

Immanuel (Augsburg) Lutheran Church  
Shobonier, Illinois  
Pentecost 2B (Proper 5B)  
June 6, 2021  
Mark 3:20-35

### Jesus Is the Stronger Man

“But 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.” (Mark 3:27 ESV)

In the Name of Jesus, the only Savior of the world.

The story begins in paradise, a long time ago. The crown jewels of creation, the man and the woman, had been placed in the garden for safe keeping as they lived in harmony with their Creator. But a strong man, the enemy of the Creator, “wormed” his way into the garden to steal these jewels. He spoke persuasively to the woman, twisting the words of the Creator, even calling God a liar. Thus, the strong man stole the jewels for himself.

As a result, we are by nature prisoners and slaves, in bondage to sin, death, and the devil. Compared to the devil, we are weak, powerless to free ourselves from his clutches. Therefore, if we are to be freed, One far stronger than ourselves must bind him.

So when the Creator came looking for the crown jewels of His creation, He found that they had hidden themselves. When He asked them what they had done, they passed the blame. When He finally spoke to the enemy, the strong man, He did so with a vengeance. And as He spoke, He declared His strategy for reclaiming His treasure. He said, “I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise His heel” (Gen. 3:15 NKJV). No mere wishful thinking, this wasn't a strategy that might work; it *would* work. It was a promise. It was THE PROMISE. And it was spoken directly into the face of the devil telling him exactly how he would be defeated. And there was nothing he could do about it.

Of course, the devil would have you believe that this is not true. He wants to have power over you and control you without you realizing it. Thus he tempts you away from the Lord God and His good and gracious will. When affliction befalls you, the satanic strongman whispers in your ear that God doesn't really love you and doesn't care about you. When things are going well, he tries to convince you that you don't need God, that you have earned everything you have. He makes sin and temptation look good, then goads you to leave the Word behind and decide for yourself what is good and right for you. All the while you are no match for the strong man.

That's why God made the promise: The Seed of the woman would come for battle. Sure, the strong man would bruise his heel, like the cowardly serpent who hides in a boot to bite his prey. But the Seed of the woman would bruise, actually crush, the strong man's head.

And God has kept His promise. The Seed of the woman, the Stronger Man has already come. He was conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary. And we see Him at work in today's Gospel reading. He has been teaching and performing miracles; indeed, He has just healed a man with a withered hand on the Sabbath, and refused to let the demons say who He is. He proves Himself to be the Stronger Man, but his family thinks He's out of his mind. The Pharisees, the Herodians, and the scribes, unwilling to repent and trust in Him, conspire together in hopes of destroying Him. It's not that He's too good to be true, He's too good to be tolerated.

So the strong man, the devil, incites Jesus' own people to oppose Him. They claim He's in league with the devil. "He has Beelzebub," they say, and, "By the ruler of the demons He casts out demons."

But Jesus quickly sets the record straight. He is no minion of the ancient serpent; He did not come to persuade more to join the damned. He has come to defeat Satan, once and for all and to set the prisoners free. He declares, "How can Satan cast out Satan? If a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand. And if a house is divided against itself, that house will not be able to stand. And if Satan has risen up against himself and is divided, he cannot stand, but is coming to an end. But 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."

No, Jesus is most certainly not in league with the devil. Rather, He is the Stronger Man who has come to bind the devil, to tie him up, to rob him of his power of death and the grave. He has come to plunder the satanic strong man's house and goods. And this is what He does!

And how does He tie up the strong man? Not as we might expect. Not with a show of force or power. For when it comes to salvation, His power is made perfect in weakness. So He fulfills the ancient promise and defeats the devil by suffering for the sins of the world, submitting to death on the cross, and taking upon Himself the wrath of God for the iniquity of us all. His strength is His perfect trust that, though God forsakes Him and condemns Him for our sin, His Father will raise Him back to life. Thus Jesus shows His strength by dying on the cross to take away your sins. That is how He ties up the devil. But death cannot hold Him. He shows that He has bound the strong man, that Satan has no power, by descending into hell and proclaiming His victory there. He shows to us that He has conquered death by rising again on the third day.

And how does the Stronger Man plunder? He tells us in the next verse: It is by the forgiveness of sins. "Truly, I say to you, all sins will be forgiven the children of man, and whatever blasphemies they utter, but whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit never has forgiveness, but is guilty of an eternal sin."

The Lord Jesus Christ, the Stronger Man, plunders you from the devil by taking those sins away. He has died for them on the cross, and now He gives to you the forgiveness of sins by His means of grace. Thus on this day, and in the Divine Service week after week, He plunders with glorious

shouts of victory. He declares, "I baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit." And in His strength, those few words and a splash of water wash the devil away, for the strong man is no match for the Stronger Man. But the Lord does not stop there; no, through His called pastors, He proclaims "I forgive you all of your sins in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit." With those words, your sins are loosed from you, and the strong man is bound. And, of course, the Stronger Man utters one more battle cry: "Take and eat, this is My Body...take and drink, this is My Blood...for the forgiveness of sins." And where Christ is, the devil must flee.

This is how the Stronger Man plunders, delivering you from bondage into sin. Yet, the Stronger Man is also gentle, not forcing His forgiveness upon you, but rather offering it to you as a gift. And the fact that the Son of Man does not coerce forgiveness upon you is a statement of His love; yet the devil twists even this. He convinces people that, while the Lord offers grace, they ought to refuse His means of grace. They ought to refuse to hear His Word and obstinately not listen to His absolution. They ought to shun their Baptism, take the Lord's Supper for granted, and stay away. This, the devil whispers, is freedom; but it is really slavery of the worst kind. Those who forsake the means of grace forsake the only means by which the Holy Spirit gives them forgiveness. To say "I do not need these means and the forgiveness they give" is to say "The Holy Spirit's work is unnecessary for me." It's on par with saying that Jesus' words and work are from the devil. This blasphemes the Holy Spirit, and such a one is not forgiven - not because God is not merciful, but because the sinner says "no" to the very mercy God offers.

So take heed, dear Christians. You are no match for the devil. Though he has been bound, he is still stronger than you. He still seeks to join you to his defeated camp, so that you might suffer the defeat and the condemnation forever with him.

But Jesus Christ is the Stronger Man. He holds the keys of Death and Hell. He has stripped Satan bare. And this is glorious good news for you. For no matter how much your enemy the devil tries to throw at you, he cannot overpower you. Jesus wins. Jesus holds the field forever.

So, dear friends, when the devil comes at you with all kinds of temptations and doubts and tries to fill you with despair, and maybe you don't feel strong enough to resist him on your own, then tell that old devil, "You take it up with Jesus." Yes, tell Satan, "I've got the stronger man fighting for me. He is more than your match, he has plundered your house, and by faith now I will be strong in him." God grant it. Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

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