

Be Silent and Come Out
Mark 1:21- 28

Grace and Peace to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. May the words of my mouth and the ears of our hearts be open to the Word of God this day. Amen.

He tried and he tried. He tried the best he could. The Lord knows he tried day after day, hour after hour. He tried. Every morning when he woke up he tried to steady himself to fight that stranger within him that wanted things that he knew were bad for him. He hoped that the new day would dawn and be different. That he wouldn't have to go through it again. He prayed that he could do it, control his life, and take back his old self. He would grit his teeth each morning and wait for the first attack. He never had to wait long. It seems that urges came upon me faster and stronger each day. He would shout at that voice to be silent, to leave me alone. But it just kept getting louder and louder, until that was all he could hear. The urges, the voices, the power it had over him. He tried not to listen. He tried to keep it quiet. He tried to shut it down.

But each day dawned it was the same. He would end up trying again and again, but the power that was rising up within him just was too strong. Whenever it chose, to roar its ugly head, it could take control of him and his actions. It was as if he became a puppet, a prisoner to this... this... this thing. He could do nothing to control himself.

Under its power, he would do and say things that were unimaginable. Unimaginable to anyone even to himself, things just seemed to happen that he couldn't control. He would curse at loved ones. He beat his wife, for no reason, just lashing out with all his strength. He stole from family and friends, strangers and store owners, anything, anywhere, anytime. He screamed at his kids and told them that they were worthless and hated them and wished they had never been born. If you saw him walking down the street you would avoid him, careful not to get too close, because he would bump into you just on purpose to start a fight and get riled up. He was just a man of anger and rage, blinding red fury just controlling everything he did. It was as if he hated each day, day in and day out, nothing ever changed. He was filled with despair but he couldn't control it. They brought in doctors and experts, priests and religious folks of all kinds, and all he did was laugh at their words of wisdom, sometime he would even spit or try to kick them. People were starting to give up on him. He shouted rude comments at friends and neighbors as they walked by on the street, in the stores, anywhere he saw them, so eventually they gave up on him. He did such horrible things that I can not even mention them in this sermon. This wildness, this thing that had him out of control was driving his life down into a pit of

darkness where despair, anger, resentment, shame, and all kinds of evil live. And there seemed no way out.

Eventually it cost him everything that was important to him. He of course lost his business that had taken him twenty years to build, no one would deal with him, in his fits he was just untrustworthy, nasty, and not worth good business, so he lost everything. He lost all his friends, people he had known his entire life, who suddenly would look the other way when they saw me coming, cross to the other side of the street to avoid him, duck away we they see him. His family left him, who could blame them his wife and children had no other choice but to kick me out of the home, for their own safety, it wasn't easy, it hurt, breaking their hearts to see him like this, but they knew they had to get him out of their home to be safe. He lost respect, worth, value. There was only shame and anger left and it drove him even deeper into this pit of darkness. It was like a vortex that couldn't, wouldn't let him out.

Now he was utterly alone. Without love. Without anyone who cares. He ate garbage and was living in the gutter. Stealing rags and anything he could just to get by for another day. He had become the dirt and grim, the worst of the worst, the lowest of society that people would rather not see and ignore than to face. And it didn't matter to him because one day was just as bad as the next.

Can you understand how terrible a state this man was in, to not to have control of your own life? To see it all happening before you through your own eyes but as a stranger – with no control of your own actions? Can you imagine what it is like to have such things, such feelings, such powers pulling and pushing you through life? Having those urges, compulsion, a force rob you of everything important, until you are so far down a dark miserable path that you see no way out – can you imagine what that man felt like?

Perhaps that is a little of how that man with the unclean spirit was in our Gospel reading today. We really don't know for sure. But we do know that while worshipping on the Sabbath day in the Temple, Jesus comes upon a man with an unclean spirit. Doesn't it seem like Jesus does this a lot in the Gospel texts, perhaps it is more common than we imagine. Over and over this takes place, Jesus meeting someone filled with an unclean spirit, that needs help. So perhaps there are more people out there with this type of story than we know, if Jesus has these run ins all along his ministry.

But we really don't know. We don't even talk much anymore about demons today. Unclean spirits are not part of our society. Doctors no longer drill holes in people's heads to let out the sick demons who must be possessing the person that is ill. Counselors and Psychologist try to find other reasons for person's mental state other than a demon. Hollywood has made some horror movies and even some T.V. shows using this demon possession theme, but they are all make believe right - fiction?

So don't we have our own demons in this modern age? We call them by different names. We treat them differently. But there are still those foreign powers that seem sometimes to enter our lives and take control. There are still strangers that take our lives from us without our control. There are still those voices and urges that can control and destroy a person's life.

Some of these demons are named alcoholism and drug addiction. These demons that will give urges and control a person into abusing and stealing from friends and family just to keep the habit going. The demons of materialism and gambling. These demons can cause people to strive for more so much that they lose everything they just to gamble for more. There are demons of jealousy and envy, that drive love away because the person can no longer trust anyone. There are demons of loneliness and depression, of boredom and meaninglessness, of power and control, of apathy and gossip. And I even believe there are also demons out there that just do drive people insane, not everyone, but I have seen a few that no one can understand why or how but the person has lost control. The man in the story had his own struggles and each one of us here in our own way can identify with at least a part of them.

But Christ is there still speaking those words of authority. It was with an authority they had never seen or heard before. It was of course the power of God the creator and sustainer of all life itself who drove that divine authority. And Christ is still rebuking the demons of our day, as he commanded the release of one human life centuries ago in Capernaum. The rebuking, commanding words of God are still spoken today against all the forces that inhabit and destroy human lives. They are spoken in the word of the Gospel, the good news of God's love through the ultimate gift of love, Jesus Christ. To hear that word and live in that word is freedom.

Be silent and hear those words spoken to each of us. Listen and tremble. For the healing, restoring Word of God is being spoken, I Love you so much, I want to save you so much that I have taken your punishment, I have died for you, I have given you my flesh and poured out my blood for you, so that you can have life that is pure, of peace and love. Cast off all that keeps you from God and receive that gift of grace. Amen.

May the peace and Grace of God be with you this day and throughout the week to come. Amen