

“What happened in church today?” If anyone would have asked this of those who gathered in the synagogue at Capernaum, they would have received quite an earful. “What happened? My goodness, it was amazing!” And then the events would have been related of Jesus teaching with authority and His driving out of the demon.

It’s like when you leave church, and at home you are asked, “How was church?” And you can barely contain your excitement as you relate everything that took place here in the house of the Lord.

Or maybe not. Maybe you simply reply, “Oh, church was fine.” And maybe you aren’t even asked. But if one Sunday the drama that took place there in Capernaum were to take place here, as soon as you would return home, everyone would hear what happened in church that day.

But listen, my friends. That is precisely what happens every Lord’s Day. It’s just that our eyes do not see all the drama. And so we assume that nothing happens; that it’s just a typical Sunday in the house of God.

But what is a typical Sunday? Our text in St. Mark describes, not an unusual day in church, but a day that is very typical, very normal. Now it is true that not every Sabbath did the worshipers witness the exorcising of a demon. On this Sabbath they did. And why? Because Jesus was teaching in their midst. He who has authority over the demons was present. And therefore, what must take place is the rescuing, the delivering of poor souls from the clutches of the Evil One.

And that same drama, even if our eyes do not see it, takes place here because Jesus is here. And not just Jesus. The demons, too.

We do not worship in a vacuum. When we come to the house of the Lord, we bring with us all the struggles, the burdens, the guilt, the sorrows, which we carry around inside of us. Walking through the doors of the church is not some kind of mystical experience in which we are suddenly freed from all the negative without and within us.

It’s good for us to read in our text that a demon-possessed man came in to join those who gathered in the synagogue. Troubles, sins, and demons do not disappear just because someone is in the house of God. In fact, being in the house of the Lord can make things worse. That demon in the synagogue was quiet until Jesus began to teach. If you want a place of rest and quietness, go out to the cemetery. That is where saints rest from their labors. But not here. For where Jesus is teaching, things are stirred up.

It’s like when you clean your house. You get out the broom, the vacuum cleaner, the mop and the bucket, and you set in, and its chaos. Dust is stirred up. It’s noisy. There’s clutter everywhere. You move things around. The process of cleaning is not a time of rest and quietness. That comes later when you rest from your labor.

And here, too, when Jesus is teaching and preaching – which He does when His words are faithfully set forth – we should expect all the powers of darkness to rise up like dust and be all in a tither.

A friend of mine was a Bible translator in Africa a number of years ago. He replaced a translator who was lazy and pretty much worthless. When my friend set in with translating the books of the Bible into the language of the local tribe, the demons who had been quiet came out of hiding. After a Bible study one day, a man spoke to my friend with a very un-human-like voice, "We will defeat you!" Other people in that tribe who were also possessed, said and did things to try and scare my friend away. But my friend was not defeated because he continued to faithfully translate and teach the words of Jesus.

That house needed a thorough cleaning. And that's what it received. And that takes place here also when Jesus sets in to teach. And not only teach, He absolves, He delivers, He comforts, He gives grace upon grace. It's because Jesus cleanses us with His own blood shed for you on the cross of Calvary. "*The blood of Jesus,*" says the apostle, "*cleanses us of all sin.*"

I need that cleansing regularly, and so do you. I need forgiveness. I need my Lord's body and blood. I need assurance. Because when I come here week after week, I bring with me all the filthiness of my sin, all the demons who have been hounding me. I bring this body of death, and so do you. And what we need, and what we receive is the cleansing Jesus gives.

When He removed the demon from the man in Capernaum, it was not pleasant. It was loud. The man's body convulsed. People watching might have fainted or thrown up. But then it was over. The man was rescued. And he was at peace.

You may come here with demons. You come with sin, guilt, burdens. But you cannot leave with these. For you leave in the peace of Christ. The peace He gives you. He prepares you for that time of rest and quietness in the cemetery. But even more, He enables you to face the week ahead because you leave here forgiven. Each and everyone of you is forgiven of all your sins. God is at peace with you.

And He assures you of His salvation. Jesus won it for you by His bloody death on the cross. No demon can frighten you. No demon can have you. You belong to Jesus. Your baptism makes this a certainty. There the devil was expelled from you and Jesus came in to dwell forever. And so no trouble can overwhelm you. No sorrow can overburden you. You may come here with these. But Jesus takes them all from you. And so you, my friend, forgiven and assured, are able to depart in peace. Amen.