

## NAMING THE DEMONS

(Mark 1:21-28)

Intro: "I know who you are, the Holy One of God."  
-Mark 1:24.  
-What a marvelous profession of faith!  
#On the lips of a believer.

But what do we make of these words on the lips of a demon?

-In our Gospel lesson for today.  
#It is not a faithful follower of Jesus.  
\*Confessing his faith.  
+With pious reverence.  
=Who intones these words.  
#It is a man with an unclean spirit.  
\*Screaming at Jesus.  
+At the top of his lungs.  
+In an accusatory fashion.  
="I know who you are."  
="The Holy One of God."

### I. What Do We Know About Demons?

- A. Most Of Us Probably Don't Put Much Stock In Demons.
  - 1. In another day and time.
    - a. Demons were a convenient way of explaining:
      - Unexplainable.
      - Unusual.
      - Unpopular.
    - b. Demon possession was used to explain:
      - Mental illness.
      - Seizure disorders.
      - Witches.
  - 2. Today.
    - a. We tend to have a more enlightened view.
      - Mental illness.
      - Seizures.
      - People whose religious:
        - #Beliefs.
        - #Practices.

- b. Mentally ill.
  - Sometimes are institutionalized.
    - #For a shorter period of time.
    - #For a longer period of time.
  - More often are treated with:
    - #Medication.
    - #Psychotherapy.
    - #Counseling.
- c. Seizure disorders.
  - Epilepsy.
  - Other neurological disorders.
    - #Can be treated with:
      - \*Medication.
      - \*Diet.
      - \*Surgery.
- d. Wiccans and witches.
  - No longer burned at the stake.
  - Although some of us many not know what to make of them.
- e. But we tend not to label such people as demonic.

B. Demons And Demon Possession Were Part Of The Biblical Scene.

- 1. Naming.
  - a. Demon.
  - b. Exorcist.
    - Important part of trying to exercise control.
- 2. In the ancient world of magic.
  - a. It was believed:
    - If you knew a person's true identity.
    - Uttered their name.
    - You had a magical power over them.
  - b. If an exorcist called a demon by name.
    - He had power over the demon.
  - c. If a demon called the exorcist by name.
    - Demon normally acquired power over him.
      - #Could prevent the exorcist.
        - \*From interfering with the demon's activity.
        - \*Worse yet, destroying the demon altogether.
  - d. "I know who you are, the Holy One of God."
    - On the lips of the demon.
      - #Not a confession of faith.
      - #But an attempt:
        - \*Overpower Jesus.
        - \*Control Him.
        - \*Keep him from destroying the demon.

3. Jesus was one who had authority.
  - a. Authority to teach.
  - b. Authority to cast out unclean spirits.
    - Jesus controlled the demons.
    - Demons did not control him.

## II. Demons Can Be Crafty Characters.

### A. They Would Like To Make Us Believe That They Don't Exist.

1. C.S. Lewis.
  - a. Screwtape Letters.
  - b. Series of communications.
    - From Screwtape.
    - #Supervisor of demons.
    - To his nephew Wormwood.
    - #Devil-in-training.
  - c. They discuss strategy.
    - How to tempt.
    - How to deceive.
    - How to be a good devil.
  - d. One of their strategies.
    - Convince people that they don't exist.
    - #If we don't think about demons.
    - \*We don't protect ourselves against the forces of evil.
    - #If we don't name the demon.
    - \*We leave ourselves open to the demon's attacks.

### B. Even If We Are On The Lookout For Demons, We Must Recognize That They Often Disguise Their Presence.

1. We know that they're around.
2. But they try to convince us:
  - a. They only work on other people.
  - b. We are safe.
3. Inmate in the St. Louis County Jail.
  - a. History of writing bad checks.
    - Almost a career with him.
  - b. But he couldn't see he had a problem.
    - He said to me one day:
      - #"I can't understand why these people are out to get me."
      - #"I never raped anybody."
      - #"I never killed anybody."
      - \*"Like these other folks in here."
      - #"All I did was write some bad checks."

- He could see the demon in his neighbor's eye.
- #But he couldn't see the demon in his own eye.
- 4. What are the demons that haunt you?
- C. If We Know Demons Are Around And Acknowledge We Are Vulnerable, The Next Demonic Strategy We May Encounter Is All Out Attack.
- 1. Patient I had met at the St. Louis County Hospital.
  - a. Had nothing going for him.
    - No job.
    - #Hadn't worked in three years.
    - No family.
    - #Parents were dead.
    - #Didn't know where his sister was.
    - No place to stay.
    - #Moved from place to place.
    - \*Bumming a place to sleep.
    - #Acquaintance took him in when the weather turned cold.
    - \*But then the gas got cut off.
    - +For non-payment.
  - b. When he was found limping down the street.
    - His feet.
    - #Blistered.
    - #Bloodied.
    - He was suffering from frostbit.
    - #Eventually all of his toes were amputated.
- 2. What was the demon?
  - a. Unemployment?
    - All those firms that said:
      - #"Sorry, we're not hiring."
      - #"We can't use you."
    - His own lack of aggressiveness?
      - #Not knocking on enough doors.
      - #Not filling out enough applications.
  - b. Homelessness.
    - No family.
    - No place to stay.
    - No knowledge of emergency shelters.
    - No way to get there.
    - #Even if he had known.
  - c. Utility company that cut off the gas?
  - d. Freezing cold of winter?
    - Yes.
    - Yes.
    - Yes.

3. Remember Jesus' encounter with the Gerasene demoniac.
  - a. Lived among the tombs.
  - b. Couldn't be held by chains.
  - c. Banged himself against the rocks.
    - When Jesus cast out the unclean spirit from this man.
    - #Jesus asked the demon his name.
    - \*There's the naming business again.
    - #Demon replied:
    - \*"My name is Legion; for we are many."
    - +Mark 5: 9.
  - d. Demons are many.
    - They can overpower us.
    - They can destroy us.

### III. We Must Be Able To Name The Demon.

- A. That Is The First Step For Doctors.
  1. They want to come up with a diagnosis.
    - a. They ask questions.
    - b. They take X-rays and CT scans.
    - c. They draw blood.
    - d. They run tests.
  2. They want to be able to name the demon.
- B. What Are The Demons That Possess Us?
  1. We make a generalized stab at it.
    - a. In our Confession of Sin.
    - b. We confess:
      - We have sinned.
      - #Against God.
      - \*Against one another.
      - #By what we have done.
      - \*By what we have failed to do.
    - c. But that confession of sin.
      - So broad.
      - So generic.
      - #Anybody can make it.
      - #We all make it.
      - \*Together.

3. But we could probably each make our own list of demons.
  - a. Our sisters and brothers in the Roman Catholic Church.
    - Have the Seven Deadly Sins.
      - #Lust.
      - #Gluttony.
      - #Greed.
      - #Sloth.
      - #Wrath.
      - #Envy.
      - #Pride.
    - Also have seven demons.
      - #One for each of the deadly sins.
  - b. St. Paul names some in our reading from 1 Corinthians 8.
    - Food sacrificed to idols.
      - #But since there are no other gods.
      - #Food sacrificed to idols is just ordinary food.
        - \*You can eat it.
        - \*You can choose not eat it.
      - #But the food is not the demon.
        - \*It could be.
          - +Gluttony.
        - \*But it's not here.
    - Your liberty.
      - #1 Corinthians 8:9.
      - #Same word as authority.
        - \*exousia.
        - \*Mark 1:22, 27.
      - #Yes, you are at liberty to eat the food.
        - \*Sacrificed to an idol.
          - +Because it's just food.
      - #Yes, you are at liberty not to eat the food.
        - \*Sacrificed to an idol.
          - +Because there may be:
            - =Newcomers to the faith.
            - =Folks who are weak in the faith.
              - Who will misunderstand.
              - Who will mistake your eating of the food.
                - #As a form of idol worship.
      - #Liberty can be a demon.
    - c. We could each have our own list of demons.
      - Demon in our Gospel lesson is called an unclean spirit.
        - #In Judaism.
          - \*Things were unclean.
            - +Separated people from God.

- Our demons.
  - #Whatever might:
    - \*Separate us from God.
    - \*Separate other people from God.
    - +Because of us.
- It is important to be able to name the demons.
  - #Identify them.
  - #Own them.
    - \*So that the demons might be cast out.
    - \*So that we might be:
      - +Connected.
      - +Reconnected.
      - =To the Holy One of God.
- But naming the demons is only a beginning.

#### IV. We Must Also Be Able To Name The Name Of The Holy One Of God.

- A. We Name The Name.
  - 1. Not so that we can:
    - a. Control him.
    - b. Overpower him.
    - c. Keep him at a safe distance.
    - d. Keep him from meddling with the evils.
      - With which we have grown:
        - #Accustomed.
        - #Comfortable.
  - 2. But so that we can appropriate:
    - a. Power.
    - b. Authority.
      - Of the Holy One of God.
      - Of the one who:
        - #Gives sight to the blind.
        - #Makes:
          - \*Deaf to hear.
          - \*Mute to speak.
          - \*Lame to walk.
        - #Brings:
          - \*Life out of death.
          - \*Resurrection out of crucifixion.
        - #Cleanses us.
          - \*From unclean spirits.
          - \*All sin.

#Who says to the demons:  
\*"Shut up!"  
\*"Don't think that you can overpower me."  
+"By calling my name."  
\*"My name is greater than yours."  
\*"My authority is greater than yours."  
\*"I order you to come out."  
+There is nothing magical about it.  
+It is the work of the Holy One of God.

B. Holy One Of God Names Us.

1. In the waters of Holy Baptism Jesus says to us:

- a. "I know who you are."
- b. "You are the holy ones of God."

2. We are holy.

a. Not because:

-We are so perfect.

-We always avoid:

#Lust.

#Gluttony.

#Greed.

#Sloth.

#Wrath.

#Envy.

#Pride.

-We have no demons.

-We have figured out a way to end:

#Unemployment.

#Homelessness.

#Ice storms.

#Sickness.

#Hunger.

#Crime.

b. But because of the Holy One of God.

-Who has wrestled with the demons.

#Cross.

#Grave.

-Who through his resurrection lives.

#To wash you.

#To feed you.

#To name you.

#To help you name the demons.

\*In the name of the Holy One of God.



