

COME OUT OF HIM

Mark 1:21-28

This is the image people often have in their mind when they casually think of the devil—the guy in red with horns and a pitchfork.



The perennial basketball power in the ACC is the “Blue Devils” of Duke. DePaul, a Catholic school in Chicago, is the “Blue Demons.” Northwestern State in Louisiana is simply the “Demons.” The NHL has its New Jersey “Devils.”

The devil is also a popular character for horror flicks. There things are a lot more serious, but they are still movies and part of fiction.

But in other times and today in other places, people have taken the devil quite seriously. In many third world cultures peoples’ everyday lives involve doing specific things to avoid demons. Last year as we celebrated the 500th year of the anniversary of the Reformation, we remember Martin Luther who was translating the New Testament into German when he felt the presence of the devil in his lonely room in hiding at the Wartburg castle and threw an inkwell at him. It is no wonder in that kind of culture why they would put into the baptism service the “exorcism,” when we ask, “Do you renounce the devil and all his works and ways?”

But isn’t that just the result of superstitions? Jesus encountered people who were possessed by demons, but our modern medicine would say they suffered from epilepsy. Isn’t what people called “evil” just the result of ignorance? If we just educate people properly then all that “nonsense” about the devil is just for fairy tales.

C. S. Lewis wrote the famous Screwtape Letters about a veteran demon corresponding to his apprentice, named Wormwood, about how to tempt his human “Patient,” as they call him. Screwtape gives Wormwood this advice:

Our policy, for the moment, is to conceal ourselves. Of course this has not always been so. We are really faced with a cruel dilemma. When the humans disbelieve in our existence we lose all the pleasing results of direct terrorism and we make no magicians. On the other hand, when they believe in us, we cannot make them materialists and sceptics. At least not yet.

That is what people thought as mankind was able to industrialize, make use of electricity, drive in cars, and develop cures for diseases. But then we saw the Holocaust, the “Gulags” in the Soviet Union, the “Cultural Revolution in China, and the senseless destruction in Vietnam. How else do you explain such evil without something Satanic?

Our world today doesn’t outright deny the demons, but instead tries to show them as a part of the “balance” of creation. Years ago, because they were into Satanism the Rolling Stones wrote their song, “Sympathy for the Devil,” with these words:

Please allow me to introduce myself
I’m a man of wealth and taste
I’ve been around for a long, long year
Stole many a man’s soul and faith
And I was round when Jesus Christ
Had his moment of doubt and pain
Made quite sure that Pilate
Washed his hands and sealed his fate
Pleased to meet you

Hope you guess my name

“Sympathy for the Devil” can reflect today how we want everything to be treated equally. So instead of seeing evil as an enemy to defeat, we see it as an alternate worldview. This just what Screwtape hoped for when he wrote:

I have great hopes that we shall learn in due time how to emotionalize and mythologize their science to such an extent that what is, in effect, a belief in us, (though not under that name) will creep in while the human mind remains closed to belief in the Enemy. The “life force” worship of sex, and some aspects of Psychoanalysis, may here prove useful. If once we can produce our perfect work—the Materialist Magician, the man, not using, but veritably worshipping, what we vaguely call “Forces,” while denying the existence of “spirits”—then the end of the war will be in sight.

Whether we deny the devil completely or see him as just some “force,” he still becomes hidden. And that is what he wants. Yes, he does terrorize people in the Third world who don’t have our education. But he is far more dangerous in hiding, as the one who doesn’t seem all that bad to us.

But in the face of Jesus the devil could not hide. Jesus didn’t negotiate with the devil or try to persuade him. Notice the demon tried to distract Him when he said, “What do you want with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are—the Holy One of God!” Jesus wasn’t sidetracked. “Be quiet!” said Jesus sternly. ‘Come out of him!’ The impure spirit shook the man violently and came out of him with a shriek.” Jesus kicked him out, He defeated him, He crushed him.

God won’t let the devil hide from us. Dietrich Bonhoeffer, who was executed for speaking out against the Nazis, said the horror of the Nazis was a “void that God allowed” to show us the extent of evil, so show how Satanic this world can be apart from God. But even more the God who reveals the devil is also the one who crushed him on the cross and open tomb.

So often our sin is not open evil like going on a shooting spree in a classroom, or cheating people out of their pensions, or sexually assaulting a woman. So often our evil is hidden in what we do with good things. In our efforts to protect our freedoms, we say things are okay when they are not. In our efforts to care for our families, we spoil our children. In our hard work to provide for our families, we become fueled by the things we just have to have. Remember the fruit that Adam and Eve ate looked good. In fact the fruit itself was good. But that good was twisted into evil, the sin we are all in.

But Jesus has come to put an end to that. “Be quiet! Come out of him.” That is why we do renounce the devil in baptism and can do it each day as we remember our baptisms. Traditionally people have placed the devil on an equal footing with God as they both struggle to win us over to their own side. The fact of the matter is that it isn’t even close between God and the devil. Martin Luther said of the devil that he is “God’s devil.” This does not mean the devil was put here by God in the first place just to test us. God is in no way responsible for the devil and his existence. The devil made his own free choice to rebel against God. But since he has, God used the devil to accomplish his purposes.

The “Rolling Stones” were quite correct in saying about the devil: “*And I was round when Jesus Christ had his moment of doubt and pain. Made quite sure that Pilate washed his hands and sealed his fate.*” God used that work of the devil to bring about Jesus’ death on the cross, which took away our sins, restored us to God, and trounced the devil.

On our own we don’t stand a chance against the devil. As much as he could terrorize us into fear, he can even more convince us he is a joke and lead us into unknowingly serving him by living for the “things” of this world. But in Jesus we have the Savior who crushed his head. As Luther said in his famous hymn, “*A Mighty Fortress,*” “*One little word can fell him.*” With God’s Word on our side, the devil is helpless. “Come out of him!” In the name of Jesus the devil is toast!

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January 28, 2018
Memorial Lutheran Church and Student Center
Ames, Iowa 50014