

Sermon 31st January 2021
“Demons and the Evil in Our Lives”
Mark 1:21-28

Gracious God, be with us today
in this place, in the
Scriptures and in our
words.

May the words of my mouth and
the meditations of our
hearts praise your Holy
name. Amen.

One Sabbath Jesus was preaching
in the Synagogue.

In the middle of the service a
demon possessed man
began making a
commotion.

“Have you come to destroy us
Son of God,” the man
yelled.

Jesus commanded, “Quiet! Get
out of him!”

After a fit of convulsing the man
returned to his right mind.

The people were amazed at
Jesus’ authority and power.

He commanded demons and they
obeyed.

Isn’t that a quaint little story
from a primitive
prescientific society.

Sociologists will tell you that it

perfectly reflects the world
view of the first century.

In Jesus’ day people believed in
demons.

They believed these demons
inhabited dark and unclean
places.

If a person wasn’t careful around
dark, shadowy and unclean
places, a demon might
pounce on them.

These demons were believed to
cause illnesses from
blindness to epilepsy.

Everything from plagues to
mental illness was blamed
on demons.

But people don’t believe in
demons any more.

Science has shown us that many
of the things blamed on
demons in the past really
have other causes.

Epilepsy is most often caused by
scar tissue on the brain.

Plagues or pandemics are caused
by viruses and bacteria.

Mental illness is caused by
biochemical imbalances
and dysfunctional patterns

of relating to others.
Science has freed us from that
ancient world view which
included demons.
There must be a scientific
explanation for what
happened in that
synagogue.
Let's look at the evidence.
The allegedly demon possessed
man apparently suffered
from a psychosis of some
kind.
He suffered from the delusion
that he was possessed by a
demon.
He thought the Son of God was
out to get him.
Obviously delusions of grandeur
and persecution.
So, you might ask, if he was
deluded, then how did he
know that Jesus was the
Son of God?
I am sure everyone in that
synagogue suspected as
much.
They were talking about his
authority and his teachings.
In his deluded state this man had
no inhibitions so he blurted
out what others would
barely admitted to
themselves.
The miracle is that Jesus is said

to have freed this man of
his delusional psychosis
with only a few words!
It might take our best
Psychologists years to do
the same.
We modern people don't believe
in demons anymore.
The last time you were sick you
went to a doctor, right?
You believe in the scientifically
based treatments that
modern medicine has
devised.
Maybe you asked a preacher or a
friend to pray for you, but
those prayers were
probably that God would
give wisdom and guidance
to the doctors, right?
How can we believe in demons if
we don't even believe in
the Devil?
Science has freed us from such
beliefs.
I am a product of this 20th & 21st
century scientific world
view.
I believe there is an explanation
for everything and that
empirical research is one of
the best ways to study and
understand our world.

My undergraduate degree is in
Economics; the way our
world works; supply and
demand speaking.

One of my areas of interest is
astronomy and physics.

My favorite shows and movies
are science or science
fiction based.

And I believe in demons!

Yes, you heard me right.

I believe in demons.

Before you hypothesize that I am
suffering from a delusional
psychosis, hear me out.

I believe in demons because of
the empirical evidence.

In ancient societies, people
avoided darkness and
protected their homes
against demons.

Today people avoid dark places
and protect their homes
against the demons of
crime and violence.

The results are the same: fear,
even terror, that robs one of
a good quality of life.

In ancient societies people were
possessed by demons that
took them over, making
their lives a living hell.

Today people are possessed by
desires, lusts and

addictions.

The end result is the same:
something else controls
them and makes life
unbearable.

The empirically verifiable
evidence is irrefutable.

Forces of evil exist and are out
there.

Now I don't believe in little
green, gremlin-like
creatures that crouch in
dark and unclean places
waiting to pounce on
unsuspecting passers by.

But I do believe in evil forces
that can take over people's
lives.

These demons are the fears,
anxieties and appetites that
crouch in the dark places of
people's hearts and souls.

They are the demonic forces that
cause racial violence and
domestic abuse.

They are the tempters that entice
people to throw their lives
away for money, sex or
drugs.

Evil demonic forces exist!

They may not take the form of
little red devils.

But they do take form in the evil

of our world.

The existence of demons is not what our Bible passage is about.

The Bible assumes their existence and doesn't spend time trying to prove it.

The Bible is more concerned with other matters.

For instance: "Who is Jesus and what is he doing?"

The real issue in Mark 1:21-28 is the authority of Christ.

It opens with the people being astounded at the way Jesus teaches.

He doesn't teach like the scribes.

The scribes were always saying "Rabbi so and so said this," or

"The prophets said that."

Even the prophets said, "Thus says the Lord."

Jesus just says what he says as if his word should be enough to believe it.

Some people were offended and said,

"Who does this carpenter think he is and what is he doing?"

It was a demon who answered

that question.

What did the demon say?

"Have you come to destroy us Son of God?"

That question is the answer!

Jesus, the Son of God, the one who can speak with such authority.

Jesus has come with power to banish and destroy the forces of evil through his teachings.

Here is the real point of this event: the teachings of Jesus have the power and authority to banish evil from our lives!

*Imagine, if you will, the forces of evil gathered before us.

There is Violent Crime making people cower for fear behind bolted doors.

There is Drug Addiction dragging her victims around in chains.

Here is Domestic Violence abusing those closest to him.

And here are Racism, Materialism, Me-ism, and all the other demonic forces that invade our lives.

Scary bunch aren't they?
Maybe if we close our eyes they
will go away. (*close and
cover eyes for a few
seconds*)

No, that doesn't work.
They are too real to just ignore.
Maybe we can run from them.
But that won't work either.
Escapism is waiting to take us if
we try.
We can't seem to defeat them
ourselves.
We don't seem to have the
strength or ability to defeat
even Poverty.

But with Jesus, we can!
He came teaching, to resist evil.

Do you remember the Walt
Disney adaptation of the
three little pigs?
In one scene the pigs dance
around singing,
"Who's afraid of the big bad
wolf, the big bad wolf, the
big bad wolf."
If you remember the story, two of
them were unafraid because
they had underestimated the
Wolf's power.
They ignored the scientific data
that demonstrated that
houses of straw and sticks

were not strong enough.
But one of the pigs sang the song
because he knew the Wolf's
power and knew the
strength of bricks to
overcome it.

Well "Who's afraid of the big
bad Devil?"

Don't ignore the existence of
evil.

Just look around you at what is
happening.

Just take a look at the front page
of the newspaper or watch
the six o'clock news.

Evil is real.

But know this, through Christ,
we are able to overpower
and resist evil.

Are there any demons in your
life?

Any evil that causes fear and
anxiety or even threaten to
take over your life?

Jesus teaches us, we can live in
love, in peace and in
happiness.

Jesus teaches us, we can resist
evil.

Thanks be to God. Amen.