

SERMON FOR AUGUST 29, 2021

TEXT: MARK 7: 14-23

THEME: WE HAVE MET THE ENEMY AND THE ENEMY IS....

14 And he called the people to him again and said to them, "Hear me, all of you, and understand: **15** There is nothing outside a person that by going into him can defile him, but the things that come out of a person are what defile him." **17** And when he had entered the house and left the people, his disciples asked him about the parable. **18** And he said to them, "Then are you also without understanding? Do you not see that whatever goes into a person from outside cannot defile him, **19** since it enters not his heart but his stomach, and is expelled?" (Thus he declared all foods clean.) **20** And he said, "What comes out of a person is what defiles him. **21** For from within, out of the heart of man, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, **22** coveting, wickedness, deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride, foolishness. **23** All these evil things come from within, and they defile a person."

In the name of Jesus:

Pogo was a comic strip that ran in newspapers across the country in the 1970's. Pogo was a possum and he made this quote: "We have met the enemy and he is us," famous in several of the strips that ran during that time when Pogo the possum was talking about the environment. Since that time, the quote is used by some when they speak about honesty and transparency in a relationship.

The Apostle Paul might have thought that this maxim was true of him when he wrote: " For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I keep on doing, wretched man that I am, who will save me?" Jesus, as He

always does, calls a spade a spade and hits the nail on the head when He speaks of the enemies we face as followers of Christ.

Jesus speaks not just to those who were gathering around Him to hear Him, He speaks to us today. “Hear me, all of you and understand.” Listen up, people, Jesus wants your attention! In a world that now places an emphasis on handwashing and sanitizing everything so that no one will catch Covid or one of its variants, Jesus tells us that it is not what is on the outside of us that makes us in need of sanitizing so that we can be saved. The Jewish leaders in Jesus’ day placed an emphasis on handwashing and ceremonial cleaning with the understanding that the things of the world make a person unclean. So, wash your hands, don’t eat animals that are unclean, doing these things will make one clean.

But that which goes into the body isn’t the issue, it is what comes out of the body that is what makes a person unclean. That is why Jesus says: ““What comes out of a person is what defiles him. **21** For from within, out of the heart of man, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, **22** coveting, wickedness, deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride, foolishness. **23** All these evil things come from within, and they defile a person.” It is what is within a person, in the heart, that makes a person unclean. Pogo was right, we have met the enemy, and he is us.

We live in an age where there are enemies everywhere: political opponents, rivals on the athletic field, people who disagree with us on any topic. When we go looking for enemies, they are easy for us to find, because nowadays we define our enemies as those people or things that are not a part of us. Our enemies are always someone or something else other than ourselves.

But Jesus tells us otherwise. Our hearts are evil. Evil lurks within, for all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. We like to point our finger and accuse others and yet when we do, we have four fingers pointing back at us accusing our own selves of malfeasance and misdeeds. We have a sinful nature that clings to us till the day we die. There is an evil that lurks within. We have seen the enemy, and the enemy is us.

But that is not all, there is yet another enemy that we deal with daily. Paul identifies the Evil One in the Epistle lesson for today: "For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places." Or as Peter so clearly says: "Our enemy, the Devil, prowls around like a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour." Whoa, talk about a one, two punch!

You can try to bob and weave as much as possible, but the enemies of self and Satan are constantly and unrelenting. There are enemies outside of us and inside of us. Talk about trouble! Double trouble. It is tough enough to wage war against one enemy, but when you have to wage war on two fronts? It spells doom and defeat.

But there is hope. And Help. And His name is Jesus, who is our ever present Help in times of trouble. Jesus has come to our aid by coming down from heaven to meet our enemies and conquer our enemies for us. He, Jesus, is the One stronger than Satan and stronger than death. He came down from heaven to live His life for you. He was tempted as each of us are tempted but He never sinned. He lived for you, He died for you, He rose for you as your conquering Savior. Jesus reigns over all of your enemies, He is the victorious One, the Devil is subject to Him and He keeps him on a short yet hidden leash. His promise for you is that He will never leave you nor forsake you in your trials and tribulations so that you can say and live with confidence knowing that your Redeemer, Jesus, lives. The blood of Jesus now cleanses you from all sins. Jesus has changed your life by giving you a new life to live by the power of the waters of your Baptism. You have been baptized into Christ. You are a new creation, the Holy Spirit has been given to you so that you can live by the love and the power of Christ. You have been changed, transformed, by the

mercy of God for the purpose of now presenting your body and your life as a living sacrifice to Jesus. You are called not to live as the world lives, conforming your life to the temptations of this world, but rather you have been changed by the power of God to now know what the will of God is, what is pleasing and acceptable to Him. And now knowing the will of God, the Spirit works in and through you to move you to live your life in a way that is pleasing to God, giving Him the glory that He deserves.

Jesus reigns over all of your enemies today, and His promise is that He will rule over them in the future too. He promises to come again, this time in glory, and when He does Jesus will end the tyranny of sin, Satan, and death forever. You have this promise from God, and God does not lie.

This is not some pie in the sky hope or dream, it is a reality given to you who believe in Jesus. So now there is no excuse to give into temptation, for Jesus has overcome temptation. There is no reason to fear the Devil, for Jesus has conquered the devil. There is no reason to be anxious about your future, for Jesus holds your future in His hands. You do not need to be afraid to die, for Christ has given to you eternal life! His promise is now a certainty, that neither death, nor life, nor angels nor powers nor anything in heaven or on earth will be able to separate you from the love God has for you in Jesus. This is why the Bible says that we are more than conquerors! For there is now no

condemnation for those who are in Christ. WE HAVE MET THE ENEMY AND ALL OF OUR ENEMIES ARE DEFEATED. Jesus has set you free from your enemies, within you and outside of you. You are now born again in the Spirit, the Spirit of God living in and through you. The grace of God abounds in Jesus, for you, so that you can now go on living your life, not in fear of your enemies but confidently in faith, for Jesus was raised from the dead so that you can live your life to the glory of God.

Amen