from the holiness of God as was possible. This is the location where this takes place, just on the other side of the Sea of Galilee, the border of the Holy Land.

In our passage other “profane things” (things that desecrate and so make you unholy) are found here – demons, nudity, tombs, pigs – all of these items held the risk of making you unholy, and thus ineligible to worship in the Temple until you had been purified. A first century Jew reading this passage would be horrified at where this takes place.

Yet Jesus goes there.

1. Discuss what comes to mind immediately as you consider this.

This may include amazement at where Jesus would go. His willingness to travel into the “darkest and dirtiest” places in order to meet with the worst of all.

2. Immediately upon stepping ashore Jesus is confronted with this demon possessed man. We are told that the man is regularly bound but breaks his chains frequently and driven by demons into the wild. Note, though, how he addresses Jesus – “What do you want with me, *Jesus, Son of the Most High God?*” Compare this with the disciples response in the boat just a few verses earlier – “Who is this?” (v. 25). What do you notice here?

In between the lines Luke is making a constant comparison between the immediate faith of the “unexpected,” the slow response of the disciples, and in other locations the rejection by those who should have been able to recognize him immediately (represented by Jewish leaders). It is the demon possessed man who correctly identifies Jesus while the disciples are still trying to figure this out.

3. Jesus heals this man, Legion, from his possession. Imagine being one of the townsfolk coming out to see what had happened (v 35). Picture the beauty and serenity of the scene of a man once out of control now “sitting at Jesus’ feet, dressed and in his right mind.” Luke tells us they were afraid. Why do you think they reacted this way?

Sometimes we may profess that God can change a person’s life but then when it actually happens for them we become afraid of the evidence that God’s power is at work amongst us. It can be confronting.

4. Verse 37 is perhaps the most tragic in this story. “Then all the people of the region of the Gerasenes asked Jesus to leave them, because they were overcome with fear... So he went into the boat and left.” Reflect on this request and Jesus response. What does this tell us about the power of fear? What does it tell us about Jesus?

In contrast to the man who is now freed from his demon possession the towns people are crippled with fear. They would rather stay with the familiarity of the demon-possessed wild man outside town than let that fear go and welcome him, and Jesus, in their midst. It also demonstrates how Jesus won’t force himself in where he is not welcomed.

5. Even though Jesus goes away, his messenger remains. The restored man is commissioned with the task of sharing his story. We may not recognize this but this kind of commission is relatively rare in the gospels. Usually, Jesus tells people that are healed to remain silent (this is known as the “Messianic Secret”). For this man, Jesus sends him away to his home to “tell how much God has done for you.” (v 39). Describe together this scene – his return *home* (perhaps for the first time in years), and his declaration of God’s salvation.

REFLECT

1. Consider who you are in this story. Are you a questioning disciple (v 25), a restored person, or a fearful townspeople?
2. Where are the dark places where Jesus would intentionally go in our world? Where are the “unholy places”?
3. How can we join Jesus in venturing into these dark places with his message of light?

IMAGINE

1. List three things that have really stood out from this passage.
2. Without worrying about any restrictions, what would the church look like if those things were always present? You might like to consider this from a global or local perspective (or both).

PERFORM

1. What action can you take today (taking account of real world restrictions) that is a step towards that dream becoming a reality?

PRAY

Spend time in prayer for each other, particularly for the actions you’ve committed to.

For next week....

1. Long Slow Read (LSR). Read chapter 9 slowly over the course of week. You can do this as many times as you like.
2. Tempo Read – Read and reread Chapter 9 several times. Take note of verses/phrases/characters that stand out – e.g. Jesus, Holy Spirit, poor, women.
3. Repeats – Choose one verse to memorise. Repeat it many times throughout the day and over the course of a week or so. Meditate on the verse and pray it in and out. Repeat the verse many times throughout your day.