



person to another. We have all seen feeding frenzies before and how a mob mentality can slowly take over. This doesn't only happen in genocides or wars. This takes place in schools, on the streets, and every social place.

If you consider all of this and then re-read the story of Jesus casting out spirits it doesn't seem nearly so preposterous. Jesus serves as physician, priest, psychologist and exorcist all rolled into one.

What attracted my attention this time was not only the usual things you find in the Jesus and exorcism stories: naming demons, silencing them and then ordering them out. What drew my curiosity was the simple line, "He would not let the demons speak, because they knew who he was."

There is an irony here, of course. Others in the story don't know who Jesus is but the demons do; they are his witnesses. If no one else knows, they do. This fits with what has been called "the messianic secret" that we find in other places in Mark; that insistence on Jesus' part that people not let the

news out. "Go and tell no one," he says. But this has to do with more than holding the demons to a secret, messianic or not. This has to do with *denying their voice*.

We all know what it means to deny a person their voice; that occurs when we do not allow a person or group of persons to express what they truly believe or truly feel. As a result they are diminished and held powerless. When someone always speaks for another they can't find their own voice. And when their voice is belittled or hidden they become less than a complete person.

Here, on the level of pure spirit and energy, Jesus is denying those possessing spirits their voices. By doing so, by rendering them speechless, they shrink in importance and power. Their influence dissipates. They lose their foothold and the ability to command attention. They have been censored. Gagged and bound they can no longer tyrannize, control and torture. They have no voice. They have been silenced.

And that, I think, provides us with the pathway to liberation, to deliverance.

The things that possess us are noisy and want to dominate the inner conversation. They intrude, control and want the upper hand. Imagine, though, an inner companion more powerful than all these, ordering every interior loudmouth to keep silence. And there on the other side of that silence is the peace we have been looking for.

All of those noisy captors enforce barriers that reinforce our self-sabotage. But can we believe there is a greater power that can silence and override them, insure free passage toward abundant life?

If we are going to hear the voice of Christ we will need to still every other voice. And every other voice can only be stilled by Christ. Once we become aware of all the noisy voices, whatever they are, we can silence them, put them out and away, single-mindedly heading through the narrow gate toward

the sacred center that is Christ. Then all others fly away, forgotten as a dream.

If you recall the movie *A Beautiful Mind*, based on the true life story of the mathematician, John Nash, you will remember that the psychotic delusions of John Nash that once obsessed and controlled him never really went away. It was by inserting something more powerful in the midst of them that their power was taken away. He named them, told them to flee, and sidelined their influence on him. And all this took place, really, by the power of love. Love expelled the rest.

We can think of it this way: The greatest power of love in the cosmos, the love of Christ, has the power to dispel all gloom, unhinge every attachment, and silence every voice that is not love. Jesus obviously had the power of the Spirit and the gift of healing. He was the embodiment of God's love and justice, before whom the spirits shrank in fear and scurried out and away. And when we call upon the spirit of Christ the same power becomes available.

And so it comes down to something as simple as that, if we will: In the face of everything that dogs us, haunts us, derails us, diminishes us, we call up one simple word: *Christ*. And when we do, all the love and power attached to that name enters the room and casts out the rest.

“Melt the clouds of sin and sadness, drive the dark of doubt away...” (*The Hymn of Joy*, Henry van Dyke)

Try it. I have and it works. Whatever you face – inside or out - begin to simply whisper that one name to yourself – *Christ* – and watch what happens. The demons flee.

I am certain that is the engine behind the ancient “Jesus prayer” that so many throughout the world, especially in the Orthodox communities, pray as a mantra: “Jesus Christ, son of God, have mercy on me.” With that on their lips and hearts they travel the earth in the days allotted to them.

You may not want to use that ancient prayer, or you might. But I dare you to try a simple experiment. Take that one word – *Christ* – as your sword and shield. When you repeat it, Christ becomes present. And you know what happens to demons when Christ is present, don't you? He won't even let them speak.