Parables and Family Lessons

1. Read Luke 8:19–21. Certainly, Jesus is not dismissing zhis earthly family; rather, He is pointing to a deeper reality about what truly forms a family. How does what He says here connect back to the Sermon on the Mount?

   He ends the Sermon on the Mount by describing the wise person who builds a house on the rock. In that teaching, the house stands because it is founded on hearing and doing the words of Christ.

   That is the connection: Jesus is redefining family around obedience to God's word. In the kingdom of God, our true "house" is not merely a biological household, but a spiritual household built on Christ himself. He is both the Word made flesh and the Rock on which that Word stands. Those who hear his word and do it are not only disciples; they become brothers and sisters in the family of God.

   This means that the family of God is not held together simply by blood, heritage, or human obligation, but by shared submission to the will of the Father. A family built on the Word is a family that seeks to do God's work and to live in the alignment of His will. In that sense, obedience is not just individual faithfulness—it is the bond of true spiritual kinship.

2. Read Luke 8:22-25. Is this just an account of Jesus flexing His divine muscle or is there perhaps something more going on?

Picture 1: Ancient Fishing boat from Galilee – 27 feet long, 7 feet wide

Picture 2: Sea of Galilee is 64 square miles – twice as big as Lake Travis or Lake Whitney. It is 700 feet below sea level surrounded by hills, while both Lake Whitney and Lake Travis are more than 500 or 600 feet above sea level. Because it is so far below sea level it is ripe for sudden storms. Indeed, it is the lowest fresh water lake. Travis is deeper by 50 feet at about 210 feet. Whitney is about the same depth as the Sea of Galilee—around 100 to 150 feet deep..

Genesis 1:1-10 (ESV) – Creation

Jonah 1:4-16 (ESV)-- Jonah and the Great Storm

But the Lord sent out a great wind on the sea, and there was a mighty tempest against the ship, so that the ship was about to be broken up. Then the mariners were afraid, and each cried out to his god; and they threw the cargo that was in the ship into the sea, to lighten the ship for them. But Jonah had gone below into the hold of the ship, where he lay down and was fast asleep.

So the captain came and said to him, "What do you mean, sleeper? Arise, call on your God! Perhaps the God will give a thought for us, that we may not perish." And they each said to one another, "Come, let us cast lots, that we may know on whose account this trouble has come upon us." So they cast lots, and the lot fell on Jonah.

Then they said to him, "Tell us, now, why has this trouble come upon us? What is your occupation? And where do you come from? What is your country? And of what people are you?" And he said to them, "I am a Hebrew, and I fear the Lord, the God of heaven, who made the sea and the dry land."

Then the men became exceedingly afraid and said to him, "How can you do this to us? For the sea is a violent sea; it was raging as we cried out to the Lord. And now, O Lord, please do not let us perish for this man's life, and do not charge us with innocent blood, for You, O Lord, have done as it pleased You." So they took Jonah and cast him into the sea, and the sea ceased from its raging. Then the men feared the Lord exceedingly, and they offered a sacrifice to the Lord and made vows.

Psalm 107:23-32 (ESV) – God Commands a Storm

Those who go down to the sea in ships, who do business on great waters, they see the works of the Lord, his wonderful deeds in the deep. For he speaks, and the storm gathers, and unsettles the waves of the sea. They mount up to the heavens, they go down to the depths; their courage melts away in their calamity. They reel and stagger like a drunken man; they are at their wits' end. Then they cry out to the Lord in their trouble, and he brings them out of their distress. He calms the storm to a whisper; the waves of the sea are hushed. They are glad because they are at peace; he leads them beside lakes and rivers. Let them thank the Lord for his steadfast love, for his wonderful deeds to humanity, for he breaks the doors of bronze and cuts the iron bars in two.

Exodus 14:21-22 (ESV) – Crossing the Red Sea

Then Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and the Lord drove the sea back by a strong east wind all night, and made the sea dry land, and the waters were divided. The Israelites went into the sea on dry ground, the waters being a wall to them on their right hand and on their left.

Exodus 15:6-8 (ESV) – God's Rule Over the Sea

Your right hand, O Lord, glorious in power—your right hand, O Lord, shattered the enemy. In the greatness of your majesty you overthrew those who opposed you; you unleashed your burning anger. The waters saw you, O Lord, the waters saw you and writhed; the depths were convulsed.

Psalm 65:7 (ESV) – Stills the Raging Seas

You stilled the roaring of the seas, the roaring of their waves, and the turmoil of the nations.

Job 38:8-11 (ESV) – God's Control Over the Sea

"Who shut up the sea behind doors when it burst forth from the womb, when I made the clouds its garment and thick darkness its swaddling band, and prescribed limits for it and set bars and doors, and said, 'Thus far shall you come, and no farther, and here shall your proud waves be stayed'?"

2 Samuel 22:16 (ESV) – God's Power Over the Sea

The channels of the sea were seen, and the foundations of the world were laid bare at your rebuke, O Lord, at the blast of the breath of your nostrils.

Psalm 76:6 (ESV) – God's Might Over the Sea

You struck down the ancient enemy, the one who had held fast to the sea.

Psalm 104:7 (ESV) – God's Authority Over the Sea

At your rebuke, O Lord of hosts, the waters fled; at the sound of your thunder they took to flight.

Consider --- The Centurion trusted the word of Christ. The same Word raise dup the son of the widow of Nain. But the disciples have little trust even when Jesus demonstrates the full power and authority of His Word.

Jesus must be Lord over creation and the one who has come to restore it and defeat Satan. This view is supported by the following pericope (Lk 8:26-39) in which Jesus performs an exorcism and the demons end up in the lake

A strong faith is not a perfect faith. It is a faith that recognizes Jesus as the Creator and Re-creator of all things. He is the Christ. He is the very presence of God himself in creation to work redemption. The disciples will continue to respond with inadequate faith as they misunderstand Jesus' passion predictions and they will be tested again in Jesus' passion.

3 Read Luke 8:26-39. Some common questions: Pastor, why do the demons want to enter into a herd of pigs? My answer: Beats me. Poor piggies! Pastor, why do the pigs run off a cliff? My answer: Wouldn't you if a pack of demons suddenly entered you? Pastor, the pigs died, the farmers lost their income. Why would Jesus allow this to happen? My answer: Maybe He didn't want them making demonic BBQ! Pastor, why does the demon-possessed man lived in the cemetery? My answer: I don't know, maybe because it seemed spookier that way.

I've had people ask me some crazy questions about our reading today. But some questions about the Bible just can't be answered with any certainty. And that's okay! We don't need the answer to every question about the Bible. In fact, most of our questions are usually just distractions, they keep us from asking the most important questions—questions the Bible does answer with absolute clarity—questions about how and why Jesus Christ is the Savior of the world. Indeed, for all of the interesting things that are mentioned in the Bible, there is really only one reason that God has given His word to man: *That all people may come to the knowledge of the truth about Jesus Christ and be saved* (1 Timothy 2:4). As for

you and me and all our questions, Paul writes, *"continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed… how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus"* (2 Timothy 3:14-15). So, while our reading today might prompt all kinds of interesting questions about the relationship between pigs and demons (and demonic BBQ), I think there is really only one truth that Matthew wants us to know: Jesus has complete power and authority, not just over sickness and storms, but even over the demons.

Refer back to Luke 4:33-37. In Luke 4 and here in Luke 8, what do we learn about Satan, Demons and Evil in general in these sections?

They all recognize the authority of Jesus. They know their time is short and that judgement is coming. They know they cannot stop it, and yet, mysteriously they continue to resist. What these demons don't seem to understand is how God's reign is already at work in Son of God made flesh. Perhaps Jesus just seems too ordinary and too human (consider also how Satan tries to temp Jesus in Luke 4). Satan and the demons are not omniscient—they do not know everything.

4. What is strange and ironic about the way this passage ends?

The towns people beg Jesus to leave, in the same way that the demons begged to leave Jesus. The man begs to say with Jesus, where previously, the demons in him had begged Jesus to leave them alone. This ending seems odd compared to the beginning of chapter 8 where we see entire regions marveling at what Jesus says and does.

5. Should we expect demon possession to happen today? How should believers respond to claims of demon possession in the world today? Does belief in or disbelief in demon possession affect one's spiritual life and understanding of evil?

If the question was "Can it to happen" the answer would "yes." Nothing in the bible suggests that it cannot happen. But should we expect it?—that's key. The answer to that is a probable "no." There is very little evidence of it elsewhere in the scriptures beyond the synoptic gospels (Matthew, Mark and Luke). The book of Acts shows that the Apostles encountered demon possession only occasionally (e.g. Acts 16:16-18). The OT has precious few descriptions of it (most notably King Saul being tormented by an evil spirit which is not necessarily possession, and it clearly a spirit sent by God. The Gospel of John only has the mention of Satan entering Judas--not necessarily possession.

I think we should ground our faith and certainty in the power and efficacy of baptism as the assurance of our belonging to Christ and having the Holy Spirit. This does not mean that Satan and his allies cannot torment us—they can! But faith that is grounded in the promise of Christ's Word is solid ground, the rock upon which we hold fast. Romans 8 – Nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus.

We should not dismiss Satan and the work of demons in this world to lead people into error and away from what is good and pure and beautiful and right.

1 Timothy 4:1-5

Now the Spirit expressly says that in later times some will depart from the faith by devoting themselves to deceitful spirits and teachings of demons, through the insincerity of liars whose consciences are seared, who forbid marriage and require abstinence from foods that God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth. For everything created by God is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving, for it is made holy by the word of God and prayer.

6 The synoptics certainly suggest that during the ministry of Jesus the forces of Satan threw their all into trying to thwart God's plan in Christ. But Christ's Kingdom is marked by Holy Baptism. Why might this work of the Church be the primary reason we see less demonic influence than in the New Testament?

- ✞ Baptism is not merely a symbolic act but a divine reality through which God grants the gifts of faith, forgiveness, and the indwelling Holy Spirit (cf. Romans 6:3-4; Acts 2:38-39). This sacramental reality equips believers with a protective shield against the spiritual forces of evil. The Holy Spirit, received in Baptism, empowers believers to live in accordance with God's will and to resist the temptations and attacks of Satan.

- ✞ While Baptism confers the Holy Spirit, it is faith that anchors this spiritual reality in the believer's life. Faith, nurtured by the Holy Spirit, is the means by which believers recognize and respond to God's grace. This faith is dynamic, continually strengthened and renewed through the promises of God's Word in and through the Sacraments, making believers less susceptible to demonic influence. Ephesians 2:8-9 - "For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast." Hebrews 11:1 - "Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see."

- ✞ In places where the majority are baptized and actively live out their faith, the atmosphere is infused with the presence and power of the Holy Spirit, which deters Satan's attempts to operate openly. In areas where the Gospel is not widely known and Baptism is rare, missionaries often encounter intense demonic activity. This is not because Satan's power has increased but because the protective influence of the Holy Spirit, through Baptism and active faith, is absent or minimal. The lack of a robust faith community and the absence of the sacramental life leave individuals and communities more vulnerable to spiritual darkness. 1 John 4:4 - "You, dear children, are from God and have overcome them, because the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world." Matthew 28:19-20 - "Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you."

- ✞ The decline in Baptism rates in some Western contexts raises concerns about the future spiritual resilience of these communities. If Baptism and the accompanying faith diminish, the collective shield against demonic influence may weaken, potentially leading to an increase in spiritual vulnerability. To counteract this trend, there is a pressing need for renewed emphasis on evangelism and the sacramental life. By spreading the Gospel and ensuring that more individuals experience the reality of Baptism, the Church can continue to fortify believers against the forces of evil. 2 Timothy 4:2 - "Preach the word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage—with great patience and careful instruction."

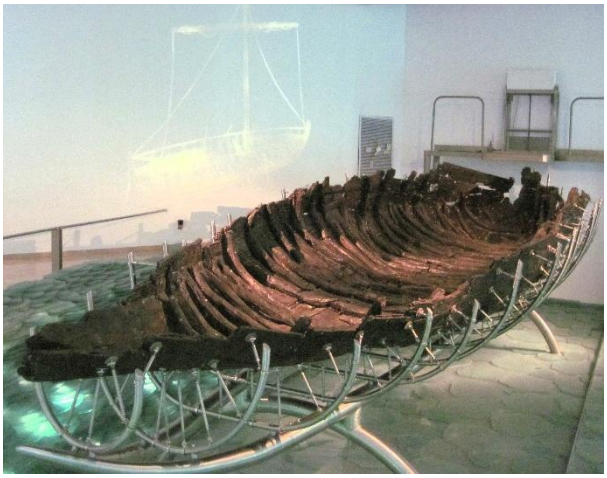
7 Think about those "before and after" makeover ads you see online. They show someone looking a bit… well, not their best, and then BAM!—they're fit, glowing, and ready to take on the world. Now, consider the similar dramatic "before and after" story of this demon-possessed man in Luke 8. What's the main lesson for us as followers of Christ today?

No matter how we first joined Jesus' family, we all come with significant struggles and burdens. But how has our life changed since then?

Just like in those makeover ads, our lives with Christ have been dramatically transformed. We've moved from being weighed down by sin and darkness to experiencing the light, peace, and purpose that come with being in Christ. The big message? Our identity and future are no longer defined by our past mistakes but by the new life we have in Him. So, whether we've been "before" for a short time or a long time, the "after" is all about living in the freedom, joy, and strength that Jesus provides.

Parables and Family Lessons

1. Read Luke 8:19–21. Certainly, Jesus is not dismissing zhis earthly family; rather, He is pointing to a deeper reality about what truly forms a family. How does what He says here connect back to the Sermon on the Mount?



2. Read Luke 8:22-25. Is this just an account of Jesus flexing His divine muscle or is there perhaps something more going on?

Genesis 1:1-10 (ESV) – Creation

Jonah 1:4-16 (ESV)-- Jonah and the Great Storm

Psalm 107:23-32 (ESV) – God Commands a Storm

Exodus 14:21-22 (ESV) – Crossing the Red Sea

Exodus 15:6-8 (ESV) – God's Rule Over the Sea

Psalm 65:7 (ESV) – Stills the Raging Seas

Job 38:8-11 (ESV) – God's Control Over the Sea

2 Samuel 22:16 (ESV) – God's Power Over the Sea

Psalm 76:6 (ESV) – God's Might Over the Sea

Psalm 104:7 (ESV) – God's Authority Over the Sea

3. Read Luke 8:26-39. Some common questions: Pastor, why do the demons want to enter into a herd of pigs? My answer: Beats me. Poor piggies! Pastor, why do the pigs run off a cliff? My answer: Wouldn't you if a pack of demons suddenly entered you? Pastor, the pigs died, the farmers lost their income. Why would Jesus allow this to happen? My answer: Maybe He didn't want them making demonic BBQ! Pastor, why

does the demon-possessed man lived in the cemetery? My answer: I don't know, maybe because it seemed spookier that way.

I've had people ask me some crazy questions about our reading today. But some questions about the Bible just can't be answered with any certainty. And that's okay! We don't need the answer to every question about the Bible. In fact, most of our questions are usually just distractions, they keep us from asking the most important questions—questions the Bible does answer with absolute clarity—questions about how and why Jesus Christ is the Savior of the world. Indeed, for all of the interesting things that are mentioned in the Bible, there is really only one reason that God has given His word to man: *That all people may come to the knowledge of the truth about Jesus Christ and be saved* (1 Timothy 2:4). As for you and me and all our questions, Paul writes, *"continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed… how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus"* (2 Timothy 3:14-15). So, while our reading today might prompt all kinds of interesting questions about the relationship between pigs and demons (and demonic BBQ), I think there is really only one truth that Matthew wants us to know: Jesus has complete power and authority, not just over sickness and storms, but even over the demons.

Refer back to Luke 4:33-37. In Luke 4 and here in Luke 8, what do we learn about Satan, Demons and Evil in general in these sections?

4 What is strange and ironic about the way this passage ends?

5 Should we expect demon possession to happen today? How should believers respond to claims of demon possession in the world today? Does belief in or disbelief in demon possession affect one's spiritual life and understanding of evil?

1 Timothy 4:1-5

Now the Spirit expressly says that in later times some will depart from the faith by devoting themselves to deceitful spirits and teachings of demons, through the insincerity of liars whose consciences are seared, who forbid marriage and require abstinence from foods that God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth. For everything created by God is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving, for it is made holy by the word of God and prayer.

6 The synoptics certainly suggest that during the ministry of Jesus the forces of Satan threw their all into trying to thwart God's plan in Christ. But Christ's Kingdom is marked by Holy Baptism. Why might this work of the Church be the primary reason we see less demonic influence than in the New Testament?

- ✞ Baptism is not merely a symbolic act but a divine reality through which God grants the gifts of faith, forgiveness, and the indwelling Holy Spirit (cf. Romans 6:3-4; Acts 2:38-39). This sacramental reality equips believers with a protective shield against the spiritual forces of evil. The Holy Spirit, received in Baptism, empowers believers to live in accordance with God's will and to resist the temptations and attacks of Satan.

- ✞ While Baptism confers the Holy Spirit, it is faith that anchors this spiritual reality in the believer's life. Faith, nurtured by the Holy Spirit, is the means by which believers recognize and respond to God's grace. This faith is dynamic, continually strengthened and renewed through the promises of God's Word in and through the Sacraments, making believers less susceptible to demonic influence. Ephesians 2:8-9 - "For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast." Hebrews 11:1 - "Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see."

- ✞ In places where the majority are baptized and actively live out their faith, the atmosphere is infused with the presence and power of the Holy Spirit, which deters Satan's attempts to operate openly. In areas where the Gospel is not widely known and Baptism is rare, missionaries often encounter intense demonic activity. This is not because Satan's power has increased but because the protective influence of the Holy Spirit, through Baptism and active faith, is absent or minimal. The lack of a robust faith community and the absence of the sacramental life leave individuals and communities more vulnerable to spiritual darkness. 1 John 4:4 - "You, dear children, are from God and have overcome them, because the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world." Matthew 28:19-20 - "Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you."

- ✞ The decline in Baptism rates in some Western contexts raises concerns about the future spiritual resilience of these communities. If Baptism and the accompanying faith diminish, the collective shield against demonic influence may weaken, potentially leading to an increase in spiritual vulnerability. To counteract this trend, there is a pressing need for renewed emphasis on evangelism and the sacramental life. By spreading the Gospel and ensuring that more individuals experience the reality of Baptism, the Church can continue to fortify believers against the forces of evil. 2 Timothy 4:2 - "Preach the word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage—with great patience and careful instruction."

7. Think about those "before and after" makeover ads you see online. They show someone looking a bit… well, not their best, and then BAM!—they're fit, glowing, and ready to take on the world. Now, consider the similar dramatic "before and after" story of this demon-possessed man in Luke 8. What's the main lesson for us as followers of Christ today?

   No matter how we first joined Jesus' family, we all come with significant struggles and burdens. But how has our life changed since then?