

Pentecost 3 6/10/18
Mark 3:20-35 5B

IF SATAN HAS RISEN UP AGAINST HIMSELF AND IS DIVIDED, HE CANNOT STAND, BUT IS COMING TO AN END.

When it comes to evil, Satan is the consummate professional. Consider his handiwork. It goes all the way back to the garden, as we heard this morning. There, he lied to Adam and Eve, “Did God really say, ‘You shall not eat of any tree in the garden?’” (Ge 3:1). And with that, creation was plunged into the kingdom of Satan, into his house. Plunged into darkness and death, all human beings who are born of human mother and father, became his goods.

Consider what he does. Look at the man in the country side of the Gerasenes. He has to live out among the tombs. Seems he has some kind of superhuman strength, for when they try to chain him, he just breaks the chains. There he is, out among the tombs, where he lives day and night, crying out and bruising himself with stones (cf. Mk 5:5). He could tell you all about how Satan rules his kingdom and takes care of his goods.

There is also that little boy. This little boy has been attacked by Satan and his demons. They seize him, throw him to the ground, and he foams at the mouth and grinds his teeth (cf. Mk 9:18). They even often try to cast him into fire or into water to kill him (cf. Mk 9:22).

If you really want to know how Satan rules his kingdom, how he takes care of his goods, there’s only one person you really have to ask, and that’s yourself. You were born of human mother and father, so you were born into the kingdom of Satan. No, you are not out living among the tombs, crying out night and day and bruising yourself with stones. You do not fall to the ground, foam at the mouth, and grind your teeth, but that does not

mean that you are not under Satan. Your life is filled with things like misfortune; you find yourself struggling with feelings like guilt and shame and despair; you are wondering if life is even worth going on, am I worth anything to anyone. You also find in your life things like accidents, not just to your property, or body, or goods, but also to your mind and spirit.

All of this is the work of Satan. He is the ruler of this present age, the prince of demons. He knows how to run His kingdom and take care of his goods. Do not be deceived, Dear Child of God, he's out to destroy you.

And yet, something very interesting has happened because Jesus has come. If you go out to the region of the Gerasenes, you will find this man who lived among the tombs and bruised himself with stones; well, he's not there anymore. He's living a perfectly normal life. And that little boy who fell to the ground and foamed at the mouth; well, he's perfectly fine, too.

That's not the only thing happening. There was that day when Jesus was in the synagogue in Capernaum preaching and teaching and a man with an evil spirit stood up and said, "What have you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are—the Holy One of God" (Lk 4:34). Jesus rebuked him, saying "Be silent and come out of him" (Lk 4:35). And the demon obeyed and the demon came out.

Later on, on that very same day after the sun had gone down, Jesus had gone to with Peter to his house and the residents of Capernaum were bringing demon-possessed people to Jesus. And Jesus cast out the demons and the people were fine.

Do you see what's happening here? Jesus is undoing Satan's kingdom. He's bringing it to an end. He's even bringing Satan to an end.

He has come to enter that strong man's house and bind him, so He can plunder his goods.

How is He making it happen? The scribes who came down from Jerusalem think they know and they are proud to tell us, "He is possessed by Beelzebul" and "by the prince of demons he casts out the demons" (v. 22). Now, I ask you, have you ever heard anything so ridiculous? Have you? Jesus is in cahoots with the devil. Jesus casting out demons by the power of the prince of demons? If that's true, then Satan is divided. And Jesus Himself says, "How can Satan cast out Satan" (v. 23)?

Jesus is responsible for casting out Satan, but how exactly is Jesus doing that? Well, we hear how He is doing from the mouth of Jesus himself, "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 (v. 27)." Jesus is plundering Satan's house.

And you know what? Satan should have seen this coming because he was told this was coming. In the Garden, after Satan had plunged God's creation in darkness and His creatures into the death of sin, God said this to him, "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" (Ge 3:15).

Born of Virgin Mary, Jesus is that offspring of the woman. Wrapped in swaddling clothes and laid in a manger, He has come to enter that strong man's house and bind him. He binds him with the Word of God out in the wilderness when Satan tempts Jesus again and again and again. And, again and again, Jesus binds Satan with the Word of God and renders him powerless. With every demon he rebukes and evil spirit He casts out,

Jesus is binding the strong man and bringing his kingdom and his house to ruin. That is what Jesus has come to do.

And Jesus came even to get you out of the kingdom and the house of Satan. He does it by turning the tables on the devil. You see, Satan has you and all humanity in his kingdom and his house through a tree. He convinced Adam and Eve to go ahead and to eat the fruit of the forbidden tree and we were plunged into sin, and death, and hell. Satan overcame the human race by a tree, so likewise, Jesus, by a tree, overcomes Satan. That tree was the tree of the cross, where Jesus suffered and died, He was buried, and on the 3rd day, He rose again so that by His crucifixion, death, and burial, He binds Satan. He takes away all of Satan's power, for Satan's power is sin and death. By that cross and resurrection, Jesus has forgiven you all your sins and He has conquered death for you.

He then gives you that victory in and through the waters of Holy Baptism so that He takes you out of the kingdom and the house of Satan into the kingdom and house of God. No longer are you Satan's goods, but you are now God's own child. That is who you are.

It is all neatly summed up in the Preface for Holy Week: "that the serpent who overcame by the tree of the garden might likewise by the tree of the cross be overcome." Make no mistake about it, Jesus has crushed the devil's head. Satan is over, he's done, he's through, but his final undoing is yet to come. That will come on the last day when Jesus Christ comes again in glory. Between then and now, Satan is going to make the most of his time. He's going to throw his lies, his ugly accusations at you, all to bring you back into his kingdom, but have no fear. God Himself gives you the armor of God, as St. Paul says,

Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm. Stand therefore, having fastened on the belt of truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and, as shoes for your feet, having put on the readiness given by the gospel of peace. In all circumstances take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one; and take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication.

Satan's house, Satan's kingdom, Satan Himself has all been undone. Jesus has done that by entering that strong man's house and binding him as He resists his temptations; binding him as he casts out the demons and evil spirits, binding him as He died and rose again for you; binding him as He gives you the whole armor of God. Satan is done.
TO GOD BE THE GLORY. AMEN.