

Matthew 20-02-09b

Let's resume our study now, and we're looking at this very rare exposure of the heavenly conflict between God and those who love God and are obedient to Him, angelic and human, and Satan and those who have joined him in rebellion against God. And you see the, how quickly someone who instills fear and exerts control finds themselves fearful and under control. And this is because of the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ.

There's never a better time to say abide with me as the evening falls. In life, in death, abide with me. All we have to do is make that choice.

This individual cannot be prevented from running toward the Lord Jesus, falling at his feet, and worshiping Him. How did he know who he was? He could tell because the perversity and evil dwelling within him was in a panic. And he said, this has to be a good thing.

Whoever this is, more of this please. And he cannot be prevented. It's an amazing thing.

He cannot be prevented from approaching the Lord Jesus. You'll notice also as we pick up the story now, and I'm going to continue in Mark chapter five, what have I to do with you in verse seven? Jesus, son of the most high God, I implore you. Sorry for the noise here.

I got to dig my glasses out from behind the microphone. What have I to do with you, Jesus, son of the most high God? I implore you by God that you do not torment me. So odd that ultimately and inevitably, even evil has to recognize that God is in control.

There's no escaping it. And yet, even acknowledging that it is ultimately God's authority, they are not doing anything to approach or to be redeemed or to be restored. They recognize it.

They acknowledge it. They'll even invoke it if they think it serves their purpose, but they're not for it. So Jesus said, come out of the man, unclean spirit.

Then he asked him, what is your name? I find this very interesting because we like to think that the Lord Jesus was omniscient in many ways, you know, knowing what is in men's hearts and so on. But even in his role as the son of God, Jesus in his humanity, functioned as a human being and limited himself in many ways to the perceptions and the limitations of human flesh. And I don't think this is a rhetorical question.

I don't think it's a question that Jesus necessarily knows the answer to. Jesus says, what is your name in the singular? And if Jesus knew in advance that the legion was there, or, you know, is he asking this question just to evoke the response so that the story will include the fact that they are legion? I don't find any reason to believe that the Lord Jesus recognizes the demonic presence, but in his humanity, I don't see persuasive

evidence that he already knew how many demons were there because he keeps on asking this question. And the Greek here suggests, and you back up, it's very typical in Semitic storytelling that Jesus said, come out of the man unclean spirit.

And then he asked him, what is your name? Notice the spirit didn't respond at the first command. And so when you get to this question, it's something that Jesus has to repeat. The command is something that he has to repeat.

And so the response here is, when it says he asked him, I wanted to look this up. It's an imperfect, and that's ongoing action in past time. He was asking him, he was asking him more than once, what is your name? And you get the idea that the demon that's in charge of the body says, it's your turn, you come up here.

And so Jesus has to keep asking because each demon that gets asked hands over the controls to somebody else and steps away. And so there's a struggle going on within the man because all the demons are now, it's like when they tried to arrest Jesus in the garden. And when they say, who are you looking for? And Jesus says his name, they all fall back.

Remember that they fall down in the garden and there's this retrograde movement. And you get the idea that there, I feel there's an implied demonic presence, even in the arrest party. And one of the reasons they fall down is the reason these demons are in quaking fear right here.

A simple human arresting party, feeling that they're right in their own eyes and have legal authority from the governor and the potentates in Jerusalem, already know that they're looking for Jesus. Who is, who recognizes exactly what that name means and what it is that they are doing? It's demons. And when those guys fall down at the name of Jesus, that tells me at least that the demonic motivators in that arrest party, you know, scripture says that Satan entered into Judas.

And I think that that's, that's a mark of their presence. They know who they're dealing with, even if the human perpetrators don't. And they have to get back up and say, well, wait a minute, this was the plan, but the fear hits them just as it does here.

So he was saying to him, come out of the man, unclean spirit. And then in verse nine, it says, he asked him, what is your name? And it is once again, an imperfect active indicative. And both of these imply that, that Jesus was asking, Jesus was saying, come out of him, but he has to say it more than once.

And they're saying, well, I'm sort of getting out of him because I'm letting the next demon take charge. And so there's this sort of, well, we can stand here all day. There's, there's thousands of us.

And we'll just keep, when he says leave, we're complying, but we're not accomplishing

the objective. And so Jesus finally pins him down and says, what is your name? And he says, well, legion, we are many. Jesus in his humanity may have been interested in knowing why there was not immediate compliance.

They know that he can immediately terminate their presence. And when he gives a command, why are they not obeying? And I think it's, they, this was a strategy. Well, we'll just keep rotating through.

And so every time he says, come out, well, technically I came out, I let the next one come in. And so they're complying, but there's no visible change in the man because it's so multifarious. That's just my take on it.

So then, uh, he, the, the, the current guy finally gets pinned down and says, well, there, there's a lot of us. This is why, you know, it's taking so long to get this accomplished. And, uh, he begged them earnestly that it would not send them out of the country.

Just hold that thought. What did it say in Matthew? He said that he, they begged to be sent into the herd of swine, right? And Matthew only records one single word from the Lord Jesus. You've got a sea of black ink and there's one little red spot.

You remember what it is? Go, go. It's just one word, depart. Uh, but we know that more was said.

There was, there was, uh, an extended conversation and, and Mark gives us some of it here, but they initially begged not to be sent out of the country. Now hold that thought. And I'm going to move to Luke chapter eight, um, beginning at verse 26, they sailed to the country of the Gadarenes opposite Galilee.

When he stepped out on the land, there met him a certain man from the city who had demons for a long time, wore no clothes, nor did he live in a house, but in the tombs, when he saw Jesus, he cried out, fell down before him. And with a loud voice said, what have I to do with you? Jesus son of the most high God. The one absolutely consistent detail you get in all three accounts is the demons know exactly who Jesus is.

And they confess that he is the son of the most high God. I beg you do not torment me. It doesn't say before the time he had, for he had commanded, notice the Semitic storytelling here, you back up.

He had commanded the unclean spirit to come out of the man for it had often seized him. He was kept under guard, bound with chains and shackles. He broke the bonds and was driven by the demon into the wilderness.

Jesus asked him saying, what is your name? And he said, Legion, because many demons had entered him and they begged him what? That he would not command them to go out into the abyss. So by comparing gospels, we've actually got a threefold insight into

this demonic fear. People have said, well, the reason they asked to go into the swine is they just had a fear of being disembodied.

Once they had sampled embodiment and possession, they just didn't want to be free floating spirits anymore. Not according to Luke. They, according to Mark, do not want to leave the country.

And according to Luke, they do not want to be cast into the abyss to go out into the abyss. What do you know about the abyss? Not a lot. What is the abyss? One thing we do know when we go over to revelation and the millennial kingdom starts, where does Satan go? Into the abyss, into the bottom.

The pit is the abyss, abyss, pit, same thing. It is a place that Satan and or demons go and they are completely out of the game. If you watch professional football, a player can be injured on the field.

He takes a knee. They send some guys out and he'll either limp or, you know, shake it off, shake it off. And he goes back to the sideline.

You know, he's in trouble when they put him on a cart and they take him into the bowels of the stadium. And he's out of the game when he has to go to the abyss. He can't see the game, can't hear the game.

Nobody can see or hear him. He's out of it. He's being looked at by doctors.

He's completely out of consideration. And the gal on the sideline will investigate and come back a few minutes later and say, well, Bob's not coming back for the rest of the game, broke his tibia or whatever. So the abyss is a place they go and they're out of the game until the time.

They don't want to be out of the game. Where do they want to be? Well, they do not want to be out of the country and they do want to be in the swine. This tells me a couple of things about demonic possession.

They can be driven out of a country. Jesus could say, you can't come back to the Decapolis. This is basically the region of the Decapolis.

It's a largely Gentile area. There are Jews living there, but it's a fringe polyglot type of area. And it's possible that the swine herdsman are Jews.

The law says you can't eat swine. It doesn't say you can't raise them. And so you could have a profitable business on this edge of the Gentile fringe, selling pork chops and bacon and hides and such.

And this is a very large herd of swine. And it's a very large region. It's the 10 city region.

There's just copious numbers of Gentiles who would buy, eat, use these pork based products. I don't know that they had pickled pig's feet, but maybe they did. So it is evidently profitable and they've evidently been at it for a while.

2,000 pigs is no small herd of swine. That's a big group. And so this is a commercial industry.

What is the commercial industry most closely associated with your prominent disciples? Fish. What prominent industry is going along in Gadara Gerasa? Pork. Notice he begins by saying opposite Galilee.

In the Luke account, Luke 8, 26, they sailed to the country of the Gadarenes, which is opposite Galilee. Galilee, fishing community, Gadara, pork community. Don't send us out of the country.

What kind of people live here? Look at their reaction. Let's stay in Luke here, chapter eight, verse 32. They begged that he would not command them to go into the abyss.

Now a herd of many swine was feeding there on the mountain. This is the steep slope. You can imagine the shore here rising and that's what creates the edge of the sea.

They begged him he would permit them to enter them and he permitted them. Then the demons went out of the man and entered the swine and the herd ran violently down the steep place into the lake and drowned. I am certain this was not the demon's plan, but the man who is possessed by these demons wants them out.

He can't get them out. He smashed himself with rocks. Other people have tried to contain him and can't, but when he runs to the Lord Jesus, a word of authority drives all of them out.

Now a legion is a lot. I'm not sure it's a specific number, but if you assume one demon per pig, it's possible that other pigs just went along with the crowd, but you could have up to 2,000 demons in these two men, maybe a thousand apiece. But it fascinates me that they plead with Jesus to not send us out of this country.

Why? What kind of people populate that country? The kind of people that are susceptible, the kind of people that are vulnerable. We can find other people as long as we can stay around here. You drive us out of this guy, I'll be right back.

I'll just find somebody else. So this country is good hunting grounds. What does Peter say about Satan? Roams the earth like a lion seeking whom he may devour.

He has to seek. He has to find, you know, lions look for the weakling in the herd, the gazelle that's got a limp or the young one that can't keep up with the fleet adults. Roams like a lion seeking whom he might devour its potential.

People put themselves in the position of vulnerability and opportunity for demonic influence, demonic oppression up to and including demonic possession then and now. What would a demon possessed person look like today? Well, in that day, the way to exert control and instill fear was to hang out in the graveyard, live in the tombs and persecute anybody who came near. These guys didn't go into the town and, you know, throw rocks through windows or break in and steal and terrorize the urban population.

They went out to an area that they could fully control. And these two guys, you know, were they grave diggers? I don't know why they were out near the tombs. Maybe these guys had been in the city, but were vulnerable and then moved there.

But it is a place that they can occupy and control. So when they say, don't send us out of this country, I don't want to have to search and search and search and search to find a needle in a haystack of somebody that we can inhabit. There's a lot of potential victims in this country.

You choose where to live. You choose with whom to associate. We can either live in a country that is vulnerable.

And I'm talking about an environment that we choose to live in. Associations we choose to maintain. Connections we choose to continue in a country that is prone to demonic influence, oppression and possession.

Or we can live somewhere else. There are favorite countries that demons like to live in. Don't send us out of here.

It's a happy hunting ground for us because there are no individuals in the immediate vicinity. What's the only numerous convenient target? Notice Jesus doesn't cast them out and they enter one or more of the disciples. That option is not even on the table.

I mean, here's some individuals, they're humans. Wouldn't that be better than swine? There's no option. Why? The answer seems obvious, but think about it for a minute.

We're in two guys. You've got three or four or five times that in the boat. Are all 12 disciples in the boat? You've got, in that case, six times as many victims.

Why don't they just say, well, yeah, go ahead and cast us out. We'll just infest your disciples. We can really screw up your ministry now.

Why is that not even an option? And remember now, these men are not great heroes of the faith. They've just been rebuked. By the way, when Jesus says, why are you afraid, O men of little faith? There is no O in the Greek rendition of what I'm sure was an Aramaic sentence.

He just says, why are you afraid little faith guys? It's very short. There was a question

during the break. What is the word here for fearful? Is it phobos? It's the word Delos and the adjective is Deloi.

So Jesus uses two adjectives and depending on which account you look at, they're juxtaposed. If you look at it in Matthew, it's why are you fearful? Why are you fearful little faith ones? And the two are just side by side here in Mark. It's a little bit different.

Why are you fearful? How is it that you have no faith? And when you get to the account we're looking at in Luke, after the storm is stilled, Jesus just says, where is your faith? And it's a fruitful investigation thinking about the theme of each gospel, why these different details are included or emphasized. But the only direct quote in Matthew is depart. The only direct quote in Luke is, what is your name? What is your name? Depart.

Names often imply authority. You get arrested by law enforcement. What's your name? People try to give a false name because for the authorities to have your name, to know who you are is the means by which they are going to control you.

You have an account with anybody. You've got a service from anybody and you need help. What's the first thing you have to do? You've got to give your name.

They have to identify you. They've got to look you up by a number and find out who you are. Once they know who you are, things can be done.

And so what is your name in the Luke account? This is the key. So why the pigs? It is symbolic of the region that they do not want to depart from. And these people are going to end up being the ones who are afraid.

We have a transition of three different kinds of fear. We have fear on the part of the disciples on the lake during the storm. We have the fear that is instilled by the demon possessed men in their purview over the tombs and roads.

Then we have the fear on the part of the demons themselves. Then we're going to have fear on the part of the individuals in the region. And if you're still in Luke, you had the fearful disciples in verse 25.

And after Jesus drives out the demons in verse 33, they went out of the man and entered the swine. The herd ran violently down the steep place into the lake and drowned. These are unclean animals, but the presence of the demons, they can't stand it.

And irrationally and violently, they want, you know, hogs are famous for getting in the mud and wallowing. They don't wash themselves off. These hogs run into the water and drowned.

They cannot stand. They cannot abide. They're dumb animals.

They're unclean animals. And even the unclean animals can't stand this demonic

presence, but they run into the sea. This is a kind of abyss.

And the demon said, don't send us into the abyss, but the swine take them into the abyss. And you get the idea that the trip just continued when the swine died. You know, I doubt that they had to stay in the dead and soon decaying corpses of the swine, you know, floating like so many couple of thousand footballs on the sea.

You get the idea that the demons, this was a descent into the sea and probably a further descent right into the place. They did not want to go 2000 demons off the scene into the abyss. And so the people who see this, when they saw what happened, they fled and told it in the city and in the country.

Verse 35, then they went out to see what had happened. This is all the people who were told came to Jesus and found the man from whom the demons had departed, sitting at the feet of Jesus clothed in, in his right mind. And they were what? Afraid, violent wind and wave.

It is stilled. And what's the response of the disciples? Fear. Fear directed where? At Jesus.

These people come out and what do they see? They see these well-known famous demon possessed men clothing in their right mind. And what's their response? It's a sunny day. Here's a guy sitting there in his clothes being normal.

And what's their response? They're afraid. They're not afraid of the man. They were afraid of him when he was out there, hassling people, trying to go up and down the roads, breaking the bonds, shattering the chains.

But now that he's not doing that, they're afraid. The disciples are afraid. And what question do they ask in the light of that fear? Who is this man that the wind and seas obey? What question do these people ask when they see Jesus power, just as great a power, perhaps greater in casting out the demons, demons who were powerful enough to inhabit the swine and create this economic catastrophe for the swine herds.

So what is their response? And again, in Semitic storytelling, it'll come to a conclusion and then back up. So in Luke, the multitude of the surrounding regions of the Gadarenes asked him to depart from them, for they were seized with great fear. They saw the man and they were afraid.

When they were told by what means he who had been demon-possessed was healed, the whole multitude of the surrounding region of the Gadarenes, the country the demons didn't want to leave, are afraid, seized with great fear. So he got into the boat and returned. Well, in normal storytelling, Jesus would be back in Galilee now, right? He got in the boat and returned, but we back up.

Now, the man from whom the demons had departed begged him that he might be with

him. And that's still on the shore in the Gadarenes region. But Jesus sent him away saying, return to your own house and tell what great things God has done for you.

Remember the leper that Jesus said, go show yourself to the priest as a testimony. But the man went and spread the news so much that Jesus couldn't openly enter any city. What does this man do? He does exactly what Jesus told him to do.

Jesus says, return to your own house and tell what great things God has done for you. And he went his way and proclaimed throughout the whole city, what great things Jesus had done for him, which is perfect fulfillment because Jesus is God as the son of God. This is faith and obedience.

This man, unlike a story Jesus will tell later about what happens when a demon leaves a man and goes to a far country. And when he comes back, he finds the house clean and swept and he brings his friends and moves back in. Why will this man never be demon possessed again? Faith and obedience.

He's not just got the temporary fix. He's got the permanent. He knows who Jesus is and he believes in him and that is his salvation.

So here's my concluding thought from this story. This region of people is like the demons themselves. When they see the power of God and their response is fear, what's their opportunity here? What could they have requested from the Lord Jesus? Tell us more about who you are.

Explain by what great power you have done this wonderful work. I see that you have delivered this man from the worst problem imaginable. Can you deliver me? Do you think there were any sick people in this region? Think there could have been any lepers, any blind, any lame, any deformed, any oppressed? Do you think that there were other demon oppression situations in their region? Here is the man that has already demonstrated he can take care of all of that.

Notice the response of people who are unequivocally, inescapably, undeniably faced with the presence and the power of the Son of God. What do they do? Do they argue and say by the prince of demons he's casting out demons? Do they say, I just refuse to believe that. Something else has happened.

There's been a switcheroo. This is the guy's twin brother. I don't know what.

This can't be right. Are they in any kind of denial? Can they in any way refute, contest, undermine, or explain away the presence and the power of the Lord Jesus? They cannot. What is their opportunity? Jew or Gentile, what is their opportunity here? I tell you from the heart of God, that simple revelation of who God is and what God can do and the manifest power he has to deliver us from the strongest forms of oppression and lostness and darkness will not convince some people to believe.

Their response will be, get out of here. Leave us alone. Don't think if someone that you've shared the beauties of Christ and the wonders of God's plan for salvation and the opportunity for deliverance and peace and joy and a future with God, that you've explained that and someone has pushed it away, has rejected it, has said, not for me.

It's not a deficiency in your presentation. The Lord Jesus Christ himself stood right in front of these people with an undeniable, absolute black and white manifestation of his grace, his compassion, his power, and they want none of it. They're afraid of it and they want it to go away.

It is a choice. These people chose to live in this region. They chose to pursue the swine business among other things.

They are where they want to be. They're doing what they want to do. And when the issue of the Lord Jesus Christ comes up, they want none of it.

These people exist in the world. And once the presentation is made, does Jesus stick around and say, well, just sit still. Let me show you a couple of other miracles and see if I can change your mind.

Bring me your sick. Somebody was asking me to provide a reference sometime this past week for Jesus. I think it was a sermon I needed a reference because the pastor was saying, well, you know, Jesus called for the sick and healed them all.

Jesus never called for the sick. You cannot find a place where Jesus said, bring me the sick and afflicted round about us and I'll heal them for you. People spontaneously brought them and he had compassion and healed them all.

But he never said to the disciples, go into the air. We're about to come to the outskirts of a new town. Go in there and tell him to round up the sick.

And I'll, I'll make a demonstration here and prove to them who I am. Jesus did these, these wonderful deliverances as a response to people who sought him out. And he didn't really even distinguish whether it was a seeking out of faith or seeking out of desperation.

You think about the nobleman, you think about various ones, the centurion came in faith. We saw this last time. The nobleman doesn't seem to have any faith.

He just says, if you can deliver, deliver. I don't care how, why, you know, I just really want this done. Jesus didn't really discriminate.

He healed them all regardless, but he never asked for them. And he doesn't ask these people. Well, all it needs is another demonstration.

All it needs is a little more time. It, the issue is clear. Everybody in the city has heard

this.

The story rips through this place like wildfire. They all come out. They see incontrovertible proof of who Jesus is and what he can do.

And it scares them. Why? Men love darkness rather than light when they choose darkness and their deeds are evil and you cannot talk them out of it. You cannot prove them out of it.

You cannot persuade them out of it. You cannot demonstrate them out of it. You can't Bible them out of it.

You can't love them out of it. What did Jesus do when he is asked to leave? What did he do? It's two words. He left.

There is a time to speak the truth in love. There is a time to determine if someone is actually seeking, interested, looking. But once you find out that someone is not, do what Jesus did.

You are the body of Christ. We are the body of Christ on this earth. Don't waste the time of the body of Christ in a fruitless attempt to win someone over.

Jesus didn't. It's clear. They want nothing to do with it.

There is no additional proof. There is no additional information. There is no additional wooing.

This is something else I get asked all the time. Can you give me a verse for the wooing of the Holy Spirit? The Holy Spirit is wooing people. The Holy Spirit doesn't woo anybody.

He convicts of sin, righteousness, and judgment. That's the facts. You decide.

He doesn't play the pan pipe and try to lure somebody away from the sin and darkness in which we all originally find ourselves. He makes the issue clear. You decide.

We're done. It's a harsh truth. But look at the Lord Jesus.

This is a whole region full of people. And when they say, please depart, we want nothing to do with you and your power over demons, your ability to take somebody that's oppressed and persecuted and has instilled fear in us. Now, instead of being afraid of him, we're afraid of you.

Why? Why would they be afraid of Jesus when they see this power? There is something within themselves that they don't want driven into the swine and into the sea. There's something in themselves that they want to keep hold of. They don't want to be delivered.

They don't want to undertake relationship with God through Christ. It scares them. There is no love to come to God.

We end up in a love relationship with him and with each other. Perfect love casts out fear. This fear is of a different kind.

Disciples had fear, but they're not going to be fearful later on. You remember Peter, who is several times manifest in the grip of fear. But after Pentecost, what kind of a man is he? An imminent threat of execution.

The angel has to kick him to get him awake because he is in perfect peace. He's in the right place at the right time doing what he knows God wants him to and he's not afraid. The Romans can't scare him.

A little maid in the courtyard scared him on the night of the arrest and trial. But all the force of Roman guards and prisons and governors and everything else doesn't keep him from getting a wonderful night's sleep. So what is the message we get from the casting out of the demons? First of all, look at the distance the Lord Jesus will go for just these two individuals.

He will cross the sea. He will put his disciples in what they think is imminent mortal peril. He'll scare his disciples to death to bring them along to witness his power not only over the wind and wave, but over the forces of darkness that motivate and drive much of what flesh and blood sees and does in this life.

And it is no different. Paul didn't say we used to war against principalities and powers. He said we now wrestle.

We wrestle. Very few wrestling matches are fatal. He many oftentimes uses warfare and swords and spears and the possibility of death facing lions at Ephesus and so on.

But he says we wrestle. The good thing about wrestling is you don't die even if you lose. We wrestle against them.

We have the opportunity to wrestle and win. Why? Because the Lord Jesus has absolute authority. We're never going to be tested above what we're able to bear.

We're never going to be wrestling out of our weight class. And all we require is to have more than oligopistos, more than a little faith, less than total fear. It's a good question on the break.

What's the difference in fear and cowardice? You can be fearful and courageous while carrying that fear or you can be fearful and cowardly in being controlled by that fear. You can't always eradicate fear but we don't let it control us. We wrestle.

The demons want to instill fear. They want to exert control. The way to resist them is to

resist the devil and he will flee from you.

Isn't that something? The most powerful archangel ever to come from the hand of God will flee from you. It makes me laugh. Satan is going to flee from Sam and I think, seriously? Well, what is the means of my resistance? People might flee from a guy on the battlefield not because he's personally impressive but because he's got a rocket launcher aimed at them and it's fear of the rocket launcher.

You and I have the power of the Lord Jesus Christ, his authority, his spirit, his word. That's what we represent. That's what we carry.

The reason Satan will flee is the same reason these demons are forced to comply with what Jesus requires. It is absolute sovereign authority of God. If you want to talk about sovereignty, you don't have to be a Calvinist.

Come look at the demons. God is in control. We have nothing to fear.

Just have a little faith, trust, and recognize that in this warfare we're on the winning side. We have overwhelming superiority of force and our cause is truly righteous, righteousness. Also remember that this conflict is going to continue until the Lord Jesus comes and casts all of these demons and their leader into the abyss.

So when you look around and you see evil, where do you think the demons are? You're looking at them. The flesh and blood you're seeing is operated by these forces of darkness. No mistake, no kidding.

And that's why it is often irrational, illogical, opaque to the understanding of any reasonably righteous person. How can they be this way? How can they do what they're doing? How can they say what they say? We say it's post-modern. It's beyond that.

It's demonic. That's what we're wrestling against. What are the means of our wrestling? Do just what you're doing right now.

Stay in the Word of God. Reflect on it. Keep it in your heart and mind.

Thou will keep him in perfect peace. Who does what? Whose mind is stayed on the peace? If you lack peace, where's your mind? Is your mind on the irresistible, absolute power of God or is it on what you think the demons can do? The only legitimate fear anybody should have is the fear that the region has, the fear that the demon has of being on the wrong side of God's power. We're on the right side.

That to me is the great comfort and encouragement from this particular episode in the life of the Lord Jesus. Well, we'll pick up and continue our study in the Gospel of Matthew next time. Father, thank you for the wonderful security that we have in you, the absolute wall of fire around us.

Anything that intrudes is by your design and is purposed for our benefit and our growth to help us learn to be more effective in applying our faith. We pray that as we think about this portion of your Word that God the Holy Spirit will implant it deeply in our hearts, will illuminate it and help us to see its pertinence, its application in our current and future circumstances so that our lives will reflect your glory and the glory of the Lord Jesus. We pray these things in his name.

Amen.