

FRANKLIN CONGREGATIONAL-CHRISTIAN CHURCH, UCC
Sermon for Sunday, June 9, 2024
Mark 3: 20-35
Siblings

Today Mark tells us a story about Jesus – how the scribes from Jerusalem accused him of being possessed by the devil because he is casting out demons and healing other people and forgiving less than behaviors and telling others it is lawful to heal on the Sabbath and perform other good works.

Scriptures not read today include texts from Genesis and II Corinthians – Genesis tells that Adam and Eve were hiding from God, and Paul acknowledges the afflictions of human living yet says that inner nature can be renewed each day – saying “...we look not at what can be seen but what cannot be seen.”

Most of us have conflicting thoughts about these texts –

We meet good people – people like us really trying to do the right things by our families, friends and neighbors. We know that like us, others either live with pain or have experienced pain in their lives – we know of children having little respect for their elders, relatives who cheat them, spouses who betray them...

We see difficult people apparently prosper – watch them grow rich on the labors of others, party with alcohol and fancy foods while their neighbors struggle simply to pay the rent and put food on the table.

The Bible teaches us there is a power in the world that causes this – evil – and this power can take a personal form against which we have little response.

But there is another power in this world – the power of God and it is the greatest power of all.

This is what Mark's Gospel is about today – Jesus turning to those who accuse him of using Satan's power to cast our demons and work against the laws and traditions.

We can please ourselves rather than seeking to please God – we can chase the Spirit of God away – we can deny the Spirit access to our lives – we can refuse to believe or hope.

When we do these, refuse to believe and trust, when we refuse to see what is all around us or to acknowledge the forces that underlay all human affairs, we lose and our inner nature decays.

Thursday, we saw Western Leaders and WWII service people gather in France to remember the 80th landing on the beaches in Normandy. We remember that day with a great sense of pain and loss.

This event, and WWII need not have happened if people had looked more carefully at the world around them – if they had understood what evil was and is –

Back in 1938 – after Austria had been taken over by the Germans – after Czechoslovakia had been invaded – after Crystal Naught – Prime Minister Chamberlain proclaimed Hitler was a rather pleasant person who really wanted peace –

But as we know today, it just wasn't so –

Today we in America live in a country where others risk their lives to try and come here – we have more food than we need, we are well clothed, housed, we're educated, have access to health care and human rights – yet are we free from suffering, hatred and senseless violence?

There is GOOD NEWS friends – it is that God seeks us – that God wants us and that we can listen to and follow God's directions – We can enter into the kind of world and help build up the kind of world that God planned for us from the very beginning.

We do this by faith – by trust – by belief – by walking in the ways of God.

The experience of Paul what comes when we choose to live by faith – When we come to believe in God, great and wonderful things happen –

We are made new creatures, day by day, bit by bit, and we begin to share in the joys of love – and we inherit an eternal weight of glory that is beyond all measure.

So friends, look not simply not at things seen, but look at that which is unseen – things that are eternal – and open you hands and heart and leave them open – let the Holy Spirit land upon you and remain with you and give you life in this world and the next.
Amen.