

Kingdom of Left Sunday 2021
Mark 1:21-28 “Epiphany from a Demon”
A Sermon from Lutheran Family Service

[Pastor – Every year LFS designates a “Kingdom of the Left” Sunday in January as a new legislative session begins. This sermon is on the Three-Year Lectionary Gospel for January 31, the Fourth Sunday after the Epiphany. Please use it or parts of it as you deem appropriate and thank you for considering it. I also encourage you to download the bulletin insert as it outlines the sermon’s main points.]

We continue our focus in Epiphany on making Jesus known as the Son of God and Savior of the world. This demon in our text did a pretty good job! *“What have you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are—the Holy One of God”* (vs 24). Of course, he interrupted Jesus’ sermon during church in the Synagogue to do so.

But that’s okay. It gave Jesus a chance to illustrate why He came, to deal with the interruptions of evil. He came to deal with the evil that interrupted God’s holy creation in the beginning and has been interrupting our world and our lives ever since.

Evil interrupts our health with sickness and suffering. The evil of the Corona virus interrupted the whole world and our own personal worlds as well. And that’s certainly not the only evil that interrupts our health. The evil of cancer and dementia and mental illness and a host of others still interrupt people’s lives. Maybe yours.

Evil interrupts our peace with disorder and discord. We see evil interrupt peace out there in our streets with rioting and looting. We see it interrupt peace in here in our hearts with our own multiple sins that seem way too often to take control.

Evil interrupts our Joy with anxiety and apprehension. We’ve seen a lot of that this past year and much of it still continues for a variety of reasons. Living in fear robs us of our joy.

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Evil interrupts our families with friction and fraction. Divorce rates increased significantly during this pandemic. Job loss, financial worries, school kids at home, death of a loved one, separation from loved ones—all raise the level of stress significantly and strains relationships.

Evil interrupts good government with power and partisanship. This is NOT a comment on the recent presidential election! It doesn’t matter who is in power. Satan doesn’t like good government any more than he likes good families. He prefers lawlessness and chaos. He loves rulers seeking personal power and legislative bodies bickering over every jot and tittle until nothing at all gets done.

And evil’s very favorite interruption, interrupting life with dying and death. This was Satan’s goal from the beginning. He succeeded. He interrupted a perfect place and perfect people with sin. He convinced those first two humans, created in the image and likeness of God, that things could be better! Sin! This became the vehicle for all subsequent interruptions. The perfect life interrupted with toil and pain and broken relationships and dying. Life, holy and eternal, interrupted with death.

But now back to our text for some Good News! Jesus interrupts the interrupter! *“But Jesus rebuked him, saying, ‘Be silent, and come out of him!’”* (vs 25). Jesus’ authoritative power sends the demon packing! His authority “astonished” and “amazed” everyone. This rabbi was different. Jewish rabbis established their authority by quoting the authority of other rabbis who quoted the authority of yet other rabbis who . . . well, you get the picture. Jesus spoke on His own authority. Jesus spoke, as the demon correctly pointed out, as the “Holy One of God.”

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The word of Jesus, the word of God prevails. Jesus shows why He came. His death and resurrection interrupts evil's interruptions once and for all.

Evil interrupts our health, but Jesus brings healing. Although as we will see in next week's Gospel, Jesus did not heal everyone. But Jesus does bring the healing of forgiveness; and because God did not spare His own Son for us, as Paul says in Romans 8, we can be assured that He will never abandon us and that He works even in our suffering to bring good according to His will. We know He brings good from our suffering not because we always see it or feel it but because the ultimate good of forgiveness and eternal life came from the ultimate suffering of the cross. If you want to be assured that God works in suffering, do not look at your circumstances, look at the cross.

Evil interrupts our peace, but Jesus brings peace, but not always in our world or country or even in our hearts. He brings peace with God. This is the peace you hear about often at the end of sermons. The peace that passing understanding. Jesus took upon Himself the anger and hostility of God over our sin. We have the assurance that God loves us with an unconditional love and that nothing now can separate us from that love. Understand it or not, God gives you this peace. It is this peace that becomes the beginning point of finding peace in our lives.

Evil interrupts our joy. Jesus brings Joy that no one can take away. This is what He told His disciple as He was preparing them for His death and giving them the hope of His resurrection. Unlike happiness, joy does not depend upon circumstances. It is a fruit of God's

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Spirit, a gift from Him. It flows from what He does for us and not from anything we do. That is why no one can take it away!

Evil wants to interrupt families, but Jesus brings membership into His family. When we were baptized, we became His children and heirs of His eternal Kingdom. This does not make family problems go away but it does give to Christian families a source of love and forgiveness and unity from which to deal with those problems.

Evil wants to interrupt the rule of good government but Jesus rules over us in His Kingdom with His grace. Luther called this God's "Right Hand Kingdom." God administers this rule through His Church and His means of grace. Through His Church we receive His gifts of forgiveness and eternal life. In the Right Hand Kingdom we receive the proper motivation for holy living and loving our neighbor. As members of the Right Hand Kingdom, Jesus gives us responsibilities as we live in the Left Hand Kingdom. In this Kingdom God rules over us through those in authority over us, including the government. Jesus desires His people to be "salt" and "light" in our culture and government, to bring our Christian influence to bear and help interrupt evil and keep the government good.

Evil would interrupt life with dying and death. But Jesus gives the death-defying hope of resurrection, no more death, back to living forever with God and in the image of God. Satan interrupted God's perfect world with sin. But God sent Jesus to interrupt this world of sin and to win victory over sin and death and that old evil foe. That victory has been won! He gives that victory to us. It is not something we strive FOR. It is something we strive IN. That means

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no matter what evil may interrupt our lives or how it may interrupt them, we live in the certain hope it cannot prevail because the great Interrupter of Evil, Jesus, has prevailed.

Now that would be a good place for an “Amen!” But how can we have knowledge of and faith in such a grand interruption of evil and not share it with others who also experience evil’s interruptions of their lives? Wouldn’t it be nice if this congregation had sufficient staff to deal with all the interruptions of evil we have talked about in this sermon? Wouldn’t it be nice if we had on staff several mental health counsellors, some pregnancy counsellors, staff to handle adoptions, to help us minister to the elderly in our midst, to enhance our youth program, two or three more pastors to preach and teach specifically on these particular issues and help us all do a better job of wrapping our congregation around folks whose lives are being interrupted by evil? Oh, wait! We do!

Lutheran Family Service exists to extend the ministry of this congregation in all of these areas. You can see a listing on the other side of the bulletin insert today. But today we also highlight one aspect of our partners at Lutheran Family Service. It’s in bold print, **“Affirming Life and Influencing Policy in the Public Square.”**

[At this point, we recommend simply going through the rest of the insert. For your convenience, here it is:]

Affirming Life and Influencing Policy in the Public Square

Satan works hard in capitols across the country to legislate his evil. Christians need to work hard too. Plenty can be done to interrupt evil through policies and laws that curb the devil’s evil intents. Lutheran Family Service advocates for laws that:

- Protect the unborn

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- Protect the elderly and vulnerable
- Uphold the sanctity of marriage
- Foster good adoption practices
- Defend religious freedom

Jesus calls all to be this world’s salt and light (Matthew 5:13-14). You can:

- Pray for your legislators and legislation
- Contact them on key issues
- Participate in LFS-sponsored events
- Sign up for email alerts . . .
- Support the public advocacy of LFS with a financial gift.

[**Note:** Since this sermon is being written *before* the session begins, we do not yet have knowledge of what significant legislation may be brought forth. For an update, go here and sign up for legislative updates We will keep this information as current as possible.].

The verse at the bottom of the page is an appropriate way to conclude.

“Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same things, that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil” (Hebrews 2:14).

Evil interrupted Jesus in our text today and it interrupts our lives as well. But He interrupted the interruption in our text and He continues to do it every day. Through His cross and resurrection He destroyed death and the evil one himself. Jesus wins! We share in His victory and are called to share His victory! Now we can say it, Amen!