

February 4, 2024 (Epiphany 5 B)

Mark 1:29-39

“Diligently Defeating the Demons:”

We’re focusing on the spiritual forces of EVIL here today – and we don’t want to *underestimate* them. They are real, and they are powerful, and they are incredibly destructive and dangerous. That said, however, we know they are nothing compared to **Jesus** – He’s in a whole *other* league when it comes to POWER. He is God Incarnate and no demon could ever threaten Him. We know He’s coming again in His full glory and power to, once and for all, destroy ALL the forces of evil and banish them to that everlasting pit of suffering and despair.

But . . . when He came here the first time . . . He came in humility and lowliness as a **true human being**. He showed off little *glimpses* of His Divine power and glory – with every miracle He performed. Yet – He lived, ministered, fought, died – and ROSE as truly one of us. Therefore, in Jesus (and during His earthly ministry) we can see exactly what a PERFECT human life looks like. We actually get to see and learn from Him – as One of us, ***diligently defeating the demons***.

When I say “demons” I’m using it in the *broad* sense here. Yes, it includes the actual demons themselves, but also the spiritual effects of their evil and lies all around us – and – also the physical effects of their wickedness which results in the pain, sickness, disease, and death this world is so full of.

As we put on our “detective hats” here today we can, in our text, follow around the humble and fully human Jesus in His earthly ministry as He ***diligently*** went forth – ***defeating the demons*** in whatever sense He came across them. My hope and prayer is that we too – humble and fully human people – can learn from Him how to do the same.

This lesson is neatly divided into 4 paragraphs – and each one presents us with a specific “scene” where Jesus ***diligently defeats the demons***. **Mark 1:29-31 (NIV) 29 As soon as they left the synagogue, they went with James and John to the home of Simon and Andrew. 30 Simon’s mother-in-law was in bed with a fever, and they immediately told Jesus about her. 31 So he went to her, took her hand and helped her up. The fever left her and she**

began to wait on them. Peter’s mother-in-law was suffering from the *physical* effects of sin and evil – Jesus took her by the hand, and, as the Son of God Almighty she was instantly healed, and joyfully got back to work serving her guests.

Mark goes on to the next “scene” here: **Verse 32 That evening after sunset the people brought to Jesus all the sick and demon-possessed. 33 The whole town gathered at the door, 34 and Jesus healed many who had various diseases. He also drove out many demons, but he would not let the demons speak because they knew who he was.**

Bible critics claim the people in Jesus’ day didn’t understand physical sickness and diseases – they claim they were ignorant and thought everything that made people sick was caused by demon possession / oppression. These verses prove that theory dead wrong. Jesus healed many who had various physical diseases – *and* – He drove the demons out too. He would not let them speak because He didn’t need (or want) their endorsement in any way – for even if they do tell the truth at times, their goal was to mislead and disrupt His ministry work.

Mark goes on to the next day: **35 Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed. 36 Simon and his companions went to look for him, 37 and when they found him, they exclaimed: “Everyone is looking for you!”**

Finally – Jesus was able to get some “me time”! He got up super early and went for a hike to have some down time. **No – not at all!** Prayer is one of the duties and responsibilities He had to accomplish. Prayer is necessary, so Jesus had to *find* time for it – even if it cut into His sleep. Prayer wasn’t just for Him – it was time with His Father / time to pray for others / time to reflect on His work and gain the strength He needed (according to His human nature) to recharge and keep on doing the work set before Him. Our responsible Savior MADE time for prayer and then prayed perfectly as God wants us all of us to.

THEN He’d have some down time! Nope. Not a chance – back to His other duties. Mark goes on: **38 Jesus replied, “Let us go somewhere else—to the nearby villages—so I can preach there also. That is why I have come.” 39 So he traveled throughout Galilee, preaching in their synagogues and driving out demons.**

He just keeps going and going – diligently preaching, serving, healing, teaching, working. Do you think Jesus ever had a sign reading “OFF DUTY” that He would hang around His neck so He could get a break from His responsibilities? **Nope.** He did his job perfectly and never took a moment for Himself. Good golly – what would Oprah say?! *“Jesus – you need to take care of our own needs first! You need to get away from all that for a while and focus on you – maybe then you can start to think about the needs of other people!”*

How opposite Jesus is. He always put the needs of others first. Even to the point of suffering through hell – He was willing to do that – because we needed a Savior. Jesus stepped forward to meet our greatest need. *Time off?!* He wouldn’t look for that, request that, or pursue it at all – He left that in His Father’s hands and just diligently did the work He placed before Him perfectly. From very early to very late . . . day in and day out . . . He perfectly and *diligently defeated every demon* in every form He ever came across. On Good Friday HE defeated the devil himself, and on Easter Sunday He defeated death itself.

And – *WE are supposed to learn how to defeat the demons from HIM?!* They were no match for JESUS, but **we** are no match for the *demons!* They terrorize us and they know how to get at us individually and personally. They can’t, thank God, get into our heads and possess us – as people who have the Holy Spirit and living faith in Jesus. But – how long would they have to follow you around to pick up on what YOUR sinful weaknesses are? We all have our “demons” so to speak – those weaknesses and sins we just can’t ever seem to overcome. Guilt and shame torment our own consciences thanks to our sins and failures and mistakes. The lies and spiritual forces of evil all around us torment us too. We hate what Satan and sin is doing to our loved ones / to our country / to our world – and we are powerless to do anything about it. Likewise time marches on – and thanks to sin, our physical bodies are falling apart and dying too – and there’s nothing we can do about it.

BUT . . . Jesus can! The fact is – He has ALREADY defeated all your demons and mine too. It is finished, and the victory is WON – it was won 2,000 years ago when the Risen Lord said, *“Peace be with you!”* His perfect human record is now your perfect human record. God sees you as His own perfect and holy saint –

purified by the Blood of Christ, and wrapped up in the robe of His perfection – right here / right NOW!

But . . . we’re not in heaven yet, and the moment we leave church we jump back into demon infested waters to get tormented all over again. Well – yeah, we have to swim in demon infested waters for a time down here – *but – we need not be tormented by them!* You can **defeat the demons** down here too! *How?* Because HE / **Jesus** – is right here with you. It’s true we don’t have the power to heal diseases / to vanquish the evil all around us / or to cast out any demon we come across . . . but HE DOES.

You can defeat ALL the demons you come across by memorizing 4 very short little words: **“Thy will be done.”** You, or a loved one, gets sick and is suffering – take it to your Lord in prayer and say, *“Thy will be done.”* One way or another, down here, or when He comes again in glory – we and our loved ones WILL stand in perfect health and say, *“Thank-you Lord!”* Your world is being decimated and destroyed by the influence of Satan raging in this world – take it to Him in prayer and end it with, *“Thy will be done.”* He will take care of it all, in His own time and in His own way – as His saving plans are carried out according to His perfect will. Bring all of your sin and guilt and shame to Him and say, *“Lord Jesus – please forgive me!”* And you don’t even have to say “thy will be done” because we already know it **is His will** – for He has promised to hear and forgive His children every single time they turn to Him for grace, mercy, and forgiveness. But – what about all those weaknesses we still have, and the sinful habits we all still struggle with? Bring them to Him too. You can’t beat them on your own – but He can do all things. Say, *“Help me Lord / do not give up on me . . . and thy will be done.”* We can say that because we KNOW giving up on His children is NOT something Jesus ever wants or does.

He will sustain you and carry you through it all and home to glory. You and I will see, with our own eyes, that Day when He comes to ultimately and finally defeat all evil and every demon for all eternity. Stay **close to Him**, and He’ll get you through anything and to that Day when you will see, witness, and experience His full power on a scale we can’t even imagine!