

The Third Sunday in Lent
Ephesians 5: 1, Luke 11: 14
Christ Church Parish
Father Richard Hobbs

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.

So Jesus, since you cast out demons you must be possessed of a demon yourself....

Today's Gospel lesson, like the ones for Lent 1 and 2, focuses on Jesus dealing with the Jews, Satan and his followers. The problem for modern man is; we do not believe in Satan or demons as they belong to the spiritual realm and the spiritual realm only exists in movies and good fiction. Satan and demons are regarded as nothing more than cartoon characters left over from the Middle Ages suitable only to frighten children and gullible Christians.

The idea of Satan as a cartoon character leads to a heresy called Dualism, because we can see that there is true evil in the world, but this guy in the funny red suit is not that true evil. A dualist teaches that God (good) and Satan (evil) are co-eternal (i.e., from eternity past), and are therefore co-equal. In dualism; good and evil are "equal and opposite forces." We see this "equal and opposite forces battling for supremacy" played out in many books and movies today. If you ask most people about the battle of Armageddon, they will tell you it is the final battle between Good and Evil and the winner will determine which path the world will follow. This could not be farther from the truth.

The truth is Satan and his followers have already been defeated.... twice. Once by St Michael when they were thrown out of Heaven, and finally and forever by the Cross of Christ. Satan, like Man is a created being.

Prior to the death of Jesus on the Cross a human being could be possessed involuntarily by the demonic. The Cross is why involuntary possession by a demonic can not happen today. If a person becomes

possessed today it is because they have consciously invited the demonic into their lives usually by some action on their part (i.e., Drug addiction, Alcoholism, revenge, or feeling the world owes them something). The only reason Satan and his followers are still around is so each of us can answer the question "Will we follow God or will we follow Satan"?

The Pharisees did their best in trying to discredit Jesus by saying He cast out demons by Beelzebub (i.e., Satan). Jesus put them in their place by saying; "if you were really the people of God that you profess to be, you would know who I am by what I do". The message for us today is that we should become imitators of Christ in our daily lives. We have the Gospels to tell us who and how Christ acted. We should act the same way, with love, to everyone we meet. Remember the Pharisees were not friends of Jesus, but Jesus treated them with love, courtesy and reasoned discourse. Jesus attacked their views not their persons.

In St. Paul's epistle to the Ephesians today, he tells us the same thing. He urges us to become followers of God (i.e., imitators of Christ) and that we should walk in love. Meaning love answering love, love motivated by love, love made possible by the initial love of Christ. When we love in this way, in our daily lives, we do not leave ourselves open to demonic influences, but instead we step closer to God.

So the question you must ask yourselves today is; Do you believe that someone can be that much in love with one's God as so many truly are? Can you be that way yourself? Jesus has shown us the way. He has given us the grace to live as he lived. So in this Lenten season let us resolve to be a people who follow the Lord's way no matter what.

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.