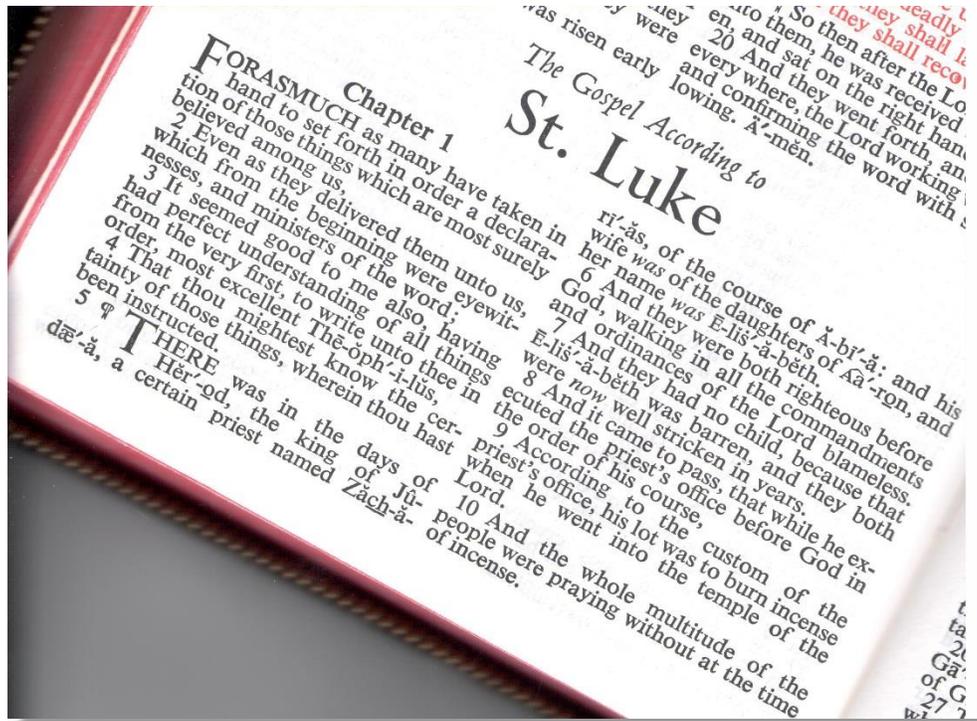


LUKE

TEACHING THE POWER OF FAITH



F. Michael Slay
A DEEP Study

The Fellowship of Ailbe

Luke 8:34-9:17– Teaching the Power of Faith

People are scared or even offended by Jesus's power. He keeps who He is a secret, while doing things that, in retrospect, will make it obvious. This is all part of preparing his disciples for what's coming. Some of the events are actually clever exercises for them.

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We are a spiritual fellowship in the Celtic Christian tradition. Our goal is to promote revival, renewal, and awakening, following the teaching of Scripture and the example and heritage of our forebears in the faith.

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Thank you.

Luke 8:34-9:17 – Teaching the Power of Faith
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1 Luke 8:34-39 (ESV)

When the herdsmen saw what had happened, they fled and told it in the city and in the country. Then people went out to see what had happened, and they came to Jesus and 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. And those who had seen it told them how the demon-possessed man had been healed. Then all the people of the surrounding country of the Gerasenes asked him to depart from 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." And he went away, proclaiming throughout the whole city how much Jesus had done for him.

The townsfolk asked Jesus to leave? Seriously? What's up with these people anyway?

The demoniac had to be just about the scariest thing they've ever seen, what with the breaking chains and all that. But now that he's normal they're even more afraid. Of what?

Could this have something to do with all those pigs drowning? No. Notice that *they were afraid* before *those who had seen it told them how the demon-possessed man had been healed*. They didn't know anything about the pigs when they first got scared. It was seeing the demoniac *sitting at the feet of Jesus, clothed and in his right mind* that frightened them.

The demoniac is no longer scary, so it has to be Jesus. So why are they scared of Him?

He isn't "safe." He's powerful beyond their wildest dreams and He's also good. That's unpredictable. To people (who, by our fallen nature, are not good) that's scary. This is the lesson CS Lewis teaches in "The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe" when the Beavers tell the children about Aslan.

"Then he isn't safe?" said Lucy.

"Safe?" said Mr. Beaver. "Don't you hear what Mrs. Beaver tells you? Who said anything about safe? 'Course he isn't safe. But he's good. He's the King, I tell you."

People are afraid of all things holy. We claim to love goodness, but when it comes right down to it we just want to be left alone.

And so they ask Jesus to leave.

We should be afraid of God. If not, we have a problem. When we lack total awe at all things holy, we think too highly of ourselves.

This highlights our need for humility. Our stinking sin makes us completely unworthy of God's favor.

Sure, he gives us grace but we shouldn't act like it's no big deal – like we aren't surprised (or even impressed) by it.

Who do we think we are anyway?

2 Luke 8:40-48 (ESV)

Now when Jesus returned, the crowd welcomed him, for they were all waiting for him. And there came a man named Jairus, who was a ruler of the synagogue. And falling at Jesus' feet, he implored him to come to his house, for he had an only daughter, about twelve years of age, and she was dying.

As Jesus went, the people pressed around him. And there was a woman who had had a discharge of blood for twelve years, and though she had spent all her living on physicians, she could not be healed by anyone. She came up behind him and touched the fringe of his garment, and immediately her discharge of blood ceased. And Jesus said, "Who was it that touched me?" When all denied it, Peter said, "Master, the crowds surround you and are pressing in on you!" But Jesus said, "Someone touched me, for I perceive that power has gone out from me." And when the woman saw that she was not hidden, she came trembling, and falling down before him declared in the presence of all the people why she had touched him, and how she had been immediately healed. And he said to her, "Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace."

How does Jesus know someone touched him? Why does He care? Why does He want to know who it was? Why is the woman afraid? Why does Jesus call her out anyway?

All these are connected. Verse 46 answers the first question; Jesus perceives *that power has gone out from Him*. But why has power gone out from Him?

Verse 48 answers that question and then all the dots connect. Jesus tells the woman, "*Daughter, your faith has made you well.*" The woman's faith is why the power went out from Jesus.

That's the point of the whole incident. Notice that Jesus gives credit for the healing to the woman's faith. He wants to teach this lesson, so He seeks her out. She's afraid because she knows she took something from Him and she assumes He wants it back or has some other "normal" motive. It never occurs to her that all Jesus wants to do is teach.

In her fear she actually teaches most of the lesson when she *declared in the presence of all the people why she had touched him, and how she had been immediately healed*. Jesus then wraps it up, explaining what actually happened by saying, "*Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace.*"

This is an important part of the Lord's agenda. The people need to learn that faith is the key.

Faith is the key, but faith in what? Lots of people think it's faith in the cross.

It's not. It's faith in Jesus – specifically faith in who He is.

That's all this lady knew. That's all the thief on the cross knew – that He is the king. That's why we confess Jesus as Lord. He saves His people, and His people are the ones for whom He is Lord. That's saving faith.

because, if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. – Romans 10:9 (ESV)

3 Luke 8:49-56 (ESV)

While he was still speaking, someone from the ruler's house came and said, "Your daughter is dead; do not trouble the Teacher any more." But Jesus on hearing this answered him, "Do not fear; only believe, and she will be well." And when he came to the house, he allowed no one to enter with him, except Peter and John and James, and the father and mother of the child. And all were weeping and mourning 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. But taking her by the hand he called, saying, "Child, arise." And her spirit returned, and she got up at once. And he directed that something should be given her to eat. And her parents were amazed, but he charged them to tell no one what had happened.

The word "asleep," as used in the first century, doesn't always mean normal snoozing.

Then he appeared to more than five hundred brothers at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have fallen asleep.
– 1 Cor. 15:6 (also see 1 Cor. 15:18 and 1 Thess. 4:13-15)

But this crowd misses that and they laugh at Jesus (some translations say "ridiculed.") The laughing bit seems way over the top, but it's just fine with Jesus. He doesn't want everyone to know who He really is. That's why He only let a few people *enter with him* and that's why He *charged them to tell no one what had happened*.

This is known as the messianic secret.

<http://www.ligonier.org/learn/devotionals/messianic-secret/>

There are lots of explanations and interpretations for the messianic secret but they all involve Jesus keeping his crucifixion on track.

Every minute of every day, Jesus was walking on the road to the cross, and He took great care to make sure that everything unfolded according to plan.

Every minute.

Jesus' bravery and focus boggles the mind. While no one can rise to His level, for two thousand years Christians have risen pretty far. This still goes on today.

Christians around the world, especially in areas controlled by Islam, suffer massively for Christ. We need to pray for them regularly. Ask the Lord to give them divine protection and comfort.

There are many organizations and websites that specialize in prayer for the persecuted church. Search on "persecuted church" and you'll find thousands.

I cannot endorse any particular one, but this website has a good current events/news section.

<http://www.persecution.org/>

4 Luke 9:1-9 (ESV)

And he 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. And he said to them, “Take nothing for your journey, no staff, nor bag, nor bread, nor money; and do not have two tunics. And whatever house you enter, stay there, and from there depart. And wherever they do not receive you, when you leave that town shake off the dust from your feet as a testimony against them.” And they departed and went through the villages, preaching the gospel and healing everywhere.

Now Herod the tetrarch heard about all that was happening, 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 prophets of old had risen. Herod said, “John I beheaded, but who is this about whom I hear such things?” And he sought to see him.

This passage describes a discipleship training exercise. The twelve are intentionally sent out without the ability to survive on their own – no staff for self-defense, no food, no money, not enough clothing for a cold night. Even the small items they’d have in their bag aren’t allowed.

Jesus does give them amazing powers, even some authority; anyone who takes them in will be glad they did.

But they’re also given a curious restriction; they can’t move from house to house within a town. Why?

This fits well with the other restrictions and seems to complete the package. They have highly marketable skills (to say the least) but aren’t allowed to market them. They must travel as poor sojourners. “If you’re welcomed, great; if not, leave town.”

The disciples have no idea of the tough road that lies ahead for them – but Jesus does. In this exercise, He gives them the kind of power they’ll have later but forces them to be completely dependent.

This is essential training in how to function as an apostle.

We’re raised to be self-sufficient, and this passage is not calling us to forget what we’ve learned.

But we need to learn to not be self-reliant and to depend on Him. God is glorified when we become accustomed to the fact that He has all the power and we are nothing without His blessings.

This can only be learned through prayer. We need to ask God to teach us to depend on Him.

But this is tricky. How do you ask for this? Pray for a humbling trial?

No, there’s plenty of evidence already. We just need to see it better. Think back. Ask the Lord to remind us of the times we turned to Him and how He responded. We often forget the desperate prayers that preceded our triumphs.

Ask Him to help us recall and connect the dots.

5 Luke 9:10-17 (ESV)

On their return the apostles told him all that they had done. And he took them and withdrew apart to a town called Bethsaida. When the crowds learned it, they followed him, and he welcomed them and spoke to them of the kingdom of God and cured those who had need of healing. Now the day began to wear away, and the twelve came and said to him, “Send the crowd away to go into the surrounding villages and countryside to find lodging and get provisions, for we are here in a desolate 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. And he said to his disciples, “Have them sit down in groups of about fifty each.” And they did so, and had them all sit down. And taking the five loaves and the two fish, he looked up to heaven and said a blessing over them. Then he broke the loaves and gave them to the disciples to set before the crowd. And they all ate and were satisfied. And what was left over was picked up, twelve baskets of broken pieces.

The 5,000 was actually more like 10,000. Matthew’s account notes the rest of the crowd.

And those who ate were about five thousand men, besides women and children. – Matthew 14:21

The disciples divided them into 100 groups of 50 men each. Presumably some men brought families and some didn’t. So this is 100 groups of, say, 100 each. Try to imagine that crowd. Picture 100 people at a church picnic. Then picture 10 such groups in a row. Now picture 10 such rows in a field.

The amazing thing isn’t just that Jesus fed all those people; it’s that a mob that size followed Him when He withdrew to an isolated place. Only a tiny fraction of them could have heard him when he spoke.

This miracle is the only thing prior to the last supper that’s recorded in all four gospels. It’s a great portrait of His power and His love, but the portrait of his following is important.

These people are hungry for a lot more than just bread and fish.

But do they even know what they’re hungry for?

They thought they needed a king when they really needed a savior. That’s what makes charity so tricky. Nowadays, some people think they need a hand-out when what they need is the gospel.

But the real trick is to just love them. It’s OK (even glorious) to err on the side of giving someone what they want instead of what they need. That’s how we learn, and sometimes that’s how people learn to see grace.

While skill and experience matter, we need God to make us more compassionate. Pray for the Lord to soften our hearts. Ask the Holy Spirit to cure us of any self-righteousness.

Pray that we will be transformed into His likeness so that we will be deeply moved (as He was) by people’s needs.

Questions for reflection or discussion

1. Do you ever think of Jesus as fearsome?

2. Have you ever realized, in retrospect, that some strange incident was there to teach you or open your eyes to something?

3. Do you ever worry or feel guilty about not suffering for Christ? This is what drove St. Patrick to invent Green Martyrdom.

4. Modern people tend to depend on technology. How can we learn to depend on God and not ourselves or our toys?

5. What's the key to loving needy people?

Items for prayer: