

Every so often you will hear of a motor manufacturer announcing that they are recalling a number of particular cars. It would appear that a fault had developed in these vehicles that may put the owner at risk. It might be the brakes, it may be the airbags or steering. Whatever it is, the owners are advised that they should contact their nearest dealer who will arrange for remedial work to be done.

What we have here is an example of a fault that requires the urgent attention and action of the manufacturer.

This morning our Old Testament Lesson is part of the account of creation given in the second chapter of the Book Genesis. It is a picture of man in harmony with his maker and an evolving universe. Our Gospel reading is very different, with its themes of storm, of demons, of fear. It tells of Jesus confronting a creation in disarray.

To what extent are we conscious of living in a creation that is in disarray? We may not always be aware of things going wrong. In fact for much of the time things seem to run smoothly enough. But then to the owners of those cars being recalled, nothing seems to be wrong. The car looks OK in front of the house, it is comfortable to drive. But there could be a fault that few would notice that could be a source of danger, that requires the urgent attention of the manufacturer.

Our Old Testament and Gospel lessons today, taken together, are a reminder that at the heart of creation is a fundamental flaw requiring the urgent attention and action by the maker. That realisation lies at the heart of the Christian story.

In the ministry of Jesus, in his miracles and healings, and finally in his death and resurrection, we have Jesus acting in power and authority to bring creation back into harmony with God.

Our Gospel reading, from the 8th chapter of Luke's Gospel, is part of a wider account by Luke of Jesus' ministry in the region of Lake Galilee. In this particular part of the Gospel Luke tells us of four miracles that run one after the other. There are the two we read today, the stilling of the storm and the casting out of an evil spirit into a herd of swine. These are followed by the healing of a woman with an issue of blood and the raising of Jairus' daughter.

Luke, in the way he has grouped these incidents together, points to Jesus' authority over all aspects of a dysfunctional creation, over the powers of nature, of evil, of sickness, of death itself. Jesus' ministry is, if you like, moving up a gear. Up to now it has been by and large a popular ministry. He has attracted large crowds and, apart from his home town of Nazareth, he has been something of a celebrity figure. Now he moves to confront the disorder at the heart of creation.

As we are aware in any circumstances, confrontation involves an element of conflict and with that tension and unease.

Certainly the casting out of an evil spirit into the herd of swine is not met with a universal welcome. The crowd return from viewing where the herd of swine had run down into the lake. They see the man who had been previously deranged sitting calmly at Jesus' feet. There is a deep unease at what has happened. So much so that we will read in the verses immediately following on this morning's passage, they will ask him to leave, to go away, to get out of their community, out of their lives.

The reaction of the crowd strikes an uncomfortable chord in my own experience. Sometimes the presence of Jesus in my life is a troubling, a challenging one. He comes to heal and to cast out of our lives demons that we did not realise were there or that we felt quite comfortable with – pride, bitterness, resentment, pleasures that we know are not wholesome. We say in our hearts, ‘Lord, go away, leave me be – you can have my Sunday, you can have some of my money, my time and my talents – but let me look after the rest.’

But of course, he does not go away – just as he did not go away while he was here on earth. He may have withdrawn from those villages but he stayed with his task of confronting the powers of sin and death, that fundamental flaw at the heart of creation. Stayed with it right through to the Cross and his final victory of resurrection.

He does not go away. Try as we might try to ignore him, he comes into situations to challenge, to trouble us. Maybe part of the problem, part of the solution, lies in the words of the collect of last Sunday when we prayed that God would enable us to love what he commands and to desire what he promises. Maybe the breakthrough comes when, rather than resenting his presence, we welcome it. We need to pray for grace to welcome the presence of Christ, to recognise that the discomfort and unease he may cause is but the first stage in his work of healing and restoration, as we realise the truth that ‘he has made us for himself, and our hearts are restless till they find their rest in him.’