

Worms / Jesus, Lord over Spirits

Tammy: Musa went home to his village after being away at school in a large town. As he got out of his canoe and trudged up the hill to the village, he was puzzled. Where were all the little children that would normally come running to greet him? They had all run away to hide...they thought he was an evil spirit coming to get children to put into the holes of the new bridge being built in the city. The adults had told this story, believing it to be true. Actually, it was bad people who used to steal children, not spirits. The children didn't recognize Musa because he was wearing a new kind of hat! He understood how frightened they would have been, and they all laughed when they realized it was just their friend, Musa.

Carol: Hello! This is *Women of Hope*. I'm Carol, and Tammy and I are happy to be with you today. That was an interesting story, Tammy...where did it come from?

Tammy: I heard it from my friend Marj, a nurse who used to work in Musa's village years ago. I'll tell you more about Musa later, if we have time. But first we're going to talk about something that can be embarrassing...worms! We've been finding out a lot from our nurse...it's interesting but rather horrible!

Carol: You know, I used to think worms in our stomachs were *embarrassing* but not really *serious*. But I found out that having worms can be quite dangerous, so it's good for us to talk about this today. Maybe you've had worms and know already how much trouble they cause.

Tammy: I knew a child who had very bad tummy pains...her bowel seemed to be blocked. She was taken to the hospital, very ill. They thought she might die on the way. At the hospital they found that a huge tangle of worms had formed into a ball in her tummy.

Carol: If you see little children with huge pot bellies, and skinny arms and legs...you might think they haven't had enough food to eat. But it's possible that they may have worms as well.

Tammy: Worms are common in tropical areas, and especially in the rainy seasons. Some kinds of worms such as *threadworms* get in through the mouth. They are tiny, up to 1 cm long, like thin white threads. They make the skin around the back passage (anus) very itchy, especially at night. They are also known in some countries as

pinworms or *seatworms*. Children often catch them from other children who have the eggs on their hands from scratching their itchy bottoms. These worms often pass through by themselves, and they are easily treated with medicine from the health clinic. Then there are *roundworms*, which are up to 30 cm long and round like a pencil, You get roundworm eggs from food or water contaminated by soil that has feces in it from people or pigs.

Carol: I read that a quarter of the world's population has roundworms! And I was amazed! But apparently people often don't realize they're infected by roundworms. Roundworms can be more dangerous than thread worms, because they can get into the lungs or other organs.

Tammy: And there are *hookworms* that usually enter through the skin of the feet. They travel to the person's intestines, and suck their blood. Ugh!

But probably the most dangerous worms are *tapeworms*. They can grow many meters long, and segments of them break off and start new worms. The greatest danger is when the small sacs containing baby worms get into a person's brain or lungs and form cysts. People often die from these cysts.

Carol: That's very serious! So Tammy, tell us, how do we know if a person has worms in their belly?

Tammy: The simplest way is to look! Often worms *can be seen in a person's vomit or their feces* or bowel actions. So if you think someone has worms, look carefully at these.

They *might feel nauseated* and have *indigestion and stomach pains* that come and go. They could have *diarrhea, or constipation* and they pass lots of wind. They can *lose their appetite*, and feel very *tired*, with *no energy*...

Carol: I expect they are tired because they can't absorb the food that gives them energy before the worms take it.

Tammy: That's right... And some worms suck the blood and make the person *anemic* - they don't have enough red blood cells. And the inside of their eyelid, looks very pale.

They may *not sleep well*, and often grind their teeth at night. Infected children can even have fits.

The person might have a dry cough, and itchy skin. Sometimes the worms even come out of the nose or mouth!

Carol: It sounds pretty awful, but we need to know, and we need to look, so we can get rid of them. But let's take a break and think about what we've just learned while we listen to this song.

We've been talking about worms that get into our bodies. So we need to talk about how to avoid getting them in the first place...

Tammy: ...and how to treat them if we do get them.

The nurse, Marj, told me some things we can do. The most important one is to be really careful when getting rid of feces or bowel actions. If you don't have a toilet, build a latrine – a hole in the ground for your toilet. And don't let small children pass their feces onto the ground.

Carol: Always wash your hands properly with soap and water after using the toilet. Soap is the best investment you can make for your family's health!

Tammy: We need to eat in a clean way – clean hands, clean food, and well-cooked meat. Tape worms, can be found in meat...especially pork if it's not cooked all the way through.

Carol: Often children get worms. So we should teach our children to wash their hands often, especially before they eat. Don't let the children go barefoot outside, because bare feet can pick up hookworms or carry dried dung back inside.

Tammy: And of course, drinking water needs to be clean. If it's dirty, or could be contaminated, boil it for about 10 minutes to kill any parasites or their eggs that might be in it. You can't always see them.

Carol: So these are all things we can do to help prevent worms getting inside us – wash our hands, drink clean water, wear shoes outside if we can. But Tammy what did the nurse say about how to treat them if we do get them?

Tammy: She said that worms can be easily treated with medicine from a doctor or health worker.

Carol: And if we can't get to a health worker, are there some simple, natural ways to get rid of them?

Tammy: Yes - papayas can help get rid of intestinal worms. Collect 3 to 4 teaspoons of the milk that comes from the green fruit or trunk of the papaya tree when it's cut. Mix this with an equal amount of sugar or honey and stir it into a cup of hot water. If possible, drink it with a medicine that makes your bowel actions soft.

She also said that threadworms don't like garlic! Crush four cloves of garlic and mix this with one glass of liquid - this can be water, juice or milk. Drink one glass every day for three weeks.

Carol: Wow, your breath would smell of garlic, wouldn't it! But they sound like good practical suggestions, if you can get papayas or garlic.

Tammy: If you do get medicine for worms, the nurse said it needs to be taken just as you are told - the right amount for the right time, especially for tape worms. If one child has threadworms, then treat the whole family as you've probably all been infected. And wash your clothes and all the bedding when you start taking the worm medicine. Your children may have worms or germs in their bowel actions, so take care how and where you wash their clothes or diapers. You don't want to contaminate the water or soil.

Carol: So what did *you* think was most important about preventing worms?...

Tammy: / think it's all about being clean - clean hands and feet, clean food and water, clean disposal of our waste and animal droppings. I don't want my family- or my tummy - to be a home for worms!

Carol: Welcome back to *Women of Hope*. We've just been talking about worm infections. Worms cause so many different problems it's often confusing, and it can be hard to decide what to do. And you know, I think many of our *human* problems are like that. We can ask, 'What's causing this problem?' but the answer is not always clear.

Tammy: Remember how in Musa's village, the people thought Musa was an evil spirit, but it was really bad people who had taken the children? What do you think about evil spirits? Some people believe they're everywhere, causing all sorts of human problems. Others believe in them, but think they would never affect

them. Some people think there are no spirits, and that everything has a practical explanation. Do you wonder what spiritual powers are in the world? Today, Fran's here again to tell us a true story that may help us to think about this question. Welcome, Fran.

Fran: Thank you Tammy. I'm glad to be here with you again. Jesus, God's son, believed that evil spiritual powers existed. In the Bible, we can read about many times that he healed sick people, and other times when he came up against evil spirits. He knew the difference. I'd like to tell you one of those stories from God's true book.

Carol: Let's listen carefully so we can remember...

Fran: One day Jesus met some people crowded around a father and his son. The father shouted to Jesus, 'Teacher! I beg you, look at my son, my only son! A spirit attacks him and throws him into a fit, so that he foams at the mouth: it keeps on hurting him and won't let him go! I begged your followers to drive it out, but they couldn't.' Jesus answered, 'How unbelieving you people are! ...Bring your son here.' As the boy was coming, the demon knocked him over and threw him into a fit, so that he fell to the ground, rolling around and frothing from his mouth. The father told Jesus, 'Many times the demon has tried to kill him by throwing him into the fire and into the water. Have pity on us and help us, if you possibly can!' 'If I *can!*' exclaimed Jesus. 'Everything is possible for the person who has faith.' 'I do believe,' cried the father, 'but not enough. Help me to have more faith!'

More and more people were gathering. Then Jesus gave a command to the evil spirit: 'Spirit, I order you to come out of the boy and never go into him again!' The spirit screamed, and threw the boy into a fit, and then came out of him. The boy looked as though he was dead, but Jesus took him by the hand and helped him to get up, and gave him back to his father. And all the people were amazed at the mighty power of God that they saw in Jesus. (Luke 9:38-43, Mark 9:17-27, from GNB.)

Carol: How did you feel about that?...Were you amazed too? What part of the story stands out for you, Tammy? Let's see if we can remember the main things in this story. What did the *father* say about the boy?...

Tammy: Mmm...His father said an evil spirit was trying to kill him and hurt him, and no one could get rid of the spirit or demon. He begged Jesus to help.

Fran: Then what did *Jesus* say to the father?...yes *everything* is possible if you have faith.

Carol: Then the father asked Jesus to help him have *more* faith and confidence in God.

Tammy: Then Jesus ordered the demon to come out of the boy, and never come back. And it went!

Carol: But it left the boy looking like he was dead. Imagine what the father was thinking! He might have feared he had lost his son!

Tammy: But, he hadn't... Jesus helped him up, and he was all right from that time on.

Carol: Now we know what happened, let's think about what the story *means*. What did *you* think was wrong with the boy?...

Fran: Well, we might have said that he had *epileptic fits*...not that fits are usually caused by demons. We just heard how they can be caused by worms! But Jesus saw what was causing the fits...he had God's knowledge about this situation.

Tammy: But there was a spirit as well!

Carol: Yes, and it was evil - it wanted to hurt and kill. These spirits, or demons, are like evil angels who follow Satan, the devil. Satan is the enemy of God and of humans. But that father certainly went to the right person for help didn't he!

Tammy: Why do *you* think Jesus could deal with this powerful spirit?

Fran: Well, I think the power of God was in him - the people there were amazed when they saw that. Jesus said later, 'I throw out demons by the hand of God, and this proves that the kingdom of God has come among you.' (Luke 11:14-20)

Later Jesus told his followers that they could stand up to evil spirits too, but they would need to pray to God, the father, and place themselves under his authority (Mark 9:29).

Carol: ...and they needed faith, too. Remember Jesus said that with faith *anything* is possible. I think he meant, put your trust in God.

If you feel you do not have strong faith, you know what? You can do what this father did - ask Jesus to help you to believe in him. Faith isn't just wishing really hard for something you want. It's believing that God has the power to act, and will do the best thing for you because he is so *good* and *wise*.

Fran: So later, when Jesus' followers met demons they told them to go, using the power and authority of Jesus. Jesus still has that power, and you can call on him to deliver you from your fears - the power of evil spirits, or any other thing you fear. Jesus is still the Lord over all the spirits.

Tammy: That makes *me* feel very safe. I don't have to be afraid of spirits, or anything else, if I am on Jesus' side - or rather, if he is on my side! It gives me confidence to face the world. It gives me hope, because he loves me and he will never abandon me.

Carol: When Fran said, 'Jesus is Lord over the spirits' it reminded me of some words written in the Bible about Jesus. Listen: 'And so, in honor of the name of Jesus all beings in heaven, on earth and in the world below will fall on their knees, and all will openly declare that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father (Phil 2:10-11, GNB).

Tammy: So that means that one day, all angels and people and demons will realize who Jesus is. We'll all want to follow him and worship him. Wow! So let's start to follow him now. He really is the lord, the master, and we can trust him completely.

Would you like to hear the rest of Musa's story? Musa was very happy. It was a sunny day, and he was in love with a lovely young woman. He had come home to help his family with the rice harvest. When that was done, he planned to marry Maria.

He and his Father walked toward the rice field. Suddenly they stopped. Shocked, they saw a patterned snake slither across the path in front of them. "Oh no!" They turned around and hurried back towards the village. "We can't harvest the crop! I have seen the snake," his father said to his mother and the village people.

The women all felt very sorry, but they believed that if you saw that snake it meant the spirits wanted the rice crop for themselves. You would die if you went ahead with the harvest. They all knew it would be a very difficult year for the family without the harvest safely stowed away. Friends would help by giving some of their rice, but there would be hungry times ahead. Musa's mother would have to search the forest each day for

mushrooms, fern leaves and any other things she could find to eat. Poor Musa! He knew he would have to put aside his dream of marriage.

It was a different story three years later. A very old man came to the village and told the people that if they turned to the Lord God, who is much more powerful than the evil spirits, God would protect them. They learned that his son, Jesus gave his life for them. They were very glad, and all decided to put their trust in Jesus. Although they were a bit nervous at first, they learnt that they did not need to be afraid of the evil spirits any more.

So if a bird flew overhead when they were going out to the rice fields, or if a snake slithered across their path, they could continue on, trusting God to protect them. He not only gave them great peace of mind, but he also saved them from hunger. They could eat what they grew, and have some left over to share. And the children and parents learned they didn't need to be afraid of evil spirits stealing them away.

There was much rejoicing in the village when Musa married his lovely bride. A great party was held and his family welcomed Maria into their family.

Carol: What a difference it made when they put their faith in Jesus and trusted God to protect them! But they had to decide. I guess it felt risky to change their old customs. But they were glad they did, I'm sure.

Would you like to be less fearful in your life? Are you willing to trust God to protect you? Ask him today to help you to believe with all your heart and mind. He may not take away all your difficulties, but he will give you strength and peace. You'll be glad you did.

Tammy: Time for us to go now. You can contact us in care of this station or via email.

Carol: Thank you for letting us be a part of your life and let's get together again next week. Have a wonderful week and God's blessings on you.