

Oculi
St. Luke 11:14-28
March 3rd, 2024
Sts. Peter and Paul Ev. Lutheran Church, UAC
Simpsonville, SC
St. Bartholomew Ev. Lutheran Mission, UAC
Fort Myers, FL
Pastor Jerald Dulas

How Shall His Kingdom Stand?

In Nomine Iesu!

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

Sermon Text:

“But He, knowing their thoughts, said unto them, ‘Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation; and a house divided against a house falleth. And if Satan also is divided against himself, how shall his kingdom stand? because ye say that I cast out demons by Beelzebub. And if I by Beelzebub cast out demons, by whom do your sons cast them out? therefore shall they be your judges.’”

Prayer in Pulpit before 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.

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

My dear friends, during the season of Lent we focus on the Ten Commandments. We especially focus our thoughts on our breaking of the Ten Commandments so that we might in all contrition and sorrow feel sorry for our sins, and amend our sinful ways. The Gospel texts during the first part of Lent lend themselves to our reflection upon the Law of God. For so far in Lent all of our Gospel pericopes have had some reference to the spiritual battle that we face on a daily basis. Our battle is not just with our own flesh and blood. We certainly have to deal with the lusts of our sinful flesh, but our battle in this life is really against the powers of Satan and his demons. We are attacked by them mercilessly day in and day out. They corrupt the world, and deceive our sinful flesh into great shame and vice. We are led often into sin and shame.

To this end, and in her great wisdom, the Church has seen fit in this Lententide to present to us texts that describe our spiritual battle. The first Sunday in Lent saw the Lord + Jesus being led into the wilderness by the Spirit to be tempted by the devil. In the same way that Adam and Eve were tempted into sin early after their creation, our Lord was also tempted by the devil at the beginning of His ministry. This battle with the devil would continue throughout His earthly ministry. And as the Lord + Jesus defeated the devil and his temptations in the wilderness, we see time and time again the Lord coming out victorious in His battle with the devil.

Last Sunday we saw this battle with the forces of evil when a Canaanitish woman pleaded with

the Lord for her daughter who was grievously vexed with a demon. In this case the devil and his demons did not attack the Lord head on, but attacked the daughter of the Syro-Phoenician woman. In her great faith she desperately pleaded with the Lord to rescue her daughter from the bonds of the devil. Our Lord defeated the demon in that instance without even being there. He merely spoke the words to the Canaanitish woman that her daughter would be healed, and she was healed in that very hour.

This past Wednesday we once again were presented with child facing demon possession. In that case it was a father who pleaded on behalf of his son. He did not have the same faith as the Canaanitish woman, and doubted the Lord could help, having endured years of disappointment. His hopes were dashed once again right before the Lord + Jesus had come, because the Lord's Apostles could not cast out the demon. For that kind could only be cast out with prayer and fasting. The Lord + Jesus once again enters into the devil's kingdom and cast out the dumb, that is, mute, spirit. For that demon, the Lord commanded it to come out, and it put up quite a fight crying out and tearing up the poor boy so much that many thought he had died. But our Lord took him by the hand and raised him up and restored him to his father. Once again, the Lord + Jesus showed His authority and strength over the powers of darkness.

Today we have another case where our Lord + Jesus casts out a dumb spirit. He once again shows that He has great power and authority over the powers of darkness. He shows that He can defeat Satan and his horde by His Word. But the Lord is accused by some to be in cahoots with the devil. They believed He was only able to cast out demons by being in league with Beelzebub. The Lord explains to them, and us, why that notion is so preposterous.

A kingdom divided against itself cannot stand. When a nation is so divided that it is constantly fighting with itself it surely cannot stand. It will be brought to desolation. The devil's kingdom would not stand if it was divided. Our Lord shows us that that cannot be the case. For He shows us just how powerful the devil is in his kingdom. Satan is depicted as a strong man, fully armed and ready for battle, who guards his goods with diligence and is always on guard against any thief that would break in and steal that which he claims as his own. The hymn we sang just prior to the sermon carries this theme as well. "Deep guile and great might are his dread arms in fight, On earth is not his equal." For us the "Old Evil Foe, now means deadly woe." If he were to set his sights upon us, soon would our loss be affected. In other words, we would stand no chance against the devil if left to our own devices and strengths.

This is shown to us simply by how often we fail in keeping the Law of God. We see this in how much we daily struggle with sin; how much we do wrong, when we intend to do the right. We are often defeated by the devil and his demons when we try to face them with our own strength. We are no match for the powers of darkness. This is why the world is trapped in sin and darkness, why we ourselves were trapped in the bondage of sin and death. For with might of ours we cannot defeat the spiritual powers of evil. We fall into sin and shame time and time again.

But we need not fear the devil and his demons. We need not fear the powers of darkness. We need not fear the world, nor our own flesh. For there is One Who fights for us Who is the Stronger Man than the devil. The Valiant One fights for us. The Lord + Jesus is that Stronger Man. He comes into the strong man's kingdom and has overcome him, and has taken away his armor, and the Lord + Jesus divides the spoil with us, those who cling to Him in faith. We are rescued from the attacks of the devil and his kingdom. We have seen this over the past few weeks in the Gospel readings every time the Lord + Jesus defeated Satan or cast out a demon. He shows that He is not in league with Satan, with Beelzebub, but is the Stronger Man Who easily defeats the devil and sends him fleeing in fear.

This is why we need not fear the devil and his demons. This is why we need not fear the spiritual powers of darkness. Why we need not fear sin and death. For our Lord + Jesus has come down from Heaven to do battle with the devil on our behalf. He has come to destroy the devil's kingdom and open

up for us an eternal Kingdom with Him and all the saints and angels in Heaven. We lay claim to this eternal Kingdom through faith. The same faith that is gifted to us by the Holy Ghost through the means of grace. For through the Word and the Sacraments the Holy Ghost opens our eyes to what our Lord + Jesus had done for us poor sinners.

This is what we will be shown in the coming weeks. For we will be soon heading to the suffering and Passion of our Lord + Jesus, the Christ. We will see His penultimate battle with the devil. He will endure the suffering that we deserve on account of our manifold transgressions. He will endure all the slings and arrows of the devil that we rightfully deserve. He will take them all upon Himself. He will suffer, be crucified, and die and be buried. But His death is not a defeat, it is the victory. For by His death, He strips the devil of all of his armor and goods. For Satan has kept this world and us locked up on sin and death. He has held us in bondage in his kingdom. But our Lord + Jesus has broken our bonds and freed us from the tyranny of Satan.

Like all those we have seen this Lenten season who were cured of their demon possession; who were freed from the tyranny of the devil and his horde, our Lord has freed us from the bondage of sin and death. Now we can turn to Him in faith, and cling to Him as our Valiant One and Victor. For He has thoroughly defeated death and taken away the bonds that our sins held us in. Therefore, my dear friends, let us do as St. Paul wrote to the Church at Ephesus in our Epistle reading, and not return back into the darkness from which we have been freed, but walk and live in the Light of the Christ.

For the world does this time and again. The Lord has freed them from the chains of death, but they by their rebellious desire to cling to their wicked ways put the chains of sin and death back on themselves. They return to the kingdom of the devil not wishing to be free from his kingdom. They desire to continue to walk in darkness.

Let us not return to being blind and dumb, my dear friends, but rather let us continue to walk in the Light of redemption. For our Lord + Jesus has defeated the old Evil Foe for us once and for all. He can harm us none, the deed is done, the victory is won. He can no longer overpower us. For we now cling in faith to the Stronger Man, our Lord + Jesus. He destroys the kingdom of the devil on our behalf, and He divides the spoils of His victory with us. For He has won for us forgiveness of our sins, eternal life with Him in Heaven, and salvation and rescue from the devil and his kingdom. Thanks be to our Lord + Jesus for being our Victor and King. In the Name of our Lord + Jesus, the Christ. Amen.

Prayer in Pulpit after Sermon:

Almighty God, be pleased to accompany Thy Word with Thy Holy Spirit and grant that Thy Word would increase faith in us; bring into the Way of Truth all such as have erred; turn the hearts of the unrepentant; and for sake of Thy Name grant succor to all heavy hearts and those who are heavy-laden, that they may through the mercy of the Lord Jesus Christ be relieved and preserved so that they succumb not to the temptation of despair but rather that they gain the victory over the world, the flesh, and the devil; through the same 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!