

2/1/09

THE PSALM AND THE INVOCATION

Psalm 111

Lay Minister: 1 Praise the LORD. I will extol the LORD with all my heart in the council of the upright and in the assembly.

People: 2 Great are the works of the LORD; they are pondered by all who delight in them.

Lay Minister: 3 Glorious and majestic are his deeds, and his righteousness endures forever.

People: 4 He has caused his wonders to be remembered; the LORD is gracious and compassionate.

Lay Minister: 5 He provides food for those who fear him; he remembers his covenant forever.

People: 6 He has shown his people the power of his works, giving them the lands of other nations.

Lay Minister: 7 The works of his hands are faithful and just; all his precepts are trustworthy.

People: 8 They are steadfast for ever and ever, done in faithfulness and uprightness.

Lay Minister: 9 He provided redemption for his people; he ordained his covenant forever-- holy and awesome is his name.

People: 10 The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom; all who follow his precepts have good understanding. To him belongs eternal praise.

Lay Minister: We begin in the name of the Lord, whose works are faithful and just, whose teachings are trustworthy, who provides redemption for His people.

People: In the name of God the Father, and in the name of God the Son, and in the name of God the Holy Spirit. Amen.

THE PRAYER OF THE DAY Almighty God, You know we live in the midst of so many dangers that in our frailty we cannot stand upright. Grant strength and protection to support us in all dangers and carry us through all temptations; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

THE OLD TESTAMENT LESSON

Deuteronomy 18:15-20

(God promises a prophet like Moses.)

15 The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your own brothers. You must listen to him. 16 For this is what you asked of the LORD your God at Horeb on the day of the assembly when you said, "Let us not hear the voice of the LORD our God nor see this great fire anymore, or we will die." 17 The LORD said to me: "What they say is good. 18 I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their brothers; I will put my words in his mouth, and he will tell them everything I command him. 19 If anyone does not listen to my words that the prophet speaks in my name, I myself will call him to account. 20 But a prophet who presumes to speak in my name anything I have not commanded him to say, or a prophet who speaks in the name

of other gods, must be put to death."

THE EPISTLE LESSON 1 Corinthians 8:1-13

(God calls us to watch our actions and to care about the conscience of a friend.)

1 Now about food sacrificed to idols: We know that we all possess knowledge. Knowledge puffs up, but love builds up. 2 The man who thinks he knows something does not yet know as he ought to know. 3 But the man who loves God is known by God. 4 So then, about eating food sacrificed to idols: We know that an idol is nothing at all in the world and that there is no God but one. 5 For even if there are so-called gods, whether in heaven or on earth (as indeed there are many "gods" and many "lords"), 6 yet for us there is but one God, the Father, from whom all things came and for whom we live; and there is but one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom all things came and through whom we live. 7 But not everyone knows this. Some people are still so accustomed to idols that when they eat such food they think of it as having been sacrificed to an idol, and since their conscience is weak, it is defiled. 8 But food does not bring us near to God; we are no worse if we do not eat, and no better if we do. 9 Be careful, however, that the exercise of your freedom does not become a stumbling block to the weak. 10 For if anyone with a weak conscience sees you who have this knowledge eating in an idol's temple, won't he be emboldened to eat what has been sacrificed to idols? 11 So this weak brother, for whom Christ died, is destroyed by your knowledge. 12 When you sin against your brothers in this way and wound their weak conscience, you sin against Christ. 13 Therefore, if what I eat causes my brother to fall into sin, I will never eat meat again, so that I will not cause him to fall.

THE GOSPEL LESSON Mark 1:21-28 *(Jesus commands an unclean spirit to leave a man.)*

21 They went to Capernaum, and when the Sabbath came, Jesus went into the synagogue and began to teach. 22 The people were amazed at his teaching, because he taught them as one who had authority, not as the teachers of the law. 23 Just then a man in their synagogue who was possessed by an evil spirit cried out,

24 "What do you want with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are-- the Holy One of God!"

25 "Be quiet!" said Jesus sternly. "Come out of him!"

26 The evil spirit shook the man violently and came out of him with a shriek. 27 The people were all so amazed that they asked each other, "What is this? A new teaching-- and with authority! He even gives orders to evil spirits and they obey him." 28 News about him spread quickly over the whole region of Galilee.

INTRO - This is not a real story, but a made up story so that I don't use names of more than one person who has told me this.

There was a young, strong, healthy man who was injured at work one day. He was working construction fell off the roof. He broke his back and ended up in a wheel chair. He worked and worked to get his life back to normal, whatever that is. He had family to support him, good doctors, and even his church. But, for years he was depressed, angry, not at peace. Finally the man came to accept his situation, and even reached out to help others in need. One day when the pastor was visiting he asked, "Why the change?" The man replied, "For ten years I fought and struggled with my injury. Pastor, it took me ten years to look and see the goodness God is doing even in my handicapped state. It took me ten years to think about how I can use my injury to glorify God." I have actually heard those words more than once from different people.

This man was not just fighting the physical injuries, he was fighting doubt of God's love, and doubt of God's power. He was being attacked by Satan in his spirit as he was fighting his physical problems.

I. Today's Gospel lesson tells us an account of Jesus, while worshiping in the synagogue, encountering a man possessed by a demon.

A. In reading the Bible it is always important that we don't add to, or take from what is said.

1. For example, some of those who were demon possessed in Scripture had outward signs, but we don't hear of outward signs for this man.

2. We do know, however, that this man was actually in the Synagogue worshipping. Imagine the struggle going on within the man.

3. We also know that this demon knew Jesus was the Christ, and caused seemingly painful convulsions to the man when the demon left the man.

B. Some may say, well, there are no demons today.

1. Actually demonic activity *is* discussed more during the ministry of Jesus than at any other time in Scripture. But, that makes sense, if Jesus completed His God given task, these demons were defeated and condemned.

2. There are many fundamentalist pastors who see a demon around every corner, which I believe is sensationalism. But one of the books I read for my doctorate called, "Radical Evil" was written by a rather liberal theologian who had not preached much about sin, or seemingly believed in a real devil. His personal experiences changed his belief.

3. However, Paul in Scripture talks about the Spiritual warfare of all Christians, and our fight against the principalities and powers, against Satan's forces.

C. All Christians, no matter their condition, face a spiritual battle, a constant onslaught of temptation of the tongue, temptation of the eye, temptation to our faith and attitude, temptation to greed, or lust, or pride.

1. Please remember Jesus' words in the next chapter of Mark, Mark 2:17 "**...Jesus said to them, "It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners."**

2. We are all sinners.

3. Jesus came to help us with our spiritual battles and our sin.

II. This November I came home from the Workers' Conference and became ill. I had headaches, and achiness and stomach pain. I couldn't keep anything in and lost 10 pounds. After a couple of days my wife told me I had to get in some liquids and food to strengthen myself, but if food touched my tongue, my belly went into painful spasms. I called the doctor thinking I had the flu, but after a lab test, it turns out I had food poisoning, and the right medicine helped me recover quickly.

- A. We've all been sick. Mostly we got over our colds, or the flu, or chicken pox. But, sometimes we become more seriously ill.
 - 1. To a certain extent this is an attack by our enemy.
 - 2. First of all, sickness was not part of God's good world at the beginning of creation. While, sickness might not be a direct result of our personal sin, illness is one of the results of a sinful world rebelling against its loving creator.
- B. But, there are other ways the devil can attack our spirit when we are ill, or hurt, or suffering.
 - 1. He can cause us to feel sorry for ourselves, to wonder, why me?
 - 2. He can tempt us to doubt that God loves us.
 - 2. He can tempt us to believe God is not really strong enough to help, or to become angry.

III. Please look at today's lesson.

A. Beginning in verse 24 we read, **24 "What do you want with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are-- the Holy One of God!" 25 "Be quiet!" said Jesus sternly. "Come out of him!" 26 The evil spirit shook the man violently and came out of him with a shriek. 27 The people were all so amazed that they asked each other, "What is this? A new teaching-- and with authority! He even gives orders to evil spirits and they obey him." 28 News about him spread quickly over the whole region of Galilee.**

- 1. Jesus is the Holy One of God.
- 2. Jesus is stronger than our spiritual enemies. They do obey Him.
- 3. Jesus is stronger than our sin, and our troubles.

B. The battle for our health and life was fought not so much in that synagogue, though it was fought there, but it was fought and won on the cross of calvary where Jesus died for the sin that causes pain and illness and death, for our sin. The battle for our health and life was fought and won at the empty tomb where Jesus overcame death and Satan forever.

C. My Christian friends, when we face illness, Satan has His hand in it. But, when we face illness, God has already won the battle forever.

CONCLUSION The man I told you about in the beginning, who was injured, came to realize that even in his injury, God was present and loving and victorious. He came to realize that even in his injury He could glorify God, because God was with Him.

Do you know 2 Corinthians 1:3-4? Here is what it says, **3 Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, 4 who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God.**

When you are ill, or hurt, or grieving, or troubled, God will help you so you can help another and glorify him. Which pain of yours can help another to see God's comfort and compassion? How will you live out Jesus' victory in the midst of your trials? Amen.