

## Homily for Sunday, February 5, 2012 Fr. Bill Breslin

How are we to move among the people of our time? If we are truly Christians, then we are meant to be salt for the earth, a light that shines, something different than the bumptious ordinariness of being swirled around by the events of our times. To better understand our role in the world, let's look at what today's scriptures say about human existence.

In Job, we see what sadness is for some people who have forgotten what happiness is. In such a state a person finds life to be a drudgery, with troubled and restless nights, feeling like an overworked slave who wishes simply for a few moments rest in the shade before returning to the drudgery of life. Sometimes so much oppression in life can make a person say with Job, "I shall not see happiness again."

No wonder our psalm has us singing and calling upon the Lord who heals the broken hearted.

See also the Gospel's account of the whole town gathering around the door of the house Jesus was in, bringing to the healer all those who were ill or possessed by demons.

Illness is a real downer, so no explanation is needed for those who seek out Jesus to be healed of their various illnesses. An explanation is needed, however, to understand the 1st century expression of being demon possessed.

In our society we ascribe the very same human reality not by calling the problem demon possession but rather: a psychological illness. Which is better: to call a man demon possessed or schizophrenic? Which is better: to say someone has AD/HD or to say such a person has a spirit that needs to be expelled? Which is better: to identify persons with the problem they have, or to realize that a people's problems are not the persons themselves but something that is weighing upon them like a burden that needs to be lifted off of them, or expelled?

So, our society's tendency to equate the person's problems with the very being of the person is not really accurate, and not helpful either.

We also do this labeling with illnesses as well, don't we? I am a diabetic; not I deal with diabetes. I am obese; not I have a battle with weight control. And so on.

So, to appreciate Jesus' expelling demons, we need to move out of our psychological framework and enter into another way of looking at things: Jesus lifts off of us whatever weighs us down. Jesus sets us free from whatever imprisons us. Jesus graces us with the capacity to deal with anything. Sometimes Jesus deals with us directly, like Simon Peter's mother-in-law. Other times Jesus intervenes in our lives and sets before us the people who are just right to help us, like St. Paul.

In St. Paul we see someone who had so identified with Christ that this identity changed his understanding of everything that happened to him in life. If on some days his bringing Christ to the here and now situation was something he did only out of duty, then so be it, for he had been given this mission as a stewardship. But if on other days he did so willingly, then he had the reward of doing exactly what he is meant to do.

Do you see how identifying with Christ changes our interpretation of what happens in our day to day experiences? If I really believe that Christ lives within me and guides me in everything I do, then my moods don't drive me into action, or out of action. If Christ is my light, then I am not like a reed swaying in the wind; I am firmly grounded and in tune with the One who is our Master and Lord.

And can you see what happens to us who are firmly founded in Christ when faced with calamity like Job? His plight was so bad that he thought he'd never see happiness again.

For us who are so firmly set in Christ so as to identify totally with Him, no calamity, no distress, no tragedy, nothing in the past, nothing in the future can separate us from His love and from the peace that comes from this union with Christ.

For this peace to reign over our hearts, we must be people of prayer, like Jesus going off in the wee hours to spend time in communion with God. When we develop our prayer lives, if even by simply being faithful to whatever it is we do for prayer, every day, then we indeed become a light shining in the darkness, and we will indeed be something very different than just being bounced around by the events of life. We will live purposefully and meaningfully, as we bring Christ to the heart of Boulder and into whatever situation we encounter go this week.