

Demon Hunters

July 21, 2019

Luke 8:26-39

There once were two brothers. One brother cared for the other brother, who was very sick, had to be kept alive by machines. The first brother hated seeing his brother like that, hated having him suffer like he was. However, he was also a very devoted Catholic, believing that if he had the doctors/nurses pull the plugs on the machines, he will have in essence killed his brother. The chaplain came by one night, seeing the first brother in a state of mental torment, asked what was bothering him, and the brother explained. The chaplain replied, “In love, there is no sin.” These words struck a chord with the first brother, who soon after decided to let his brother go in peace.

For the first brother, he was contending with a “demon” of sorts. He had a responsibility to his brother, but felt guilt in carrying out that responsibility and was saddened at the prospect of not having his brother around. Much like the first brother, we all have our own demons with which we contend. Maybe it’s a demon that you brought on yourself, like addiction or the guilt of having hurt one or more people. Maybe it’s something you didn’t ask for, like an illness (whether physical or mental), the scars of being hurt by one or more persons, or the responsibility to care for a sick/dying loved one, even if that means asking the doctors to turn off the machines. Maybe your demon isn’t just metaphorical, but physical: a boss who talks down to you and criticizes you, a family member who shows no respect, a doctor who doesn’t listen to your needs, or a workplace that physically and emotionally drains you. Maybe it’s temporary, or maybe it’s lifelong. Regardless, there are two truths that are true for all demons.

The first truth is that demons cause us to bear many emotions all at once. For those who have been in a similar situation as the brother I began speaking about, you know the emotions that come with making a decision like that. You’re sad to see your loved one go, happy they were able to go quietly and without pain, angry at God for not doing anything to save them or for putting you in that situation, and scared your loved ones might be put in a similar situation down the line. Maybe you experienced one or more other emotions, or maybe you experienced one of the emotions I listed for a different reason. These emotions each fight for “dominance” for lack of a better word, and this emotional overload becomes a demon you fight to control/manage.

For those who have faced other demons, all invoke different emotions, different reactions, and there’s always more than one fighting for “dominance.” This is something we see in Pss. 42 and 43. A multitude of recurring verses appear, each expressing its own emotion:

- “Why are you cast down, O my soul, and why are you disquieted within me?”, which expresses sadness or being in that deepest of the pits.
- This recurring question is then followed by the same phrase: “Hope in God; for I shall again praise him, my help and my God.”
- Recurring question: “Why have you forgotten me? Why must I walk about mournfully because the enemy oppresses me?” –anger/betrayal
- Recurring question from the enemy: “Where is your God?” –fear

This illustrates a back and forth struggle of emotion within those that suffer, just as the demoniac was struggling for control. However, this brings to question how Jesus fits into these truths.

The second truth is that love defeats all demons. Consider for a moment the Demoniac. He suffers from self-harm (lack of love for self), violence towards others (no love for others), and isolation/alienation, not just emotionally but physically (i.e. no one to love him). Enter then the power of Love in this story. Jesus is, so to speak, Love incarnate. He comes in and lovingly

shows compassion towards the man by trying to free him of the demons. The demons resist, saying they don't want to go to the abyss, but will leave the man so long as they can go into the herd of pigs. Jesus, out of compassion for the man, allows it. Once the man is free of the demons, the town welcomes him back, shows him that he is loved. As one commentary puts it, "The awareness that one is a child of God stabilizes the self, leading to courage and power . . . What is clear is that the love of God incarnate in Jesus and those drawn to him and sent out by him had the power to heal the man. He was restored to his family and fellow villagers and took with him the power to bring healing to them." So, love bestows the power to defeat any and all demons.

Imagine it, a world where, though we have our demons, we face them together, help each other in overcoming them, leaving only a memory of a time when demons actually posed any real threat. Imagine a world where love conquers all, and pain is nothing but a word. This is the world God has planned for us all, had planned from the start, and is working towards/guiding us to work towards this very moment. Everyone has demons they face throughout their lives, but through the power of love, any demon can be conquered. Feeling loved, feeling like you're part of something greater, these things give you strength to overcome life's challenges, great and small. Showing love to others, welcoming them in, can help them overcome theirs, and it can mean all the difference. Our challenge then is to face our demons rather than ignore them and to show love towards others that they might have the strength to face theirs.