

True Liberation Theology

Matthew 8: 28-34

- I. To those who are far from God, Jesus can be a scary guy.
- A. We can assume these are Gentiles.
 - 1. They do not know the God of Israel
 - (a) They are not following him or seeking him.
 - (b) They are ignorant of his ways.
 - B. Something powerful has happened that they can't explain.
 - 1. They were familiar with the two "crazy" men.
 - (a) But now they are sane, normal.
 - 2. This Jew spoke and the spirits obeyed him.
 - (a) Power that is not understood can be frightening.
 - C. They also know they have an economic crisis on their hands.
 - 1. Don't know if this is a communal herd or owned by one man.
 - (a) Mark 5 says there were about 2,000 pigs.
 - (b) Somebody isn't going to be bringing home the bacon.
 - (c) Somebody had a lot invested in this herd.
 - (d) But suddenly pork futures have gone belly up.
 - D. The people come out of the town and beg Jesus to leave.
 - 1. They are scared.
 - (a) They don't even ask what this means.
 - (b) They see the result of a mysterious power.
 - 2. They misinterpret because they're looking through the wrong lens.
 - (a) A wrong lens can be historical, cultural, religious, or personal.
 - (b) A wrong lens can be based on stereotypes, false assumptions.
 - 3. So, they send Jesus away.
 - (a) We are tempted to think, "what fools."
 - (b) But we do the same thing.
- II. Jesus comes to liberate us, but we misinterpret him.
- A. Our perspective is distorted by false lenses.
 - 1. The lens of religion.
 - 2. The lens of fear.
 - (a) This lens goes all the way back to the original deception.
 - (b) Is God really good? Does he really want good for me?
 - (c) What are his motives? Does he just want control?
 - (d) What is his character? Is he trustworthy?
 - (e) What will it cost me? (Fear of loss).
 - B. When we misinterpret Jesus, we tend to be closed to the Gospel.
 - 1. We don't seek. We don't give the Gospel a chance.
 - 2. We react, treating the messenger poorly.
 - 3. We defend and deflect even if we sense there is truth.
 - 4. We run away from God and the Gospel.
 - (a) We don't want to deal with it.
 - (b) We assume that our perspective is accurate.
 - (c) We have no interest in the Gospel.
 - (d) "No, thanks! That's not for me. I don't need Jesus."
5. We may not realize it, but we are the townspeople.
 - (a) We are actively or passively pleading with Jesus to leave.
- C. We also need Jesus for the ongoing liberation of sanctification.
 - 1. When he approaches our idols we sometimes want him to "leave our region."
- III. What we don't realize: we are spiritually like the demoniacs.
- A. These demonized men are clearly far from God.
 - 1. They have no control, or power over their oppressors.
 - (a) They are held captive.
 - (b) They have no ability to free themselves.
 - 2. They can't see the desperation of their situation.
 - (a) Darkness even has control over their perceptions of reality, their understanding of good and evil.
 - (b) Because they can't see, no inclination to seek freedom.
 - 3. They are stuck. In and of themselves, they have no hope.
 - B. Consider who we are before we knew Jesus.
 - 1. We are far from God. We are his enemies (Colossians 1:21).
 - 2. We are under the "dominion of darkness (Colossians 1:13).
 - (a) Dominion: the place where a king rules.
 - (b) Same root as domination. We were controlled and manipulated.
 - 3. We are spiritual captives (II Timothy 2:25-26).
 - C. We are not aware of our captivity because it is not visible.
 - 1. The plight of the demoniacs is obvious and visible.
 - 2. But as non-believers, we think we're free.
 - D. Jesus comes to liberate us through the Gospel.
 - 1. He is good and wants good for us (John 10:10; Psalm 84:11)
 - 2. He has demonstrated his love.
 - (a) Would a tyrant offer his life for us on a cross?
 - 3. We need not fear the intentions of this good God! Trust him!
 - E. Jesus tells the liberated ones to bear witness to the captives.
 - 1. The parallel story to this in Mark's gospel, ends differently.
 - 2. Jesus tells the man to speak of God's mercy (Mark 5:18-20).
 - (a) That is our role.
 - 3. Remember, this is a spiritual battle.
 - (a) People need to not be afraid of what Jesus will do.
 - (b) People need to become aware of their need.
 - (c) They need their hardened hearts to be softened.
 - (d) Instead of skepticism, they need spiritual hunger.
 - (e) We need to pray for all of these spiritual changes!
 - 4. Liberation requires the authority of Jesus, and power of the Holy Spirit.
 - (a) That's why authority and power are delegated to us!