

09/03/17 BUCYRUS UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

“RECOGNIZE EVIL EXISTS”

Pastor Mike Corwin

Text: Mark 7:14-23 God’s Word: Genesis 2:8-17

I – EVIL REMINDERS:

On September 11, 2001 we saw evil up close and personal in our country as two planes were flown in to the World Trade Center, one into the Pentagon, and one headed to the White House was forced to crash land in Pennsylvania. This launched us into a war against terrorism that still rages on today. In the ensuing years we have seen terrorists drive vehicles into crowds of people and kill many in this country, in England, in Paris, and in Belgium just to name a few. There have been many reminders of evil since that date to remind us that evil is alive and well.

Then on August 12th of this year, we all watched the news and we learned that evil had reared its head again - as racism, bigotry, and violence erupted in a place called Charlottesville, Virginia. In a rally named “Unite the Right”, we saw white nationalists, neo-Nazis, and other right wing groups clash with people who protected against such a stand of supremacy and hate. This turned ugly, people yelled at one another, fights erupted and people began getting hurt. It was then that a 20 year old young man from right here in Ohio took matters into his own hands and drove his car into the crowd. This resulted in the death of one 32 year old woman and 19 others were hurt...some seriously. And 2 State Troopers died in a helicopter crash as they responded to the riot.

And then this week we turn on the news again to see that a juvenile boy walked into a public library in Clovis, New Mexico and randomly shot people - leaving 2 girls dead, and 4 others injured by bullet wounds. And they can’t even figure out why he did it.

I have to tell you that my soul is overwhelmed with grief!

II – EVIL EXISTS:

I want to spend the next few weeks (minus next week) looking at this thing we call **evil**. I don’t know that we can fully understand it but we can come to recognize that it exists. I would say that that’s the first step we must take. We must **recognize** that evil exists. That it is alive and well. That it is the enemy of the followers of Jesus Christ.

I have heard numerous people, including theologians and others that would profess to know all about God and the realms of our belief and faith, deny that evil exists. More specifically they deny that there is a devil or a place called hell.

I profess I can't understand how they have come to that conclusion. Me thinks they think too much! I look at it simply. I know it exists because of two reasons:

1. Jesus showed me and told me. Jesus is the one who told us of the coming judgement and the place called hell where sinners who have not put their faith in him will come to be punished. Jesus is the one who used parables about the fires of hell where there will be great moaning and the gnashing of teeth. Jesus is the one who was taken into the desert and was tempted by the devil for 40 days and nights before he began his ministry. Jesus is the one who prayed to God that he would not allow the disciples to be defeated and taken by the enemy...the devil. I guess to tell me that evil and the evil one don't exist is to tell me Jesus was either a liar or had some issues that required serious treatment! You can't believe in Jesus (good) and not the devil (bad).
2. I see it with my own eyes today. Not a day goes by that I don't see signs of evil in this world. I see it in child abuse...in domestic violence...in murder...in rape...in addiction...in greed...and the list could go on and on.

III – HOW DID IT GET HERE?

So the question becomes, “Why is Evil Here?” There are hundreds if not thousands of books on the subject but you won't read them and we don't have enough time on a Sunday morning to give you a book report on each of them. So allow me to give you a book report on just what I understand from one...The Book...The Bible.

In the beginning of the book I see a story of a God who loved us. A God who set us up in this beautiful garden called Eden. It was a place we would like to go on vacation today if we could. It was lush with plants and you could sit and watch the wildlife frolic around you all day. For room service you just had to reach up from your hammock and pluck a nice ripe piece of fruit to munch on, or you could go to the garden and get any vegetable you wanted. It didn't even rain in this place, everything was watered from the ground up. And no tan lines. Clothing wasn't optional...it didn't exist.

And there were no rules in this place, except one. You were allowed to walk on the grass. There was no curfew, there were no police, you were allowed to touch the animals, and the management was approachable and would take walks with you in the evening to make sure you were enjoying your stay. The only rule was that you could not eat the fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil or you would die.

Well...we just couldn't resist. We ate the apple! We were led to it by a snake who is commonly believed to have been the devil. He tempted us...he sweet talked us...and we gave in. And as

soon as we did we became aware of evil. And our bodies didn't die but our innocence and our relationship to God certainly did.

How did evil get here? It entered through us and it continues to do so to this day.

IV – TEXT:

I see this fact retold to us by Jesus in this parable:

Mark 7:14-23 (NLT)

¹⁴ Then Jesus called to the crowd to come and hear. “All of you listen,” he said, “and try to understand. ¹⁵ It’s not what goes into your body that defiles you; you are defiled by what comes from your heart.” ¹⁷ Then Jesus went into a house to get away from the crowd, and his disciples asked him what he meant by the parable he had just used. ¹⁸ “Don’t you understand either?” he asked. “Can’t you see that the food you put into your body cannot defile you? ¹⁹ Food doesn’t go into your heart, but only passes through the stomach and then goes into the sewer.” (By saying this, he declared that every kind of food is acceptable in God’s eyes.) ²⁰ And then he added, “It is what comes from inside that defiles you. ²¹ For from within, out of a person’s heart, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, ²² adultery, greed, wickedness, deceit, lustful desires, envy, slander, pride, and foolishness. ²³ All these vile things come from within; they are what defile you.”

In the 7th chapter of the Gospel of Mark, we find Jesus being visited by some Pharisees and religious teachers from Jerusalem. While they were visiting they noticed that not all of those who were following him complied with the tradition of their faith. They didn't follow the ceremony of proper hand washing before they ate. It was the ancient custom that before you could eat you poured water over your cupped hands. If you were eating something from the marketplace, you had to completely immerse your hands in water before you could eat the food you had bought. Then when that's done let's not forget that the Jewish law had the right way to wash your cups plates and pans too.

Then Jesus lit into them about how hypocritical they were about following these kind of stupid rules that concern their hands, but then are hypocritical when it comes to matters of the heart such as worship and caring for other people.

He then called the people close so they can hear the truth about cleanliness as it pertains to the Kingdom of God. He tells them that it's not the external stuff that defiles a person. It's the internal stuff. It's not what you put into your stomach but what comes out of your heart that matters. It's not what a person eats, it's what they think, say, desire, and do.

His disciples get him alone a short time later and ask him to break it down a little more, so he gives them a private lesson. He tells them that food just passes through and goes into the sewer. He even tells them they no longer have to pay attention to all the food rules and regulations they grew up with. They can have Ham!

They might not have to guard their gut, but they do have to guard their heart. It was the belief that the heart was the center of human personality. It was the heart that determined a person's actions and intentions. And Jesus gave a short list of examples he was talking about. So it was what came out of the heart that brought defilement to the body. If good was in the heart then good would come out...if evil was in the heart then evil would come out.

V – WE ARE THE EVIL:

So what I see is that we ushered evil into the world and it continues to exist through us. It is through us that Hatred, Bigotry, Racism, Intolerance and Violence continue to exist and be tolerated. As long as they do, they will continue to grow and be more accepted.

Before we can shine the light into the community and defeat the darkness of others we must shine inside ourselves and defeat the darkness that affects us and spills over to others.

It only makes sense that if we can be the hands and feet of Jesus, we can also be the hands and feet of the devil. Examine your heart, let the light shine in, and let the light spill out of your heart always...not darkness.