

The Depressed

Dressed and in his right mind. That was the condition of the Gerasene demoniac as Jesus left him. (Luke 8:26ff)

Demon possession is not something that people are comfortable talking about these days. Nor is it a common occurrence in this culture. Nevertheless, people who are not in their right mind is more common than one might expect.

Severe depression can put a person in such a state of mind that there is nothing “right” about it. Conducting a life under the burden of that affliction can often be masked, but never controlled. It is as though the body is outside itself looking on as the activities of daily living are carried out.

Unlike the Gerasene man possessed by demons, the person suffering from acute depression is not chained to a wall naked and erratic; In their mind perhaps, but seldom in reality. The only suffering that goes on goes on within the confines of their own distorted reality. Their lifeless form simply mimics living since they know what it was like and can repeat it as though by rote.

It is easier for people to understand demons than to understand the depressed. You can describe demons and put a form to something imaginary. With depression, the imaginary has no form. The mind cannot wrap itself around anything coherent. People find it difficult to accept because there is no rash, no oozing sores, nor fever to control. It is simply there. It is not as though the severely depressed are crazy. They are not. They are merely tormented by their own lack of meaning or purpose.

At worse those of us who suffer from this condition hope that the right combination of medicine and, if needed, counseling will help to bring it under control. At best an encounter with the healing power of Christ could help us find ourselves dressed and in our right mind. The combination of the two is most likely where the truth lies.

Should you encounter one of us, fear not. We seldom harm anyone but ourselves. However, love and understanding go a long way in our finding “normal” again.