

## Sermon: *Things that Go Bump in the Dark: Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*

Scripture: 1 Samuel 18:12-16 & Romans 7:14-25

In 1886, Scottish writer **Robert Louis Stevenson** published *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*. In this novel, we meet the Dr Jekyll, a kind doctor who is determined to figure out a way to separate the evil from the good within humans. So he develops a potion that separates the two, not realizing that each become personified through him. Dr. Jekyll does good, while his counterpart, Mr. Hyde, does evil. Dr. Jekyll cares for those around him, Mr., Hyde destroys those around him. And in the end while evil was at the beginning the smaller portion of the doctor's personality, eventually it takes over his whole being.

It's a fascinating story, the idea of taking away the evil, the bad within us. In our scripture lesson taken from 1 Samuel, King Saul, who we met last week as the first king of Israel, has an evil spirit overtake him as he is filled with regret.

Here's the background, last week we met Saul as the first king of Israel, and he was a good king, leading in battles, caring for the people, however he does not follow the word of God in what he should and should not be doing. And so in chapter 15:23 we read the prophet Samuel declaring to Saul **"Because you have rejected the word of the Lord, he has rejected you as king."** At the beginning of chapter 16 we **meet David**, whom God calls Samuel to anoint as the next leader of Israel. And when he does the text states, **"the spirit of the Lord came mightily upon David from that day forward."** - verse 13 Right after that we read, <sup>14</sup> **Now the spirit of the Lord departed from Saul, and an evil spirit from the Lord tormented him.**

So the spirit of the Lord came mightily upon David, but has left Saul, and now God sends an evil spirit to Saul? This is a difficult passage to read and most scholars believe that the real interpretation is Saul believed God had departed from him, because he felt a disconnect with God. Therefore, Saul is prone to do what he wants, which in this case *is not the way of God*, but rather wrongful. So wrongful that others notice. The text continues, <sup>15</sup> **And Saul's servants said to him, "See now, an evil spirit from God is tormenting you. <sup>16</sup> Let our lord now command the servants who attend you to look for someone who is skillful in playing the lyre, and when the evil spirit from God is upon you, he will play it, and you will feel better."**

This is how David and Saul meet. David would play the lyre for King Saul, and this would soothe his soul. In fact he hired David because at the end of chapter 16 we read, <sup>23</sup> **It came to pass, whenever the spirit from God came upon Saul, David would take the harp and play it with his hand. So Saul would find relief and feel better, as the evil spirit departed from him.** David made Saul feel better, he played songs of peace and hope. In the text we read, **"Saul loved David greatly"**.

But that would change when in chapter 17, David takes on the giant Goliath of the Philistines and wins, then everyone celebrated him for it. Which leads to our text today in chapter 18 where we read: <sup>12</sup> **Saul was afraid of David, because the Lord was with David but had departed from Saul.** Saul goes from love to fear, but the real fear is not being scared of David, he was scared of the situation he was in with David. I would suggest *Saul's real problem was regret*.

Hear the rest of the text again: <sup>14</sup> **In everything he did he had great success, because the Lord was with him. <sup>15</sup> When Saul saw how successful he was, he was afraid of him. <sup>16</sup> But all Israel and Judah loved David, because he led them in their campaigns.** Saul realized he was not going to continue to be king, and more than likely David was. Saul believed it was because the Lord was with David, however the Lord could be with Saul, if he would open himself to the Lord. But he wouldn't, he felt he couldn't. He believed there was no turning back. Just like we see with Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde, no turning back, which leads to only regrets.

As we work through this sermon series of darkness, darkness that pulls us down emotionally, physically, and spiritually, I believe regret is one of those things. We do something, after we do it we recognize we shouldn't, and we can't let it go. So much so that it can even prevent us from doing better. It's like Paul writes in his letter to the Romans: <sup>15</sup> **I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do.** And then he goes on to explain why we do such things that we regret, it's because of our separation from God, our sin, verse 17, **As it is, it is no longer I myself who do it, but it is sin living in me.** Paul says

there is this alter ego side of us that is against God and God's will, the Mr. Hyde, the fearful Saul, but the good news is, *it doesn't have to control us, it doesn't have to have the last word. We do not need to live in darkness due to our regrets.* Rather, Paul writes, verse 24, **Who will rescue me from this body that is subject to death?** <sup>25</sup> **Thanks be to God, who delivers me through Jesus Christ our Lord!** Meaning, in Christ, God has taken our evil side away, God has taken those things that separate us from God's goodness for our lives. In Christ we receive the love and will of God that does not leave nor abandon us. Rather clears us of regrets and pain so that we can move on, striving to do the good we are inspired to do through God's love revealed in Jesus.

Can you imagine if Saul would let his past go and just learned to reconnect with God, what that could have meant for him? Or if Dr Jekyll would not have chosen science to help him with his bad side, but rather faith and religion? Something society was struggling with when Stevenson published this. Or if you, could let that one thing that nags you, bothers you, when you think "I should not have done that" what would it mean for you to trust God to take that regret and redeem it? Imagine the lightness of your heart, mind, and spirit.

That's what happened to Paul. He was a persecutor of Christians, he ordered their deaths, but he was forgiven and in that love was redeemed so that he became a witness that continues to inspire the Christian faith.

Friends, maybe you are holding onto something, something that you are beginning to recognize is separating you from the relationship you want to have with God, or with others. If that's you, I invite you today to lay that down, give it to God in Christ, and allow redemption to heal those regrets and shine more light in your life.

In fact, today we will close with a prayer of confession written by Beth Merrill Neel on her blog, 'Hold Fast to What Is Good'.<sup>1</sup> That will invite you to a moment of silence to lay those regrets down.

### **Let us pray:**

Lord, we recognize that confessing is like walking into a dark cave, seeing nothing, hearing nothing –we do not know what we will find there.

Maybe we will find the bones of things long dead

Maybe we will find the living wings of a bat, or the thousand feet of some worm thing.

Maybe we will find the silence not at all quiet, but full of unknown rustles.

Maybe we will find ourselves, and find old hurts or desires that are long dead,

And find the thousand feet of some urge or temptation that could carry us away in a heartbeat.

Confessing is difficult, Lord.

And yet, we believe that even in the deepest dark, you offer us a tiny light that is always present, that sliver that comes from an unknown place, that sliver of light that give us hope, that sliver of light that looks a bit like grace.

Right here, right now, we silently offer to you our darkness, our regrets, to sense your light of grace. (moment of silence)

Thank you, God. Thank you that we can see your grace, know your forgiveness, and become free to go and live in the light of your love as we affirm our faith in you by praying the words of Jesus, Our Father...

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<sup>1</sup> <https://holdfasttowhatisgood.com/liturgy/prayer-of-confession/> Oct 19, 2022