

Lectionary Gospel Commentaries

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Based on the Lectionary Pericope Covering:

SOLA-LSB (Lutheran Service Book):
RCL (Revised Common Lectionary):

Luke 4:31-44

Year C - Epiphany 4, Texts: Luke 4:31-44
(n/a)

When Jesus preached His first sermon in His hometown the people were taken aback and confused. They were not sure of what he was saying, but they knew they didn't like what it implied. They were furious to the point of wanting to throw him off a cliff!

Verse 3:31: But Jesus survives, leaves Nazareth, and travels to Capernaum. Note: If Jesus traveled there that same day, He certainly traveled farther than the Torah permitted on a Sabbath.

Verses 4:31-37: While teaching in a synagogue there, Jesus casts a demon out of a man in His audience — again, on a Sabbath! A man possessed with “the spirit of an unclean demon” comes before Jesus. He is “unclean” because of the spirit’s resistance to the holiness of God.

The demonic presence knows who Jesus is, why He has come, and fears Jesus’ power to destroy its influence. It addresses Jesus as “*Jesus of Nazareth ... the Holy One of God.*” It is significant that when Jesus exorcises demons, they — the enemy — recognize who He is, even though His own people do not.

It is possible that the demons tell Jesus that they know His name and who He is to suggest that He can have no power over them, and maybe even to suggest that they have power over Him! In many parts of the world still today, to know a person’s name is to have power over that person. But Jesus forbids the demon to speak, demonstrating His mastery over it!

It is interesting to note the power in Jesus’ words, and that by his words He is able to shut down the words of the unclean spirit. Just as God spoke light into existence by the power of the Word alone (Genesis 1:3), here, in confronting the powers of darkness, Jesus shows this same power (see Hebrews 1:1-4).

After Jesus casts the demon out of the man, the crowd is even more astonished, and Jesus’ fame begins to spread throughout Galilee. Those present are amazed by what they see, and news about Jesus begins to

spread far and wide.

Verses 4:38-39: After this — and still on the Sabbath — Jesus heals Simon Peter’s mother-in-law. Like the demon, Jesus “rebuked the fever” and it left her. There appears to be no distinction between the “unclean” — whether physical or spiritual.

Verses 4:40-41: When the sun sets (and the Sabbath is over), people flock to Jesus seeking to be healed and to be freed from demonic control. Again, the demons identify him, but “he would not allow them to speak.”

Verses 4:42-44: Next morning, when Jesus goes to a deserted place, the crowds go looking for Him. When they find Him they beg Him to remain with them. However, Jesus continues to preach in the synagogues of the region.

The Deception of Evil:

In what form do the temptations of unclean spirits come to us? It is significant to note that many people in today’s world embrace the same nationalistic and materialistic hopes and dreams, as did many Jewish people in Jesus’ day. Evil always comes in pleasing forms (see 2 Corinthians 11:13-15). The most enticing idols are those that seem to be good and right. Yet, we tend to overlook the spiritual elements and temptations at work in these things.

Jesus calls preachers, teachers, and parents today to make people aware of the deception embedded in these hopes and dreams, and to teach and inspire them to walk His Servant Way — “out of step” with the ways of the world.

Christian faith is not the means to obtain earthly wealth and security. It is not wrong to want prosperity for oneself and one’s nation, provided that one does not gain wealth by oppressing others. But we do not preach a “Prosperity Gospel,” but rather a gospel of radical servanthood under the cross.

