

Sermon Sunday 19th June Luke 8:26-39

We don't often talk of the demonic and the presence of evil. I wonder what you believe. Today's gospel shows us Jesus confronting the powers of evil. We are shown Jesus' power over the natural world. Perhaps this is a message we need to hear today.

Jesus confronts a deranged mind. The man lives among the dead, he is possessed of inhuman strength, and he is naked. Jesus confronts the demons and asks the man what is your name? The reply comes "Legion" for many demons had entered him. The demons begged Jesus not to send them into the abyss.

The fact that Jesus utilizes the heard of pigs indicates that he was at that time in the Decapolis, for the Jews saw pigs as unclean so they would not be keeping them. Jesus chooses to send the demons into the pigs and they drive off the cliff into the sea. One view of commentators is that this was an act of mercy. Another view of this text is that the spirits were sent back to the place of their origin. It was believed the Leviathan some form of evil monster lived in the sea and received the demons. Be that as it may, Jesus is merciful to the possessed man. He expels the demons and restores the man who had been an outcast to his society.

So, will we learn more from this gospel focusing on literal interpretation or is it the metaphor of the demon controlled life that is more powerful?

Brendan Byrne calls us into a modern day reading that suggests we look to our own demons. We all have them! What are the forces that we struggle with? In the gospel once the demon has been forced to name itself, it has submitted to Jesus' power. Its stratagem is to enter the pigs who then rush to the sea. Here we see the destructive nature of the force that the man is freed from. Then the man whom the community has been unable to control, is now sitting at Jesus' feet clothed in his right-mind. I wonder what you and I might be like and how we would live if we were clothed in our right mind as Legion is.

An interesting aspect of the gospel is how the onlookers respond to the event. When they are informed by the swineherds about what has happened, and they want Jesus to leave.

We are invited into this drama. Which of the characters do you most readily identify with? Perhaps there is a part of each of us ready to dwell within the tombs, rather than the house of life. Perhaps we could say to the Lord; "What have you to do with me"? Why have you come to torment me? Do we need to name our demons and their destructive power in our lives and to aspire to our right mind?

Perhaps talk of demons sounds a little far-fetched for you. So I turn to a reflection of Richard Rohr in this week where he focused the idea of the **power of the ordinary** and explored the idea of the *Everyday Mysticism*. As a community who has embraced the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, we made some pledges about our on-going belief and

behaviours. I'll remind you of what we said as we extinguished the Paschal candle. That we would dare to walk into God's future trusting the Holy Spirit, that we would dare to embrace each other and grow together in love, share our riches and minister to each other, dare to pray for each other until our hearts beat with the longings of God and to carry the light of Christ into the world's darkest places. I suggest these are the approaches that will clothe us in our right-mind. In other words, we can look to the ways that the *Holy Spirit* as the power for the good in the universe.

Rohr states there is no right way to encounter the spirit world. It can occur as a simple understanding of unity, the nonduality of an observer and the observed, in oneness, feelings of sacredness, peace, bliss, transcendence, a feeling of changing and transforming time and space or an intuitive conviction that this experience is the source of objective truth and ultimate reality. Of the ordinariness of my mystic experience says Barbara Holmes states that it is not limited to ritual, visitation, and mysterious power. It also just broadens the scope of your personal identity. It includes normal gifts like healing, and it can ground us in our ancestral heritage.

I wonder if you can find your right-mind in these ways of looking at the world. All that is right and good is in front of us what we need to do it look. I will close with one of Jan Richard's blessings called

Blessing The Ordinary.

Let these words
lay themselves
like a blessing
upon your head
upon your shoulders,
as if,
like hands,
they could pass on
to you
what you most need
for this day,
as if they could
anoint you
not merely for
the path ahead
but for this ordinary
moment that opens itself
to you-
opens itself
like another hand
that unfurls itself

that reaches out
to gather
these words in the bowl
of its palm.
you may think
this blessing
lives within
these words,
but I tell you
it lives in the opening
and in the reaching;
it lives in the ache
where this blessing
begins;
it lives
in the hollow
made by the place
where the hands
of this blessing
meet.

Jan Richardson.

May we confront our demons in the Lord's name and find our right-mind.

AMEN

References

Byrne, B. SJ. *The Hospitality of God* 2000 St Paul's Publications NSW

Richardson, J. Circle of Grace Wanton Gospeller Press 2015 Florida US.

Rohr, R. Reflection Week 23 The Holy Spirit *Richard Rohr's Daily Meditations* 2022