

The Third Sunday in Lent  
St. Luke 11:14-28: "The Lord Jesus Fights for You."  
March 6/7, 2021 | Saude, Jerico, & Redeemer Lutheran Churches

**In Nomine Iesu**

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Lord God, heavenly Father, You have sent Your Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, to take upon Himself our flesh, that He might overcome the devil, and defend us poor sinners against the adversary: We give thanks to You for Your merciful help, and we beseech You to attend us with Your grace in all temptations, to preserve us from carnal security, and by Your Holy Spirit to keep us in Your Word in Your fear, that we may be delivered from the enemy, and obtain eternal salvation; through the same, Your beloved Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one true God, now and forever. Amen. (*Evangelical Lutheran Hymnary*, p. 153)

*Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen. (Rom. 1:7, etc.)*

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*The sermon text for today is taken from the eleventh chapter of the Gospel according to St. Luke. We read selected verses in Jesus' name:*

Now [Jesus] was casting out a demon that was mute. When the demon had gone out, the mute man spoke, and the people marveled. But some of them said, "He casts out demons by Beelzebul, the prince of demons," while others, to test Him, kept seeking from Him a sign from heaven. / But He, knowing their thoughts, said to them, "Every kingdom divided against itself is laid waste, and a divided household falls. And if Satan also is divided against himself, how will his kingdom stand? For you say that I cast out demons by Beelzebul. And if I cast out demons by Beelzebul, by whom do your sons cast them out? Therefore they will be your judges. But if it is by the finger of God that I cast out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you. / "When a strong man, fully armed, guards his own palace, his goods are safe; but when one stronger than he attacks him and overcomes him, he takes away his armor in which he trusted and divides his spoil. Whoever is not with Me is against Me, and whoever does not gather with Me scatters. / "When the unclean spirit has gone out of a person, it passes through waterless places seeking rest, and finding none it says, 'I will return to my house from which I came.' And when it comes, it finds the house swept and put in order. Then it goes and brings seven other spirits more evil than itself, and they enter and dwell there. And the last state of that person is worse than the first." / As He said these things, a woman in the crowd raised her voice and said to Him, "Blessed is the womb that bore You, and the breasts at which You nursed!" But He said, "Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and keep it!" (ESV)

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*These are Your words, heavenly Father. Sanctify us by Your truth, Your Word is truth. Amen. (Joh. 17:17)*

In Christ Jesus, Satan's great enemy and our merciful Savior, dear fellow redeemed:

Before the fall into sin, Adam and Eve were perfectly one with God. There was no tension between them, no division. God had made them in His image, which meant that they perfectly understood His will and perfectly possessed His righteousness and holiness. But then an intruder slithered into their holy garden. It was the devil in the form of a serpent. Having

already rebelled against God, he wanted to destroy God's good creation. He set his sights on the crown of God's creative activity – man and woman.

The devil succeeded in poisoning their minds and getting them to do exactly what God warned them not to. The devil had brought Adam and Eve over to his side. Now they were completely separated from God, and when they heard Him in the garden, they hid from Him. But no one can really hide from God. He found them cowering among the trees, crudely covered in fig leaves, and they weren't alone. They were hiding with their new friend, the devil.

The LORD could not let this stand. His love for mankind was too great. He would not see them given over to Satan and facing a hopeless death. So He cursed the devil and spoke words of comfort for Adam and Eve. He said to Satan: *"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" (v. 15).*

To *"put enmity"* between two parties is to set them in opposition, to make them hostile toward one another. In other words, the LORD would not let the devil keep his prize. The devil would not reign over all mankind. The LORD reclaimed His people even in their sin, and He promised to deliver them. He would send the woman's *"Offspring"* or *"Seed"* to crush the serpent's scaly head and win the victory over the great deceiver and his plans.

What we find in these words to Satan is God's declaration of war. Things would not go so easily for the devil as they had with Adam and Eve. His wicked schemes would be frustrated. The LORD would stand against him at every turn, and the devil would ultimately be overcome.

Jesus demonstrates and speaks about these things in today's text. He was that Seed of the woman whom the LORD promised to Adam and Eve and their descendants. During the time of His public work, He cast many demons out of those who were afflicted. Today we hear about Him delivering a man from a demon who had caused him to be mute. After the demon had left, the man could speak! The demon could not stand against Jesus' power. It had to depart.

When some in the crowd accused Jesus of casting out demons by the power of Beelzebul, or the devil, Jesus replied that this would make no sense. *"Every kingdom divided against itself is laid waste,"* He said, *"and a divided household falls."* Jesus was not in league with Satan; He was opposed to him. He cast out demons *"by the finger of God,"* by the power of His Holy Word. This is a clear sign, said Jesus, that *"the kingdom of God has come upon you."*

God's kingdom still comes upon us, which is what we pray for in the Lord's Prayer: *"Thy kingdom come."* We learn in the Catechism that *"The kingdom of God comes when our heavenly Father gives us His Holy Spirit, so that by His grace we believe His holy Word and live godly lives here in time and hereafter in eternity"* (Luther's Explanation to the Second Petition).

But the work of the Holy Spirit through the Word does meet some resistance. Jesus describes this resistance in His parable of the sower. He says that the devil snatches the Word away from some, *"so that they may not believe and be saved"* (Luk. 8:12). Some believe for a time, but because of the devil's continued afflictions and torments, their faith does not become deeply rooted and

it withers (v. 13). Others believe for a while, but the devil slowly chokes their faith *"by the cares and riches and pleasures of life"* (v. 14).

The devil is constantly trying to weaken and overthrow the faith of believers. Today's Epistle lesson describes how he tries to tempt us through *"sexual immorality," "impurity,"* and *"covetousness"* (Eph. 5:3), among other things. And he has often succeeded. The devil has coaxed us away from the mighty fortress of God and His Word and has gotten us to venture into the darkness. Not only does he tempt us to sin, but when we sin, he holds it over our heads. "Look what you've done! You sinned against God, and He hates sin! There is no hope for you! You will die in your sins! I will see you in hell!"

The devil wants us to think that God does not love us anymore and that He will punish us. But those are bold-faced lies. The devil is just spouting off. He knows what Jesus did for sinners. Out of love for the whole world, God the Father sent His Son on an epic rescue mission. Jesus came to storm the devil's castle. The God of all goodness and truth came to face off against the lord of wickedness and the father of lies.

Jesus was more than ready for the fight. He describes the conflict in today's text. He talks about the *"strong man, fully armed, [who] guards his own palace."* That is a reference to the devil. Satan is strong, but there is One *"stronger than he."* This One *"attacks him and overcomes him, he takes away his armor in which he trusted and divides his spoil."* Jesus is the One stronger. He is not afraid of the devil. The apostle John writes: *"The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil"* (1Jo. 3:8).

But the way Jesus overcame the devil is not what we might expect. We expect a slug fest in which the toughest and strongest prevails. Or better yet, a battle of laser beams and lightning strikes waged in the clouds and on the tops of mountains. But Jesus did not come to show the devil who was more powerful. He came to save sinners. He was not fighting for bragging rights; He was fighting for souls.

And the only way for Jesus to win that battle was to lose. The only way to overcome was to be overcome. Jesus had to suffer and die in our place. If He did not take our sins on Himself, those sins would still count against us, and the devil's accusations would never stop. But by pouring out His precious blood in payment for sin, Jesus ended the devil's reign over us.

The power of Satan's kingdom crumbled before his very eyes when Jesus willingly went to the cross for you. This was the fulfillment of the LORD's promise about *"the woman's Seed"* crushing the serpent's scaly head. Jesus' death looked like defeat, but it was victory. The devil will never recover from this work of love that secured your redemption. No matter what temptations Satan may try on you, no matter what lies he may tell you, he has no claim on you.

Whenever you hear the devil whispering in your ear and trying to plant doubts in your mind, you can point to the Lamb of God sacrificed on the cross in your place and say: "Listen to this, devil: Jesus died for my sins! You have no authority here! Why don't you crawl back in the hole you came from!"

The devil knows this is all true. It is all clearly recorded and revealed in God's Holy Word. This is why he seeks to turn us away from the Word. The Word is how God creates faith and keeps His people in the faith. Jesus says, "*Blessed... are those who hear the word of God and keep it!*" The word translated "*keep*" does not mean "*obey*." It means to watch over, guard, and defend the Word. Jesus says we are to guard and defend His Word as though our lives depend on it. And in fact, our lives do depend on it!

Without His Word, we have no message of the cross, no promise of salvation, no forgiveness of sins, no comfort in trouble, no life after death. Without His Word, it's just us hiding among the trees of this world, wearing the fig leaves of our self-made righteousness, stumbling through the darkness with the devil by our side. But through the Word, "*now [we] are light in the Lord.*" We "*[w]alk as children of light*" (Eph. 5:8).

By walking in the bright light of God's Word, we are safe from the devil's sneak attacks. God's Word keeps our eyes open. It keeps us alert. It keeps us in God's kingdom. The kingdom of God comes through His Word. His Word is how God does battle against the devil, the world, and our sinful flesh. His Word is how His kingdom advances and conquers the hearts and minds of those whom the devil used to have in his grasp. The devil is strong, but he cannot stand against God's powerful Word.

Even now, **The Lord Jesus Fights for You** through His Holy Word. He comes to the battleground of your heart and mind to beat back the devil's advances. When you fall into sin, Jesus brings you forgiveness through His Word and calls you back to His kingdom of light. When you are troubled by doubts and fears, Jesus comes through His Word to bring you comfort and peace. When you think you cannot withstand the devil's temptations, Jesus comes through His Word to strengthen and keep you, so that you are not overcome.

As much as we would rather avoid the devil's attacks, it is good to have him as an enemy. The LORD promised that He would "*put enmity*" between His people and the devil. Having the devil as our enemy means that we have the Lord Jesus as our Friend. And our Friend Jesus will not leave us to fend for ourselves. He will wage the fight for our soul until He brings us "*safely into his heavenly kingdom*" (2Ti. 4:18).

*Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Ghost; as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, forevermore. Amen.*

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