

# THE HOPE JOURNAL

LEARNING TO LOVE, TOGETHER

FEBRUARY 4, 2024



## QUIET

### *Silencing the demons*

by Drew Downs

There's a curious thing about Jesus's encounters with demons in Mark's gospel. They know who Jesus really is. And Jesus wants to keep them quiet.

This pairs easily with what scholars refer to as The Messianic Secret: a pattern in this gospel of Jesus trying to keep his true nature a secret as long as possible. But I think there is a parallel truth. That we don't really want demons to be the one's testifying.

There are corollaries in our world, of course. Of one-sided conversations or disreputable people defining the terms for us.

But it can also simply be the wrong voice and one we shouldn't take as authoritative. Not that we need to silence problematic voices, but that we struggle once we hear them. Struggle with hearing the truth. Or the Good News. Because demons don't want the Way of Love to win.

# EPIPHANY

2024

## WHAT'S GOING ON

*"You know we've got to find a way  
To bring some loving here today".*

-Marvin Gaye

Disciples, Apostles, and Saints!

### **Pot Luck and Apocalypse**

In seminary, we convinced our Greek professor to teach a course in apocalyptic literature. It wasn't in the curriculum and he had never taught it. But we thought it was important for us to at least have an opportunity to study the genre.

Our idea was simple. Mainliners, for the most part, avoid it. As do Catholics, Orthodox, and most conservative Evangelicals. Which means the only people talking about it are charismatics. So if someone were curious about this stuff, who would they turn to?

This, was also shortly after the last of the *Left Behind* books was released and a popular audience was getting a fringe understanding of Christianity.

When a couple of people brought it up recently, I thought it might be time to dig into our apocalyptic imaginations again.

Starting February 18 and running every Sunday in Lent, we'll gather at St. Stephen's for Pot Luck and Apocalypse, a time of eating and sharing with our focus on the last book of the Greek Scriptures: Revelation.

We'll read *Breaking the Code Revised Edition: Understanding the Book of Revelation* (2019) by Bruce Metzger. I'll have a few copies of the book available for \$13. Please let me know if you plan to participate by signing up online or contacting me directly!

With love,  
Drew

# EPIPHANY

2024

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## FOR SUNDAY

*Epiphany 5B*

February 4, 2024

### Collect

Set us free, O God, from the bondage of our sins, and give us the liberty of that abundant life which you have made known to us in your Son our Savior Jesus Christ; who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever.

**Amen.**

### Reading

Mark 1:29-39

After Jesus and his disciples left the synagogue, they entered the house of Simon and Andrew, with James and John. Now Simon's mother-in-law was in bed with a fever, and they told him about her at once. He came and took her by the hand and lifted her up. Then the fever left her, and she began to serve them.

That evening, at sundown, they brought to him all who were sick or possessed with demons. And the whole city was gathered around the door. And he cured many who were sick with various diseases, and cast out many demons; and he would not permit the demons to speak, because they knew him. In the morning, while it was still very dark, he got up and went out to a deserted place, and there he prayed. And Simon and his companions hunted for him. When they found him, they said to him, "Everyone is searching for you." He answered, "Let us go on to the neighboring towns, so that I may proclaim the message there also; for that is what I came out to do." And he went throughout Galilee, proclaiming the message in their synagogues and casting out demons.

# EPIPHANY

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## Reflection

Things escalated quickly.

Last week, we read about Jesus walking into a synagogue to teach. And it was there that he *also* exorcized a demon. He was there to do both: proclaim the Good News and free people of the demons who are afflicting them.

Next thing we know, Jesus is doing this everywhere.

I think most of us are drawn to figuring this out. So we think we have to decide whether we think demons are real. For the latter half of the Twentieth Century, this famously led in the search for the historical Jesus to explanations and responses to believability. Including the idea of seeing these stories as depicting mental illness or physical maladies.

And while I understand this pursuit, I worry that the whole thing is a distraction from what Jesus is doing. And from the Good News itself.

For the second straight week, we're invited to see forces in the world that are *scared* of Jesus. They know who he is and what he is about, and they want to be *spared* of it.

And this thing they want to be spared of? Freedom of the host they are exploiting. And the transformation of the world.

The people can't see the big picture yet. Only the demons can. The good that Jesus is doing in the world is slowly revealing itself. And the people are clamoring for it while evil fears it.

We mustn't lose sight of the Good News—and Jesus's message of love.

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