

Rediscover Jesus, 24: “Jesus and Demons”

Luke 8:26-39

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Sermon Series & Scripture Introduction

Today, we are continuing in the sermon series, studying through the Gospel of Luke in order to Rediscover Jesus, for some of us, discover Jesus for the first time, to learn who Jesus is, what he did, and what it has to do with our lives today.

Last week, we saw how Jesus calmed the storm, rebuking the wind and the waves, proving his authority over natural forces. Now we'll read about how he has authority over spiritual forces as well.

Scripture Reading

Luke 8:26-39 (ESV)

²⁶ Then they sailed to the country of the Gerasenes, which is opposite Galilee. ²⁷ When Jesus had stepped out on land, there met him a man from the city who had demons. For a long time he had worn no clothes, and he had not lived in a house but among the tombs. ²⁸ When he saw Jesus, he cried out and fell down before him and said with a loud voice, “What have you to do with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I beg you, do not torment me.” ²⁹ For he had commanded the unclean spirit to come out of the man. (For many a time it had seized him. He was kept under guard and bound with chains and shackles, but he would break the bonds and be driven by the demon into the desert.)

³⁰ Jesus then asked him, “What is your name?” And he said, “Legion,” for many demons had entered him. ³¹ And they begged him not to command them to depart into the abyss. ³² Now a large herd of pigs was feeding there on the hillside, and they begged him to let them enter these. So he gave them permission. ³³ Then the demons came out of the man and entered the pigs, and the herd rushed down the steep bank into the lake and drowned.

³⁴ When the herdsmen saw what had happened, they fled and told it in the city and in the country. ³⁵ 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. ³⁶ And those who had seen it told them how the demon-possessed man had been healed. ³⁷ 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.

³⁸ The man from whom the demons had gone begged that he might be with him, but Jesus sent him away, saying, ³⁹ “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.

This is the Word of God. Amen.

Sermon Introduction

- Today we'll be covering Jesus' interaction with demons. Previously in the book of Luke, we did see how Jesus cast out demons from people but they were rather short in comparison to the extensive narrative we are looking at today. And before we continue on in our study, we need to do a quick check on our view of demons and their spiritual activity in our world.
- Author and theologian, C.S. Lewis, had written an interesting novel on demons and their purpose to ruin our lives. It's called, *The Screwtape Letters*. It's a fictional novel made up of a series of letters written by an experienced demon who writes to a younger, inexperienced demon about strategies on how to tempt his human beings to eternal condemnation.
- So in order for people to read his book with a proper perspective, he writes in the preface of his book:

Show picture “*The Screwtape Letters - Cover.jpg*” and this quote together:

“There are two equal and opposite errors into which our race can fall about the devils. One is to disbelieve in their existence. The other is to believe, and to feel an excessive and unhealthy interest in them. [The demons] themselves are equally pleased by both errors and hail a materialist or a magician with the same delight.” - C.S. Lewis

- C.S. Lewis is pointing out that people on one hand do not believe that demons exist, and that they only believe in the material world. Demons delight in this because they actually do exist and they are actively at work against the cause of Christ in our world. They are the cosmic powers over darkness and the spiritual forces of evil that scripture talks about (Ephesians 6:12). So if people deny their existence, the demons are pleased as they freely act upon human targets. Are demons real? Yes, they are.
 - On the other hand, there are people who believe in demons and the spiritual realm but give too much interest, or even much more power than demons actually have. The demons are also pleased when people entertain their minds, even worrying and blaming bad aspects of their lives to demonic activity. Because, superstitions and belief in things like black magic can easily paralyze someone in fear, hindering them from faith in the greater spiritual power and authority over our lives. So do demons have significant spiritual power and authority? Yes, they do, but their power and authority are significantly limited compared to that of Jesus Christ.
 - So it would be very wise for us to try to learn about the spiritual realm, not from horror movies or from scary stories, but to go to our source of truth in God’s Word.
- We’ll see in today’s text that while Jesus alone is the greatest power and authority, we’ll also see how Jesus uses his power and authority, to seek out the spiritually lost, to free the souls enslaved by sin, evil and death. And for those who say, “I believe in Jesus Christ,” we’ll see how we ought to respond to the salvation and freedom we have received in Christ.

The One Thing

So, because Jesus is Lord and ruler over all, the One Thing for us today is this. We must:

*Respond to Jesus’ saving power and sovereign authority
by proclaiming, “See how much Jesus has done for me!”*

Overview

We’ll look at Luke 8:26-39 by looking at the 2 wrong responses to Jesus and 1 right response::

1. The army of demons responded with defiance against Jesus (vv.26-33)
2. The eyewitnesses responded with dread of Jesus (vv.34-37)
3. The restored man responded with deep desire for Jesus (vv.38-39)

Prayer for the Preaching of the Word

Sermon Outline

I. The army of demons responded with defiance against Jesus (vv.26-33)

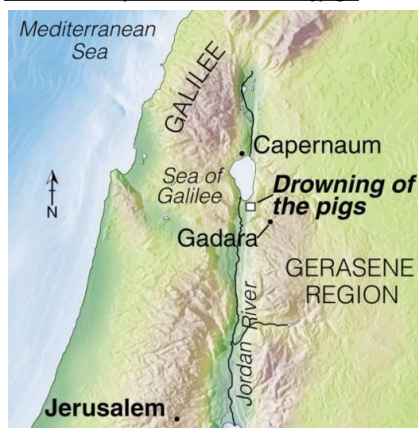
- Before we dive into God’s Word, there are some initial details we need to address:
 - Reading these verses, we’ll quickly realize that the writer Luke does not present all the details of this event in chronological order. But he uses a specific order to present the details in the way he wants to. Chronologically speaking, we see that there was a man from the city who had demons and was severely oppressed by them. He was an outcast of society. Then, Jesus arrived. Then the man confronted Jesus. Jesus commanded the demons to come out of the man, but there was a moment of defiance—they were resisting to obey, until they finally came out of the man and entered into a herd of pigs. So if helps, you can keep this framework in mind as we go through the various details.

- Also, we have to realize that it is difficult to understand the very nature of these demons, even a simple thing like how many demons there are. Luke goes back and forth from plural to singular: from plural demons (27), singular unclean spirit, it seized him (29), driven by the demon (29), and again plural, many demons (30). Another difficulty at an initial glance of this text is to know exactly who is speaking and with whom Jesus is speaking—is the man or the demons? It goes to show that trying to understand the spiritual realm is not simple and straightforward so we should study God’s Word with care and attention. We’ll consider these things as we move along.
- Lastly, this particular event with the demoniac is also written in the gospel of Matthew and Mark, and we will include of the details that they focus on that is not in this Luke account to help us better understand what is going on here.¹

Luke 8:26 (ESV)

²⁶ Then they sailed to the country of the Gerasenes, which is opposite Galilee.

Show “Map of Gerasenes.jpg”



- So if you take a look at the map, you see the region of Galilee on the left, the west side of the Sea of Galilee. But Jesus and his disciples sailed to the opposite of Galilee, toward the southeast side of the sea. This was a predominantly Gentile (non-Jewish) area, which is later shown by how they are farming pigs in this region, which were considered unclean animals by the Jews. And because Jews do not regularly interact with Gentiles, let alone plan to be in a Gentile region, Luke starts this narrative hinting that Jesus had a plan even before he got in the boat with his disciples.

Luke 8:27-29 (ESV)

²⁷ When Jesus had stepped out on land, there met him a man from the city who had demons. For a long time he had worn no clothes, and he had not lived in a house but among the tombs. ²⁸ When he saw Jesus, he cried out and fell down before him and said with a loud voice, “What have you to do with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I beg you, do not torment me.” ²⁹ For he had commanded the unclean spirit to come out of the man. (For many a time it had seized him. He was kept under guard and bound with chains and shackles, but he would break the bonds and be driven by the demon into the desert.)

- Demons are evil spirits and servants of Satan who stand against God’s purposes and his people.² So, they know precisely who Jesus is and what he can do.
- So, Jesus’ plan was to meet this demoniac, this man from the city who had demons. According to scripture, demons are evil spiritual beings. Satan is referred to as the “prince of demons” (Luke 11:15), so demons carry out the purposes of Satan, and they stand against God’s purposes to save people. In the Gospels and in the book of Acts, we see demons directly tormenting people, causing them to suffer in a variety of ways. It could be a physical condition like blindness or muteness or seizures. It could be self-destructive behaviors.

¹ Note that in the account in Matthew 8:28–9:1, there are two demon-possessed men. Though it may seem to be a contradiction, the two accounts are often reconciled by the fact that Mark and Luke have chosen to emphasize the one of the two men who begged to be with Jesus and yet was sent back to his home. This epilogue of the narrative is not included in Matthew’s account.

² For more on Satan and demons, see <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/essay/satan-and-demons/>.

- In our example of this demoniac, the demons are responsible for causing the man a terrible life. This man doesn't follow behavioral norms—he doesn't wear clothes and lives among the tombs. These isolating behaviors caused him to be an outcast among his own people. So if he was not among the tombs, then he was put in prison. But then the demons would give the man supernatural strength to break out of his chains, only to run away into the desert. We'll also see from later in verse 35 that there was a mental aspect to the demons' torment, causing the man to be insane.
- Lastly, demons affect people's spiritual condition, as they are considered "unclean spirits," contaminating God's creation with their evil. As they are unfit to be in God's presence, they promote evil through deception and encourage wickedness in people to also keep them from God's presence. So when Jesus came as the Son of God, Satan and his demons seem to have increased their efforts.³ Jesus came to make a way for people to be forgiven of their sins and be saved into God's presence, and demons were doing whatever they can against Jesus and his ministry.
 - To be clear, I want us to be careful not to jump to conclusions that demons are the cause of every specific illness or every specific mental condition. Scripture doesn't say or even assume that every person influenced by a demon will act exactly like this man. There is a complexity of how demons affect and influence human beings and we should not try to simplify it. We also can conclude that demonic activity is not only through demon possession, but it is one of the methods in which evil forces attempt to keep people from the truth of God that can set them free.
- If demons are looking for strategies and methods to try to hinder God's purpose, then it is no surprise that demons know very precisely who Jesus is and what he can do (cf. James 2:19). They seem to have one eye looking out for Jesus, because as Jesus stepped off the boat, it is the demons that confronted him.
 - It is ironic that they approached Jesus, and they knelt down before him. They know that Jesus is a greater authority over them. And this kneeling is a posture of submission but we can hear their defiance. They came screaming to Jesus, "What have you to do with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God?" They saying, "Jesus, we have nothing to do with you. What do you want with us? Why are you here?" It is also ironic that verse 25 as we saw last week, ended with the disciples asking, "Who is this that even the winds and waves obey Jesus?" And now we are getting a precise answer from these demons. This is Jesus, Son of the Most High God. But this is not a proper, respectful interaction. They have the right knowledge of Jesus, that he is the Son of God, that he is the greatest authority and power in the spiritual realm, but they resisted to obey as Jesus commanded them to come out of the man. This moment of defiance is captured in their request to Jesus, "I beg you, do not torment me."
 - There is a lot going on here are two truths I want to point out from this ironic interaction. First is a great encouragement and second is a grave warning.
 - The encouragement for us is that Jesus is sovereign! He is the greatest power and authority in the natural world, in the spiritual realm. Over all things, Jesus is sovereign. Even over these demons who have such a strong hold on this man and who are capable of great physical strength. It doesn't matter how many demons there are, Jesus is the Son of the Most High God and we do not need to fear such dark, evil spirits, no matter how mysterious they are and how deceptive they may be. No matter how powerful or oppressive we think they are. And though they are defiant and resisting to obey, ultimately they cannot do anything other than to submit to the commands of Christ. So as we grow in our faith in Christ, such fears can be driven away.
 - The warning for us though, is that we must absolutely be aware of any defiance we have in our hearts against Jesus. Just like it is ironic for the demons to know full well of Jesus' identity and his authority but not be on Jesus' side existing for Jesus, it is also a grave irony when we say we know who Jesus is but are unwilling to live for Jesus. And this is a warning for all of us who say we believe in Jesus Christ, because often our defiance is subtle. It will take great

³ My thoughts became more developed listening to Dr. Sinclair Ferguson's observation and explanations from scripture regarding demon possessions from <https://ask.ligonier.org/podcast-episodes/can-christians-cast-out-demons>

care and evaluation of our hearts to see how we may be defying and resisting to obey Jesus. We can start by checking the areas of lives and desires of our hearts that we have not fully surrendered to Jesus. We might not yell out to Jesus, "I have nothing to do with you!" But there might be areas of our lives that actually have nothing to do with Jesus because we have made it that way. A lot of times for the brothers I have counseled, Jesus seems to have nothing to do with the area of dating and relationships. For others, it may be our work and careers that we have been separated from Jesus. And for many of us, it is when we have been hurt by others, even from one another in our church. And we are tempted to resolve our hurts and pains apart from what Jesus has taught us to do—to love and to forgive as Christ has loved and forgiven us. This will not be easy but I pray that the Holy Spirit will bring to attention such areas of our lives and desires of our hearts that we have not yet fully submitted to Christ. Christ alone is sovereign and he is worthy of our whole lives. We'll see why in the next verse. It says in verse 30...

Luke 8:30 (ESV)

³⁰ Jesus then asked him, "What is your name?" And he said, "Legion," for many demons had entered him.

- Demons use their power and authority to torment and destroy life. Jesus uses his power and authority to intentionally seek out and save the lost, broken outcast.
- I took a long time trying to understand what was going on in this verse. We have to be careful first not to think about what we have seen in movies or heard about from exorcisms. Because it is often said that we need to know the name of a demon in order to cast it out. But even though that would make a really dramatic and compelling scene in a movie, that's not what is going on here. When Jesus asked the man, "What is your name?", the man couldn't answer. The demons answered on his behalf, showing how severe the demons' oppression and enslavement of the man. But I believe that Jesus desired to know the man's name, showing in his desire to know the man personally, in order to have a personal relationship with him. So Jesus would make that possible by freeing the man from these demons.
 - So while demons use their power to steal, kill and destroy life (cf. John 10:10), Jesus uses his power and authority to give life. And Jesus intentionally seeks out the lost, the broken, the outcast in order to save them from sin, from evil and darkness. Let's backtrack for a moment to realize what Jesus did in order to seek out and save this man. Jesus would sail through a storm. Jesus would enter into unclean places. Jesus would overpower unclean spirits. All so that hopeless and helpless people like us, sinners who are undeserving of his attention, could be saved.
- So going back to why Jesus is worthy of our lives: Jesus is worthy because he pursues us! He pursues us in his love and compassion for us. Jesus pursues us, yes, in all of his power and authority. But also he pursued us by surrendering his own rights. He would go through his own terrible storm, willingly entering into torment and torture on the cross so that we could be saved from eternal torment, suffering under God's wrath that we deserve. So that by faith in Christ, we could have eternal hope and life with him.
 - Therefore, our trust and submission to Jesus is not out of fear or obligation, in order to gain salvation. No, Jesus pursued us while we were still dead in our sin, while we were still defiant enemies of God. We can trust and submit to Christ as we realize what he has already done for us. Our trust and submission therefore is a response to this good news. And therefore something that we should gladly and joyfully do now in our time on earth until that day Jesus returns to take us home. This is what we see in verses 31-33. It says...

Luke 8:31-33 (ESV)

³¹ And they begged him not to command them to depart into the abyss. ³² Now a large herd of pigs was feeding there on the hillside, and they begged him to let them enter these. So he gave them permission. ³³ Then the demons came out of the man and entered the pigs, and the herd rushed down the steep bank into the lake and drowned.

- Jesus granted the demons permission, proving that he is sovereign over evil and that judgment day will come when Satan and demons will be defeated once and for all.
- There are probably a lot of questions here about the pigs but I hope that you will have fruitful discussions during LIFE Group this week about this. I will just narrow down to one point from these verses regarding the “abyss” and regarding why Jesus gave demons permission. So in their defiance, the demons beg Jesus not to command them into the abyss. The abyss literally means a “watery, bottomless pit” but it refers to a place of captivity for demons. And so it is ironic that the demons begged to avoid the watery pit and to go into the pigs instead, but the pigs ended up drowning in the lake anyway.
 - But the important point I want us to take away is this: According to scripture, evil spirits will be kept in chains in the abyss until Judgment day when Jesus returns (2 Peter 2:4; Jude 6). And on that day, Satan’s head will be crushed and all his demons will be defeated, once and for all (Romans 16:20; Revelation 20:7-10).
 - So, Jesus’ permission, on a grand scale, proves that Jesus is sovereign over evil because even evil needs his permission to operate in our world. Satan and demons are not on equal power with Jesus Christ, not even close. And this points us to take hope in the promise that Jesus will return one day and restore all creation in the new heavens and new earth where there will be no more sin and evil. And all who have faith in Christ will receive new resurrection bodies to reign with Christ eternally.
 - To be clear, Jesus is sinless, perfect and holy as God the Son. He is not evil and he does not support evil. He is sovereign and able to redeem even the greatest evil for good. We know this is true because we look at the cross upon which Jesus died. The greatest evil and injustice was committed against Jesus Christ, and yet he redeemed it for the very people, all people, who put Christ there.
 - So, the demons, who do not trust and submit to Jesus, responded to his power and authority in defiance. Now we’ll look at the people’s response.

II. The eyewitnesses responded with dread of Jesus (vv.34-37)

Luke 8:34-37 (ESV)

³⁴ When the herdsmen saw what had happened, they fled and told it in the city and in the country. ³⁵ 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. ³⁶ And those who had seen it told them how the demon-possessed man had been healed. ³⁷ 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.

- All the people who witnessed Jesus’ power and authority fearfully concluded that Jesus was a threat to them more than he was a liberator. Even when Jesus performs miracles and wonders, a heart that is unwilling to submit will ultimately reject him.
- There were many eyewitnesses to Jesus’ power and authority. There were the herdsmen who just saw all their pigs suddenly run off and drown in the lake. Then everyone who heard the report from the herdsmen came and saw Jesus and this man. They saw this once demon-possessed man completely transformed. He was no longer wandering among the tombs but sitting at Jesus’ feet, which was a posture of a disciple learning from his teacher. He was no longer naked but clothed. He was no longer acting insane but now in his right mind. And all of them saw and heard how the man was healed by Jesus. This man was set free from his torment after all this time and there was great reason to celebrate the power and authority of this liberator, Jesus. But sadly, that was not their response. What did they do instead? They asked Jesus to go away! Why would they do such a thing?
 - As Luke emphasizes how afraid, how fearful the people were, I think their fear helps us to understand what is going on here. We saw verse 25 how fear of Jesus could lead one to marvel

and wonder at who Jesus is. So that's one kind of fear that draws someone closer to Jesus. But here, we see that fear could also push someone away from Jesus. And this is the common kind of fear people feel when they are threatened by someone greater and stronger than them. This kind of fear is a dread that causes us to avoid and separate ourselves from whatever or whoever we dread.

- So as all the people heard about and probably now see a lake full of their dead pigs, a source of their income and food for their community. A source of their stability, they fearfully saw Jesus as a threat to their normal lives. Jesus was just a disturbance to the stability of their society. All the more, as they saw the man who was once strange, scary and strong transformed by Jesus, rather than submitting to Jesus, they wanted nothing to do with Jesus. And a heart that is unwilling to submit to Jesus will ultimately reject him. They missed one amazing opportunity to know Jesus and his saving power and sovereign authority. They missed out on receiving his loving pursuit of them. They missed out on living true life in the power of God.
- The people's rejection shows us two realities. First, it shows us how impossible for anyone to submit to Jesus without faith in him. Even when people witnessed Jesus with their own eyes and how sovereign he is and how he can powerfully save a life, and seeing such things did not guarantee them believing and submitting to Christ. A sinful heart can be that hardened and stubborn. And only by the grace of God and the power of God, can a heart be softened, spiritual eyes and ears be opened to know God. We must all the more realize and trust that Jesus alone is our savior, our liberator, and all the more respond with gratitude for our salvation in every waking moment of our lives.
- Second, the people's fearful rejection of Jesus shows us how easily we can reject Jesus as soon as we see him as a threat to the stability of our lives. It's great to receive Jesus' love and forgiveness, but the same message becomes a threat to us when we find ourselves wrestling with forgiving our brother or sister in Christ. It's a joyful thing when people in the church are serving and caring for us but it becomes a threat to our stability when we realize we must also serve and care for others.
 - This is why we must understand from the very beginning that the call to follow Jesus is a call to give up our whole being, not just parts of our lives where we think we need some extra help. No, from the beginning, it is a call to carry our cross daily. It is a call to deny ourselves and surrender our desires for as long as we follow Jesus as his disciple. If we try to follow Jesus in our own ways, we will be disappointed. If we try to find stability in any other source, we will be disappointed. And the sad but serious reality is that when we continue to reject Jesus and ask him to go away, there might come a time when he actually does. And that will be the greatest disappointment when people have witnessed Jesus' power and still end up walking away. May we no never see Jesus as a threat to our own little kingdoms but as we keep our eyes fixed on the cross, we'll see our savior worthy of our submission.
 - Thankfully, we have one another in this process: And we must include these reminders in our efforts to disciple one another. Especially as we are encouraging our church members to formal discipleship relationships, called Life Change Groups, or LCGs, we want every one of us to strive toward care, commitment and challenge. We care for one another with the love we have received from Christ. We are committed to one another's spiritual growth, even as it requires our sacrifice of time, energy and resources. And we also strive to challenge one another, speaking the truth in love, so that we remember the great cost of following Christ. And so may we gladly learn to count the cost of following Christ. And may we see that such costs are little in light of Jesus paying the cost to die for us on the cross, paying for our ransom.
 - So, we saw how the demons responded in defiance. The eyewitnesses responded with dread. Now we'll see how we should respond to Jesus' power and sovereignty.

III. The restored man responded with deep desire for Jesus (vv.38-39)

Luke 8:38-39 (ESV)

³⁸The man from whom the demons had gone begged that he might be with him, but Jesus sent him away, saying, ³⁹“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 man does not receive what he requested, but he faithfully submits to Jesus’ sovereign authority. His desire for Jesus is expressed in his willingness to obey the commission to proclaim Jesus to the very people who once rejected him and Jesus.
- This great event of this man’s healing, freedom, acceptance by Jesus ends with a strange conclusion. The man desires to remain at Jesus’ feet, to follow Jesus. This man begs Jesus, out of a deep desire to be with Jesus. But Jesus sends him away! He instead commissions the man with a task: “Return to your home, and declare how much God has done for you.”
 - We see an example now of what a proper response and a true submission to Jesus’ power and authority looks like. Because even when he couldn’t get what he wanted, he obeyed Jesus at his word of command. Jesus taught his disciples that (in John 14:15), “If you love me, you will keep my commandments.” When we long for something good, even for the kingdom, our hearts should still love Jesus, and in love, we obey when some doors just don’t open. We don’t force it.
 - We also see the power of a personal testimony of experiencing Jesus’ power and authority and how Jesus uses it
 - The man just saw the entire city and country of people reject Jesus. “Jesus you want me to do what? You expect me to keep talking about you?”
 - to the very people who saw Jesus, his power and authority on display, with their own eyes and still rejected.
 - As Jesus draws near to us in his sovereignty, go as he sends us out to proclaim him faithfully
- We too share the same testimony as this man. We may not have been possessed by many demons, but we too were enslaved by sin and evil desires of our flesh. Jesus sought us out, when we were helpless to evil temptations, and ultimately defenseless before God’s holy judgment.
 - For the disciples who were with Jesus as witnesses to this entire event, would also be commissioned in the exact same way. After Jesus died and resurrected from the grave, he spent much time with his disciples, encouraging them with his presence, teaching them with scripture.

How we can respond to Jesus’ saving power and sovereign authority...

Life Application

- 1) Take comfort in Jesus’ power to save you and in his pursuit to know you.
- 2) Consider and confess the areas of life where you are defying or dreading Jesus.
- 3) Craft a personal testimony of how much Jesus has done for you.

The One Thing:

Respond to Jesus’ saving power and sovereign authority by proclaiming, “See how much Jesus has done for me!”