

## **22 - Different Kinds of Power**

### **Luke 8:22-39**

A large block of Luke's narrative now turns attention to the different kinds of power that Jesus exhibited. It was, of course, not his own power, but God's. The whole passage presents four stories of this power of God's Spirit at work in and through him. Death, diseases, demons and natural disasters all come under his control. These stories are also about his identity as the Son of God.

Vss. 22-25 tells about a storm of the lake that Jesus stilled. At least, his disciples and the subsequent tradition believed he did so. Luke intended his audience to believe this too.

Because Lake Galilee lies below sea level and is surrounded by mountains, it is noted for its sudden storms that rush down from the heights almost without warning. The winds can instantly turn the normally tranquil water into a raging maelstrom. People who have been in such storms on Galilee, even in our time, have said that it can be a very frightening. The disciples readily attributed Jesus to have power over the natural realm.

For the disciples, confronted as they were with a new aspect of Jesus' being, this power raised questions about his identity. Sharon Hinge asked if this was a post-resurrection interpretation of a

perfectly natural occurrence. But that is a modern issue of which Luke had not conceived. His concern was what the story said about Jesus and how it would lead others to believe in him.

The next story (vss. 26-39) presents an even more remarkable healing miracle in what many Jews regarded as foreign territory. "The country of the Gerasenes" lay east and south side of Lake Galilee and the Jordan River. Its main centre, Gerasa, was twenty miles east of the river, but the territory it controlled reached as far as the lakeshore. One of the ten city states of the Decapolis, a loose federation established by Greeks about three centuries before Jesus' time, Gerasa contained many Greek temples, the ruins of which can still be seen.

As the presence of a herd of pigs indicates, the territory was inhabited many by non-Jews. A man possessed by demons, as mental illness was regarded in those days, lived in the cemetery and was bound with chains. Luke's description, especially the plural "we," may make us think of schizophrania or multiple personalities. The man was a danger to himself and his community. The story contains many details no longer credible, but they are still important in identifying who Jesus is.

The surprising detail of the story is the loss of the herd of pigs belonging to the community. Driven by the demons Jesus cast out, they plunged into the lake and drowned. This would have been a terrible loss. The Gerasenes did not believe, but reacted with fear begged Jesus to leave. When he and the disciples got back to their boat, the deranged man, now well again, begged to go with them. Jesus refused and sent him home to be a witness to what Jesus had done for him. Telling his story was to become “the completion of his healing,” Sharon Hinge reports.