

## **DON'T GIVE IN TO UNCLEAN SPIRITS (MK 1:21-28)**

Given by the Rev. Corinne Hodges

Sun., February 1, 2009, St. John of the Cross, Bristol

- I. Each yr. at this time, I get a little down. Mike and I have had the conversation on what is the worst month of the year. For me, no doubt, it is February.
  - A. Maybe it's the lack of sun, the inability to go outside, the hibernation that sets in. We see our neighbors less, my asthma is worse, breathing
  - B. On some days, all of this can bring me quite low.
  - C. Unhappy spirits set in, saddening my own being and making sometimes just getting through the day a challenge
  
- II. It would be easy to conclude from our gospel reading today that only really sick, "other" people have unclean spirits...that this is a story about "them" and not us, but this is not true. Evil, dark spirits are all around us. If we let them in they can cause:
  - A. Depression--loneliness, loss of self-esteem and self-worth
  - B. Addiction--unhealthy, tempting ways of life that destroy us
  - C. False sense of self--pride and ego, getting us into trouble
  - D. The fact is all of us have unclean spirits—dark sides that make us do, feel, think and say terrible things. They can possess us and oppress us.
  
- III. Whoopi event
  - A. Reporter who tried to talk his way in, lie, then sneak
  - B. Things got hot and hostile, caused a disturbance
  - C. Tried to keep self-control, but after he left, I could feel myself shaking
  - D. So rattled & upset just trying to do my job, anger/emotion got best of me
  - E. I had allowed myself to be pushed past the limit & had lost control
  - F. My actions did not reveal God's presence
  - G. Had feeling God was not pleased w/ me--neither was I
  - H. Look over my life, certain things stand out that I wish I could have done better, redo, this is one of them
  - I. How?
  
- IV. All of us have to do things we do not want to do in life/entangled in webs
  - A. Several parishioners past months similar situations in their lives—having to deliver or receive bad news from co-workers, friends, colleagues
  - B. No choice they have to do it
  - C. Redeeming thing: HOW. How (the way) we do what we do or say what we say matters. It can does a difference
  
- V. In Nov. 1993, Joseph Cardinal Bernadin, then Achbishop of Chicago, was falsely accused by a seminarian of sexual abuse—Steven Cook, 20 yrs., man

- he could not even remember, no foundation for the claim, convinced by lawyers to build the case—JCB had to face dark spirits setting in
- A. 1<sup>st</sup> press conference—morning meeting w/ advisors, after took one hour to pray and reflect, empty himself.
  - B. Called in an old friend, “I’ve been listening to good advice from good people all morning. I have made a decision to follow my own instincts. I am just going to tell the truth.”
  - C. Faced crowds of reporters, I am not there to do battle with them. I just wanted to answer their questions truthfully
  - D. Crowds of reporters, TV, radio, print, to deliver news all over world
  - E. Press conference became less intense, reporters calmed down and approach JCB in the same friendly manner they always had—said it was their job to do what they had to do, ask the tough questions
  - F. Archbishop could have handled this in a completely difft manner, letting his anger get the most of him, result could have been drastically different
  - G. He deliberately chose HOW to handle this horrible, hurtful experience. He chose the Lord’s way, which lead to a common understanding and peace, earning him even greater respect

- VI. Gospel reading, Jesus is very direct with the man with the unclean spirit
  - A. The Message version

- VII. Unclean or evil spirits creep into our lives and we have to stop them dead in their tracks!
  - A. Like Jesus, we have to be intentional and tell them to be silent, get out, go away...send them packing (EP)
  - B. But doing this takes great strength
  - C. Just like the man with the unclean spirit, we might struggle as we resist temptation. We might toss and turn at night, yell out, protest
  - D. But we must not let dark spirits get the best of us, which is what I did at that celebrity event years ago. I allowed a dark force to take me over and prevent me from being who God created me to be.
  - E. When times get tough and we feel the clouds surrounding us, no matter what the cause, may we think like JCB, remember to take our authority from God and no one else
  - F. HOW WE LIVE MATTERS
  - G. We need to be deliberate--stand up and choose goodness over evil, possibility and hope over defeat and depression
  - H. And if we give in to anyone or anything in this world, give in to God