**Man with multiple demons** 12/11/23dkm

Read: Mark 5:1-20, Jude

Text: Mark 5:1-20

Psalms: 66:1-9, 121old, 141:5-10, 117

We were in a minibus winding our way into the hills of Orissa in India. We were going to visit a village where people of the Bonda tribe lived. Suddenly two men stepped in front of our bus. They were naked except for a loin cloth. Each was carrying a bow and arrow. The driver stopped and let them on the bus. As the two men stood in the isle the smell of their unwashed bodies drifted through the bus. Everyone sat in silence because Dr Iris Paul, the missionary lady working among this tribe, had just told us how violent these people were. At the slightest provocation, like taking more than your share of food, they would spear a person to death. These men on the bus had probably killed someone at some time.

**1. Pathetic**

After Jesus calmed the storm on the lake, he and his disciples reached the other side, across from Capernaum. When Jesus stepped out of the boat he was met by a demon-possessed man. This man was a pathetic figure. He was also a man not to be messed with. He terrorised the people of the area. He was scary, and he was strong. Most people gave him a wide berth - but not Jesus. For a long time this man had lived among the tombs of this region of the Gadarenes (5:1). Some manuscripts (MSS) have ‘Gerasenes’ and a few ‘Gergesenes’. Near the village of Khersa on the eastern shores of the lake are ruins, and also caves, on a rocky hillside which runs down to the lake. Gentiles rather than Jews probably lived in this region; unless they were renegade Jews who kept pigs. The demon-possessed man was such a problem in society that they had chained him hand and foot to keep him from harming others, and harming himself. But he broke the chains as the demons drove him into this solitary place. The demons possessed his mind and body so that he wore no clothes and sheltered in the caves where people were buried.

We may not see such demon-possessed men today, but we do see many who are under the power of Satan and living similarly pathetic lives. I mentioned the Bondas in the hills of Orissa. There are tribes in the NE of India also. The Chakesang people once lived pathetic lives. Driven by the devil, they went out to kill men in neighbouring tribes. They kept the heads of their victims as trophies. In 1992 I had the opportunity to visit the Chakesang people. In their newly built church, before hundreds of people, I preached from this very passage. Jesus had set them free from bondage to evil and they were rejoicing in the Lord.

Among the Hindu’s there is a group of devotees called Nagas. These men remind me of this demon-possessed man that Jesus met. They smear ash over their bodies but wear no clothes. They go around stark naked. They attract some attention but are usually strong men and deal violently with anyone inclined to make fun of them.

But what about our western society? Are there not people similarly driven by Satan to live pathetic lives in our society? A strong, almost naked man is idolised in our society. Just look at reports into the lives of some football players. Just look at magazines and web sites promoting body building. They feature semi-naked men and women on the covers. We see people parading down our streets half-naked during the *Mardi gras*. Would this demon-possessed man that Jesus met have looked out of place in this street parade?

‘Satan still urges many, in whose heart he reigns, into self-dishonouring and self-destroying habits of life’ writes J. C. Ryle. He goes on to say, ‘fearful it is to see what a wreck of body and mind Satan often brings young persons. Fearful it is to observe how he often drives them out of the reach of good influence and buries them in a wilderness of bad companions and loathsome sins! Fearful above all it is to reflect that in yet a little while Satan’s slaves will be lost for ever, and in hell’.

Maybe you know someone who is a drug addict or an alcoholic. Drugs are ruining the lives of so many young people in our community. How can anyone damage their own lives by such things? It is so insidious. It is of the devil. What else can you say when you see people emerging from pubs and getting into fights. What else can you say when you see people vomiting as they lie in the gutter. And we live in a civilised society! Yet we say people who run around naked, fighting each other in the forest are primitive. We look in horror at this naked and violent man that Jesus met.

Is there any cause for hope? Yes there is. Jesus is our hope, the only hope we have. Jesus delivered the people of the Chakesang tribe in NE India from their bondage to Satan. Jesus delivered this demon-possessed man that he met from the many demons that possessed his mind and body. Jesus is delivering men and women today from addictions to alcohol, drugs and other evils. Let us pray to the Lord, believing that he has the power to deliver from all evil. In the Lord's Prayer we pray, ‘Deliver us from evil’. Some say, 'deliver us from the evil one’. Let us pray especially for young people that they will not be tempted to try substances and activities that will harm their mind or body.

**2. Power**

The day Jesus set foot on the opposite shore of Lake Galilee was a great day for this pathetic man. When he saw Jesus he cried out and fell down before him (5:6) - the word translated ‘worshipped’ means to fall down before someone. He was not worshipping Jesus; he was begging Jesus to leave him alone. He knew who Jesus was. He screamed out, ‘What do you want with me Jesus, the Son of the Most High God’. Screaming and yelling are symptoms of Satan’s working. The Most High God is more of a Gentile than Jewish way of referring to God. The demon-possessed man that Jesus met in the synagogue at Capernaum similarly cried out, ‘Leave us alone’, calling Jesus ‘the Holy One of God’ (1:24). In calling Jesus by name the man, or the demons in him, may have sought some advantage over Jesus. It is good to know a person’s name when praying for them, and also when cursing them, as Jesus will soon do with these demons.

It was not the man himself who recognised Jesus; it was the demons possessing him. It was not the man himself crying out to be left alone, it was the demons possessing him and using his vocal system. They recognised Jesus and were afraid; knowing his name was not going to help! They pleaded with Jesus not to torment them (5:7). Jesus was not about to leave this pathetic figure alone. He was a human being made in the image of God. He was a human being, made to glorify God his maker. He was not glorifying God in his present condition. He was suffering as a slave of Satan.

‘Leave them alone’, the anthropologists and others say to missionaries taking the gospel to the tribal people of Africa, Asia or America. ‘They are happy running around naked and killing one another at will’ they say. ‘Leave them alone’ is the politically correct thing to say when you try to direct young people in the way they should live. ‘Leave them to their binge drinking, their drugs, their pornography, and their sexual immorality’ they say. Some places have even legalised mind-disturbing and deadly drugs.

Secular humanists believe that the young should be left to make their own choices. But do the young have the wisdom or power to choose what is best? Jesus did not leave the pathetic man he met to his own resources. The man was powerless to get rid of the demons possessing him. He needed help. He needed power greater than that of the demons. He needed the power of Jesus. Education about drugs and other evils is good, but it will not enable us to stand against the power of Satan. We need the power of Jesus, the Son of God, to overcome evil.

Jesus had ordered the unclean spirit to get out of the man (5:8). That was why the man was crying out. It was a scream of defeat from the demons. Jesus did not stop to ask this man about his condition and if he wanted help. He was not actually speaking to the man but to the demons. When Jesus asked the man his name it was the demons who answered saying, ‘Legion, for we are many’ (5:9). By knowing this name Jesus knew the nature of this man’s affliction, and maybe the man himself realised something of his affliction.

It is difficult for us to understand the nature of demon-possession but here is one sign - the man was not himself. He spoke in the third person. This man was obviously crazy, but there was this extra aspect to his behaviour. Jesus recognised that he was confronted by hundreds, if not thousands, of demons that had taken up residence in this poor soul.

**3. Pigs**

The demons were exposed by Jesus. The people of the region had done all they could to help this crazy man; they ‘treated’ him as best they knew. They had kept him under guard and chained him up. But they had no idea why he was behaving so badly. The demons liked it that way. They were tormenting this man and his community without them knowing. The people were ignorant of the devil and his power. How many in our society, or even in the church, are aware of Satan and his power? We may not see demon- possession as Jesus did, but Paul tells us that our struggle is against a spiritual enemy, ‘against the spiritual hosts of wickedness’ (Eph 6:12, 2Cor 10:3, 4).

We know the effects of alcohol and drugs on the behaviour of men and women today, and we have treatments to apply, sometimes successfully. But why do people start harming their bodies with these substances in the first place? That is a question no one seems to be able to answer, except Jesus! The gospel of Jesus Christ is the answer for all our problems; Jesus is powerful to save, even if demon-possession is not one of our problems; although all who are outside of Christ are slaves to Satan (John 8:44).

Jesus correctly diagnosed this man’s problems and followed up with effective cure. He ordered the demons to leave. But where would they go? Demons are spirits, unclean spirits. They evidently seek bodies which they can occupy- if not human, then animal. They pleaded with Jesus ‘not to send them out of the country’ (5:10). They wanted to avoid going to the abyss (Luke 8:31). The abyss is where evil spirits are imprisoned, before being cast into the fires of hell for eternity (Rev 20).

The many demons in this man begged Jesus not to send them to the abyss. They begged him to let them go into the pigs that were feeding on the nearby hill. Jesus gave them permission, so they went out of the man and into the pigs, and the pigs raced down the hill and drowned (5:13). Only Mark records that there were about two thousand pigs that drowned; are we to understand that there were about two thousand demons in this man? Mark will later record that seven demons were cast out of Mary Magdalene (16:9).

How amazing! This is incredible! How are we to understand what happened- if we possibly can? Was this outward event meant to assure the man that the demons had truly left him? We will look at this question and the response of various witnesses next time, God willing. For now, let us remember how these demons were trying to destroy the life of this poor man. They wasted no time in destroying the pigs! Satan or the devil is active today, trying to destroy the lives of men and women, young and old. If he gets the young, then all the better for him.

But remember, above all, that Jesus, the Son of God, defeated Satan at the Cross and in his resurrection. Jesus became like us, ‘that through his death he might destroy him who had the power of death, that is the devil’ (Heb 2:14). In the name of Jesus you can resist the devil and he will flee from you.