

Oculi
St. Luke 11:14-28
March 24th, 2019
Sts. Peter & Paul Evangelical Lutheran Church, UAC
Simpsonville, SC
Pastor Jerald Dulas

He Was Casting Out a Demon

In Nomine Iesu!

In the Name of the Father and of the + Son and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.

Prayer in Pulpit before Sermon:

O Lord, send out Thy Light and Thy Truth, let them lead us. O Lord, open Thou my lips, that my mouth may show forth Thy praise. O Lord, graciously preserve me, lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be rejected. Amen.

Grace, mercy, and peace be to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior + Jesus Christ. Amen.

There are many false theologians and preachers today who deny the existence of a spiritual realm. To them, there are no demons; no angels. These false theologians would look at the Gospel reading for today from the Evangelist St. Luke and make the claim that the mute man was not actually possessed by a demon, but he had some sort of physical or psychological malady that prevented him from speaking. False teachers always blame spiritual problems on some physical or psychological problem, and they believe that if we can just find the right medicine then we can get rid of the problem. These false preachers take their unbelief in the spiritual realm and saving ability of the Lord God even further than the pharisees and scribes from today's Gospel.

The pharisees and scribes, after seeing our Lord + Jesus cast out a mute demon, say that our Lord is only able to cast out the demon because the Lord + Jesus is in league with Beelzebub, the ruler of the demons. All this so that they could discredit our Lord + Jesus, and turn people away from the Savior. Their unbelief in the spiritual realm and saving ability of the Lord God is no different than modern false teachers. The only difference is that they at least acknowledge the existence of Satan. Like the modern false teachers who deny the existence of a spiritual realm, the premise of the pharisees and scribes is absurd, and our Lord + Jesus points this out to them today, and all of us here who would listen, in a parable.

Our Lord + Jesus tells a parable about a strong man who is plundered by a stronger man. St. Cyril of Alexandria in a sermon on this text illustrates the point with the example of the Lord God plaguing Egypt and destroying Pharaoh and his army in the Red Sea. Pharaoh was a strong man. His kingdom was powerful. His goods were at peace. He even had a ready labor force to do all of his bidding. Pharaoh for the Jews became associated with the ultimate power of evil. He was the oppressor of the Jews. He oppressed them so sorely that they cried out in their slavery to the Lord God for help.

The Lord God sent Moses to be His instrument of deliverance. But make no mistake, Moses was just the physical embodiment of the power and work of the Lord God. The Lord God was the stronger man. He plundered Egypt with signs and wonders. He plagued the Egyptians until they demanded that the Israelites leave their country. The Egyptians became so oppressed by the Lord God's plagues that they were willing to do anything for the Israelites, even give them gold, silver and many of their fine possessions. So that the Israelites who labored and were oppressed under Pharaoh and the Egyptians,

plundered them by the arm, hand and finger of the Lord God.

This plundering of the Egyptians was a foreshadowing of our Lord + Jesus Christ. He entered into the kingdom of this world, the kingdom ruled by the devil and his demons, to conquer and defeat them once and for all. The devil was secure in his rule of the people of this world. The proof is in the fact that the Lord + Jesus is met with so many that are demon-possessed. And as I mentioned in my sermon from this past Wednesday, do not believe those who want to diminish the rule of the devil in this world by denying the existence of a spiritual realm. These are actually demon possessions, not some sort of mental health issue. Such a teaching distorts the corruption that this world experiences because of the evil spirits work to destroy mankind.

The devil's mission to destroy mankind and bring us down to the same destruction that is meted out for him, is met with a huge road block. Just like He did to Pharaoh and Egypt for their oppression of the Lord's people, the Lord + Jesus attacks the kingdom of Satan and drives out all the demons that oppress His people.

This is met with the unbelief of the Pharisees and scribes. The people of Israel believed the Lord + Jesus to be the Messiah, the one come to redeem them. The scribes and Pharisees would not have this. As we will hear again when we read and listen to the Passion story, Pontius Pilate is right in his thinking that they only hate our Lord + Jesus because of jealousy. If the Lord is in power, then they are no longer the leaders of the people of Israel. They accuse our Lord of casting out demons by the power of Beelzebub, but they are clearly ruled by the lies and deceptions of the devil.

Our Lord + Jesus points out just how absurd this premise is. Nobody who has a kingdom—a strong kingdom—makes his kingdom weaker by dividing it up. You want your kingdom well protected by good armor, strong defenses, and vigilant watchmen. If Satan is dividing his kingdom on behalf the Lord + Jesus, it would be very stupid of him. The enemy of the devil is the Lord + Jesus, he would not allow his enemy to plunder him willingly.

Which shows us the power and authority that the Lord + Jesus has, because He is stronger than the devil. He freely plunders the devil's kingdom at His will. The Gospel reading from the Evangelist St. Luke mentions that some had asked for *"a sign from Heaven."* What more of a sign does one need? The devil's kingdom is ransacked by the Lord, and the demons who are oppressing the people, are being driven out by the Lord. How much more of a sign does one need that the Lord + Jesus was sent from God? It can not be made any clearer.

There are only two sides to this battle. There are no gray areas. You are either in the devil's kingdom, or you are in the Lord's kingdom. For He says, *"He who is not with Me is against Me."* The scribes and Pharisees, and all those who balked at His ability to cast out demons, showed their true character in their rejection of the Lord + Jesus. This should serve as a warning to us, as well. For we should never think that are secure in our spiritual house with our spiritual possessions. For the stronger than we—the devil—seeks to break in and plunder out of us our faith in the Lord + Jesus and His promises.

This is why there is the seemingly odd addition at the end of the Gospel of a woman from the crowd who cries out in praise of the Lord's mother. Our Lord's response is meant for our ears: *"Blessed are those who hear the word of God and keep it!"* However, the English translation is weak here. The word that is translated "keep" literally means "to guard." It is the same word used earlier in the reading about the strong man who is *"guarding his own palace."* Our Lord + Jesus is making a connection between the parable that He just told, and how we should apply it. In the same way that a person guards his house and goods, is the same way that we should guard the Word of God and our use of it.

We should ever be diligent in our use of the Word of God. We should daily and often be reading, studying, inwardly digesting the Word of God. This is our defense and armor and weapon against the assaults of the devil, and the world full of demons that want to quicken the Old Adam in us and drive us into great sin and shame. And remember that the holy Scriptures is not the only way that the Lord + Jesus has given us to guard our faith. He sent His Holy Ghost to work through other means as well for our benefit. He has given us Holy Baptism, so that when we daily repent in contrition and faith, we are reminded that we have been washed free from our sins, and all that is evil within us, and all that we have added thereto.

He has given us the preaching of the Gospel, so that by the mouth of the minister of God, our ears may be filled with the good news that our Lord + Jesus has indeed conquered the devil and all demons and their power over us, once and for all on the tree of the holy cross. He atoned for our sins, by His suffering and death, and by His perfect obedience to the Law of God. And He won for us forgiveness of sins, eternal life and salvation, which are given to us in Holy Baptism, and the Lord's Supper. Which is another means that the Holy Ghost works through to strengthen our faith, and guard us from the fiery arrows of the evil one. Whenever we eat our Lord's Body and drink His Blood given in bread and wine, we are once again reminded of His sacrifice for us and the gifts that He won for us, and distributes to us at this meal. Indeed, we dine with our Lord + Jesus at His table and receive His gifts.

Our Lord has also given us the weapon of Absolution, so that when we hear from the pastor that our sins are forgiven, we can firmly believe it, and not doubt it, for he speaks the words given to him by the Lord + Jesus to pronounce unto us forgiveness for Christ's sake. And when we hear this good message of forgiveness for Christ's sake, any attacks and accusations of the devil can fall on deaf ears, for the promise of the Stronger One than the devil promises that He has forgiven us of our sins.

We can also strengthen one another with this message whenever one of our fellow brothers or sisters is attacked by the devil and his lies and deception. We can comfort and console one another with the promises of our Lord's salvation for us. This is why we gather together as a community of believers, so that we can bear one another's burdens of sin and guilt, and strengthen each other's armor and defenses by sharing the good news of salvation with one another.

With all these things we can guard our faith. So then, let us guard our faith from the assaults and attacks of the evil one, by being diligent in our use of the means of grace. And when one of us falters and falls, let us bear him up, and strengthen him with the message that his sins are forgiven. The Lord + Jesus Christ entered into the devil's stronghold and plundered him by allowing Himself to be destroyed on the tree of the holy cross. But in giving Himself over to death, He one for us and all mankind, especially them that believe, forgiveness of sins, eternal life, and salvation. Fix your eyes upon the Lord + Jesus' cross and give thanks. In the Name of our Lord + Jesus Christ. Amen.

Prayer in Pulpit after Sermon:

Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto Thy Name give glory! I will extol Thee, O Lord, and I will praise Thy Name forever and ever. Amen.

The Votum:

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

Soli Deo Gloria!