Spirituality
Pencil Preaching





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“If it is by the finger of God that I drive out demons, then the Kingdom of God has come upon you” (Luke 11:20).

Joel 1:13-15, 2:1-2; Luke 11:15-26

Anyone who has tried to overcome an addiction will recognize the struggle to stay clean after the first effort at regaining control. It is only when challenged that the insidious nature of an addiction shows its power. Just when we think we have kicked the habit, the lies and whispers begin, the enticements to go to the edge again to test our resolve, to celebrate our victory. The trap is sprung, and the struggle begins all over again, protected by denial and self-delusion.

Jesus addresses the reality of evil as possession by a power that can only be overcome by a superior power. From the beginning, human beings have fallen prey to the seductive, deceptive power of an evil that coils itself like a serpent around the very soul, that inner space where motive and judgment reside. There it lies hidden, permeating the person’s thinking and will, and remains calmly in control, exacting its humiliating tithe on that person’s freedom and sense of purpose.

His critics accuse Jesus of expelling demons by the power of Beelzebul, the “prince of demons.” Jesus destroys the logic of that absurd claim: How can evil drive out evil? What they are witnessing, in fact, is the arrival of a power much greater than evil, and as it advances into territory long held by the demons, they flee before its power. But, to prevent their return, the Holy Spirit must occupy the soul once held by evil spirits. Left empty, the soul is quickly reconquered by old, self-destructive

habits.

Richard Rohr, in his book *Breathing under Water*, says that every one of us encounters addiction as we struggle to grow to mature freedom and purpose. Only by entrusting ourselves to the higher power of God will we be able to move forward toward wholeness. Ironically, in greatest danger are those who pride themselves in having no addictions. This only means that what is defining their personalities and controlling their behaviors is still well hidden and unchallenged.

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