

Mark 5:1-20  
Tell Them What the Lord Has Done  
WRCoB 1.21.24

Our Sunday school class recently studied a book  
Entitled, *The World, The Flesh, and the Devil*  
By Richard Rohr.

What I thought was interesting  
Was not so much the book itself  
But the many perspectives  
We, the class, had on evil.

The class had mixed opinions on the origins of evil  
Ranging from evil acts precipitated by  
Humanity's immoral desires and choices

To the recognition of a supernatural evil  
An evil apart not originating from human beings.

It seems as if as we were fuller enlightened  
We've discarded the concept of evil

As an entity of itself  
Having the ability to possess  
And control one's life.

Evil nowadays is simply bad choices  
Made from selfish desires

But we are confronted with this story.  
What do we do with it?

Do we write it off as superstitious thinking?  
That the people of that time were ignorant  
That we now know better?

That Jesus, himself, was ill-informed?

That rather than being possessed by an evil spirit  
What this man was experiencing  
Was a schizophrenic psychotic episode  
And was probably off his meds?

Do we get to pick and choose  
What to believe, in regards, to what Jesus said?

Before we answer that question  
Let take another look at our story.

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Following a wild night on the lake  
Pummeled by a severe storm

Jesus and the disciples came across the lake  
And landed in the Gentile region of Gerasenes.

A man with an evil spirit came to Jesus.

This tortured man was to be pitied..

He lived in a cemetery.

No one could do anything to restrain him  
No one was strong enough.

Night and day, he would cry out  
He would howl  
He would self-mutilate.

The evil spirit in him was named Legions  
Meaning lots and lots of spirits.

Jesus told the unclean spirit to come out!

The evil spirits pleaded with Jesus  
Not to send them away.

So, Jesus sent them into a herd of pigs  
And, now possessed they jumped off a cliff  
And drowned in the lake below.

The hog farmers having just witnessed  
Their investments literally take a plunge  
Ran back to the village.

After hearing what Jesus had done  
Instead of praising God  
They wanted him to leave town.

So as Jesus was getting back into the boat  
The man who had the evil spirit  
Approached Jesus.

He begged to go with Jesus.

## **Mark 5:19 CEB**

**<sup>19</sup> But Jesus wouldn't allow it. "Go home to your own people," Jesus said, "and tell them what the Lord has done for you and how he has shown you mercy."**

And so, according to the Gospel of Mark

    This once demon-possessed man

        Became Jesus' first commissioned evangelist

And the people were amazed.

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According to science, evil originates from humankind.

Baumeister & Vohs, (2004) identify four roots of evil

- 1. Idealistic evil: end justify the means**
- 2. Egotism and revenge**
- 3. Instrumental evil: evil as a means to an end**
- 4. Sadistic pleasure**

Baumeister claims all evil comes from

    One of these sources.

It's a rather compelling argument.

And actually, there are Biblical insights

    That suggests this as well.

Here's two examples from James

**James 1:14-15 NIV**

**<sup>14</sup> but each person is tempted when they are dragged away by their own evil desire and enticed. <sup>15</sup> Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death.**

**James 4:1-2 NIV**

**4 What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don't they come from your desires that battle within you? <sup>2</sup> You desire but do not have, so you kill. You covet but you cannot get what you want, so you quarrel and fight.**

It initially appears that James agrees  
With the psychological view  
That evil originates from humankind.

EXCEPT, just a few verses later

**James 4:7-8 CEV**

**<sup>7</sup> Surrender to God! Resist the devil, and he will run from you. <sup>8</sup> Come near to God, and he will come near to you**

James appears to see the root of evil  
As both coming from our own evil desire  
And coming from the devil.

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The problem, as I see it  
Is that evil, from a scientific perspective  
Does not acknowledge the supernatural.

But we, who believe in God, do!

We believe in a supernatural God  
Who created and sustains our physical world

We believe in Jesus, the Son of God  
Who is both human and divine

And we believe in a Holy Spirit  
Who guides and inspires and comforts.

We believe in a spirit world.

So really, is it all that much of a stretch  
To consider evil forces at work against us?

The problem comes in, of course  
Is that if we believe in a God  
Who is all powerful and all-loving

Who created the heavens and the earth  
And called all of what was created good

Then how could evil exist  
In a good world created by a good God?

Well, beginning back in Genesis 3  
We see that out of all the animals God created  
The serpent was craftier than any other

It's believed the devil entered the serpent.

And since then evil has run rampant  
In humankind and the world.

We also see in the Book of Job  
That angels come into the LORD's presence.

Satan also came.

**Job 1:7 CEV**

**<sup>7</sup> the Lord asked, "Satan, where have you been?"  
Satan replied, "I have been going all over the earth."**

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Satan was an angel who fell from grace.

**Luke 10:18 CEB**

**<sup>18</sup> Jesus replied, "I saw Satan fall from heaven like lightning."**

The Bible believes in evil as supernatural.

The Bible explains that the heavenly host  
Was also created with free will  
And could choose to go against God.

**Jude 6 NLT**

**<sup>6</sup> And I remind you of the angels who did not stay within the limits of authority God gave them but left the place where they belonged.**

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To me one of the more convincing passages  
In all of Scripture that identifies the entity of evil

Was written by Paul.

**Ephesians 6:12 CEB**

**<sup>12</sup>We aren't fighting against human enemies but against rulers, authorities, forces of cosmic darkness, and spiritual powers of evil in the heavens.**

I mean, how else do you explain  
The terrible evils in our world?

Can you explain away the evils of the Holocaust  
Or the Hutu genocide of the Tutsis  
The oppression of so many people groups

By simply saying bad choices?

How do you explain the evils of mass shootings?

Of human trafficking, terrorism, child abuse  
Cyber crime and identity theft?

How do you explain institutional evils?

C. S. Lewis writes

*"There are two equal and opposite errors into which our race can fall about devils," C. S. Lewis noted in The Screwtape Letters.*

*"One is to disbelieve in their existence. The other is to believe, and to feel an excessive and unhealthy interest in them."*

*The Washington Post* ran an op-ed piece titled

*As a psychiatrist, I diagnose mental illness.  
Also, I help spot demonic possession.*

The author, Richard Gallagher  
Is a board-certified psychiatrist  
And a professor of clinical psychiatry  
At New York Medical College.

His credentials are impeccable  
Princeton, Yale and Colombia  
Some of his alma maters.

This is what he wrote.

*For the past two-and-a-half decades and over several hundred consultations, I've helped clergy from multiple denominations and faiths to filter episodes of mental illness—which represent the overwhelming majority of cases—from, literally, the devil's work.*

*It's an unlikely role for an academic physician, but I don't see these two aspects of my career in conflict. The same habits that shape what I do as a professor and psychiatrist—open-mindedness, respect for evidence and compassion for suffering people—led me to aid in the work of discerning attacks by what I believe are evil spirits and, just as critically, differentiating these extremely rare events from medical conditions.*

*Is it possible to be a sophisticated psychiatrist and believe that evil spirits are, however seldom, assailing humans?*

*Most of my scientific colleagues and friends say no, because of their frequent contact with patients who are deluded about demons, their general skepticism of the supernatural, and their commitment to employ only standard, peer-reviewed treatments that do not potentially mislead (a definite risk) or harm vulnerable patients.*

*But careful observation of the evidence presented to me in my career has led me to believe that certain extremely uncommon cases can be explained no other way.*

<https://youtu.be/ATK9cEjUqoU> (Time 0:00 - 1.28)

And how do we keep away from the wiles of the devil?

By keeping Jesus in the center of our vision.

Put God first!

If Satan is lurking around  
He will be on the margins.

The light shines the brightest  
When Jesus is front and center

Let the devil lurk in the shadows.

Keep your eyes on Jesus.

Don't reverse this.

Don't keep an eye on Satan  
And place God in the margins.

A.W. Tozer

*The best way to keep the enemy out is to keep Christ in... It is not the praying sheep Satan fears, but the presence of the Shepherd."*