MEDITATION 30

Mark 3: 22-27

[2] And the scribes who came down from Jerusalem said, "He has Beelzebul, and by the ruler of the demons he casts out demons." [23] And Jesus called them to him and spoke to them in parables, "How can Satan cast out Satan? [24] If a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand. [25] And if a house is divided against itself, that house will not be able to stand. [26] And if Satan has risen up against himself and is divided, he cannot stand, but his end has come. [27] But no one can enter a strong man's house and plunder his property without first tying up the strong man; then indeed the house can be plundered.

Through these parabolic sayings, Jesus is explaining what he is doing when he heals. He is "tying up the strong man" and defeating Satan who is the agent of chaos and suffering. "Beelzebul" is another name for Satan. And whether the religious authorities are simply astonished by Jesus strange behaviour when he heals people (see last week's meditation) or not, they are bent on interpreting Jesus' behaviour as demonic rather than divine, and leading to harm under the guise of healing. Perhaps they simply want to discredit Jesus and turn people against him given his quick rise to popularity with his healing gift. How may he be a threat to their authority? How may they control Jesus and the crowds? This drama will run throughout the gospel narrative.

Have you ever been misinterpreted in your actions or your intentions?... Have you ever tried to offer help but been rejected or accused of having self-serving motives in the help offered? Or alternatively, have you ever felt mistrusting or resistant to help or support offered by someone because you did not trust their motives or intentions?

Sometimes we want to avoid any dependence or indebtedness because we want to protect our autonomy and independence. Maybe it's about maintaining our pride. Maybe it's about fear of losing our capacity and having to face our limits and our need. Maybe we have issues with the person offering to help. Maybe we've always been in the role of giver and find it profoundly difficult to be in the role of a receiver…

The concept of grace is about recognizing our need for something we can never earn or deserve. It is simply gift, the gift of love, from the heart. The only thing we can do is open ourselves to receive it. The people healed by Jesus come seeking in their need, and open to receiving whatever Jesus has to give. The religious authorities are shut down from any of this because in their world you have to earn whatever you receive and deserve whatever you get. They are also used to judging who is worthy and who is not according to their authoritative measure and control.

How central a place does grace have in your life and your relationships? Obviously in a world of work, material services and products we pay for what we receive and earn what we get. But

applying this contractual and merit-based understanding to core relationships in our lives and to voluntary community where the most precious exchange should be heart to heart, is a sad way to live and no way to find the healing intimacy and trust we all need to live with inner abundance.

Jesus is a challenge for us all. He calls and he offers to heal with the gift of his love. How deeply can we take that in at this time of our lives? How may we heal where our trust is broken and our critical spirit active?

PRAYER: We come, O God, with our need. But can we admit that? Or do we fear our vulnerability in the asking and then the receiving? … Are we afraid of disappointment? Are we afraid of depending and expecting and then feeling indebted or entangled in a way that feels uncomfortable or unsafe?...

Help us find some release and some letting go with you, O God… Begin to heal us by restoring our capacity to trust… Help us open to the healing of grace… Help us know our worth and trust our worth no matter how we have felt unworthy in certain contexts and with certain people… In Jesus' name we make this our prayer… Amen.