

I brought some Kleenex today just in case you sneeze. When you sneeze, what do people say? ... That's right, "Bless you" or "God bless you." Why do they say that? Well, years ago, no one knew what caused sneezes. So, people thought when you sneeze, your soul came out of your body, or an evil spirit would come out of your body. To protect themselves from evil spirits, they would say, "God bless you." We still say, "Bless you," today. In Scripture we come across: **evil spirits as also impure spirits, demons, or devils**. The evil spirit beings are some of Satan's main agents in his warfare against humanity. There are many demons but one Satan - Lucifer.

Let us examine how Jesus himself dealt with a demon in today's gospel. Jesus had been preaching in Galilee saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand." Now, Jesus demonstrates the superiority of God's kingdom over Satan's with these six points.

1. Jesus dealt with the demon, not with the man. The demon spoke out of the man, and Jesus spoke to the demon saying, "Quiet! Come out of him." And the demon convulsed the man, and with a loud cry came out of him.
2. Jesus expelled the demon from the man, not the man from the synagogue.
3. Jesus was not embarrassed by the interruption. Dealing with the demons was part of his ministry.
4. The demon spoke in both singular and plural forms: **"Did you come to destroy us? I know who you are ..."** This is the characteristic of a demon in the man speaking for itself and on behalf of others. Which says, "my name is *legion*, for we are many.
5. It is reasonable to assume that the man was a regular guy of the synagogue. But apparently no one knew he needed deliverance from a demon. Perhaps even the man himself did not know. The very presence of Jesus forced the demon out into the open.
6. Jesus' public ministry gets launched with this conformation. His fellow Jews, for the first time, saw Jesus' unique authority over demons.

Demons' role is to subject the people to demonic influence. If your personality is not under the power of the Holy Spirit, then, you are in trouble, and you are easy prey to demons.

Why does Satan hate us and try to destroy us? First, Satan hates God for he cast him out of heaven for he succumbed to pride. Secondly, God Created man in his own image and likeness and the devil doesn't like it. Third, Satan hates you and me and the whole humanity for we get to know Jesus and can go to heaven, the state the Satan lost. That's why according to the Bible, we are at war that's a-raging.

The real and present foe of our faith is the devil. The Greek word for devil is *Diabolos*, which means "to split." The devil is a splitter, a divider, and a wedge driver. The primary activity of demons' is to defame our character and ultimately defames God's character. He did it to Adam and Eve and has every intent of doing the same to you. Satan is not absent from God's story. He is at its center. We

cannot understand God's narrative without understanding Satan's strategy. He wants to take the unbelievers to hell and make life hell for believers.

Anger opens the door for devil to step in, and anxiety offers him to take over the territory or possess ownership of your life. Demons have three assignments given by Satan, Lucifer: 1st, to torment and afflict us. 2nd, to keep us from knowing Christ as Savior and not go to heaven, and failing that, 3rd. to keep us from serving Christ effectively. That may be the reason for, some of you never ever give any kind of service to church or the communities. Demons are invisible, and cannot be seen. However, we can recognize their presence and activity in the same way we recognize the presence of the wind.

Here are some of their typical activities:

1. Demons entice or persuade us to do evil. Every one of us has experienced this at some time. Often it comes verbally, a voice compelling us. *Take it or do it! Nobody will ever know.*
2. Demons Harass. They study your moves and observe your weak spots and make you slip. You have a terrible day at work, then you go home and for no reason, get angry at spouse or children and then get ashamed and get remorseful.
3. Demons torture: Remember the parable of unforgiving servant and the judgement. He was delivered to the torturers. The torturers are the demons. I have encountered many Christians in the hands of tortures for one simple reason: unforgiveness. In the Lord's prayer we say, "Forgive our sins as we forgive those sin against us," yet many of us fail.
4. Demons cause: addiction to smoking, alcohol, drugs, stealing, lying, porn, Compulsive disorders, physical and mental ailments.
5. Demons defile your thoughts and imagination. This can take the form of impure, lustful images or fantasies. Demons deceive you to lose your faith and go to false religions and practices. And so on.

Jesus saw devil as a superhuman narcissist. When Jesus taught us to pray, he did not say, "Deliver us from negative emotions." He said, "Deliver us from evil one. We play into the devil's hands when we pretend, he does not exist. The devil is a real devil.

But this is huge. The devil is a defeated devil. Jesus stripped Satan of certain victory by his cross and resurrection. Be alert to the devil, but don't be intimidated by him. Learn to recognize his stench. "Since he comes to steal, kill and destroy" (John 10: 10). Turn to God in prayer. Go immediately to scripture. Stand on the promises of God regarding Satan.

"Resist the devil, and he will flee from you." (James 4: 7)

"God who brings peace will soon defeat Satan and give you power over him." (Rom. 16:20)

"Put on God's full armor ... with the belt of truth tied around your waist and the protection of right living on your chest. On your feet the Good News of peace to help you strong. And also use the shield of faith with which you can stop all the burning arrows of the Evil One." (Eph. 6: 13-16)

It is a battle. Don't panic. God has won. So, don't give the devil more than a passing glance.