

**“The Schemer”**

**1 Peter 5:8; 2 Corinthians 2:10 – 11; Ephesians 6:10 – 18**

By way of introduction this morning I'd like to share with you this story:

Some years ago, I don't know if you remember, but there was New Zealand Police recruitment drive that featured the stories of different officers and their work.

One of the stories was about Constable Lio.

One evening he received a call from that a woman was in obvious distress.

He arrived to attend on the scene, he found her alone in a room and very withdrawn.

Constable Lio tried to strike up a conversation with her, but she remained quiet and withdrawn.

He knew she was in a dark place but kept trying to find some common ground.

Finally she broke down and explained that at night she saw demons crawling around her bedroom walls that spoke to her and told her she was worthless. She added that she had tried to read her Bible to combat these attacking demons, but that she would wake up in the morning and find her Bible in the toilet, without having the slightest idea of how it got there.

So Lio said to her, “To be honest, the only person that can help you right now is God.”

He said knowing the power of prayer, he grabbed her hand and started praying.

And Constable Lio said his prayer was simple; he just asked God to set her free from all the things that she was going through, like the demons, and that in the power of Jesus' name that the devil leave her alone.

That evening she was admitted to hospital for a mental health assessment and the following Sunday Lio and his wife took her to a church service. At church she gave her life to Jesus.

Today she is living happy and free and that night is now immortalised on a wall in Otara, South Auckland.<sup>1</sup>



***“What do you think about this story?”***

Tell the person next to you.

This morning I want to begin a short series talking about the... devil.

Of course, when you do talk about the devil some people in the church think of you as being on the fringe.

If the devil does exist, he is of little consequence today.

I’ve said before, of the 29 passages in the gospels which speak of Satan, 25 of them are found on the lips of Jesus, the One who Christians claim was the most in tune person who ever lived.

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<sup>1</sup>Shine TV – [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2YDeVay\\_QbA](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2YDeVay_QbA)

And throughout the gospels Jesus came in contact with those who were afflicted and by demons on a regular basis, liberating and setting them free.

In Acts we're told, "God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and power, and... he went around doing good and healing all who were under the power of the devil, because God was with him".<sup>2</sup>

And as you read through the rest of the New Testament, the writers there also spoke of a personified devil.

As we heard Peter writes, "YOUR enemy, my enemy, your enemy, the devil. You and I have a spiritual enemy.

Jesus, Paul, Peter, the Apostles, the Early Church, the Church for the last 2000 years believe in a "world-between-worlds".

They assumed that in between humans and God there exists a vast array of wicked, intelligent, free, spiritual beings whose behaviour significantly impacts human existence.

The Living Bible puts it well in Ephesians 6:12:

"For we are not fighting against people made of flesh and blood, but against persons without bodies — the evil rulers of the unseen world, those mighty satanic beings and great evil princes of darkness who rule this world; and against huge numbers of wicked spirits in the spirit world."

To put it bluntly, to live as a follower of Jesus is to be caught up in a cosmic drama; a war zone where we experience crossfire in a spiritual war.

God has chosen to create a world in which there are free will agents and decision makers, both human and angelic.

And many of these beings have chosen against God and his purposes.

While in no way equal to God these other influences are bent on using their power to mayhem and madness — the chief of these powers is called Satan.

What we discover then is that the devil though unseen is very personal, very real, very active.

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<sup>2</sup> Acts 10:38

So when it readings this morning, what's the reoccurring word in regards to the devil? Did anyone pick it?

Schemes.

The devil prowls, he stalks and he... schemes.

What that points to is that the devil, he strategizes.

He makes plans for you and me.

He has designs on how afflict Christ's church.

He is a schemer.

And to the Corinthian believers Paul says "we are not unaware [we are not ignorant] of his schemes."

It's against these schemes that Paul in Ephesians says we are to take a stand.

But what I want to suggest this morning is that while the Corinthians weren't unaware or naive of Satan's schemes, perhaps sometimes we are.

So the next question this morning has to be this:

***"What are the devil's schemes?"***

Have you thought about it?

If you feel comfortable, tell the person next to you.

One of the ways to identify the devils schemes is by the names that he is called.

In Scripture the devil is named in many ways.

He is called **Satan**, meaning 'adversary' or 'accuser'. This designation occurs 53 times in the Bible.

As an 'accuser' he criticises, incites gossip, induces slander, provokes grumbling, stirs up dissent and lays charges against the faults and failings of God's people.

(That means our words are important; some Christians unwittingly become agents of the accuser through what that say).

As an 'adversary' he opposes and hates God, His plans, His people and His praise.

He will seek to destroy hope, induce fear and bring discouragement.

These are his regular tactics, and when they are a constant presence in a church or with us personally, you can bet that Satan is not very far away.

### **Prince of demons.**

This tells us that sometimes the “devil” is a collective term.

Satan does not act alone and leads a cohort of demonic powers.

These are the rulers, the authorities, the powers of this dark world and the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms under Satan’s command.

They harass and carry out his plans.

### **Lucifer.**

Lucifer means ‘to shine’.

It’s no surprise then that Satan masquerades as an “angel of light” (2 Corinthians 11:14) that deceives and leads people astray especially in the area of the occult, New Age practices and false teaching.

In term this opening by which Satan can gain a foothold, a place to land in people’s lives.

### **Beelzebub.**

To put it crudely, Beelzebub means “lord of the dung”.

As “lord of the dung” he seeks to defile and pollute people’s lives, whether through their thought life or actions or both.

### **Evil One.**

As the evil one he is vicious, degenerate, malignant, ugly, injurious and destructive.

He seeks only to thwart God’s plans, wreck his work, rob him of His glory, and in that sense triumph over him.

### **Destroyer.**

He is intent of wreaking havoc and bringing chaos into people’s lives.

He wants to tear down marriages, break up families, see communities collapse and nations brought to their knees.

### **The Devil.**

The root word from which we get the “devil” is ‘dia-ballo’.

Dia-abllo literally means “to divide” or “to separate”.

He loves to break up families.

He gets a kick out of workplace conflicts.  
War is one of his favourites.  
He enjoys causing rifts wherever he can create them.  
And he especially loves to bring disunity into the church.

And in all of this he is **Tempter**.  
As the 'Tempter' he seeks to make evil and wrong attractive.  
He presents sin as a good thing, to be enjoyed and to be pursued.  
He can even make the destructive attractive and appealing.

He is also called a liar, a murderer and a thief.

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All of this tells us that we face a genuine opponent.

However the centre of the universe there is an all-powerful God who is without equal, without beginning and end. This God is absolutely good and holy and powerful and deserving of our worship and adoration.

In Jesus he has brought Satan's reign to an end.

When Jesus died on a cruel Roman cross he took on himself our sin.  
He took from us any claim the Satan has over our lives and made us free.

Jesus' resurrection declares Him to be the world's true Lord, despite how appearances may be.  
But if this so, why does the world still seem to be a cosmic battleground where people get caught in the crossfire?

In nineteen years' time will be the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of D-Day June 6<sup>th</sup> 1944 – the decisive battle of World War II.  
Once a beachhead was established on the shores of occupied Europe the war was over. An Allied victory inevitable.

Yet the war in Europe wasn't finally over until VE Day, 11 months later on May 8<sup>th</sup>, 1945. In the days and weeks ahead casualties were huge – more than in any other time during the war – and yet victory over the evil of Nazi regime was assured on what some have called the longest day.

We live in this inbetween place – between the cross and the Jesus' return.  
The kingdom has come but not in its fullness.  
It is "already" but "not yet".  
So we will see moments and times of triumph but also times bitter battles.

And as the world's true King he will one day Satan's chaotic thrashings to a complete end.

And you know, in meantime, followers of Jesus are charged with joining in with Jesus' mission in the world in the power the Holy Spirit – his mighty power that Pauls talks about.

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So this morning there's a couple of sayings you may know:  
An ounce prevention is better than... cure.  
Forewarned is... forearmed.

1 Peter counsels us, "Be alert and of sober mind".  
And I think one way we do that is by familiarising ourselves with the devil's schemes.  
What's been hidden away in darkness we need to bring into God's light.

So that may mean doing an audit of your home.  
Is there anything in your home associated with witchcraft, the occult, the New Age or other religions that needs to go?

It may means a personal audit. Are there personal practices you shouldn't be involved in? Is there an area of unconfessed sin?

The other thing I'll say is this – 1 John 3:8 tells us:  
"The reason the Son of God came into the world was to destroy the works of the devil."

It may this morning that you feel like you're in the firing line of the adversary.

It may be through the mouth of another, or in your thought life.

And all you constantly hear are words of criticism and condemnation  
Jesus came to make you clean and speak words of life and truth to you.  
He can silence the accuser.  
And he can do that this morning.

Maybe you've done things or things have been done to you that have made  
you feel dirty on the inside, and you can't get clean.  
And it torments you.  
Jesus came to make you clean and new.

Maybe you're simply feeling disappointment and hopeless, and as much as you  
try to shrug it off, it just keeps coming back at you.  
Jesus is the God of all hope; He can lift the cloud of melancholy.

It may be in some other area.  
Some of it may seem rational but the sheer volume is beyond the norm.

There's opportunity for prayer this morning; we will stand with you in prayer.

"The reason the Son of God came into the world was to destroy the  
works of the devil."