

ENGAGE

- The next three weeks we are looking at the Bible's teaching on Spiritual Warfare. The two passage we look at today will be a glance at the deliverance of two individuals. The Growth Hour will be looking at these texts and giving opportunity to discuss the nature of the spiritual realm and our authority in Christ against the enemy. I however, in the sermons will be looking at an overview of all of spiritual warfare: i.e. angels and demons, authority and actions in response to encounters.

EXAMINE**Luke 10:26-39**

Gospel stories of demon possession are difficult to teach, because we don't experience demons as described in the Bible very often.

However, all the "demons" Jesus confronts have three things in common: they cause self-destructive behavior in the victim, the victim feels trapped in that condition, and they separate the victim from normal living in the family circle. Sound familiar? Don't many of us suffer from the same kind of snares and burdens?

If we define "demons" as those forces which have captured us and prevented us from becoming what God intends us to be, we are as surrounded by -- yes, possessed by -- as many demons as those whom Jesus encountered. Our demons can be of many kinds: mental illnesses, schizophrenia, paranoia, addictions, obsessions, destructive habits, and so on.

Note the similarities between this demon-possessed man and the demons that possess us. He was totally cut off from family and society. He didn't live as people, but "in the tombs," probably in caves that were used as burying places. He was also "driven by the demon into the wilds." In other words, he was already in a "living death," separated from normal people and normal living.

Furthermore, the demons were harming him. In Mark's version he was "bruising himself with stones" (Mark 5:1-20). Thirdly, in Mark's version "no one could restrain him anymore, even with a chain." Fourthly, and most sadly, he was so totally possessed that though the demons recognized Jesus as "Son of the Most High God," but the man could not free himself.

The point of this story, as well as all the demon-healing stories in the Gospels is that the power of God can cast out demons. The seventy persons sent out by Jesus soon afterward came back and reported, no doubt with astonishment, "Lord, in your name even the demons submit to us!" (Luke 10:17)

Sources

Workingpreacher.org

Carm.org

Serendipity bible

This is the key to the success of Alcoholic Anonymous, whose “twelve steps” to healing” begin with these three:

1. We admitted we were powerless over our addiction, that our lives had become unmanageable.
2. We came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.
3. We made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God, as we understood Him.

Alcoholism is a terrible problem in the former Soviet Union. Before the collapse of the USSR, Soviet officials appealed to American AA members to help them set up AA groups. However, because the Soviet Union was officially atheistic, they asked that these first three steps be omitted in adapting AA to them. The Americans refused, stating that those three steps are basic to their program. We need God to free us from our demons.

Members of AA also realize they not only need God’s help but the support of people around them. In almost all of Jesus’ stories of healing, there is restoration to families and townspeople. For the healing of demons today, the fellowship of family, congregation and community is a key to restoration. Becoming free from our demons is seldom a “do-it-yourself” project. We need help. We need God’s help, and we need the help of other people.

All this is happening in this story.

Today’s listeners, attuned to animal rights and the SPCA, will be bothered by the fact that “a large herd of swine” was drowned after the demons entered them. In that setting, however, pigs were considered an unclean animal. It was fitting that sinful demons would be consigned to unclean animals and that, being destructive, would drive the animals to death -- just as the man had been dead to the world around him before his healing.

At the end of the story, the man “had been healed,” a word from the Greek *sozo*, which can also be translated “saved,” “delivered,” or “made whole.” He is not only delivered from the demon and not only “cured” of the terrible burden, but had been altogether “healed” and “saved.” That leads into the important last verse of the story: “He went away, proclaiming throughout the city how much Jesus had done for him.” He has not only become a follower of Jesus, but a “proclaimer” as well.

We call Matthew 28:18-20 the “Great Commission.” Verse 39 in this story is shorter but an equally urgent commission, given not only to the healed man in the story, but also to us: “Return to your home, and declare how much God has done for you”!

Sources

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In Luke's gospel this is the only healing Jesus does in Gentile territory. This man proclaiming his healing throughout the city is a foretaste of the mission of the seventy at the beginning of the next chapter.

In teaching about this text, the teacher might want to show how Jesus meets us at our greatest needs. Look before and after this text (a good idea with any text).

- Jesus brings healing to the different situations where healing is needed.
- Last week we looked at (7:36-50), a woman "who was a sinner," bursts in on the supper as Simon the Pharisee's is hosting Jesus, kneels weeping before Jesus and washes his feet with her tears -- all despite the objections of Simon the host. Jesus' healing word to her was, "Your sins are forgiven... Your faith has saved you; go in peace" (7:48-50).

In the paragraph before today's text, the disciples are in a boat with Jesus when "a windstorm swept down on the lake," and the disciples are terrified that they will drown. Jesus awakes and "rebuked the wind and the raging waves, and they ceased" (8:22-25). The disciples may well have thought of the storm as a force of evil, and Jesus shows his command even of the forces of nature.

The story immediately following today's gospel contrasts the double healing of the twelve-year-old girl and the woman suffering twelve years from hemorrhages -- a dead, innocent little girl and a ritually unclean woman. The girl can do nothing for her resuscitation; the woman takes the initiative herself and touches Jesus' robes. The girl has a grieving family; the woman is alone. The girl can't act out of faith; the woman reaches out from faith. Almost opposite circumstances, yet Jesus heals them both. (You can tell the story this Sunday, because it won't occur in the lectionary until the summer of 2015, when we read it from Mark 5:21-43.)

So in this short stretch Jesus brings deliverance from a sinful, guilty conscience, from demons, from a raging storm, from a long-term physical ailment, and from death itself!

Luke 9:37-45

The glory of God in action.

1. (Luke 9:37-42) Jesus casts out a demon that His disciples were unable to cast out.

a. A spirit seizes him, and he suddenly cries out; it convulses him so that he foams at the mouth, and it departs from him with great difficulty, bruising him: The boy displays signs that many today would regard as evidence of mental illness, but Jesus perceived that they were caused by demonic possession. Surely, some of those we diagnose as mentally ill today are actually demon possessed.

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b. I implored Your disciples to cast it out, but they could not: Why could the disciples not cast this demon out, when they had previously had success (Luke 9:1)? There are "ranks" of demonic powers (Ephesians 6:12), and evidently, some demons are stronger (more stubborn, resistant) than others. In Matthew 17:21, Jesus said that their failure was due to a lack of prayer and fasting.

i. It isn't that prayer and fasting make us more "worthy" to cast out demons. The idea is that prayer and fasting draw us closer to the heart of God, and put us more in line with His power.

c. Then Jesus rebuked the unclean spirit, healed the child, and gave him back to his father: Jesus had no difficulty whatsoever, because He was close to God the Father, and in the flow of the Father's power.

QUESTIONS

1. Stepping off the boat, how do you think Jesus reacted to the 'demon possessed' man?
2. Why didn't Jesus banish the demons into the Abyss?
3. What is the significance of knowing the name "Legion"?
4. What do you think bothered the bystanders the most?
5. Why did the bystanders want Jesus to leave town?
6. Why do think Jesus was upset by the disciples regarding the non-deliverance of the boy?
7. What does Jesus teach His disciples regarding their inability?
8. Why would fasting make a difference?
9. "What does the Bible say about demon possession / demonic possession?"
10. Can the Devil, or demons, control humans?
11. What does "binding Satan" mean?
12. If you could be free from one thing, what would it be?
13. Does possession still happen today? If so, how should we be prepared?

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