

SERMON FOR JUNE 6, 2021

TEXT: MARK 3: 22-27

THEME: THE STRONGER MAN

**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.

In the name of Jesus:

One of the premier bodybuilding competitions takes place right here in Central Ohio. The Arnold Classic, named after one time governor of California and former bodybuilder Arnold Swartenagger, has been in existence and hosted by the city of Columbus since 1989. It features as one of its events the “Arnold Pro Strongman World Series”, a weightlifting event which was won last by a gentleman from Iceland named Halfthor Bjornsson (kind of sounds like a Viking name doesn't it). He won it for the third straight year and he has participated in this event for ten straight years.

Jesus speaks of the strong man in our text today, but Jesus isn't talking about bodybuilding. What Jesus is speaking about is His adversary and our foe, Satan. Jesus says: “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.” What in the world is Jesus talking about?

Well previous to this, scribes who came down from Jerusalem were saying that Jesus was out of His mind or that He was someone who was possessed of the Devil. They said: ““He is possessed by Beelzebul,” and “by the prince of demons he casts out the demons.”

Jesus, though, dismisses this claim by asking how can Satan cast out Satan? A divided Kingdom can not stand, for if Satan has risen against himself, then he is at cross purposes with himself and his kingdom will come to an end. After explaining this, Jesus then says: “ **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.”

Jesus is telling us in this parable that Satan is the strong man. He has been described elsewhere in Scripture as the “Prince of the Air,” the “Prince of this world”, and compared to a lion prowling around seeking someone to devour. Jesus is explaining that Satan has a death grip on creation and its inhabitants, including you and me. He loves to cause havoc, he is the cause of evil, sin, and unbelief, and he is alive and well sowing all sorts of seeds of mischief and mayhem. One doesn't have to look far to see all of the hatred, the anger, the jealousy, sin and death that the world is plagued with today. God

has looked down from His throne in heaven and has declared “that there is no one righteous, no not one, all have sinned and have fallen short of God’s glory.”

The sin that we all are affected with is worse than Covid and there is no earthly remedy or cure for it. Some may try to ignore the fact, others may seek to cover up their sins by trying to do good, but God has diagnosed the problem, Satan has a death grip on this world and unless God intervenes, all are without hope.

God’s Good News is that God has intervened, He has stepped in and He has sent Someone who is stronger than Satan, Someone who will fight Satan on this turf and defeat Satan once and for all. That Someone is Jesus, and He is God’s Strong Man, He is the One Stronger than Satan, and He has defeated both sin, Satan, and death.

But Jesus didn’t show His strength over Satan by getting into a physical competition with him. Instead, Jesus became weak, He became a baby, born in Bethlehem, and this Babe in Bethlehem grew to be a full grown human being, just like you and me.

Jesus in His life and in His ministry plundered Satan’s house and did battle with the Devil, not with physical might and human strength, but with the strength of God, the mercy of God and the love that God has for sinners. Jesus withstood the temptations of the Evil One all throughout His life. Where

Satan was showing his power by possessing people with demons, Jesus threw out the demons and made the demon possessed well again. Jesus came to undo and unwind Satan's clutches on this life, by showing love to sinners, by giving sight to the blind, feeding the multitudes with just a few leftover items of bread and fish, and by raising the dead to life again.

Satan wasn't done, however, he threw everything he had at Jesus. He tempted Judas to betray Jesus, others brought charges against Jesus, Jesus was tried as a criminal for crimes He didn't commit, and He died a death on a cross, dying a cursed death by crucifixion.

But this was all according to God's plan. It was revealed in Genesis 3: 15, and Paul explains it in this way: Christ Jesus,<sup>6</sup> who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, <sup>7</sup> but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. **8** And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross." Jesus ultimately showed His strength by humbling Himself even to the point of dying on the cross, three days later rising from the grave defeating sin, Satan and death by His glorious resurrection from the dead.

This victory has been given to you by God's grace through faith in Christ. Christ has humbly yet powerfully come into your life in your Baptism. The

Holy Spirit has not only given to you faith in Jesus, He brings Jesus into your life and your life into Jesus, so that you now share in Jesus' victory and strength over the Devil, for He who raised the Lord Jesus will raise you with Jesus and bring you into His presence on the Last Day.

Christ has entered into your life in Baptism, and He comes to you also to feed you with His grace and forgiveness in His Supper. He does this so that you are transformed into His image and likeness. That is why you are now called a Christian, you are a little Christ, chosen by Him and sent by Him to do His work. He has chosen you to seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness. Clothed in the forgiveness of Jesus, you are now Jesus' secret agents, so to speak, going out in your life to sow the seeds of love, kindness, and caring that the world needs.

And the world needs what you have. So many people you know are hurting. God has placed them in your life to take care of their hurt. To the hurting you can give a listening ear. To the one who is lonely you can be their friend. To the one who needs help, you can offer your hand to help. To the one who is sorrowful, you can point them to the joy of Jesus.

You have been endowed and blessed with the strength of Christ. Not strength as the world sees it, in power, prestige, or might. But rather in meekness and lowliness and love. Christ has forgiven you all of your sins. You

have been made anew in the waters of Baptism. He strengthens you with His grace and love today in the Supper. All so that you can show and share the strength of Christ in all that you do. For you have been crucified with Christ, so that it is no longer you who live but Christ who lives in you. Jesus says to love one another, even as He has loved you. You have been made free in Christ, not using your freedom as an opportunity to serve yourself, but through love to serve and help those around you. In and doing so, you show the strength of Jesus.

In Jesus' name.

Amen