

SERMON FOR SUN. JUNE 6 AND WED. JUNE 9 2021

Pent 2B Mark 3:20-35 “Binding, Bruising and Plundering the Evil One” LSB 668

Dear fellow redeemed of the Lord, today we begin the long Pentecost season with its focus on church’s life.

The first half of the church year, we focus on the life of Jesus - His birth, life, death, resurrection, and ascension to God’s right hand.

Now we focus on the development of the church; on what the Holy Spirit accomplished through the preaching of the Word and the giving of the Sacraments.

Today’s Gospel lesson is a good place to start- for in it, like today’s world, we find Jesus opposed and spoken against. As you heard, His family thought He was out of His mind, and some Jewish leaders accused Him of being demon-possessed.

The things He said were revolutionary, and so the good He did, well that must be evil too. Or perhaps we could put it this way: ***For God so loved the world that He sent His only-begotten Son***, and the world thought Him dangerous at best and crazy at worst.

That’s the direction our world seems - in many ways - to be going right now. Christians and churches that hold to orthodox Christian doctrine are considered behind the times as best, and dangerous at worst. Yet this is nothing new.

Throughout history, the church has fallen into and out of favor.

But no matter what the tide of history, in times good for the church and bad, there has been a constant: Satan *is at work*. Sometimes subtly, undercutting the truth with rationalism; other time quite openly, as in communism.

When times are favorable for the church, it is tempting for us to become complacent and satisfied.

When times are bad, Satan incites us to hide our light under a basket, silencing our witness to the truth, silenced by fear.

When times are easy, luring us into getting fat and lazy.

When times are tough, Satan wants us to hunker down and separate ourselves from the world.

And it’s not just the world and its history - I’ll bet most of you can identify all of those times *in your own lives*.

Times when you’ve grown complacent with your faith and satisfied with your knowledge of God’s Word.

Times when you wouldn’t speak about Jesus or the truth because you were afraid of what others would think if they knew you were one of “those Jesus Freaks.”

Times when the Bible didn’t get opened for a while, your prayers faltered, and just going through the motions in worship.

And times when you decide to fight evil with evil instead of with love and forgiveness. Maybe you’re in one of those times right now.

Satan is a tireless foe, working in good times and bad, in the world and in each of us, trying to weaken and destroy our faith and snatch us from our Father in heaven.

How good then to hear Jesus words today in response to those who oppose Him. No, He is not demon-possessed nor fighting evil with evil, and He is not against them either.

In fact, He has come to save them, by bruising, binding and plundering Satan. Jesus said, **“No one can enter a strong man’s house and plunder his goods, unless he first binds the strong man. Then indeed he may plunder his house.”**

What was truly revolutionary then was that God had entered Satan’s domain in the person of Jesus in order to subdue him.

Now you may be thinking: it sure doesn’t look like He did so! Just look at all the evil and false teaching and godlessness in our world today. Satan sure doesn’t *seem* to bound very well, and Jesus doesn’t look very victorious.

It’s easy to look at the evil in the world and conclude that this world is Satan’s house. But is it? Consider what we heard from the apostle Paul today: **We do not lose heart.** Even in a world that seems intent on marching toward evil.

Why? Because **though our outer nature is wasting away, our inner nature is being renewed day by day.**

For this slight and momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are temporary, but the things that are unseen are eternal.

Now that’s quite the opposite of modern thinking, which asserts that it’s what I can see and feel that’s real, that’s lasting, and what I cannot see, the spiritual, is uncertain and transient. But the truth is just the opposite.

You see, it’s not this world that satan is battling for; *it’s you* - your heart and your mind. If he can use the things of this world to distract you from Christ, great.

But it’s not the world he wants, it’s you.

The evil and suffering we see in the world are the symptoms of the larger problem - the corruption and enslavement of hearts and minds to Satanic lies.

And so it is precisely on the battlefield of our hearts and minds, that Jesus came to bind, bruise and plunder the strong man.

Jesus frees hearts and minds smitten by sin and captivated by evil, and turn them to Him in repentance and faith.

Yet Jesus’ weapon of choice looked senseless to the world: For how can a crucifixion set people free? How can death give life? How can shame give honor?

How can the death of one man, mean life for all men?

To the world, it can’t. That’s why so many thought Jesus was out of His mind. But on the battleground of your heart and mind, the word of the cross is the power of God to set you free.

The forgiveness of sins won on the cross binds satan and strips him of his power. While Jesus was on the cross, satan looked powerful, but in the resurrection, He is exposed.

God's love and life are more powerful than sin and death. And for those bound in sin and death - you and me - Jesus' resurrection binds the one who has bound us, and so sets us free.

And that binding and freedom are now accomplished where His cross and resurrection is for us now - in the preaching of the Word and the giving of the Sacraments.

Those weapons look weak and senseless in worldly terms. Water, words, bread, and wine; those aren't weapons!

Oh, but when the Holy Spirit is in them, they are means through which satan is bound still today.

For through them, the Holy Spirit is working, cleansing hearts, freeing minds, and feeding souls.

If you neglect these and despise the Spirit who works forgiveness through them, you're letting satan loose in your heart and mind and face a dangerous eternal reality.

But cling to these means of grace, and satan is muzzled, bound, and plundered. Your heart and mind are claimed by the Spirit for Christ, for life, and for eternity.

An eternity that's not just some far distant, dreamy, future hope that we'll get to enjoy *someday*, but an eternity that has begun already now. A new reality, a new family, a new life that Jesus has provided for you even now.

For Jesus **looked about at those who sat around him, he said, "Here are my mother and my brothers! Whoever does the will of God, he is my brother and sister and mother."**

That is how He looks at you and how we can now look at each other. That doesn't diminish our earthly relationships but adds to them.

And it doesn't mean we'll have no problems - as you know, families have plenty of problems and often fight and disagree. Churches too.

But it does mean there's something else that defines us now - not just the family we're physically born into, but also the family we're spiritually born into, through water and the word.

The family we have Sunday dinner with. The family we sorrow with, rejoice with, and live with in forgiveness and faith.

And as we do, this happens too: ***Jesus continues bruising the serpent's head.***

As you know, Jesus is the promised offspring of Eve, who would bruise the serpent-satan's head through His cross.

But know this too: He still is.

Please stand up, for we need to do some devil stomping.

Every time a person is baptized into this family, living water makes the devil's domain steam. STOMP

Every time you hear the word of God and keep it, Satan grimaces. STOMP

Every time you repent and receive forgiveness, STOMP

Every time you give forgiveness instead of holding a grudge, Every time you pray, Satan's horns get bent a little more. STOMP

Every time you speak the truth, the father of lies can't bear to hear it. STOMP

Every time you help others and love and live as the child of God Satan's head is bruised. STOMP

It's like we're a multitude of little Christ's, our heels stepping on Satan's head, like a constant drumbeat of bruising. STOMP 3X

The triumph of Jesus on the cross continues on through the Spirit in those who belong to Him. Which puts a little different spin on things, on your life and the good works that you do, doesn't it? Even makes it kinds of fun!

And if Satan goes crazy against us because of it? Well really, isn't that what we should expect? But he can't touch us.

And if the whole world turns against the church? No worries. **For we know that if the tent, which is our earthly home, is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.**

That's the confidence we have in Jesus, through His Spirit given to us, making us sons of the Father.

So as we just sang, *Satan may have designed our fall*, but Jesus has accomplished our salvation.

So the good news for you this morning is that the strong man Satan is bound by the stronger man, Jesus, and you belong to Him.

That's a good note to start this half of the church year on, don't you think? But not only today - to remember and believe and rejoice and live in God's grace every day. **AMEN**