

Mark 2:20-35 Today devils and demons...good stuff to understand
Jesus today generates a lot of worry in this passage. But I suppose he always has...earlier He has chosen His disciples and has also given them the power to drive out demons and to heal.

It's like one ugly Thanksgiving scene here!

See Jesus is starting to move out of everyone's comfort zone and the crowds who were familiar with him are trying to keep him in line and then also to make excuses for his behavior.

He is shattering their current world view and folks are going crazy...
Pharisees sent from Jerusalem and even his own folks won't let God out of the box...the view they have so comfortably constructed for themselves and cling to.

First, the crowd arrives. They keep doing this right, swarming Jesus at almost every turn. He's putting on a show...free lunches and healings!

Then his own family arrives. Now the worrying begins. Those who know him best, those who have the most to lose if his ministry provokes those in power.

Jesus' own family thinks He is out of his mind...which would denote that He was possessed by some kind of demon. Mark says that those family members think he is "beside himself" ...or not himself...in other words he's not acting like us! There's fear and trepidation.

See Jesus just went to see John in the wilderness and underwent a baptism...so maybe something happened...maybe now He's possessed.
(He is actually – the Holy Spirit)

And now the scribes from Jerusalem are eager to offer their expert explanation of Jesus and His power.

The scribes from Jerusalem were the experts. They represented the authority and wisdom of God. Better listen to those guys...they know what they're talkin' about!

And they pronounce, that Jesus is a satanic agent recognizing some other power is at work here.

...and because His power clashes with their understanding of God they decide His power must be perverse or evil in some way.

Folks have dismissed the possibility of God's restoration...they write it off as a satanic deception. Yet around Him, people are being set free from their demons...healed.

People are experiencing wholeness and life once again. People's dignities are being acknowledged and restored...remember that word I use a lot...Tikun Olam...the restoration and reconciliation of the kingdom of God. They don't see it or get it!

Crowd, family, and scribes...be prepared to meet resistance if you embrace the kingdom of God too quickly or if it shatters the worldview of the Kingdom of man...we see that all around us today!

See the kingdom of man and its constructs will do all in its power to keep God and our notions of God constrained and controlled. And Jesus wasn't exactly fitting in. He was at odds with his communities' ideas of God and religion and how things are done around here in the "REAL" world.

But Jesus can't be constrained within our small little boxes and our comfy container views about God.

Today I want to spend some time talking about everyone's favorite topic: Devils and Demons...what's the deal here...are they real...where do they come from...what's up with the different names.

Is Satan the devil and who's this Beelzebub guy...who's Bhaal and what about legion etc.

I think this is an important subject because we can get so far into left field with this that we then begin to blame these supernatural evils for all that ails our world instead of us being accountable for that evil ourselves.

It's like the insanity plea that can get us off the hook...to not be responsible or accountable for our own behaviors. Blame everyone and everything else for your behaviors...sound familiar!

First the confusion about Satan. Who is this guy...More like guys...Satan is a mishmash of folks...Firstly Satan is a Hebrew lawyer in the heavenly courts...he's the prosecutor...the adversary?

In the Quran Shaitain (different spelling) is a fallen angel... like Lucifer in Christianity.

And the word Lucifer means light bearer...He's a fallen angel... Lucifer literally chooses to follow his own light rather than God's light. His own Ego. His will vs God's will! Fear for myself or Love vs Others?!

Our physical view of the Devil is actually not even from Satan but rather was born in the middle-ages and is based more on the Greek god Pan...a satyr (half man and half goat) with cloven hooves and horns trying to get folks in trouble with drunken mischief...and he was a fertility god.

His temple was in Caesarea Philippi above where the Jordan river started, and it was believed to be an actual gate to the underworld there – a gate to Hades.

Pan is where we get our words for pandemonium or pandemic or panic...Pan is a more of a chaotic figure where you act “out of your own mind” and that's more the m.o. of a demon really...not a devil!

So Satan is a member of the heavenly court and uses law for evil inclinations...this is the kingdom of man... self-centered... egotistical...narcistic inclinations. My will vs God's will! Me and my

tribe are more important than anything else. Like Lucifer one looks to their own light rather than God's...self-righteousness.

And Satan is manipulative and subtle and uses the law to his own benefit.

Devil backwards includes the word live. One overcomes the devil by becoming self-aware. Looking into a mirror and seeing the illusion of yourself contained within. This is the Love God part of the two great commandments. You can either love and worship God or your own tribe (sports team/nation) and ego.

The devil uses laws and subverts them subtly to his will...the letter of the law then becomes more important than the spirit of the law...the laws then become corrupted over time and then systematically damages cultures and societies... especially those at the margins or outside the current system of power just like today. The devil's hidden in the details!

And rather than uniting symbolically it divides diabolically. (and by the way that's what those two words symbolic and diabolic mean)...eg FB connect or divide?

When Jesus uses this reference... the devil He is calling out are those who would think of themselves and their specific causes as being above God's greater good... Like when Jesus tells Peter in Caesarea Philippi to get behind me Satan...or when Satan tempts Jesus with the Kingdom of Man rather than serving God's will for His life. In one instance you yourself are the King and in the other you are a servant of the One King.

Satan is our selfish nature played out at the expense of others. Jesus uses the term Kingdom of man to express this point of view as opposed to the kingdom of God or Heaven. Fear or Love?

One must shine a light on the devil's creations in order for all to see the harm that they are causing. Lucifer's light or God's light...God's law as

Satan interprets it, or God's law as Jesus does. You can use the Bible to define love...or you can use love to define the Bible.

Now devils are different than demons. Demons are not concerned with systems and laws but rather with the individual. Beelzebub was a major demon in Philistine...Bhaal a Canaanite storm god...and legion referred to the chaos caused by the demons of Rome.

Demons backwards contain No Me. A demon enters a person, leaving that person not in their right mind. And most times the person possessed cannot simply expel this force out by themselves. Unlike the law-abiding devils, demons follow no laws and live only to cause chaos.

A demon can only be overcome by another means outside oneself. This is where loving one another comes in.

A demon is something that enters a person from outside oneself...which can then come to "possess" you. Today we can call this mental illness.

Abuse as a child (before they have developed their own sense of self) or an adult fed from external propaganda by respected leaders or significant others...what happens there?

Then we have our Environment. Drugs, Alcohol, Toxins in our food, air or water...some drugs side effects include "may cause suicidal thoughts"! And you literally are what you eat!

...and yes we still leave room for evil spirits here... but that would be a very rare instance once everything else has been ruled out.

It's anything outside us...even the stuff we use to fill that space reserved for God that a demon may come to fill.

The term Mad as a Hatter for instance came from the fact that hatters used mercury in the hat making process and mercury poisoning would produce symptoms similar to madness...In this case the demon is mercury...a toxin in the environment...or like a "pan" demic.

And these demons cause chaos and wreak havoc on an individual which then come to damage families and communities in their wake.

Legion mentioned in the gospels was the abuses perpetrated upon the occupied citizens by the Roman Legion stationed there...Josephus notes that Pilot was notoriously violent and abusive, and it would follow that soldiers under his command would follow suit and also abuse their power against the population which they controlled.

See one must "Name" the demon in order to cast it out. And names in the ancient world were powerful and meant to take possession of...like when you name your family members.

In other words someone has to identify the cause of the illness before it can be treated... and the person themselves is not in the best position to do this... they can't control themselves. They need someone outside themselves to recognize the demon...see it for what it is... and then lovingly enter into their darkness with them until they are healed.

And so you see Jesus throughout the Gospels casting out demons and calling out and exposing Satan's works in the kingdom of man.

In today's gospel when Jesus refers to Beelzebub he refers to casting out demons...and how could a demon cast itself out? And when he refers to Satan he then refers here to kingdoms. Both are evils in the world and both cause us to become disconnected from the kingdom of God.

...and there is one other evil that assails us besides the lawful evil of devils and the chaotic evils caused by demons...and that's neutral evil...apathy...the evil of doing nothing about the wrongs and evils we see in the world around us...not healing...not changing laws (eg civil rights laws).

So that's my primer on devils and demons... and oh by the way if you want to pay attention to a Spirit... Jesus does tell us to pay attention to

the Holy Spirit...that energy from our Creator which flows through us and around us...the thing that relationally connects us all.

Jesus points out that God's Spirit is what we must look for to fill the voids in our lives and to help set our course towards wholeness and health... that's the Spirit we better have in us...that's the kingdom we better care be about and be focused on.

And like I said before that's the kingdom we are a part of and are all connected to...and we do this again by Loving God and one another!

In this reality we are all brothers and sisters...relationally connected to one another as children of the One God.

So always be mindful of your perspective and learn how to discern what Spirit is driving you...is it of God or of the world. Is the Spirit that fills you born from love and connection or born of ego and fear...or toxins you intentionally or unintentionally put into your body.

This Pentecost season may the Spirit of God come to possess you.

May you shine the light of Christ into the world revealing the works of Satan as well as showing others the kingdom of God.

And may you reach out to your brothers and sisters in love to help them overcome their demons.

And may we all come to dwell in the one and Holy kingdom of God.

Your faithful servant,

carmen