

St. Mark 9:14-27

Dear Friends in Christ,

You do realize that the liberal theologians of the past and present did not and do not recognize Satan as a reality? Commentator Harold Wicke correctly observed:

They (that is, the theological liberals) claim that Mark...reflected the mood and beliefs of his time which, according to them, falsely ascribed many illnesses to demon possession. However since what Mark wrote is "God breathed" according to 2 Timothy 3:16, such commentators are really saying that God doesn't know what he's saying or that he accommodated himself to the beliefs of that day. (Harold E. Wicke, "Mark", *The People's Bible*, Northwestern Publishing House, Milwaukee, Third Printing, 1998, pp. 129-131)

In contrast to the rejection of the demonic are the obsessive number of productions the entertainment industry has cranked out dealing with the occult and the devil. I explored a bit of this on line and read about what might be one of the best examples, namely the former weekly television production of *Lucifer!* The devil walks the earth in human form, runs a nightclub and becomes a consultant to the Los Angeles Police Department. Up jumped the devil dressed in white! Maybe under all the denial is the fear that there might really be such a person! Well . . .

THERE REALLY IS A DEVIL AND HE REALLY WANTS TO DESTROY US!

I. His Song and Dance!

And when they came to the disciples, they saw a great crowd around them, and scribes arguing with them. And immediately all the crowd, when they saw him, were greatly amazed and ran up to him and greeted him. (vv. 4-15)

The "they" in "when they came to the disciples" are Jesus, Peter, James and John who had just returned from the Mount of Transfiguration; that glorious glimpse of heaven. And Satan was doing what Satan does, stirs up accusations, lies and doubt: "they saw a great crowd around (the other disciples), and the scribes (the theological wizards of that moment) arguing with them." And then this . . .

And he (Jesus) asked them, "What are you arguing about with them? And someone from the crowd answered, "Teacher, I brought my son to you, for he has a spirit that makes him mute...So I asked your disciples to cast it out, and they were not able." (vv. 16-18)

It's the way Satan works. It's **his song and dance!** The scribes were doing everything possible not to discredit the disciples, but to discredit Jesus! That's how it all got started way back in the Garden of Eden, Satan's words: "Did God actually say, 'You shall not eat of any tree in the garden?'" (Gen. 3:1b) Questioning, doubts, lies to feed sinful human thinking and, as a result, to feed suffering, dying and death! As a result, God pronounced: "By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread, till you return to the ground...for you are dust, and to dust you shall return." (Gen. 3:19) The Almighty God describes fallen human life in two terms: "sweat" and "dust" (death!). I'm sorry, positive thinkers, but that's our lives in this world apart from Christ! **Sweat and death!**

Those who want to discredit or jumble what Jesus said can ultimately do nothing else but hold hands with Satan, sing his song and dance with him. Satan does not simply want people to disbelieve. He wants to murder people. We'll hold on to what Jesus said about those who sing and dance with the devil:

You are of your father the devil, and your will is to do your father's desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks out of his own character, for he is a liar and the father of lies. (Jn. 8:44)

And so, from our text . . .

II. No Age Barriers.

And they brought the boy to him. And when the spirit saw him, immediately it convulsed the boy, and he fell on the ground and rolled about, foaming at the mouth. And Jesus asked his father, "How long has this been happening to him?" And he said, "From childhood. And it has often cast him into fire and water, to destroy him. But if you can do anything, have compassion on us and help us." And Jesus said to him, "If you can! All things are possible for one who believes." (vv. 20-23)

This young one is introduced to the reader as a "boy". What he was experiencing from the demon had been going on from "childhood", since he was very young. The time span is not revealed. It need not be. Its chilling. Satan recognizes no barriers. He does not bear empathy. He's vile. A murderer. Often very subtle say, for example, through the godless teachings of godless adults. Often horribly obvious say, for example, through **the results** of godless teachings by godless adults - let's say, for example, re-constructing history in order to sell the "benefits" of the degradation of life, family and decency; that we are witnessing everywhere:

And there's the reality that this demonic spirit had entered this young one. You can't ignore this. You can't pretend that these things don't happen; especially today. Such horror that dismisses the reality of God's Word and the desire of Satan to murder!

Remember that moment when we're told, "During Supper, when the devil had already put it into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray him..." (Jn. 13:2) Let's not ask how the devil put it into his heart. God help us to examine our own hearts and protect them with the Word.

And a short time later we're told, "Then after he (Judas) had taken the morsel, Satan entered into him." (Jn. 13:27) Entered. Chilling, isn't it?! Would drive him to his death and hell. Satan knows no age barriers. He bears no love - none! It is exactly as Peter warns: "Be sober-minded (You know? Pay attention. Keep our priorities straight. Don't get messed up by the fleshy fuzzies and the goofy thinking of the moment!); be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls (constantly on the move and observing) around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour." (I Pet. 5:8)

III. There Really Is Jesus Who Gives Life!

And when Jesus saw that a crowd came running together, he rebuked the unclean spirit, saying to it, "You mute and deaf spirit, I command you, come out of him and never enter him again." And after crying out and convulsing him terribly, it came out, and the boy was like a corpse, so that most of them said, "he is dead." But Jesus took him by the hand and lifted him up, and he arose. (vv. 25-27)

I know this sermon has a lot of hard and uncomfortable realities in its words. I know it doesn't contain all the pleasantries we might like. But the reality cannot be ignored. The Scriptures are clear. Satan's activity will violently increase, as we are seeing, as we draw near to the end of this world. We cannot - none of us! - ignore the reality or pretend it will go away.

However, and more importantly, everything we see and know about this vicious enemy draws us to our Lord Jesus, as should be the case. The Scriptures say,

“Whoever makes a practice of sinning (that is, blatantly and unrepentantly pursues what is clearly in conflict with God’s Word) is of the devil, for the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil.” (I Jn. 3:8)

Satan brought hatred and distrust of God into this world. As a result, he gave humanity a highway paved with tears and broken hearts, and finally death and hell. Jesus brought life and eternal salvation; forgiveness of every sin with His sin covering Blood! Jesus promised, “For this is the will of my Father, that everyone who looks on the Son and believes in him should have eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day.” (Jn. 6:40) And though our struggle with sin and failures is always there, Jesus was clear: “For God did not send his son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. Whoever believes in him is not condemned...”. (Jn. 3:17-18)

I look at myself. Most of the time, I don’t like what I see. And the forces of hell are always there to condemn and underscore the spiritual and eternal failure. We must confess with Paul: “...I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh. For I have the desire to do what is right, but not the ability to carry it out.” (Rom. 7:18) We cry with him, “Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?” (Rom 7:25) And the words that kick that lying, murdering Satan out the door embrace us: “There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.” (Rom. 8:1)

And so, the blessed news is this: There really is Jesus and He really loves, forgives and saves us and wants us to be with Him forever! And that’s what we want. Isn’t it?

Amen.

Pastor Bill Abbott

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***“There Really Is a Devil
and He Really Wants to Destroy Us!”***

- I. His Song and Dance!*
- II. No Age Barriers.*
- III. Three Really Is Jesus Who Gives Life!*

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