



Free Evangelical Lutheran
Synod in South Africa

Sermon- First Sunday after Trinity

*Jesus has defeated the devil and
released us from the bondage
of sin and death!*

St. John's Lutheran Parish



Shelly Beach

♦ The Word of God for this Sermon is written in Mark 3, 20-35:

- ♦ ^{ESV} 20 Then he went home, and the crowd gathered again, so that they could not even eat.
- ♦ 21 And when his family heard it, they went out to seize him, for they were saying, "He is out of his mind."
- ♦ 22 And the scribes who came down from Jerusalem were saying, "He is possessed by Beelzebul," and "by the prince of demons he casts out the demons."
- ♦ 23 And he called them to him and said to them in parables, "How can Satan cast out Satan?"
- ♦ 24 If a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand.
- ♦ 25 And if a house is divided against itself, that house will not be able to stand.
- ♦ 26 And if Satan has risen up against himself and is divided, he cannot stand, but is coming to an end.
- ♦ 27 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.
- ♦ 28 "Truly, I say to you, all sins will be forgiven the children of man, and whatever blasphemies they utter,
- ♦ 29 but whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit never has forgiveness, but is guilty of an eternal sin" -
- ♦ 30 for they had said, "He has an unclean spirit."
- ♦ 31 And his mother and his brothers came, and standing outside they sent to him and called him.
- ♦ 32 And a crowd was sitting around him, and they said to him, "Your mother and your brothers are outside, seeking you."
- ♦ 33 And he answered them, "Who are my mother and my brothers?"
- ♦ 34 And looking about at those who sat around him, he said, "Here are my mother and my brothers!"
- ♦ 35 Whoever does the will of God, he is my brother and sister and mother."
- ♦ **Let us pray:** *Come Holy Spirit, breath Your Life into our ears and into our hearts that we will be freed of the bondage of the world, sin and Satan and become who we are Jesus' brothers and sisters! Amen.*

♦ Dear beloved of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit!

♦ Bondage! The opposite of freedom. Many people have been, and still are, prepared to risk their lives to become free from whatever bondage they experience as burden. These kind of escapes make for great movies and gripping stories. But strictly speaking, those bondages we experience and clearly see as bondage are not as dangerous as those we don't even recognise, and yet we are in bondage. We are hooked. We are in denial of our bondage, blind to the bondage. This is typical for Satan's bondages. He doesn't come openly as a bad guy. He is at his most dangerous when he comes as an angel of light. And please let us get this idea out of our heads, if ever it was planted there by so-called

"enlightened" scholars, that the devil is none existent. Jesus is the one who unmasks the devil and his demons. Whoever says that these creatures do not exist speaks against Jesus' revelation. These creatures of the dark do exist. They are dangerous because they lure people into bondage by letting them feel good about themselves. They are dangerous as long as they are allowed to operate in the dark. This is the kind of bondage which our passage addresses.

- First we see that Jesus' family tried to seize Him! Why? They thought He had gone crazy, because He wouldn't even stop to eat whilst helping the people. So, they tried to bind Jesus, to stop Him from doing His work the way He wanted to do it. But of course they thought they were doing good! They didn't see it as serving the devil! The scribes coming down from Jerusalem also tried to bind Jesus by saying something very radical [22]: *"He is possessed by Beelzebul," and "by the prince of demons he casts out the demons."* They claimed to know that Jesus was possessed by a leader of the demons! This was their way of trying to seize Him. They wanted to bind Him, to nullify His baptismal ministry amongst the lost people of God! Of course, they were under the impression that they were protecting God's people from a possessed preacher.

- Fact is neither the family of Jesus nor the scribes were doing God's Will! In reality the scribes were blaspheming the Spirit of Christ. They said that He had an unclean spirit. That is the sin against the Holy Spirit. That is: They were blaspheming God's mercy and Love and forgiveness. They were assigning the very Spirit of God to the side of Satan, to evil! For such a person there is indeed no forgiveness, because this person actively despises the only forgiveness available. The forgiveness of sins is not something we should take lightly. God the Father the Son and the Holy Spirit paid dearly to hand it out freely. Let us not despise this gift, just because it is free. It had to be free, because there is nothing we as weak sinners and spiritually poor creatures can contribute.

- This is indeed the one side of the story which Jesus reveals to us. We have to face this. We can face it in all honesty, because there is good news, tremendous good news in this passage too!

- First of all Jesus refutes the foolish idea of the scribes, that it is possible that a demon possessed person can drive out demons- this would mean the destruction of the demonic reign. Hence, if Jesus was driving out the demons of all sorts- which He was doing day and night- the following needed to be true [26-27]: *"... 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." Here we are introduced to another bondage. This time it is Satan himself who is in bondage! He is bound by none other than Jesus! That is what Jesus was revealing to each and everyone by casting out the demons. Jesus entered the house of Satan and started to plunder his house. He cast out the demons and took the cleansed people into His reign, into His kingdom! And Satan couldn't stop Him! This proves: He was bound by Jesus!

• We don't need to be afraid of Satan and his demons any more. You don't even need to be afraid of the dark any more. Evil is not the strongest force on earth. It is not true, although it seems to be. Evil does not win in the end. Our experience might point us in the opposite direction. Well, then our experience is dead wrong! Our eyes and our thinking might also object to this. Well, then they are lying too! Holy Scripture reveals to us the fabulous good news, the good news truth: Jesus has conquered Satan! Jesus' coming and preaching and driving out all kinds of demons and healing many kinds of sicknesses during His baptismal ministry has demonstrated this fact. Satan was bound by Jesus, since then!

• By the way, this wipes the pre- and post- millennial views of the end-times from the table! These views hold that Satan will only be bound much later, more close to the end. For eg. in pre-tribulationism after the alleged 'secret' coming of the Lord (*which the Bible does not teach*), at the beginning of a literal thousand year reign of Jesus on earth in an earthly government. These views cannot be reconciled with this Word of Jesus.

• The truth is much better news: Jesus has bound Satan and He proved it during His baptismal ministry. That is what Jesus was busy doing, when His family tried to stop Him. They didn't understand what He was revealing. Jesus had started to rob Satan of his members! That has continued to our current day. That is why we have something called church history. And still the Gospel continues to run through the world. In our days the Gospel rains fall on China and on Africa. Many, many people are literally freed from the bondage of the evil forces! Satan couldn't stop this!

• On the other hand, we have to sober-mindedly realise that western societies are experiencing an increasing resistance against the Gospel. We do experience an increase of severe cases of hopelessness and even demonic activity these days. Jesus prepares us for these times through the Word of the Holy Spirit which we have heard in the Epistle

reading today [2Cor 4,16]: "*So we do not lose heart. Though our outer nature is wasting away, our inner nature is being renewed day by day.*" This is a beautiful comforting word for our times. No need to lose heart. No need to be afraid, again, of the devil. Our outer nature- that is what Paul calls our "old Adam" elsewhere- perishes. We are not getting younger and stronger. And we have to face the afflictions of resistance from the world, sin and the devil, the evil trio. Yet, we don't lose heart because our inner nature is being renewed day by day!

• Here is something crucial to realise! It is renewed *day by day!* Don't look at the mountain of evil building up in front of us: Our inner nature, fed by the Word of God, is being renewed day by day. This is a very important concept which we need to come back to. Too often Christians want to fly through life, conquer the world for Christ of course, instead of walking or even crawling from day to day. We need to come back to the basics, daily repentance, *daily* devotions in our families, in the mornings and in the evenings and weekly Divine Services Sunday for Sunday. Where has the daily singing of hymns, reading a Scripture and saying a prayer in the families gone? How many devils and demons and evil forces have not been driven out by the Word of God which was read, confessed, sung and prayed in families! The active weapon of the Holy Spirit is the Word of God, is Christ who is the incarnate Word. The devil is no match against this weapon! We need to learn to be faithful in this basic exercise of our faith again and remain faithful in it.

• This is indeed something we can and should do. Then we will experience the following comfort: The afflictions we face will be momentary and light compared to the eternal weight of glory that is prepared for us. The Word of God turns our attention from the mountain of afflictions towards the things unseen! That is what Jesus reveals to us in His Word, that these unseen eternal things are real. He is alive, although unseen. These determine us as Christians. Through Baptism and faith you have become Jesus' brothers and sisters! Your outer being, the world and the devil have no say over you- they are out! You are IN- in Christ, and that is what counts. This is the truth, because Jesus has robbed you away from Satan. You are in His house now. *Praise be to the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen.*

• *"The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all. Amen. [NKJ 2 Cor3:14.]*