

The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll & Mr Hyde

Trinity 13c --- St Mary's Iffley --- 1000 and 1830 Sunday 25-Aug-13

Some authors have a gift for creating names that become society's definitions for the traits of the character that first bears the name.

Charles Dickens gives us SETH PECKSNIFF

Mr Pecksniff is the architect from Martin Chuzzlewit, who had never designed or built anything.

"Some people likened Pecksniff to a direction-post, which is always telling the way to a place, and never goes there." Pecksniff is a hypocrite.

Robert Louis Stevenson gives us Henry Jekyll

Dr Jekyll is a respected, respectable man.

An experimental potion releases his alter ego, the monstrous, murderous Edward Hyde, and eventually, Hyde begins to predominate, until Jekyll is exposed and only Hyde remains.

"Jekyll and Hyde" --- people who are radically different in moral character and behaviour from one moment to another.

Hyde is no hypocrite though --- Jekyll is.

He embraced and fed Hyde as the mechanism to give vent to his own shadows.

Today's gospel uses the word hypocrite for a synagogue ruler, president of the board of elders if you will, and his cronies.

- C.S. Lewis: "*Of all bad men religious bad men are the worst.*" And this was the kind of man who believed that he had a secret pact with God which, in ritual and piety exempted him from compassion and mercy.

A most wonderful thing had happened in his synagogue that Sabbath to a woman whose profound and enduring disability rendered her invisible to those who were used to seeing her.

- Jesus saw her though.
- She did not approach him but rather Jesus took the initiative—a significant act in a culture that tended to shun women, and to shun disability.
- Though to everyone else, cure was unthought of and unexpected, Jesus saw her and she was healed.
- Her thrill and gratitude explode into joyful praise.
- And bear in mind that she wasn't an Anglican – there will have been shouting and singing and dancing, surely?!

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And everyone is crowding around her to join in --- and even to reach out for their own miracles. Sabbath rest has descended into holy disorder, and Jesus was right at the heart of it.

The synagogue leader is indignant, but is nothing more than jealousy with a halo. Not brave enough to take Jesus on openly, the halo the man spins as he lashes out at the people is *"There are 6 days on which work ought to be done; come on those days and be cured, and not on the sabbath day"* as if healings were the norm at his synagogue!

But the truth is, he would show compassion to a thirsty animal that to this woman, and he would rather see the poor woman bent to the earth like a beast, than see Christ glorified by healing her.

"Woe to him whose good name is more to him than goodness" Herman Melville

Jesus takes him apart – exposing both his motives and his actions are suspect, corrupt even. *GILL: the force of Christ's reasoning is this, that if it was lawful, on a sabbath day, to lead out a beast to watering, to quench its thirst, that so it may not suffer so much as one day for want of water, how much more reasonable must it be, that a rational creature, one of Abraham's posterity, and a religious person, who had been for eighteen years under a sore affliction should be freed from so long and sore an affliction on the sabbath day?*

Sabbath, true sabbath is not a day of the week.

True Sabbath is the creative Presence of God

True Sabbath can be messy and confusing
as well as restorative and invigorating

True Sabbath says "you are free" to the weary,
the oppressed and the down-trodden. Isaiah told us we are to remove the yoke from amongst us.

Who here would doubt that Wilberforce and the Clapham Sect were raised up by the Holy Spirit to cry out, "HYPOCRITE" to British state, church and people, demanding a Sabbath freedom from the trade in those bought and sold as chattel slaves.

Jewish commentaries warn that whoever sins in secret or walks with a proud and haughty bearing crowds out the arrival of true Sabbath.

It has always been part of the calling of God's people to expose corrupt motives and actions. A warning though – I googled "crusaders hypocrites" and got 3,520,000 results. I googled "Christians hypocrites" and got 37,800,000 results

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Only two occasions where Luke uses the word hypocrite – here and in Luke 6:42

How can you say to your neighbour, “Friend, let me take out the speck in your eye”, when you yourself do not see the log in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your neighbour’s eye.

We miss Jesus' point entirely when we use His words as a call to arms against others. They are also to be taken personally by each of us.

Hypocrisy is not failing to practise those virtues that one preaches: We are all more capable of words than action.

Hypocrites are literally actors, dissemblers, ones pretending, as in a public performance.

- C18th preacher George Whitfield was once asked if a certain person was a good man: *"How should I know that? I never lived with him."*
- George Orwell comments on one of his characters though that “he wears a mask, and his face grows to fit it.”

Deliberate inconsistency not through ignorance or through weakness, but through our own deliberate fault is a yoke of hypocrisy heavy to bear both for us and for those around us too.

The line between good and evil runs straight through the heart of each one of us. Mr Hyde must be faced if Dr Jekyll is to discover his true Sabbath.

I TOLD YOU THIS STORY MY 1st SUNDAY MORNING HERE:

- A tribal elder tells his young braves about the struggle within, explaining that inside every warrior there are two dogs fighting continually.
- one good dog who wants to do the right thing and the other dog always wants to do the wrong thing.
- "Who is going to win in the end?" one of the youngsters asked.
- The chief answered "The one you feed."