

Isaiah 40:21–31; 1 Corinthians 9:16–27

Mark 1:29–39

²⁹And immediately he left the synagogue and entered the house of Simon and Andrew, with James and John. ³⁰Now Simon's mother-in-law lay ill with a fever, and immediately they told him about her. ³¹And he came and took her by the hand and lifted her up, and the fever left her, and she began to serve them.

³²That evening at sundown they brought to him all who were sick or oppressed by demons. ³³And the whole city was gathered together at the door. ³⁴And he healed many who were sick with various diseases, and cast out many demons. And he would not permit the demons to speak, because they knew him.

³⁵And rising very early in the morning, while it was still dark, he departed and went out to a desolate place, and there he prayed. ³⁶And Simon and those who were with him searched for him, ³⁷and they found him and said to him, "Everyone is looking for you." ³⁸And he said to them, "Let us go on to the next towns, that I may preach there also, for that is why I came out." ³⁹And he went throughout all Galilee, preaching in their synagogues and casting out demons.

IN THE NAME OF JESUS.

We have Jesus again casting out the demons—he's proclaiming the gospel in the synagogues, says Mark, healing those sick with diseases and casting out demons. They were bringing to Jesus all who were sick and oppressed by the demons, Mark tells us.

So we have before us, the demons. You don't talk about demons in polite company, it would seem. It's okay to talk about diseases that strike the body, about mental illnesses and chemical imbalances in the brain; it's okay to talk about someone doing violence because of bad influences in his life, about drunkenness or drug use, about bigotry and racism and hatred—it's okay to talk about these things because, well, probably because we see them, or observe them, in some way. You can run tests and see diseases that attack the body, you can run tests to measure the chemicals in the brain, you can analyze a person's life-history and see the bad influences, you can give a blood test to check for intoxication or drugs, it's okay to talk about things, it seems, when you can see them, observe them, and measure them in some way.

But the demons. There not physical beings. How tall is one of these things; if we're talking about a particular demon (as if we could see one), is he overweight or anorexic, does he have a chemical imbalance in the brain—none of this makes any sense. He's not a physical. He's a spirit, an angel created by God in those first six days of creation, but now fallen into his own sin and arrogance and hatred and lies and murder.

But you can't see that demon, or measure him—he's an evil spirit having fallen.

No wonder no one talks about them. If you can't see and observe and measure something with physical instruments, then you can't get control over them. Better, maybe, to be quiet about it, and hope they're not there.

Are they near us? Are they in our city, in our nation? Our Lord does speak of Satan as “the prince of this world” [John 12:31], and of the evil angels as “the principalities and powers of this dark age” [Eph. 6:12]. Are these demons at our workplace? Are they in our homes? In the conversations of our families? Are they even in the church, dividing one Christian against another? How do we measure that? What do we do to expel them?

Let us think of what a home would look like, if the demons were never there.

The home never oppressed by the demons—this home would be peaceful and joyful, with each person speaking words of comfort and encouragement. It would have each person in the home serving the others, each according to vocation. The father would joyfully love his wife, seeing her as the Lord’s good gift to him, and he would spend time speaking to the children in love and gentleness, training them up in the gifts of the Lord’s Word.

The wife would see her husband as the one given to her to love and cherish, and would look forward everyday to serving children with gifts of motherhood.

The children would see the parents as those standing in the Lord’s place to take care of them, feed them, clothe them, and keep them in the Lord’s Word.

The Lord’s Word, that would be the foundation of the family. And the word of the demons, the lie, the intimidating word, the word of division and struggle, it would never be heard in that house.

What house has ever looked just like that?

Do we see a husband ever speaking harshly to a wife, sometimes speaking with a voice not of love and a desire to serve, but with the voice of a controlling slave master? Do we see a wife ever afraid of her husband, or sometimes deceiving her husband or harboring bitterness in her heart? The demons are there in that conversation.

Do we see children ever disobedient, disrespectful, fighting for their own way, even hurting one another? The demons are there in that conversation.

Do we see a father coming home scared because he doesn’t know if he’ll have a job next week? Or a mom and dad in tears over the sickness of a child? Do we see children crying, not knowing how they’ll ever get ahead in class, or how they’ll ever be popular in school? The demons are there.

Where we see intimidation or fear, false hope or despair, where we see hatred or violence, words of retribution or callousness, where we see sickness, resignation, or death, there are the demons.

Satan is the prince of this world, his demons are the powers and principalities of this darkness, Scripture tells us.

We can't see them. We can't corner them and round them up like a bunch of rats. But they were created to bring the Lord's good gifts to us, and now that they are fallen, they bring to us the opposite—sin and death, arrogance and violence, lies and deceit, division and struggle.

We have these three enemies, the Catechism tells us: the demons, the world, and our own sinful flesh. The demons are the princes of this world and they oppress our sinful flesh, leading us into every sin and shame.

Mark 1:32:

³²That evening at sundown they brought to [Jesus] all who were sick or oppressed by demons. ³³And the whole city was gathered together at the door. ³⁴And he healed many who were sick with various diseases, and cast out many demons.

Jesus casts out the demons. He casts them out from our households, too.

He was speaking in the synagogues, proclaiming the Gospel, and casting out the demons.

The Gospel is the Word of forgiveness. It is the declaration that the sinner stands before God the Father reconciled—cleansed of all guilt, released of all sin. The Gospel is the Word of Jesus justifying the sinner not by any worthiness on the part of the sinner, but only and completely by the grace of Jesus.

The Gospel is the Word spoken by Jesus here on Earth so that we hear it in our own ears. But at the same time that Jesus is having this Gospel spoken here on Earth—in the sermon at church, in the word of forgiveness spoken between a husband and wife, in the word of grace delivered to a family in their Evening Prayer devotions—at the same time that Jesus is having his Gospel spoken here on Earth, he is speaking it also to his Father in Heaven. So that the sins forgiven here on Earth are forgiven in Heaven, says Jesus.

Jesus is casting out the demons from our households, too.

We know the work of the demons. We can't see them—they're spirits, after all. But we see their work, and they bring us into despair, and we are afraid of them.

Fear not, says Jesus. No demon can take back my word of forgiveness. When my Gospel cleanses you, no demon has any charge against you. When I create in you a clean heart, no demon has you. When I put my Name on you in Baptism, you belong

to me and to no demon.

The demons will still afflict us. They are still princes of this world until the day this world is judged; we are still in our sinful flesh, until the day of the resurrection of the body; they are still liars, telling us we have no hope before the Father in Heaven; we are still in our sinful flesh, listening to their lies, but against this, against all of this, against the lies and the deceits of the demons, against the despair and fear of our hearts—against all of this, stands the Word of Gospel.

You are forgiven, says Jesus. Sins absolved. Guilt released. Shame removed. You belong to my Gospel, says Jesus.
And with that Word, he is still, even in our households, casting out the demons.

This is the Word he has for our families. Where we see division or hatred, fear or despair, where we see words spoken in retribution or for manipulation, we pray for the demons to be cast out. Lead us away from temptation, deliver us from the evil ones, we pray—and that prayer is answered.

It is answered as the household is gathered to the Lord's Word of Gospel, as the family intercedes to the Father in Heaven that his will be done here on Earth—it is answered as our Lord Jesus forgives us of our sin.

IN THE NAME OF JESUS.