

GOD IS IN CONTROL

This morning we are going to look at 4 stories that show God's greatness and control over all things. God is great so we do not have to be in control!

1. JESUS HAS POWER OVER THE NATURAL WORLD

Read [Luke 8:22-25](#)

This story has less punch for us than it did for its first century hearers – *we shop at PnP for our fish and travel is car with ABS and airbags, you don't own a rowing boat – so the closest you get to understanding is lounging on your lilo in the pool!* But up until today it is well documented that Lake Galilee, even though it is an inland lake, can have very ferocious storms. These fishermen had boarded a boat with Jesus and set off but suddenly a storm came up. It was at the point where they were about to go down and they would drown. *These veteran fishermen were thinking: 'I've kissed my wife for the last time, my kids are going to grow up without their father...'* – this is not an irrational attack of storm-a-phobia! So they wake Jesus who is curiously sleeping. He says, 'quiet, be still'. *My first reaction if I were in the boat would be to laugh at Jesus' words – until the wind dropped immediately and the lake went flat; then I would be terrified!* Jesus was not just a Rabbi – in one sentence he silences the wind and waves; this Rabbi could tell nature what to do! The disciples are now more terrified of Jesus than they were of the storm (nature obeys him).

Jesus was not upset that they appealed to him to save them, but that their appeal came from faithlessness and fear (read 8:25). The disciples mistakenly think that Jesus doesn't care, and that they were alone. But God always knows what is happening – everywhere and all the time.

First story = God is in control of circumstance.

2. JESUS HAS POWER OVER THE SPIRIT WORLD

Read [Luke 8:26-39](#)

This story makes the storm story seem like child's play! If we can't relate to storms then the demon possessed man is probably more difficult. Many people have the idea that there is a battle for supremacy in the Bible between good and evil. But this passage shows us that God has unprecedented power over Satan and all evil. Satan becomes entirely defensive as soon as Jesus arrives (read 8:28). The demoniac was a legend, kids knew about him, he ran about naked freaking everyone out, he ripped chains apart and incited fear. But when Jesus arrives he turns into a little lamb - is begging not to be tortured, as if the demons know what their ultimate end is

already. There is a warning here for us: there is great danger in knowing who Jesus is and now living according to who he is, not loving him as your Saviour. The demons are under judgement and are going one way. Jesus, but his victorious death on the cross has triumphed over Satan. It is not good enough for you to know about God – I have so many conversations with people who say, ‘I believe in God’; and I want to say, ‘so did the demons and they are in hell’. Belief in Jesus, entrusting you life to Jesus is the key – that is salvation.

With one command the demons come out and Jesus sends them among the pigs. The drowning of the pigs shows Satan’s intentions, as opposed to Jesus who saved the disciples from drowning.

The crowd gathers like a bunch of paparazzi photographers rushing in media frenzy. What surprises them is not the lemming like mass pig suicide – but rather the transformation of the man.

Second story = Jesus has power over Satan and all demons; over the whole spiritual realm. Notice again the people were scared of the demoniac, but now they are fearful of Jesus!

3. JESUS HAS POWER OVER SICKNESS

Luke intertwines two stories here to show that they should be contrasted and compared.

Read [Luke 8:40-56](#)

The story of this woman is not as foreign as the story of the storm or the demoniac – perhaps there are people here who can relate to long term suffering. The woman’s illness is portrayed as utterly hopeless – a long time:

- (a) 12 years,
- (b) the doctors who should have helped had only made her suffer more,
- (c) she was just getting worse not better,
- (d) she had spent all her money,
- (e) and according to Jewish law she was ritually unclean because of her bleeding condition.

When you’ve suffered for hours you expect to get better; when you have suffered for days and weeks you still have hope; when you’ve suffered for months hope starts to fade; when you’ve suffered for 12 years all hope is gone.

However somehow this woman hears that there is a healer in town, a man called Jesus – so she braves the crowd, she pushes her way to Jesus and in faith she reaches out and touches Him.

Series: The Gospel of Luke – Jesus: the God man
Preached @ ECCC by Grant Peers on 6th November, 2011

Scripture: Luke 8:22-56

And she is healed. Imagine how she felt when she was finally healed. Jesus tries to find out who had touched him the woman eventually comes forward – trembling with fear she kneels before Him. But Jesus reassures her, speaks peace to her that it is her faith that has healed her.

Third story = Jesus has power over sickness. And again we find this woman trembling at Jesus feet after the frailty caused by her condition.

4. JESUS HAS POWER OVER DEATH

Jairus comes to Jesus in faith to ask that he would come and heal his sick daughter. But as Jesus is going to heal his daughter he is interrupted by the incident of the woman with the bleeding.

Read [Luke 8:49](#)

So the way the story reads is: because Jesus was waylaid by this woman Jairus' daughter is dead. But Jesus did not spend time with the woman instead of Jairus' daughter, but rather Jesus is about to give an even greater demonstration of He is; and in fact it calls for far greater faith. The situation has gone from grave sickness to death, from a flicker of hope to utter hopelessness.

Jesus goes into the room with the parents and the disciples while others scoff at him. And he shows that it is not more difficult from Him to raise the dead than it is for Him wake someone who is asleep. The parents get their dead daughter back!

Fourth story = Jesus has power over death. And again the parents are literally beside themselves, astounded, in awe.

FAITH OR FEAR

WHO IS JESUS?

The miracles of Jesus were windows into heaven for us to see who God really is. The point of these four stories is NOT that we would spend our whole lives longing after a similar miraculous experience. That is not to say that God cannot or does not still perform wonderful and glorious miracles today; but the point for us is the same as the point for their initial witnesses: we're not to copy them; they simply teach us who Jesus is.

The verse that explains these four stories to us is 8:50 – "Don't be afraid; just believe." Fear of circumstances can be replaced by faith in Christ when we realise that He is Lord of everything. God is in control.

WHEN DO YOU TURN TO HIM?

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The interesting thing in these stories is that no one has faith in Christ until they are desperate – disciples in the boat, demon possessed man, sick woman, or the desperate father. Again - this is not what we are meant to copy!

The default setting is a human is 'faith in myself' = 'If I am in control things will go well in my life'. But these stories teach us that God is great and we do not need to be in control. I do not mean that Christians should waft through life in a hazy notion of 'let go and let God'. No, God has given us a certain amount of responsibility that implies control, but we need to trust him when we can't be in control.

APPLYING THE FOUR STORIES

One of the great hymns of our faith was written in response to a terrible storm in Horatio G. Spafford's life. In late in the 19th century Spafford's only son was killed by scarlet fever at the age of four. He was a wealthy business man but the great Chicago Fire of October 1871, ruined him financially. On November 22, 1873 his four daughters were crossing the Atlantic from America to England ahead of him on holiday. Their steamship was struck by an iron sailing vessel and 226 people died – among them were all four of his daughters. When his wife arrived in England, she sent a telegram to Spafford saying "Saved alone." Several weeks later Spafford sail to his wife and it was on this journey that he wrote the hymn, "It is well with my soul"

Spafford learnt to trust God in the most dire circumstances. These four accounts have been recorded for us to encourage us to trust when we face difficult times. These four stories sort of covers about all the uncontrollable in our lives:

- Circumstances – people lose keys and people have car accidents;
- People – you can't control people and especially the ones who can most affect your life: your spouse, your children and your boss
- Sickness – you can treat sickness but you can't control it
- Death – when your time is up it is up

I'm a pastor and I get to see how people are just racked with fear and worry and anger and are perplex because they have this false sense of sovereignty over their lives. So when things don't go 'according to plan' they collapse.

Here is the interesting thing: your faith can never grow further than it has been extended. In other words you can't really say that you have faith until you have been there, until you faced

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the circumstances, dealt with the people, faced the sickness or death! But what you need to arm yourself with is the knowledge that God is in control, with the realization that you are not in control, with an understanding of who Jesus really is and the way that he rules over everything; with the fact that God has set up this testimony of faithfulness in the Bible and in your life...

CONCLUSION

In what areas of your life are you asserting a false sovereignty, living as if you have control over things that are really out of your control?