

Pentecost 2 6/7/15  
Mark 3:20-35 5B

THEN HE WENT HOME, AND THE CROWD GATHERED AGAIN, SO THAT THEY COULD NOT EVEN EAT. AND WHEN HIS FAMILY HEARD IT, THEY WENT OUT TO SEIZE HIM, FOR THEY WERE SAYING, "HE IS OUT OF HIS MIND."

You may have never given much thought to it, but it is interesting how often we make reference in our everyday conversations to being "bound up." For instance, if we're unable to help someone out because of rules and regulations, we say that "our hands are tied". If something is really easy, we'll say that we can do it with "one hand tied behind our back". If our schedules are jam-packed and hectic, we say that we're "tied up" and can't get away. You get the picture. You probably don't realize how often you use this binding imagery throughout the day, but it is often a lot more than you may realize.

And that brings us to the appointed Gospel for this Sunday. There are numerous references to binding; more than you probably realize. Look at v. 21, "When His family heard it, they went to seize Him, for they were saying, 'He's out of His mind'." That's how it reads in English. But, bear with me for a moment, the Greek word, "krateho," means "to restrain," "to bind". The Evangelist Mark is telling us that His own mother and brothers want to lay hands on Jesus and bind Him up and haul Him away because they figured He was crazy. You get the picture right? You can almost see the guys in the white uniforms coming for Jesus with a straight jacket.

Hearing our Scripture readings for this Sunday, you get the idea that the focus of our worship this Sunday is that sin has caused division. The Fall in the Garden, division between us and God. Our Gospel points out to us that where Jesus is, there is division. His own family have forgotten who

He is and why He has come. Division. The scribes have to have some way to explain how Jesus can do miracles, so they say that His ability comes from Satan. They certainly cannot say it's from God, after all. Division -- like Adam and Eve, they are separated from God because they reject Christ. "Whoever is not with me is against Me," Jesus says (Mt 12:30). This Sunday forces us to take a look at ourselves. Are we with Christ or against Him? Either you are with Christ or you are working against Him. There is no gray area. Which side are you on?

The truth is that we are all guilty of attempting to bind and restrain Jesus, not much different than what His own family wanted to do. Consider stewardship. You know how it is, right? I would love to give more money to the Church, but I have bills to pay, gas tanks and cupboards to fill, retirements to save for ... I would love to take an office at Church but I just don't have time." Binding Jesus. Trust in God and walk by faith? No, we worry and walk by fear. Binding Jesus. Teach God's Word to our children and pray with our family? Not when it interferes with my favorite TV show or my time. Binding Jesus. Covet that woman in the magazine rather than cherishing and loving the spouse God has given you. Binding Jesus. Obey my husband. No way; besides, men are jerks, right? Binding Jesus. Speak up and defend my neighbor's name and reputation? Forget it. I'm going to use my tongue to join in degrading and defaming my neighbor with gossip. It's more fun and makes me look all the better. Binding Jesus. Confront my neighbor in his/her sin? Invite my neighbor to church? No way, I can't say a thing! Binding Jesus.

But, binding Jesus is sin, and binding and restraining and hindering Christ and His Word and His Will has been around since our first parents were bound up in the Garden of Eden. Just like Adam and Eve, we desire

to be like God. We want what we want more than what God wants for us. Like our first parents, we try to hide in our sin.

“For all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God,” Paul teaches us. But that’s not the end of that verse is it? “And are justified by His grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as a propitiation by His blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God’s righteousness, because in His divine forbearance He had passed over former sins” (Ro 3).

God passed over former sins. That is, God has released, freed, unbound us from our sin. That’s because of what God did for us in Christ Jesus.

Did you catch those words God spoke to Satan in the Garden after the fall? “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.” That offspring of woman was Jesus. The very Son of God took on human flesh and bone and was born of the Virgin Mary. But that’s not all He took on. He took on the sin of every sinner, was condemned for those sins, and went to the death of the cross to die for the wages of those sins. Our bondage to sin and death is broken, because all of our sin is gone in the blood of Jesus. We are forgiven. Jesus has crushed the head of the devil, to silence all his ugly accusations against us. We are free.

We have seen Lolly freed this morning. Baptized into Jesus, God has forgiven her all of her sin, set her free from sin, death, and the devil. And that’s what God did for you, Dear Child, in the new birth of your baptism. In Christ, we have been set free; unbound to serve and proclaim Christ to all the world, with every thought, word, and deed.

Look around you. Here are your mothers and brothers and sisters in the faith. Here are those who serve and love and forgive because of the joy of knowing that God first loved them and forgave them and, who you serve and love and forgive.

I talked about division earlier. Sin divides. Division happens when we bind Jesus. But, Christ heals and forgives and reconciles and unites. Reconciliation, oneness, happens when we live in Christ and are Christ to one another.

Consider our Old Testament lesson. Adam and Eve fall into sin. And what does God do? “They heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden.” God is not out for an afternoon stroll, to get some air. He is on a mission. He is looking for His lost and hiding children. God still does the same thing in our world today. He does it through you and through me.

Camp Discovery: Jesus At Work Through Us was the theme of Vacation Bible School was this past week. The students looked at five Bible stories where God worked in His people to save them and then worked through them to serve others. One of the songs the kids learned re-enforced the theme,

God loves our friends, our neighbors, too  
Through simple things we say and do.  
Go, help, share, serve,  
Giving God the glory.

Jesus frees us, unbinds us, and gives us faith, courage, and wisdom to help our family, friends, and neighbors. As God’s children, living in Christ, we are enabled by God to serve through our vocations. God pleases us in various situations and calls us to serve others. In the words of Luther, God doesn’t need your good works, but your neighbor does!

Think about the people around you every day:

- How can you better honor your father or mother, all who are in authority over you?
- How can you be more patient and kinder to a younger brother or sister, or that know-it-all co-worker?
- Even when your friends or co-workers choose to sin and bind Jesus, how can you be let your light shine and not let Satan blow it out?

With Christ living in us and us living in Christ, we can say and live,

“We love because He first loved us!”

I am sending you out as sheep among wolves

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So they thought Jesus was crazy; out of His mind...sticks and stones, right? Who here hasn't had this accusation made against them when someone disagrees with them? I hear it said about me, and I say it about others too. Believe me: This line of work necessarily takes you into a world full of dysfunction and craziness. But that brings up a good point. This particular line of work deals specifically in confronting sin with the Truth and Life of Jesus Christ. Faithfully proclaiming and serving Christ necessarily puts you at odds with the rest of the world. It's like that old quote, "Whoever is not with me is against me." Do you know who said that? Jesus did! In fact, Matthew records these very words coming out of Christ's mouth in his parallel account to this very text ( [HYPERLINK "http://biblia.com/bible/esv/Matt%2012.30"](http://biblia.com/bible/esv/Matt%2012.30) Matt 12:30 ). Think about that for a moment. There is no gray area or neutral zone when it comes to faithfulness, forgiveness, and salvation. Either you are or you are not. Either you are with Christ or you are working against Him. Good thing we're not like all those rotten, sinful people out there who work against Jesus, right?

Let me let you in on something: We're all guilty of attempting to bind and restrain Christ, no different than His own family was. For instance, how many of you have allowed yourselves to be bound up in silence or inactivity when it comes to stewardship? "I'd love to help out more, but I can't. My hands are tied. My funds are all tied up. I have bills to pay, gas tanks and cupboards to fill, vacations to take, retirements to save for." You're right. That whole "fearing,

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How many of you have ever allowed yourselves to be bound up in silence when you've encountered sin? "Confront it? Rebuke it? Are you out of your mind? That wouldn't be polite. Everyone has a right to their opinion." Understand: I'm not talking about crazy, heinous sins that nobody here commits. I'm talking about binding, ministry-robbing sins that we commit right here in church; sins like gossip; sins like desiring to exercise authority and control that hasn't been entrusted to you...just like Adam and Eve, who desired to be like God.

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d...sticks and stones, right? Who here hasn't had this accusation made against them when someone disagrees with them? I hear it said about me, and I say it about others too. Believe me: This line of work necessarily takes you into a world full of dysfunction and craziness. But that brings up a good point. This particular line of work deals specifically in confronting sin with the Truth and Life of Jesus Christ. Faithfully proclaiming and serving Christ necessarily puts you at odds with the rest of the world. It's like that old quote, "Whoever is not with me is against me." Do you know who said that? Jesus did! In fact, Matthew records these very words coming out of Christ's mouth in his parallel account to this very text ( [HYPERLINK](http://biblia.com/bible/esv/Matt%2012.30)

"<http://biblia.com/bible/esv/Matt%2012.30>"

12.30" \t "\_blank" Matt 12:30 ). Think about that for a moment. ??[There is no](#) gray area or neutral zone when it comes to faithfulness, forgiveness, and salvation. Either you are or you are not. Either you are with Christ or you are working against Him. Good thing we're not like all those rotten, sinful people out there who work against Jesus, right?

Let me let you in on something: We're all guilty of attempting to bind and restrain Christ, no different than His own family was. For instance, how many of you have allowed yourselves to be bound up in silence or inactivity when it comes to stewardship? "I'd love to help out more, but I can't. My hands are tied. My funds are all tied up. I have bills to pay, gas tanks and cupboards to fill, vacations to take, retirements to save for." You're right. That whole "fearing, loving, and trusting in God above all things" only applies to certain aspects of life; the comfortable, easy ones that we like and agree with. To think that it would apply to all of life is crazy! "I can't help out because that time interferes with my favorite TV show, my Facebook time, my tee time, my "me" time. That's crazy talk!"

How many of you have ever allowed yourselves to be bound up in silence when you've encountered sin? "Confront it? Rebuke it? Are you out of your mind? That wouldn't be polite. Everyone has a right to their opinion." Understand: I'm not talking about crazy, heinous sins that nobody here commits. I'm talking about binding, ministry-robbing sins that we commit right here in church; sins like gossip; sins like desiring to exercise authority and control that hasn't been entrusted to you...just like Adam and Eve, who desired to be like God.

And that's just it. All this binding that we do is sin, and this sort of binding and restraining and hindering of Christ and His Word and His Will has been around since our first parents were bound up in that first church—the Garden of Eden. "If you're not with me, you're against me." Sin—all sin—stands against holiness. There is no gray area. Either it's sin or it's God-pleasing righteousness. Either it's on the side of Satan or it's on the side of Christ. Now I know that this reality check may rattle some of your cages. I know that I may sound crazy to you. Yes! I did just say, from the pulpit, that some of the things you do are sinful. Is complaining about the color of the paint or the church sign or the landscaping or the Treasurer's spreadsheet a sin? No...but it can quickly become a sin when it seeks to undermine authority and interfere and split and bind up ministry. Do not be deceived! These desires and cares and concerns are not serving God and His people, but rather vain, sinful attempts at serving yourself. If you're not happy, go somewhere else; start your own church. You already have your own god. Repent! Turn from your binding ways! Turn back and be unbound in Christ.

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But that's not the end of that verse, is it? All are also redeemed in the blood of Christ Jesus. All are forgiven, or as the Greek says, all are *aphethāsetai'd*; that is, released and unbound. Folks: That's what this ministry is all about. That's what this congregation exists for—to proclaim this Good News of Christ Jesus. This is why Almighty God Himself has allowed this congregation to exist and prosper for the past twenty years now. We, as God's people here, have been set free and unbound in the Gospel truth of Christ crucified and resurrected for all mankind.

Do you realize what a tremendous, life-giving, liberating treasure God Himself has implanted in your hearts? This is what the truly sanctified life is all about. As those who believe and trust in the total and complete forgiveness that is ours by God's grace alone because of the all-redeeming work and person of Jesus Christ alone, we have been set free; unbound to serve and proclaim Christ with reckless abandon. We are not to be caught up and bound up in the ways and worries

of this fallen and sinful world. Whether we live or whether we die, we belong to Christ. Heaven is our home. We have been baptized into Christ's death and resurrection.

And that's how we'll end for today. Look around you. Here are your mothers and brothers and sisters in the faith. Here are those who serve and love and forgive because of the joy of knowing that God first loved them and forgave them unconditionally. Are we perfect? Do we do everything the exact way you want to see things done? No, but that doesn't mean that we're sinful for doing things differently than you would. We are faithful in endeavoring to please God and do His will; faithfulness which also necessarily includes repenting for our sins and seeking the unbinding and loosing that is found only here in the cross of Jesus Christ.

As we now enter into the long "dog days" of Pentecost, may your heart, soul, and mind not be bound up and taken captive with idle foolishness and deceit. It is true what your grandmas used to say: Idle hands are the devil's workshop. I will add that idle hearts and minds; hearts and minds not faithfully bound up in the light and life and countenance of Christ Jesus, have a way of providing all the rope we need to hang ourselves and bind ourselves, and our fellow brothers and sisters, in the bonds and chains of sin.

May the Gospel Good News of your justification in Christ alone by God's grace and love alone unbind you and set you free to serve, honor, love, and obey your Lord with all that you say, think, and do, now, through these long dog days of Pentecost, and into all of eternity.

In His Name...AMEN.