

The Exorcist
Luke 7:40-8:3 September 11, 2011

- I. So what do you think the odds are that a couple who went to go see the movie ***The Exorcist*** for their first date would have any chance of surviving?
 - A. It was 38 years ago for Shelly's birthday that the split pea spewing Linda Blair provided extra tension to the already painful gastronomical bubbling that arises from having too much butter with your 'date impressing' lobster dinner. Every time the demons came forth in the movie so also did the butter induced demons within my body. By the time we arrived back at Shelly's parent's house (she was only a Junior in high school) I was quite sure the demons had possessed me and I was going to follow my grandfather to the grave – who had recently passed away from a hernia. Such gastronomical distress was I in that my double dating wing man **made** me walk Shelly to the door and kiss her goodnight. Which was probably a good call.

II. So in our scientific sophisticated world we live in today, demons are kind of pooh-poohed.

A. There not really taken seriously and that makes them safe bogeymen to scare the bejezzuz out us in the movies.

B. Can you imagine how horrific our lives would be if they really did exist as the movies portray and we had all varieties of demons and monsters and vampires and zombies running around our world?

III. But I'm here to tell you that demons do exist.

And not just the mail daemons you get back when your email doesn't go through.

A. No – I mean real demons; the demons that posses you and mess up your life.

B. Yes – they do exist – and we all have them.

IV. The gospels are full of demons and stories of Jesus casting out demons.

A. There were lots of children with demons (surprise, surprise – I have heard lots of

parents testify to that reality) and the Gerasenes demoniac, and the Canaanite woman, the man in the synagogue, and there are stories that Jesus went about the whole region healing and casting out hundreds, maybe thousands, of demons.

And, then we also hear that Jesus had to step in and help out when the disciples couldn't cast out a demon.

And today we read that Mary Magdalene had 7 demons that we presume Jesus exorcised.

Yes, it appears Jesus was quite famous in the region as an exorcist extraordinaire.

B. Demon possession was an important part of everyday life in Jesus day and most infirmities could be traced to some demon.

1. I am sure that not just mental disease but probably many gastronomical and respiratory diseases were also blamed upon demons.
2. Everything from schizophrenia and tourettes to asthma and hiccups.

C. Well in our modern scientific and medically advanced world we no longer blame the demons for such illnesses.

Bad brain chemistry, bacteria and viruses,

can pick up the blame for most of the things that demons were once blamed for.

- D. But as I said, I'm here today to tell you that demons still exist and most everyone has some and they make our lives less than happy, if not downright miserable, and in some cases unbearable.

V. So what exactly is a demon?

- A. Well, let's start with what a demon isn't.

1. A demon is not a little ugly devil looking guy.
2. A demon is not a being.
3. A demon is not even an entity of any kind.

- B. So what is a demon?
It's a spiritual energy.

1. It is a negative spiritual energy that offsets or drains us of our positive spiritual energy.
2. These demons enter us through all sorts of avenues and pathways.
 - a) For instance just the other day some motorist did something that was just irresponsible or careless and I was getting all upset with this person for doing whatever it was they did and Shelly, with only a touch of maternalism, said to me, "Let it go, it's not worth the emotional

energy.”

Of course in this context it wasn't just emotional energy, but it was spiritual energy and I realized that she was right (but please nobody tell her) and I was letting a demon have its way with me.

(1) I was letting into my soul this negative spiritual energy, that was filled with anger and judgment and vindictiveness – just to name a few, and I was letting it control me.

(2) I was letting it drag me down.

b) Now this was just a minor demon possession and I was able to exorcize it without too much trouble, but there are some major demon possessions that really do take over our lives.

C. As I said there's any number of ways that demons can enter into our lives and possess us; so let's look at some.

1. Demons of trauma –
Who this morning has memories of traumatic events that still bring mental and physical pain and emotional distress?
2. Demons of un-forgiveness –
I'm pretty sure we all still harbor some demons of un-forgiveness. People who no matter how hard we try to forgive them, the memories of

what they did still brings us pain and discomfort. And demons of un-forgiveness include the ones that keeps us from forgiving ourselves.

3. Demons of anger –
these are sometimes fleeting and anger itself is not the demon, the demon arises when we can't let go of the anger and the anger burrows into us like a hook worm and begins to control us rather than the other way around.
4. Demons of hatred –
How many are possessed by the demons that call us to vengeance and objectification and dehumanization, bigotry and malevolent behavior thoughts and desires?
5. Demons of injustice --
This is a two edged demon.
Who here still suffers from and lets their life be defined by some act or acts of injustice that was perpetrated upon them?
The other edge is of this demon is how it gets us to act unjustly towards others in order to benefit our own self interest;
but these acts ultimately make us feel less worthy?
6. Demons of fear and anxiety –
These demons oft times control and determine a persons life and career choice.
They limit where a person can go and what they do.
These demons also force people to make

irrational decisions and to see things in such a distorted fashion as to make their dreams into nightmares and their hopes into desperation.

7. Demons of stress –

These little buggers -- these demons of stress help to support and amplify all the other demons; yet it has a life of its own.

This is a demon that can lower our immune system, and bring on heart disease and open us up to cancer.

It is a demon that is only brought into reality as we let it into our lives.

It's a demon that takes advantage of our lack of trust in God's grace.

D. These demons, these negative spiritual energies, are not only capable of making our emotional and spiritual lives into a hell – these demons can also manifest themselves in physical ways in disease, addiction, social dysfunction.

E. I don't know if you were counting, but those totaled up to seven demons.

I doubt if they were the seven demons that Mary Magdalene was healed from, but they're probably 7 that most of us could have exorcized from our lives.

1. After my heart attack I was attacked almost daily by the demon of fear and anxiety.

2. The demons of anger and injustice often team up to ruin my day over some of the smallest events – that as Shelly said, I just need to let go of.
3. I have demons that I haven't been able to totally exorcize that first entered me as a child.
4. I'm guessing that like Mary, we all are possessed by at least 7 demons, 7 negative spiritual energies that keep us from being the whole and healthy and happy individuals that God intends.

VI. Today we remember one of the greatest demon possessions in our countries history.

- A. This of course being the 10th anniversary of the 9/11 attacks.
- B. But the demons were not Osama bin Laden and his sorry bunch of delusional terrorists who with lustful visions of virgins dancing in their heads murdered thousands of people. They were not the demons that possessed millions of Americans.
- C. The demons that possessed people all over the world and not just in the U.S. were demons that we invited in. They were the demons of stress, anxiety, fear, terror, injustice, hatred, anger, unforgiveness and trauma.

- D. These demons still possess and control the lives of thousands and maybe millions of people.
They have yet to be exorcized and they still bring pain and suffering and keep people from living the kind of fulfilled, meaningful, vital and loving lives that God desires for us.
- E. If we have been able to exorcize these demons from our lives then today we need to be extra careful to remember the events of 9/11 with our eyes on Jesus and with love in our hearts so that we don't once again invite those demons into our hearts.

VII. Exorcizing demons, getting them out of our lives is an act healing.

- A. It is an act of spiritual surgery, cutting away the rotting diseased parts of our life, so that we can heal.
- B. First it is helpful to recognize and name the demons that are making your life less than it ought to be.
This is akin to confession and it is a recognition that we have negative spiritual energies that need to be extracted from our souls.

- C. It could be one of the demons I have named; stress, anxiety, fear, injustice, hatred, anger, un-forgiveness and trauma; or it could be another that I haven't named.
- D. And so now we come to a time when you have an opportunity to do just that -- as everyone is invited to join us in a ritual of healing.
After a brief introduction you are all invited to come forward to receive the balm of healing for whatever may be causing you to suffer and expel those negative energies and replace it with positive energy as symbolized in the anointing of the healing oil.
- E. After a moment of silence to recognize and name the demons that posses you or to think about any other cause of suffering in your life, then please join me in the ritual of healing.