

I know I can't help but date myself here:

I reckon it would've been in the mid-1980's (And yes, that's last century – {last millennium actually})... So, back in the last millennium, when I was a teenager, the Christianity Explained course came out, and churches across Australia, ran this 6 week course as an introduction to Christianity.

It made the assumption that you knew nothing about Christianity. And over the 6 weeks, there was homework, where you would read a piece of the Gospel of Mark each week, and by the end of the course, you would've read all of it. And you would meet together weekly to discuss what you'd read and ask questions and learn about what Christianity actually is.

BTW, It's not only a course for unbelievers. As a Christian, I find it really helpful, to understand the basics of the Christian faith, in a way that I can then explain it to unbelievers....

Now the thing is, when you read the whole of one of the Gospels, you very quickly realise that not everything that we consider "physical" or "medical", is as it seems. There is another dimension to all of this, and that's the spiritual dimension...

And as our local church did that Christianity Explained course, (and me as a teenager), one of the participants (a member of our church; a high-School Science teacher) asked the question, "What is it with all these demons? It's as if there was an epidemic of them back then..."

And it was interesting, to hear the explanations and answers that people came up with... And probably the prevailing opinion was that demonic activity increases when God is active (and there's probably a fair bit of truth in that). And so the explanation was that "The demons were really stirred up, because Jesus was there. And towards the end of time, when Jesus is about to return, we can expect demons to be prevalent again." ... That was the prevailing opinion...

Now, the science teacher, I could see by the look on his face, he wasn't at all convinced by that.. ... And to an extent, I'm not either (only for a different reason)... There may be some truth to it, but there's more to it than that.

*The reason I'm not now convinced, is because the question asked ("What is it with all these demons?"), and the answer given, are **both** down-playing the activity of demons today.*

One was sceptical that demons even exist – it didn't fit his science-based world-view. The other "Well, they do exist, but they're not a problem today."

And, **like** the Science teacher, many today want to explain things with "science". And the Spirit world, being able to impact our physical world, doesn't fit their world view... But then others may concede that there **is** demonic activity, but not so much at the moment...

The Apostle Paul, wrote to the church in Ephesus, and he said: Ephesians 6:10–13 (ESV)

¹⁰ ... be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. ¹¹ Put on the whole armour of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the

devil. ¹² 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. ¹³ Therefore take up the whole armour of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm.

Now, I do not believe that those words were only true for Paul and for the church in Ephesus in their day...

We, must be able to stand against the schemes of the devil.

We, do not wrestle against flesh and blood,
As Disciples of Jesus – as prayerful Disciples of Jesus, we wrestle:

- against the rulers, against the authorities,
- against the cosmic powers over this present darkness,
- against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.

So, in our Bible reading today, a boy is healed of something that looks a lot like epilepsy. For him, was it a medical healing? Or was it a spiritual healing??? And I don't mean by "spiritual healing", was he healed by a spiritual means – I'm asking, "Was he healed of a spiritual ailment?" Was there a physical ailment that the boy had, that he was healed of??? Or was it demonic possession that was exorcized???

And today I'm going to put the cart before the horse and give you the answer to that, straight-up. And then we'll go back and study the passage more fully.

So, we know Jesus fixed the boy. Did Jesus heal a physical ailment? Or did He cast out a demon to make the boy better???

Well, in fact, He did both. **Jesus rebuked the unclean spirit and healed the boy**

And the Greek word *ιάσατο* (*iasato*) (healed), from what I can see, Luke is the only one who uses that word in that form, he uses it in 3 other places (plus this one), and each time, it's about a physical healing.

So, Jesus physically healed the boy. **AND** Jesus cast a demon out of him.

And, what I learn from this, is sometimes a person's illness (and especially mental illnesses and neurological (brain function) illnesses):

- sometimes the cause of an illness is physical (there is something physical, causing their symptoms. And that can sometimes be healed by a physician (if there is a known cure);
- Sometimes the cause of an illness, is spiritual. Evil spirits can alter the way a person behaves, and they can

torment a person terribly.

But even if a person isn't possessed by a demon, they can still have physical symptoms stemming from a spiritual problem. *i.e. a person may be filled with unforgiveness and bitterness and consumed by hatred... And that might express itself in physical ways (can't sleep; blood pressure's up; can't think straight; and they have unreasonable fears and paranoia); They might physically shake...*

The root cause, is a spiritual problem – unforgiveness / bitterness / hatred.

But let's not downplay this: sometimes, an evil spirit (unclean spirit) can debilitate a person physically.

- But then sometimes the cause of an illness, is both physical and spiritual. There may be an underlying physical condition, and an unclean spirit attacks them at their point of weakness, and their condition is exacerbated by the unclean spirit...

And I suspect that's what happened here. And Jesus dealt with both problems.

So, as Christians, how do we respond to that?

Well firstly, I want to say this: The 2 biggest tricks the Devil has up his sleeve, are opposites of each other.

Perhaps the greatest trick of the Devil, is to get people to believe that he doesn't exist. Now, I know **you** all know that Satan and his demons do exist because you can't be a Disciple of Jesus – you can't be a follower of Jesus and a follower of Jesus' teaching and not believe this, because Jesus very clearly taught us that evil spirits do exist, and evil spirits do physically affect people...

But the Devil's 2nd trick, is for the children of God to become so consumed by Satan and his demons, that they're searching for an evil spirit under every rock and behind every ailment and illness, and that seems to be their drive in their Christian life "Oh, we're going into spiritual battle..."...

You know what? We are told to cast out demons. But they are not what we seek. We seek first the Kingdom of God, and His righteousness – that's what we do... And if a demon gets in the way of that, yep, in the Name of Jesus, cast it out. But we don't go seeking them.

And we are to be aware that we do not wrestle against flesh and blood. Our battle-ground, is in prayer, and in preparedness. How do we prepare? How do we stand strong? With the armour of God.

- Truth
- Righteousness
- The Gospel of peace;
- Faith;
- Salvation;
- The word of God;
- Prayer;

That's the weapons in our armoury. There's nothing mysterious (or if you like new-age-ey type words, "esoteric") about standing firm in the spiritual wrestle that is the Christian life – it's simply about faithfully living and serving as Disciples of Jesus.

- Living by Truth
- Pursuing Righteousness
- Proclaiming the Gospel of peace;
- Being firm in our Faith; and
- Sure of the Salvation we have;
- Holding true to The word of God;
- Praying at all times...

If that's a picture of your life, the devil cannot hurt you...

Righto, so let's go back to the beginning.

The glory of Jesus has just been revealed to 3 of His disciples. Jesus took Peter James and John up onto the mountain-top, and there, Jesus was glorified before their eyes. And now they've just come down from the Mount of Transfiguration.

And a man begs Jesus to help his son.... In Jesus' absence, the man had asked the other Disciples to drive the demon out of him, but they couldn't do it.

The boy's condition sounds a lot like "epilepsy", which is a neurological condition. The father describes it like this:

- a spirit seizes him; and
- he suddenly cries out;
- it convulses him;
- he foams at the mouth;

- it shatters him (bruise); and
- it happens often (they hardly leave him).

Matthew describes it as:

- he has seizures
- He falls into the fire / water...

Now, when a child has seizures, that's really scary for a parent...

It would be normal for a parent to seek healing for a child who suffers seizures.

But Jesus' response, seems to come across as being "unreasonable": "O faithless and twisted generation, how long am I to be with you and bear with you? ... Bring your son here."

Jesus was actually quoting from Deuteronomy 32. What's going on there? I suspect he's talking to the crowd, because He tells them off for being a **faithless and twisted generation**, not just the man. BTW, what do you think He would say about our generation? Faithless and twisted....

In Deuteronomy 32, Moses is addressing the people of Israel (quoting the lyrics of a song). He's actually wanting to teach; proclaim the greatness of God.... And the song goes on to describe the Good that God has done for His chosen people... But they don't recognise Him. And they turn to idols and other gods. It's about not recognising God in their presence; and the activity of God; and the merciful actions of God...

And Jesus came to reveal Himself to the people. Up on the mountain top, Peter, James and John had caught a glimpse of His glory. And then He comes down from the mountain, and nothing has changed below. They're craving miracles. And while they see these miracles as wonders, they miss what's most important – They are a sign of God's presence...

Now, as Disciples of Jesus, we're not meant to be miracles and signs and wonders junkies... These things are not the source of our joy/passion faith... Jesus is the source...

...

Anyway, when the Disciples had tried to heal this boy, they couldn't. Why? Well, Luke doesn't tell us straight out. **Matthew** tells us that it was because the Disciples faith was too small. Mark says, "because that type of demon only comes out with prayer / prayer & fasting".

But in the Gospel of Luke, it becomes pretty evident that the Disciples hearts aren't right. I extended the reading today, into the first verse of what we're going to cover next time: **V⁴⁶ An argument arose among them as to which of them was the greatest.**

You can see what's in their hearts: "I'm more spiritual than you are..."

Is it any wonder they couldn't set the boy free of the demon...

Anyway, Jesus heals the boy. **Bring your son here."**

⁴² While he was coming, the demon threw him to the ground and convulsed him. But Jesus rebuked the unclean spirit,, {What does that mean? He told it off... We don't know what He said – maybe: You foul spirit, you must not do that... Get out of that boy}

and healed the boy, and gave him back to his father. Alright, He rebuked the unclean spirit. **And** He healed the boy.

The result?

⁴³ And all were astonished at the majesty of God. – the greatness/grandeur of God.

But while the crowds were marvelling at everything Jesus was doing, He made a very important announcement to His disciples. They knew it was really important because He prefaced it by saying: ⁴⁴ **Let these words sink into your ears: The Son of Man is about to be delivered into the hands of men."**

Ah yeah, those words are really important: **Let these words sink into your ears:**, but they had no idea what it meant.

And they couldn't even work it out because God was hiding it from them. And even though they knew it was really important, they were too afraid to ask Jesus what He meant by it...

Righto, so we learn lots of little bits here. We learn about:

- healing and how:
 - sometimes an ailment is caused by a demon;
 - sometimes it's a physical ailment; and
 - sometimes it might be caused by both;
- not focusing on miracles and signs & wonders, but focusing on the one they point to – the Majesty of Jesus; and
- so we learn about the greatness/majesty/grandeur of God, revealed in His Son;
- how a faithless and twisted generation, don't recognise God **or** His Son, no matter how much evidence He gives them...

We learn all of that stuff, but each Gospel presents this incident a little differently, and each Gospel has its main point. What's the main point of Luke?

Well, Jesus used a great big highlighter when He said: **Let these words sink into your ears:**

Do you think perhaps this might be the most important point??? Of course it is. **The Son of Man is about to be delivered into the hands of men."**

Why is He telling us that now?

We've seen the glory of Jesus up on the mountain. There, up on the mountain, Moses and Elijah spoke to Jesus about His departure/exodus that He is about to accomplish in Jerusalem. Jesus is about to accomplish a great setting-free of captives in Jerusalem... **The Son of Man is about to be delivered into the hands of men."**

The Disciples had no idea what was going on. But we do.

Through the blood of Jesus, poured out on the cross, He accomplished the exodus. He set us free. With His wounds, we are healed; by His death, we have eternal life...

A faithless and twisted generation will never receive the ultimate healing (and eternal life)... Why? Because a faithless and twisted generation, while they might lap up miracles and signs and wonders, they still don't recognise the One True God and Jesus Christ His Son...

You know, when Jesus returns, some of us are going to find our current vocation completely useless in the New Kingdom.

Dr Karen, Nurse Robyn/Jacqui/Laura won't have any work in the medical field, because there will be no sickness/disease/death...

And I'll be out of a job too – no need for preachers, because only the saved will be there. No need for teaching on the things of God, because we will all know Him...

This is what we look forward to. No more:

- achy joints;
- dickie shoulders;
- bad backs;
- seizures;
- depression;
- anxiety;
- head-aches...
- evil
- demon possession

Through what Jesus did on the cross, our bodies will be changed, and we enter eternal glory...

And Luke's point: But not everyone... A twisted/faithless generation, won't enter this life.

Let Jesus straighten you up. It's not the signs/wonders/miracles you need... Faith in Jesus is what you need... The natural inclination of man, is to be twisted and bent away from God.

And you might know – You know you need to turn to Jesus, but there's something twisting you away from Him...

God wants you, to turn back to Him. And have faith.

And that's my prayer.

Lord, I pray for every person listening to this today,
I pray that You would set us straight;
That by faith,
we would turn to The Lord Jesus,
as our Lord;
and our Saviour.

Thank You Jesus.

And Lord, we long for the day of Your coming,
Where there will be no more sickness
and no more disease.
And in glory,
we will sing Your praises forever.

But until then, as we fulfil the calling
that You've given us in this world,
in the Name of Jesus,
and by Your Holy Spirit,
may the sick be healed;
and the demoniac be given freedom;
For Your glory,
But may these miracles not be the focus,
as we set our hearts on You.

To God be the glory,
through our Lord, Your Son,

The Lord Jesus Christ.

Amen.