

Yes. He commanded the demons to go into the pigs.

What was his reason for doing so? Was it a good (in the moral sense of the word) reason?

He healed the men and destroyed the pig in order to show the people that they needed him not money for salvation. He did all this to reveal himself to them as the all satisfying treasure. This is a very good and loving reason. His purpose in the destruction of the pigs was for his glory and the benefit of people.

Did the demons want to destroy the pigs?

Yes.

What was their reason for doing so? Was it a good (in the moral sense of the word) reason?

While we don't know exactly why the demons wanted to destroy the pigs we can be sure that it was an immoral, evil reason.

Therefore we discover that Jesus willed the destruction of the pigs for a good reason but that the demons willed the destruction of the pigs for an evil reason. So the evil actions of the demons served the good purposes of Jesus and yet Jesus is not guilty of evil. This is one of hundreds of examples of God willing evil to accomplish his good purposes through the evil action of men or demons in such a way that God's will is accomplished but that God is not guilty of evil. You may want to consider these few other examples:

- ◆ Job 1 (especially vv. 21-22): Satan and evil men destroyed Job's property and family and yet Job says, "The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away". The narrator then adds, "In all this, Job did not sin by charging God with wrongdoing."
- ◆ 1 Kings 22 (esp. vv. 19-23). God commands an evil spirit to cause a group of prophets to lie in order to get king Ahab to go into battle where the Lord will have him killed. This in spite of the fact that God condemns false prophets throughout the OT.

- ◆ Genesis 50:20 Joseph tells his brothers that all the evil they did to him, God did. They did it for evil reasons, to harm him, God did it for good reasons, to save many people.
- ◆ Consider how the early church talked about the betrayal, trial and death of Jesus. Acts 2:23, 4: 23-28 (esp. v. 28)

What difference would it make in your life if you believed and acted as if you believed that every evil thing done to you was willed by God for your good?

Jesus is completely unique and superior to everyone and everything else because he is the judge and executioner of all who do evil and he causes evil to serve his purposes.

What are we told about these two men?

They lived in the tombs. They were very violent men. People were afraid to go near the tombs or the road near them because they were so violent.

The previous story ended with the disciples asking a question about who Jesus is. The demons answer their question in v. 29. What do we discover about the relationship between demons and Jesus? What do the demons know about Jesus? What don't they know?

The demons must obey Jesus. They ask him, as servants ask their master, "what do you want with us?" They know that Jesus is the Son of God. In other words they understand that God is a Trinity. They know about the incarnation, the God has become man in the person of Jesus. They know that Jesus existed before he was born. They know that Jesus is their judge and will one day torture them. They know that the day of judgement is still in the future. They do not know why Jesus has come at this time. The only thing they can think of is Jesus' punishing of them. They do not understand that he has come to die on the cross. Nor do they understand that his death will be their destruction (Col. 2: 14-15, Heb. 2:14-15).

How do the demons ask Jesus about going into the pigs? What does this tell us about the relationship between Jesus and demons? Why do they want to go into the pigs?

They beg Jesus for permission to enter the pigs. This tells us that they can do nothing without Jesus' permission. They cannot do anything without Jesus' command. We do not know why they wanted to go into the pigs other than that they wanted to destroy them as shown by what follows.

Notice that the only word Jesus speaks in vv. 28-34 is the command "Go!" in v. 32. When Jesus commands them to go what happens? Remembering what we saw in the previous question, what does this mean?

The pigs rush into the sea and drown, presumably at the instigation of the demons. However, as they cannot do anything without Jesus' command this must mean that Jesus wanted the herd of pigs destroyed.

How do the people who live in this country respond to Jesus' healing the two men and sending the demons into the pigs and thus destroying the pigs?

They are very upset and beg Jesus to leave the country.

What does their response tell us about them and about why Jesus wanted the pigs destroyed?

In the words of D.A. Carson, these people preferred pigs to people and swine to a Savior. All they care about is that the pigs, their means of support and livelihood, were destroyed. They are unimpressed that the two demon possessed men are now cured and whole people. They have no interest in the one who cured them. They are only angry that the pigs are destroyed and they want nothing to do with the one who destroyed them. The presence of these pigs and the concern of these people over them would lead us to conclude that this country is not Jewish, but rather Gentile. So, it would seem that Jesus healed these two men and destroyed these pigs because he wanted to confront these people with himself and the good news of the kingdom of God. He created a situation where the people would be forced to choose between him as their Savior or money. They chose money and ordered him to leave.

Supposing that none of these people ever came to faith in Christ, how are they going to feel when they stand before Jesus at the final judgement, remembering that they commanded him to leave their country because they were upset that their pigs were destroyed?

They will be full of despair and remorse when they realize that they commanded the one who is their judge and offered himself to them as a Savior to leave.

This story sheds light on the relationship between God and evil. Did Jesus want the pigs destroyed? Was it his will for them to be destroyed?

doesn't need crowds of people to accomplish it. He doesn't need the endorsement of human authorities or celebrities to accomplish it. He doesn't need you or me. He is infinitely powerful and self-sufficient. He didn't come to earth and die on a cross to recruit people because God needs help taking care of his world. He shows these men that if they truly understand who he is, then they will know that to have him and nothing else is infinitely better than having a home and a family.

What difference does it make to you that Jesus doesn't need you for anything? What difference would it make to you if you really believed and acted like you believe that Jesus is completely happy and self-sufficient?

Jesus is completely unique and superior to everyone and everything else because he is happy and doesn't need anyone to do God's work.

What happens when Jesus and his disciples get in a boat to go to the other side of the lake?

Jesus goes to sleep. A furious storm hits the boat and threatens to capsize it. Jesus keeps sleeping. The disciples were terrified and woke Jesus up and asked him to save them.

How does Jesus respond to their fear and their waking him up?

He rebukes them while the storm rages around them. He asks them why they are afraid and calls them men of little faith. He is not sympathetic or compassionate. He then gives a command and the wind stops and the sea is still as glass.

If you would have been in the boat, would you have been afraid? Does Jesus' response seem harsh? Why does he have not sympathy for their fear? How can he call them men of little faith when they asked him to save them?

Jesus obviously sees their fear as morally wrong. They should not be afraid. They have seen him do miraculous things and teach as no one else ever has. He had told them they were going to the other side. He slept through the storm. From these three things they should have

concluded there was no danger. They should have known that if Jesus was with them, no harm could come to them.

What does this tell us about the relationship between fear and faith?

Where fear exists, faith does not exist. Where faith exists, fear cannot exist. Fear is a sin. It dishonors God by not believing that God is powerful enough or loving enough to care for us. The disciples were calling into question both Jesus' power and his love when they were afraid.

How should we deal with fear?

Fear must be dealt with as we deal with every sin. We must confess it as sin. We must ask God for faith to believe his promises. We must go to his word and look for promises to use in our fight against fear. We should meditate on his love and power as much as we are able to fortify ourselves with faith in him so that we will not be overcome by fear.

What are the things that make you afraid? The next time you were afraid, how would it affect you to know that Jesus is asking you, "Why are you afraid, you of little faith?"

The disciples ask, after Jesus calms the storm, "What sort of man is this that the winds and the seas obey him?" What does this story tell us about Jesus that makes him unique and superior to everyone else?

He is a man who controls the weather. Controlling the weather is one of the main works of God in the OT. (See Psalm 135:5-7) Therefore, here is clear evidence that Jesus is a man who went through all that we go through. He went through the storm with the disciples. But he is a man who exercises power that only God possesses.

Jesus is completely unique and superior to everyone and everything else because he is a man who controls the weather.

What happens as soon as Jesus gets to the other side of the lake?

He gets off the boat and is greeted by two demon-possessed men.

HE IS POWERFULLY WEAK

MATT. 8:18-34

(Based on sermon 8/8/2000)

INTRODUCTION

Who is the most unique person you have ever met and why? Who is the most famous or impressive person you have met and why?

The central claim of Christianity is that Jesus Christ is the most unique and impressive person to have ever lived on planet earth. A primary goal of each of the men who wrote biographies about his life was to demonstrate the truth of that claim. Here in Matthew 8: 18-34 we are shown Jesus in action displaying his greatness. Here is a passage designed for the purpose of impressing us with Jesus.

STUDY

Imagine you were the director of one of the major political parties campaign committee for President of the U.S. What would be some of the things you would do in order to get your candidate elected? What would be your goal?

You would work night and day to get your candidate seen by as many people as possible. You would highlight his or her accomplishments. You would get the endorsements of other famous and respected people for your candidate. Wherever people gathered you would seek to get your candidate there. You would give your life to promote your candidate.

We know that Jesus is God's Son and the Savior of the world. We know that God's plan, Jesus' plan, was to create a church made up of people from every nation of the world. His goal was to spread the good news of God's kingdom to the whole world. In light of this, does anything strike you as odd when you read vv. 18-22?

It is when Jesus saw the crowd that he gave orders to go to the other side of the Sea of Galilee. In v. 20 he tells an influential man, who expressed an enthusiastic desire to follow Jesus that if he followed he

should plan on being homeless. In v. 22 he tells one of his own disciples who has just lost a father and has asked permission to go bury him to "let the dead bury their own dead". In other words it appears as though Jesus is trying to get away from the crowds, that he is trying to quell the enthusiasm of people for him, rather than encourage people to follow. (You could also add his telling the leper in v. 4 not to tell anyone what he had done, except the priest.)

Why does Jesus tell the enthusiastic teacher of the law that he is homeless?

The teacher of the law is impressed with Jesus and eager to be a follower, but why? Is he eager to follow Jesus because of what he will get out of it, a share in this popularity, or because he delights in Jesus himself? Jesus gives him a way to know what he is really after. He asks him, "Are you eager to follow me because you know who I am and you love me or because you love what I do and want a piece of the action? The way to know is this, are you willing to be homeless in order to be with me? If you love me, being homeless will be as nothing to you. But if what you really love is the crowds and the popularity then being homeless will be too great of a price to pay.

Why does he tell his disciple who wants to bury his dad to "let the dead bury their own dead"?

He says to the man who wants permission to go bury his father. "Let's see, you're willing to be my follower as long as I don't interfere with the relationships that are important to you. Is that right? Do you really believe that I am the source of all life or are you one of my 'disciples' for some other reason? Here's how you can tell. Are you willing to suffer the rejection and anger of your family in order to be with me? Is being in my company better to you than maintaining family connections and loyalties?"

What is it that Jesus is demonstrating in his leaving the crowd behind and in his challenging these two men?

Jesus is showing that he doesn't need people. Rather, people need him. He is happy and self-sufficient. He doesn't need anyone or anything to help him get God's work done. He's on a mission for God and he