

Oculi
St. Luke 11:14-28
March 20th, 2022
St. Bartholomew Evangelical Lutheran Mission, UAC
Fort Myers, FL
All Saints Evangelical Lutheran Mission, UAC
Pawleys Island, SC
Pastor Jerald Dulas

When a Stronger Than He Comes

In Nomine Iesu!

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

Prayer in Pulpit before Sermon:

Almighty and Everlasting God, we thank Thee that for the sake of Thine own dear Son Thou hast made us Thy children by adoption, and we beseech Thee, govern us by Thy Holy Spirit, that, as Christ also hath loved and given Himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to Thee for a sweet-smelling savor, even so we may love Thee and our neighbor, and may walk as children of light in all purity and righteousness and truth; through Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord, Who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever One God, world without end. Amen.

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

The first part of Lent the Church's focus is on the Ten Commandments. More specifically, our focus is on how much we break the Commandments. In other words, the first part of Lent deals with our sinfulness—our sin and rebellion against the Lord God. We learn in the first part of Lent about our sin, so that we realize that we are indeed worthy of the punishments that our Lord + Jesus endures in the last part of Lent. This focus upon our sin and breaking of the Law of God is shown us through these first Gospel readings that all deal with the devil, or have a demon-possessed person in them. For, we indeed bear the inherited sin of our first parents, Adam and Eve; our original sin which inheres in us. But we also add to this sin daily.

We need to remind ourselves daily that we are tempted and attacked by the devil, the world, and our own sinful flesh. In some ways, we are not much better off than the demon-possessed individuals from the Gospel readings. They struggle with the demon that has them under their influence, and controls their every action. We also struggle daily with the temptations that our enemies—the devil, the world, and our flesh—put us through. We all certainly have those particular sins which we just cannot shake from off ourselves. We keep on doing them, no matter how often we tell ourselves we are not going to do that anymore. Our enemies know how to drive us into sin, and they do it with ease. This is why in some ways we like the demon-possessed individuals in the Gospel readings for the first part of Lent; we are troubled by these sins constantly.

It is really no wonder that we fail often at living a "good Christian life." Our enemies are not weaklings. When our Lord + Jesus drove out the mute demon at the beginning of the Gospel reading from the Evangelist St. Luke, there were present those who accused Him of driving out demons by Beelzebub. Our Lord + Jesus addresses this accusation in three parts. He taught those who were there just how nonsensical such an accusation was.

First, our Lord addresses the notion that He was driving out demons by Beelzebub by showing

that a kingdom divided against itself cannot stand. If Satan's kingdom was so divided that some within his kingdom were actually acting against him, this would create a weakness in the kingdom. Our Lord assures us that this is not the case. The forces of evil are united against us. We are attacked by sin and temptation from without and from within. We are tempted into sin, despair, pride, false belief, and the like from the outside by the devil and his demons, who lead us into sin by the trials and tribulations of this life, and then they use our failures to accuse our consciences until we are racked with guilt and shame. Or if they fail at that they tempt us with pride in ourselves; with the thoughts that we are fine on our own without the help and comfort of the Lord God.

The world also united with Satan and his kingdom. The world draws us away from the Lord God by its cares, pleasures and riches. When we receive the pleasurable things of this world we tend to place our hope and trust in these things. We hate to lose them. Just think how often people are devastated when they lose their home, or vehicles, or clothes and possessions. That is a clear sign they are trusting in the things of this world. Our home is not this world. Our home—our citizenship—is in Heaven. We are to look for and hope in the things of our eternal, unending home in Heaven. The world, however, in its union with Satan, leads us astray far too often.

We are even attacked by our flesh. We are attacked from within. We covet and desire things that are not good for us. We want to do the things we know we should not do, because we love doing them. And so, our Lord + Jesus shows us that our enemies are united against us. He is not casting out demons by Beelzebub, because no kingdom divided against itself will stand for very long. Our enemies are united in their desire to destroy us and lead us into eternal death and damnation in Hell. They want us sharing the same punishment that has been given to them.

The second part of our Lord's response is to show that our enemies are not weaklings. They are strong. The devil is pictured as a strong man, fully armored, who guards his palace and his goods. This strong man's possessions have no threat of being plundered. He guards his kingdom well. This is why there are many in this world who have been plundered by the enemies of the Church. There are many unbelievers, many who have false gods. The enemies of the Church—our enemies—are hard at work driving people away from the Only Savior of the world. The fact that they are not easily defeated; that they are pictured as a strong man, should provide us with the proper amount of caution about trusting in our own ability to defeat this strong man.

If our salvation is left up to our own ability to resist sin; our own ability to do good works perfectly, then we are truly doomed. We cannot save ourselves. This much is certain. Our enemies are too great, too powerful, too strong for us to defeat. Sure, we may have days and times when we have a small victory. We may win the battle of the hour. But the sin we inherited from Adam and Eve—our first parents—inheres in us; it clings to us like a burr on a dress. We cannot shake of the inborn original sin no matter how good or righteous we may think we are. If we trust in our own works for our salvation we will surely fail every time.

This is why our Lord concludes His response showing that our enemies are united against us, and are stronger than us, by teaching us that there is One Who is stronger than all of our enemies. Indeed, a Stronger One has come into the world. He has taken upon Himself our flesh. He has chosen to dwell among His creation as one of His creation. He has come to do battle with our strong enemies. Our Lord + Jesus has come as the One Who is Stronger than the strong man, the devil. He comes to us as one of us, in order that the Law which we break daily and often might be perfectly completed and fulfilled in His perfect obedience and life. He even endures suffering, shame, and death at the hands of His, and our, enemies by allowing Himself to be hung on the tree of the holy cross to win redemption for all mankind.

He takes up our battle that we lose daily, and He defeats the devil, the world, and the sinful flesh

which we inherited from Adam and Eve, through His innocent suffering and death. He wins the battle once and for all time. He triumphs over sin and death. He triumphs over our enemies. He wins for all mankind forgiveness of sins, eternal life and salvation. Now all those who cling to His works and merits in faith receive the spoils of war from this battle. We who cling to His works in faith receive the forgiveness of all of our sins, even those which we continue to do no matter how hard we try to stop ourselves from continuing to do them. We also have been saved from our enemies, and will inherit an eternal life with our Lord + Jesus in Heaven. For wherever there is forgiveness of sins, there are also life and salvation.

It is truly a blessing to have our Lord + Jesus, just as the woman in the crowd cried out. He is our Blessed Savior. Those who hear the Word of God, and keep it are even more blessed. For in the Word of God we are taught about our Lord + Jesus Who won the victory over all our enemies. It is to our Savior that we cling to in faith during this first part of Lent as we focus our attention upon the Ten Commandments, and our breaking of them. For without the Lord and Savior of the world; without the Christ, there is a danger of ending up like the poor man who even after having his soul cleansed of all evil, finds himself possessed by the same demon, and even seven more just as evil as him. This is the danger, my dear friends, of all those who would trust in their own works and merits for salvation.

This is why we turn away from ourselves, and we fix our eyes ever toward the Lord. This is why this Sunday is called Oculi. Oculi means "my eyes." Our eyes are not to be fixed upon our own works, but our eyes are ever to be toward the Lord, as heard sung in the Introit. Our Lord + Jesus will pluck us out of the net in which we are caught, because He loves us and is merciful to us His beloved creation. Therefore, my dear friends, when our enemies attack us, let us not fix our eyes on our own strength, but instead let us fix our eyes on the One Who is stronger than the strong man, the devil, and has defeated Him by shedding His innocent blood on the tree of the holy cross for us poor sinners. In the Name of our Lord + Jesus Christ. Amen.

Prayer in Pulpit after Sermon:

Lord God, Heavenly Father, Who hast sent Thy Son into the world to destroy the works of the devil, we beseech Thee, curb the tyranny of the wicked foe, and protect us against him, keep us from security, and graciously preserve us by Thy Holy Spirit in all temptations, that, being ever defended from the Evil One, we may until our end walk in Thy fear according to Thy Word, and finally obtain everlasting salvation; through Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord, Who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever One God, world without end. Amen.

The Votum:

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

Soli Deo Gloria!