

United Mark 3:20-35 3rd Sunday after Pentecost June 10, 2018

Begins with scary words - Truly, I say to you, all sins will be forgiven the children of man, and whatever blasphemies they utter, but whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit never has forgiveness, but is guilty of an eternal sin Mark 3:29

Yet comforts in the end -

Whoever does the will of God, he is my brother and sister and mother.. Mark 3:35

Dear friends in Christ, normally sermons start with an introduction where we try to think of an area of our lives to think about what the text says to us. But not today, because the text in front of us is hard, and we already have questions about strong men and unforgivable sin. And we will see how what God tells us results in a unity in his church, in the family of God.

We will begin with the strong men. Jesus was casting out demons, and the scribes accused Jesus of casting out demons by the prince of demons. They accuse Jesus of using Satan to cast out Satan. And note the irony, that they accuse Jesus, they stand in the place of the accuser, they are opposed and stand in the place of the adversary, they stand in the place of Satan.

So Jesus tells a parable. A house divided against itself cannot stand. Satan is not casting out Satan. Instead, we get a story about someone pillaging a strong man - that you can't do it when he is guarding his goods. Instead, someone has bound the strong man and carried off his goods. Satan's goods are being plundered. People are freed from him and his demons. Christ has bound Satan and is delivering his people.

That is clear enough. But it is not limited to a few freed from demons at Jesus day. But it goes further. In Revelation 20, It speaks of the dragon, the devil being bound with a chain and cast into the abyss. He can no longer deceive the nations. The freedom from Satan, the captives freed are not just a few, nor just he jews, but even the gentiles. Christ's victory over Satan, won on the cross and confirmed by the empty tomb, are for all men. The time for the spreading the good news is now, the time for proclaiming to the people and the nations is now. We need not fear the devil, for he is bound.

But we might ask, what about the world today. You really sayig he is bound? What about my life? Are you really saying he is bound? What about the devil being a roaring lion, seeking who he may devour? Good points. Have you seen the youtube video of the toddler looking at the lioness just on the other side of the glass. The toddler is happily leaning against the glass enclosure as the lion makes every effort to claw, and eat the child. But the child is safe. She is safe as long as she stays on this side of the glass. Satan is bound and chained, but if we wander from Christ, he is real. We are free to spread the word even in the world, where nothing can hurt us, for Christ is with us. But we are not free to be of the chaos of the world to be of the abyss. That would be going into the lions enclosure. Stay united with the one who tied up the strong men. Be where he is, in word and sacrament. The devil does not reach you there.

Christ points this out to with his next statement, another that scares us. That "all sins will be forgiven the children of man, and whatever blasphemies they utter, but whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit never has forgiveness." We are scared of this sin against the holy spirit, what if I committed it, what if I said bad words in my sleep or on a dare. But note when he says it. God has come in the person of Jesus, with the spirit upon him he proclaims freedom to the captives. The spirit of God himself testifies that here is freedom. Yet the scribes reject it. They say the salvation of God is of Satan. The doors to the cell are open, but they refuse the freedom given, saying it is a lie. There is no other hope. When Christ is put in front of us, when he is proclaimed, if we reject and say that he is not God nor salvation, we are reminded of Christ's word that he is the way and the truth and the life. There is no other God, no other salvation. Continued rejection of his teaching gives no hope. Be united with Christ, not divided from him. Trust not in your ability to not sin, but his to forgive it.

The point is not to be afraid of the strong man. The point is not to fear some freak accident will result in eternal salvation. The point is to cling to Christ and his word. His family came to him, offering salvation, saying he was out of his mind. He points to true salvation. Who are my mother and my brothers. Here are my mothers and brothers. Whoever does the will of god, he is my brother and sister and mother. They need not fear the strong man, for God gives his son to tie him up and they are united with him. They need not fear to blaspheme, for the spirit unties them to Christ. The will of God is that they believe in him who he sent. The will of God is their salvation, that they remain in the family of God. The will of God is that they hear the word, be baptized, receive the supper. The will of God is that the spirit dwell in them richly as they take care of each other in the family of God. So rejoice today. The strong man is bound, the spirit speaks truth, and we are united to christ in the family of God. Amen.