

Daily Meditation 05/28/2022

Evil Spirits by Whatever Other Name

Good morning.

In today's meditation, we take up the subject of demons or evil spirits by whatever other name. And I propose that we move from calling spirits Beelzebub and Lucifer and so forth, to such names as racism and sexism and hatred and greed and so forth, because they hit more closely to our culture, to our times.

But as I point out, Satan stood for that which opposes or obstructs or acts as an adversary, that even one of the classical names, "pastina" actually stands for hatred; it can be translated as hatred. But the key to Elaine Pagels' fine scholarship on the role of Satan in the scriptures (her book, *The Origin of Satan*) is that she says in both Mark's gospel and Matthew's Gospel, Satan is above all "the issue of human violence"... the issue of human violence.

So notice how this is still so much with us, after all these thousands of years, and the story in the Bible of the first murder, Cain killing his brother, Abel, the violence. And of course, we've become so much more technically endowed today, Cain having killed his brother with a stone.

But here, we had just this weekend, an 18-year-old boy, killing nineteen children, fourth graders, and two teachers, with automatic military gun, the AR 15. And 10 days earlier, the same kind of weapon was used in Buffalo to kill ten Black people out of rage generated by racism and white supremacy movements that are unfortunately, spreading not only in social media, but even on public media like Fox News.

And as Pagel elaborates, the gospel writers want to locate and identify the specific ways in which the forces of evil act through certain people toward destruction.

This is why it calls on cosmological language, apocalyptic language, because these horrors are so horrible, everyday language does not have the meaning that horrible acts of violence are about. And she points out the violence epitomized in the Gospels is the execution of Jesus. And Matthew sees this as a culmination of all evils.

And you will recall in the gospels, the story is told that when Jesus died on the cross at the hands of the Roman Empire, in a very, very cruel and terrorist method of dying, the crucifixion, when that happened, earthquake happened, and the dead came out of their tombs and so forth. So this is very apocalyptic, that things were turned upside down, and that the dead walking around. So this is another way of exaggerating, if you will, or telling a powerful story in a powerful way.

So all these things we are wrestling with today with these recent, but unfortunately very familiar, acts of violence, that they go beyond ordinary language.

And of course, the big question is, what can we do about it?

When you have powerful sources, powerful forces, that the demonic seem very well at home in just today, as I am speaking these words, there is a conference of the NRA going on in Houston, a few hundred miles from where the awful killing happened a few days ago.

And this organization is not only eager to sell as many guns as it can to as many people as it can, including 18-year-old boys who are very obviously messed up and lost. But they have been sponsoring an entire political party for decades. And one of the senators of Texas, Senator Cruz, has received over \$450,000 from the NRA during his political career as a senator.

No wonder we can't get any common sense laws through when we have politicians who are lining up not to save the children, but to embellish their political war chest.

Thank you. We'll see you tomorrow.