

**Mark 3:22-27 (Second Sunday after Pentecost/Proper 5—Series B)**

**“The Stronger Man is Your Savior”**

**Lutheran Church of Our Redeemer, Enfield CT**

**June 6, 2021**

In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Our text is from the Gospel lesson recorded in Mark 3:

<sup>22</sup>And the scribes who had come down from Jerusalem were saying, “He is possessed by Beelzebul” and “By the prince of demons He casts out the demons.” <sup>23</sup>And He called them to Him and said to them in parables, “How is Satan able to cast out Satan? <sup>24</sup>And if a kingdom should be divided against itself, that kingdom is not able to stand. <sup>25</sup>And if a house should be divided against itself, that house is not able to stand. <sup>26</sup>And if Satan has risen against himself and has divided, he is not able to stand but has an end. <sup>27</sup>But no one is able to enter the strong man’s house and to plunder his goods unless first he should bind the strong man, and then he shall plunder his house.”

Satan is indeed “the strong man.” Contrary to the scribe’s faulty logic, the devil’s house and kingdom was not divided. He had a reign and rule, and Jesus’ words to scribes indicate this. Jesus speaks of the devil in John 12 as “the ruler of this world” (12:31). The apostle Paul echoes this in the letter to the Ephesians, referring to Satan as “the prince of the power of the air” (2:2). The great Reformer Martin Luther picked up on this biblical language in his hymn, “A Mighty Fortress,” calling the devil, “this world’s prince.”

The devil is the prince, the ruler, the strong man of this fallen, corrupted world. But he is not a god. He is not equal to the one, Triune God in any way, shape, or form. Is the devil powerful? Yes, but he is not all-powerful like God. Is the devil present in this world? Yes, but he is not omni-present, present everywhere, like God. Does Satan possess knowledge? Yes, but he is not all-knowing like the Triune God. But the devil has duped humanity into believing that there are two, equal, but opposing forces—God and Satan himself. That is simply not true. Satan is not a god. He is not a deity, but a creation of the one, true God who chose to rebel against the Creator and to destroy the Lord’s very creation.

Sound familiar? "Now the serpent was more crafty than any other beast of the field that the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, "Did God actually say, 'You shall not eat of any tree in the garden'?" And the woman said to the serpent, "We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden, but God said, 'You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the midst of the garden, neither shall you touch it, lest you die.'" But the serpent said to the woman, "You will not surely die. For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate. Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked" (Gen. 3:1–7 ESV).

Jesus rightly identified Satan in John 8, "He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks out of his own character, for he is a liar and the father of lies" (John 8:44 ESV). He lied to Adam and Eve. He brought sin into the world by tempting our first parents, who willingly yielded to the temptation. And in Adam and Eve's sin, the entire human race also fell into sin. Romans 5:12, "Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned" (Rom. 5:12 ESV).

So welcome to the devil's kingdom! Isn't it glorious? Isn't it wondrous? It's a reign where you are bound to doing whatever is contrary to the Word and will of God. You are spiritual slaves to Satan, sin, and death. The devil drives you further and further away from the truth that is found only in the Word of God. The devil tempts and blinds you to truth. He

doesn't want you to know what is the Word and will of God. He doesn't want you to trust in God. He does not want you to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ as your Savior. "You don't need a Savior," Satan sneers. "You are a good person just the way you are. You determine what's right for you. You decide what is moral and ethical. You don't need any Ten Commandments to guide you. Do what feels good to you. Be who you want to be and not what that demanding God desires you to be. You are free from Him. You can be like God for yourself."

The devil has a kingdom, a reign and rule. But it is based on lies and deceptions. Satan is a liar and there is no truth in him. The devil's reign is a rule of slavery where you are bound lock, stock, and barrel to him—chained to sin and doomed to die eternally in hell. To be sure, Satan would love you to believe these words to be false. He wants you to hear these words as God lying to you simply so God can control you and use you. The devil seeks to paint the Lord as the enemy and His Word as evil. And Satan will work to tell you that if you believe this God and His Word in the Bible to be absolutely true that you are completely naïve, foolish, or just plain stupid. You're not up with the times, still living the dark ages.

But it is Satan who is naïve and foolish. He thinks he's a god. He thinks he's in charge. After all, the devil is "the strong man." But has he forgotten the stronger man?

Satan, that ancient serpent, was cursed by the LORD God after humanity's fall into sin. We heard again the first Gospel in the Bible from Genesis 3:15 as God said to the devil, "I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel." In other words, "Satan, your time is short. The days of your reign and rule are numbered. Your kingdom will fall. The Stronger

Man will come in the fullness of time, and you will be tied up and the One stronger than you will plunder your lair. He will come and take people away from you and transfer them into His reign and rule. He will purchase for them complete forgiveness of sins and rescue them from eternal death and hell. No longer will you be able to utter an accusing word against them, for they will be clothed with the garments of the Stronger Man's own holiness and righteousness. They will be declared "not guilty" of sin and will be given life everlasting because of the saving life and death of the Stronger Man."

The Stronger Man is Jesus Christ, true God, who became fully man, in order to plunder Satan's kingdom and to redeem you from sin, death, and the devil's power. Jesus, the God-Man, was not casting out demons by the power of Satan. No! He was breaking into the devil's house and taking back what rightfully belonged to God, the Creator—people and the whole of creation.

The evidence of Satan's defeat was Jesus' casting out demons and unclean spirits. This was a forceful attack against the reign of the devil in this world. And it is Jesus, the Son of God made flesh who alone has the power, the ability, and the authority to neutralize the devil's activity, to restrain him, and to release those enslaved to sin and death. But Jesus' battle with Satan would be decided in a way that might seem less like victory and more like total defeat. He bore all sins on the cross and gave up His own life into the power of death.

To set people free from all sins, from death, and from the power of the devil, Christ Jesus bore our sins in His own body on the cross as if they belonged to Him (1 Peter 2:24). God the Father condemned Jesus to death for your sin and for mine. On the cross, Jesus suffered the punishment of death and hell in our place. When He cried, "It is finished," your

sin was gone. His blood released you from condemnation and death. You are redeemed, bought back to God, from sin, from death, and from the power of the devil (Rom 3:24-25). Colossians 1:13 and 14, “[God] has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.”

Jesus, the Stronger Man—true God and Man—has bound Satan, the strong man. “And you, . . . God made alive together with [Jesus], having forgiven us all our trespasses, by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross. He disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in [Christ]” (Col. 2:13–15 ESV). The seventh trumpet angel in Revelation revealed the loud voices in heaven proclaiming, “The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign forever and ever” (Rev. 11:15 ESV).

And this is the final victory that we are looking forward to. As we well know, Satan and his forces have not yet been done away with completely. But he and they are being bound; they are being neutralized. The Gospel of repentance and the forgiveness of sins in the name of Jesus Christ is being proclaimed to all nations. The Holy Spirit is creating saving faith in the hearts of people, delivering to them through the Gospel and the Sacraments of Christ the forgiveness, eternal life, and salvation that Jesus won for all through His sacrificial death and resurrection. This means that God’s people are no longer under the power of the devil. Any accusation that Satan may level against God’s people in Christ is of no account. You are covered in the blood and righteousness of Christ, the Stronger Man. You belong to Him by grace through faith. Your sins stand forgiven. Of what can the devil accuse you? Of nothing!

"This world's prince may still Scowl fierce as he will, He can harm us none. He's judged; the deed is done; One little word can fell him" (*LSB* 656:3). Amen.