

We are called to a life of service where we work to take care of others. As we do so, what happens when we spend our entire life fighting injustice and suffering? Is there a risk of feeling frustrated and helpless because evil is all around that we cannot seem to move?

If we spend our lives fighting poverty, discrimination, human trafficking and a variety of other issues, how do we keep our spirits up? What happens when we lose sight of what we are truly fighting for?

This morning's message took an unexpected turn on me yesterday morning when I started the sermon over after reading about Rev. Charles Moore. He was a retired Methodist pastor who spent his entire career fighting injustice. He drove to his hometown in Texas in June of last year and after stopping in a parking lot, he set himself on fire. He died later that evening as his wife, kids, grandkids and friends tried to understand what he was thinking.

It appears from some notes that he left that he believed that the world would take notice of his death and would rally around the fight for injustice. As I read the different articles, the only thing I could think of was that he mistakenly listened to the devil. The devil convinced him that the fight would be better without him. The ironic thing is that Pastor Moore wanted to end the stranglehold that evil has on the world and in the end, it watched Pastor Moore take his own life and then continue to do what it does best and that is to cause hatred among all.

The evil of the world really did not care about Pastor Moore, his ministry or his final act of taking his life. I was kind of surprised that I don't recall hearing of this story. I do think Pastor Moore became frustrated with how slow things were moving and truly believed that if he could bring national attention to it, then more people would join in.

Evil is a part of our society. There are many things that we do not understand and are left dumbfounded as we wonder how people could treat others so poorly. Evil has a stranglehold on us.

Thankfully, we are not left in that place to fend for ourselves. In our gospel reading, the unclean spirit in the man who confronted Jesus at the synagogue seems to represent all evil that are at work in the world and Jesus had total control over it.

We should never give in to despair, even when our efforts seem to make no real difference against the suffering of the world because Jesus' victory over the unclean spirit teaches us that God ultimately will win the victory over evil.

We are not fighting injustice by ourselves because God is with us. Jesus demonstrated God's power over evil by commanding the demons to quiet and to leave the man. God has total power and when Christ returns the devil and all of his empty promises will be defeated once and for all. This is our strength as we do ministry throughout the world.