

LENT III 2010
SERMON-CHRIST CHURCH PARISH
FATHER JOHN ALTBURG
EPHESIANS 5.1 LUKE 11.14, HYMN 536



YOUR MOTHER MUST BE VERY PROUD OF YOU SHOUTS A WOMAN IN THE CROWD...

Jesus, of course, does not dispute her Jewish motherly enthusiasm and responds, *BETTER YET, HOW FORTUNATE ARE THOSE WHO GRASP GOD'S STEADFAST LOVE AND ACTUALLY PUT IT INTO PRACTICE IN THEIR LIVES!*

TURN BACK...THE HYMN JUST CONCLUDED IS A CARBON COPY OF THE STRONG CALL TO ACTION OF LAST SUNDAY'S *BUMPER STICKER SERMON...*

Jesus demands concentration on PERMANENT improvement. The Good News is that this can be done...the Bad News is that if you don't take strong measures things can get worse...!

Today's Gospel tells us precisely why...

Jesus is doing something that consistently produces nervous laughter and lurching change in dinner table conversation...driving out a demon to cure a man's inability to speak. Then readily called Demonic Possession, both Jews and Gentiles saw this as a very real problem...unlike today when the diagnosis is likely to something more dismissively benign such as *HE'S JUST CRAZY...OR...THAT WHOLE FAMILY IS STRANGE.*

Jesus dealt with a very real problem...dramatically improving the man's life...performing an exorcism...again, one of those often discomfiting terms that make people look for someone else with whom to converse.

...WHEN THE MAN BEGAN TO TALK...PEOPLE WERE AMAZED. THEY ASKED...IS IT BEELZEBUB, THE CHIEF DEMON WHO GIVES YOU THE POWER TO DO THIS.

THEN SAID JESUS...*IT IS BY THE POWER OF GOD THAT I DRIVE OUT DEMONS...THIS DEMONSTRATES GOD'S MERCY RIGHT IN FRONT OF YOU...*

Jesus seizes the opportunity to make another point...about negative behaviors repeating if not permanently fixed...

WHEN A PROBLEM LEAVES A PERSON IT SEARCHES FOR A NEW HOME. IF IT CANNOT FIND ONE, IT RETURNS WITH SEVEN EVEN WORSE PROBLEMS THAN BEFORE. IN THE END THAT PERSON IS IN EVEN WORSE SHAPE THAN AT THE BEGINNING."

The point is...if you pay attention to what God wants - ASKS **YOU TO DO FOR YOURSELF** - don't get involved with things that corrupt your life; guard constantly against letting old problems creep back...life will be good. Let negative things take your focus and, conversely, life will be worse than ever.

These are not just abstract concepts of the ancient world. Today they permeate and corrupt our culture at all levels...families, business, government and, yes, in some situations the Church...you may have found them in your own house! Meditate about those YOU need to drive away...it's not too late to make it an individual Lenten concentration.

Most important, concludes Saint Paul in the today's letter to the Ephesians...

ABANDON ANY INVOLVEMENT WITH BEHAVIORS LIKE THE CHILDREN OF DISOBEDIENCE...WAKE UP...ARISE FROM DESTRUCTIVE BEHAVIOR, TAKE ACTION... WALK AS CHILDREN OF LIGHT...

TURN BACK...!

