

4TH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

FEBRUARY 3, 2013

THY KINGDOM COME

Pastor Jim Dunn

Luke 4:31-44

Jesus Heals a Man with an Unclean Demon

31 And he went down to Capernaum, a city of Galilee. And he was teaching them on the Sabbath, **32** and they were astonished at his teaching, for his word possessed authority. **33** And in the synagogue there was a man who had the spirit of an unclean demon, and he cried out with a loud voice, **34** "Ha!**[a]** What have you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are—the Holy One of God." **35** But Jesus rebuked him, saying, "Be silent and come out of him!" And when the demon had thrown him down in their midst, he came out of him, having done him no harm. **36** And they were all amazed and said to one another, "What is this word? For with authority and power he commands the unclean spirits, and they come out!" **37** And reports about him went out into every place in the surrounding region.

Jesus Heals Many

38 And he arose and left the synagogue and entered Simon's house. Now Simon's mother-in-law was ill with a high fever, and they appealed to him on her behalf. **39** And he stood over her and rebuked the fever, and it left her, and immediately she rose and began to serve them. **40** Now when the sun was setting, all those who had any who were sick with various diseases brought them to him, and he laid his hands on every one of them and healed them. **41** And demons also came out of many, crying, "You are the Son of God!" But he rebuked them and would not allow them to speak, because they knew that he was the Christ.

Jesus Preaches in Synagogues

42 And when it was day, he departed and went into a desolate place. And the people sought him and came to him, and would have kept him from leaving them, **43** but he said to them, "I must preach the good news of the kingdom of God to the other towns as well; for I was sent for this purpose." **44** And he was preaching in the synagogues of Judea.

You are probably familiar with the typical horror movie. You may not watch that kind of movie, but you know why you don't like to watch that kind of movie. The horror movie always has either an axe murderer serial killer, a deadly ghost, or some demon-possessed doll that goes around killing everybody. It has to have victims. Every horror film has to have those unwitting young victims who carelessly walk down a dark, deserted road or who walk through a dark house having foolishly neglected to flip on the lights. In every horror film there has to be a hero or heroine who stumbles through effort after effort to stop the murders and is usually successful only through blind chance. Because the serial killer/deadly ghost/demon-possessed doll always has the upper hand right up until the last moment when something unlikely happens that finally puts a stop to the murders.

Such movies are pretty predictable. What makes them scary, to me at least, is that there is a seed of truth to them. In real life there are serial killers, and in real life, young people are killed every day through carelessness, foolish neglect, and even sinister acts of violence.

The news is filled with their stories. And there's no other way to describe what their stories do to us. They fill us with horror, the horror of a broken world where evil is real.

Though, an account of a demon-possessed man crying out at the top of his voice may come across more like a horror movie than as real life evil. In this text from Luke chapter 4, we hear about a demon possession. How Jesus cast out that demon. But demon possession is not something we run into on a daily basis.

Nor are the kinds of miracles that Jesus was doing in the town of Capernaum. God can and may miraculously intervene to take away high fevers and various kinds of sickness, but He does not do so very often.

So, it is tempting for us to hear the account of these miracles as a parable, to think of them as a horror movie with a message. It's tempting to turn these miracles into a parable on sin. Adam and Eve committed the first sin. That brought horror, demons and sickness and brokenness into God's perfect creation. Jesus took away our sins. We're forgiven. One day we'll be in heaven.

That's not what we should hear when we hear about these miracles. We should hear them as a call to pray for healing, as a call to do something about the world's brokenness. Yet, what thoughts occur to us? The world is broken. We cannot achieve heaven on earth. Evil always has the upper hand. All we would do is stumble from one failed effort to another. Only Jesus could fix the world's brokenness. As a result, anything we might do for broken, hurting people is killed, murdered. So, we watch those stories on the news that fill us with horror, but what do we actually do about evil except bemoan it?

Yes, the world is broken, but Jesus has come to fix it. Has come. That implies something that began in the past and is ongoing. Jesus came to do battle with the evil that is at the heart of every horrifying news story. What shall we do in light of what Christ is still doing?

For Jesus did not temporarily show up to do a few miracles before dying on a cross to forgive our sins. He came not only to forgive our sin (of bemoaning evil). He came to save us from our sins, as the angel Gabriel worded it to Mary. Not only to remove the guilt of sin but to save us from the effects of sin: sickness, evil, and death.

So, Jesus engaged in an ongoing war against evil to reestablish God as King of Creation, not merely King of heaven but King of Creation. As He Himself said, "If I drive out demons by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God, the reign of God, has come upon you." (Matthew 12:28)

Has come. It began in the past and is ongoing. As the sun comes up casting its light and causing the darkness to flee, so the reign of God has come upon us in this dark world. Jesus came to this earth to drive back Satan's dark reign over this earth that began in the Garden of Eden. He came to restore God's reign over this earth. He battled with Satan in the temptation in the wilderness, not with swords or guns, but with the authority of God Himself.

"What is this teaching?" the people in Capernaum asked. "With authority and power He gives orders to evil spirits and they come out!" The evil spirits issued their own challenge of war. "Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are." In other words, I know your real name. So, I have the authority! I have the upper hand! But Jesus rebuked him, not merely scolding the demon, but with authority commanding the demon: "Be silent and come out of him!" And the demon did.

Still, it was no temporary victory that Jesus sought. The demon departed, but that didn't mean it wouldn't try to come back. So, Jesus departed and went into a desolate place. He departed. He was always departing, always heading for Jerusalem and that most desolate place of the cross.

There was no room in God's plan for a part two and a part three to this horror story. This would be no blind chance victory over the bad guys. Jesus' death on the cross and His resurrection would be the fulfillment of His healing ministry. When Jesus healed He took away sickness for a time to show He's come to undo the effects of sin. When Jesus raised the dead, He overcame death for that person for a time to show He's come to undo the effects of sin.

But when Jesus died, when He allowed all the evil and brokenness of the world to come against Him at the cross, when He allowed Satan to have the upper hand and God still raised Him from death, then He freed all who follow Him from evil and sickness and death.

That's the very reason there needs to be a Last Day. On the Last Day, your body's freedom from sickness, evil, and death will be complete. Never again will our bodies be susceptible to sickness, evil, or death. Because God's ongoing war with His enemies

will be over. Horror will be done. God's reign on earth will be complete on the Last Day. Your body will be raised never to die again. This earth along with heaven will become the new earth and the new heaven. This earth will be perfect once again, where God shall reign forever and ever.

Until that Day comes, Jesus teaches His followers to pray, "Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven."

This is what He enlists you to do in light of what He is doing. His battle is ongoing against His enemies and ours, against the evil that stands behind the horrors and brokenness of this earth.

The outcome is assured by His death and resurrection, but the battle against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms is ongoing. Yet, you stand in the light. You stand in the light of what Jesus is doing, in your life also.

In light of what He is doing in your life, Jesus has enlisted you to pray, "Thy kingdom come." Jesus enlists you to pray. To bring to Him through prayer any who are sick in any way so He may heal them. When you see those horror stories on the news, Jesus enlists you to pray in the light of His victorious and ongoing battle: Father, Thy kingdom come.

Amen