

June 6th, 2021

Genesis 3: 8-15; Psalm 130; 2 Corinthians 4: 13-5:1; Mark 3: 20-35

Pentecost, 2

In our gospel that we read this morning, Jesus is telling his disciples, “No one can enter a *strong man’s* house and plunder his property without first tying up the strong man; then indeed the house can be plundered.”

Satan as evil, is the “strong man”. Unfortunately, we all know and have experienced evil which seems at times to be so terribly strong, so intractable and unyielding. Yet then, Jesus in his response to his own statement, essentially asks, “But who is stronger than Satan?” The answer is clear. Satan is strong, but Jesus is the stronger.

In our gospel we are being told by Jesus that He is placed *within* evil, within our struggles of what is good and what is bad. He is there. In fact, at the beginning of our gospel, Jesus was in the middle of struggles with his own family and with the religious authorities. He did not run away from them or turn his back on them. His family and the religious authorities, both, were ridiculing him and mocking him and seemed to be embarrassed by his healing and touching and teaching. Some Biblical scholars call the gospels, “the gospels from the battlefield”. And we see that in our gospel today. Jesus is in a battle, not with

outsiders, but with those most close to him, his family and with the religious authorities to whom his family and friend's revere.

Is this not still our life of struggle, with family and friends, those who are closest to us. Yes, we struggle with opinions of others, with behaviors of others, but isn't it the ones closest to us that can cause us the most angst for one reason or another. Sometimes, thankfully, in the heat of a disagreement or argument, we breathe a prayer.

And don't we often forget about Satan, that, that is what is there in those arguments, those ill feelings of evil. In our gospel today Jesus describes the evil as the Devil, as Satan. And we know it is within us. Jesus pointed this out to the crowd and to his own family essentially saying, "Satan is making his home in you, and you are speaking his words."

Can't we identify with this? Who lives in our heart? Who is at home with us? Who is the strong man that lives in our heart?

Have we ever felt the Spirit of Jesus being our strong man? Jesus said, "No one can enter a strong man's house and plunder his property without first tying up the strong man." Evil thoughts and deeds, thinking thoughts that should not be thought, doing things that should not be done, saying things that should be left unsaid, are actions

coming from what is within a person, “the strong man” of evil, the strong man, Satan, Jesus tells us.

Some of you may remember Flip Wilson’s often-used phrase, “The Devil made me do it”. Well, indeed, this is what Jesus is telling us in our gospel. Yet Jesus is also telling us that there is someone stronger than the Devil within us. Jesus said, “No one can enter a strong man’s house and plunder his property without tying up the strong man, then indeed the house can be plundered.” “No one can enter a strong man’s house, unless first they tie up the strong man, then indeed the house can be plundered.” So, who’s going to do that? Who’s going to tie up the strong man?

Have you ever wondered why Jesus spent so much time in prayer? Hours, seemingly sometimes, days. Satan was His companion, as it is ours. But Jesus’ constant companionship with God, kept Satan at bay, but barely. As we have read in scripture, Satan and Jesus were on speaking terms. They had conversations, long ones, arguments. Satan would quote scripture at Jesus and Jesus would quote scripture right back at him. I have certainly had conversations with evil, which I assume was the Devil, was Satan. Arguments, in fact. And yes, sometimes Satan wins out, unfortunately for me and all those around me.

We find in our gospels that Jesus is being an example for us, but we must admit, we fall far short of living up to his example. But with the companionship of his Spirit, we are far closer to keeping Satan at bay than we would be otherwise.

In our gospel, we learn that we are constantly in the tug and pull of evil and good, something we have known from almost the beginning of our lives. We also heard Jesus' labeling evil and good as the strong ones in our heart, in a battle actually. Yet, we also learned that one, whether evil or good, can be stronger than the other, --but that it is our choice --which one it is.

Amen,

Pastor Scales