

**MINISTRY BY MAIL**  
**Lutheran Conference of Confessional Fellowship**  
[www.lutheranlccf.org](http://www.lutheranlccf.org)  
**Fifth Sunday In Lent, March 21, 2021**

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(Hymns found in The Lutheran Hymnal, CPH, 1941)

Hymns: 53, 292:4, 90:1-4, 373:1-3, 517.

Lessons: Genesis 3:1-15, Revelation 12:7-17, Matthew 12:22-32.

Sermon Text: Mark 3:20-30.

Sermon by Pastor M. H. Eibs

Dear Fellow Redeemed in Christ:

One of the precious truths we learn in the Lenten season is that our Savior Jesus Christ by His redemptive work won the victory over Satan. John writes: ***“He who does what is sinful is of the devil, because the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil’s work.”*** I John 3:8

This is a fact that is not generally accepted by all people. There are people who deny that there is an evil angel called Satan. Because the devil is invisible, they deny that he exists. Such people do not know the Scriptures, for the word Satan is used about 51 times in the Bible, and the word devil is used about 35 times. In addition, the Bible refers to him as our ***“enemy”*** and warns us: ***“Your enemy the devil prowls around like a rearing lion looking for someone to devour.”*** I Pet. 5:8 The Book of Revelation speaks of him as ***“that ancient serpent called the devil or Satan, who leads the whole world astray.”*** Rev. 12:9 In view of this, we certainly cannot dismiss the fact that there is a devil who fights against us as ‘an old-fashioned belief’. Satan, ***“the father of lies,”*** John 8:44, wants us to be deceived. It is, therefore, important for our spiritual welfare to learn of him in our text and of Christ’s victory over him. We learn:

**HOW OUR SAVIOR OPPOSED SATAN AND SLANDER.**

- 1. The slanderous accusation that Jesus drove out demons by Satan’s power;**
- 2. How Jesus, who has conquered Satan, refuted this accusation; and,**
- 3. Jesus’ warning about the unforgivable sin to those who accused Him.**

***“Then Jesus entered a house, and again a crowd gathered, so that he and his disciples were not even able to eat. When his family heard about this, they went to take charge of him, for they said, ‘He is out of his mind.’”*** The Gospel records of both Matthew and Luke in reporting this incident mention that Jesus had just healed a man who was possessed by a devil. This is why so many people came to the house where Jesus was, and didn’t even give Jesus and His disciples a chance to eat. When Jesus was so busy because of the crowds of people, His relatives were concerned about His mental health, saying: ***“He is out of his mind.”*** This, of course, was a needless worry on their part. Jesus often gave Himself so wholeheartedly in the service of sinful mankind that He was altogether exhausted from His labor.

But that Jesus was still able to think straight is very evident from His brilliant statements when He was accused by the Jews. ***“The teachers of the law who came down from Jerusalem said, ‘He is possessed by Beelzebub! By the prince of demons he is driving out demons.’”*** The Jewish teachers of the law, also called scribes, came down from Jerusalem to Capernaum where Jesus was. They came because so many people were flocking to Jesus. The Jewish teachers of the law were deeply concerned about the influence that Jesus had on so many people. Since they could not oppose Jesus in any open and truthful way, they resorted to slander. They said: ***“He is possessed by Beelzebub.”*** Beelzebub was the name of an idol the heathen Philistines worshipped. Gradually through the years this name came to be used to designate the devil. So the teachers of the law were saying that Jesus cast out devils by the prince of the devils, and that Jesus Himself was possessed by the devil.

Their thinking was that the devils whom Jesus drove out of people obeyed His authority only because He Himself was possessed by the devil.

But in their terrible hatred of Jesus they were blind to the truth. Their thinking was not straight. We learn how Jesus, who has conquered Satan, refuted their accusation.

2.

***“So Jesus called them and spoke to them in parables: ‘How can Satan drive out Satan? If a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand. If a house is divided against itself, that house cannot stand. And if Satan opposes himself and is divided, he cannot stand; his end has come.’”*** We can see from this that Jesus was very much in possession of His mental faculties. His thinking was most logical. Jesus had been accused of driving out demons because He was Himself possessed by Satan. Jesus asked His enemies what sense it made that Satan would drive out Satan! Why would the devil fight against himself? Similarly in simple, brief parables Jesus pointed out the logical truth that a kingdom divided against itself will fall, and a house divided against itself will not stand. So, if Satan is opposing himself, his kingdom will not stand. Then his end has come. By such straight thinking Jesus easily refuted the slanderous and blasphemous accusation that they had made against Him.

In another brief parable Jesus had something even more important to say to the teachers of the law: ***“In fact, no one can enter a strong man’s house and carry off his possessions unless he first ties up the strong man. Then he can rob his house.”*** In this parable Jesus was teaching how a strong man can be overcome only by a stronger one. The devil is the one whom Jesus refers to as the strong one, and He refers to Himself as the stronger One. The devil is strong and mighty, indeed, but is no match for Jesus, the mighty Son of God.

Let us see from the Scriptures that these are the facts. The first fact is that Satan is mighty, has great power. This Gospel of Mark tells us of a man that was possessed with an evil spirit. It says ***“This man lived in the tombs, and no one could bind him any more, not even with a chain. ... No one was strong enough to subdue him.”*** Mark 5:3,4 We as believers in Christ are warned against Satan’s power, and are told: ***“Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil’s schemes. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.”*** Eph. 6:11-12 Satan’s mighty power is evident from other Bible passages. Paul warns of people who have been taken captive by the devil ***“to do his will.”*** 2 Tim. 2:26 Paul speaks of Satan as ***“the god of this age,”*** and says he ***“has blinded the minds of unbelievers so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ.”*** 2 Cor. 4:4 This is evidence of Satan’s great power.

But Jesus has conquered Satan. He has won the victory over him. He is the stronger One who has overcome the strong one. Jesus’ power over Satan was most evident when He was tempted by Satan early in His ministry. These were very real and powerful temptations. But each time Jesus quoted the Scriptures, and by that powerful Word of God Satan was overcome and had to depart. (Matt. 4:1-11) The Bible tells us: ***“Many who were demon-possessed were brought to him, and he drove out the spirits with a word and healed all the sick.”*** Matt. 8:16 When the 72 followers of Jesus returned from their missionary journey, they joyfully said: ***“‘Lord, even the demons submit to us in your name.’ He replied, ‘I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven.’”*** Luke 10:17-18 When Jesus announced His coming suffering and death, He said: ***“Now is the time for judgment on this world; now the prince of this world will be driven out.”*** John 12:31 The victory that Christ won over the devil when He died on the cross Paul speaks of in these words: ***“Having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross.”*** Col. 2:15 The Book of Hebrews says that Jesus became a true man with flesh and blood so that He might die on the cross, ***“so that by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death - that is, the devil.”*** 2:14 Paul told Timothy that Jesus ***“has destroyed death and has brought life and immortality to light through the Gospel.”*** 2 Tim. 1:10 When Jesus was made alive again after His death on the cross, Peter says, ***“he went and preached to the spirits in prison.”*** 1 Pet. 3:19 What Jesus preached when He descended into hell was His victory over Satan. Peter says that after His resurrection Jesus ascended into heaven, ***“and is at God’s right hand - with angels, authorities and powers in submission to him.”*** 1 Pet. 3:22

This is also our victory by faith in Christ. So long as we put our trust in Jesus we need not fear Satan's power and will not be overcome by him when he tempts us. No matter what accusations Satan brings against us, Paul says, "***We are more than conquerors through him who loved us.***" Rom, 8:37

Finally, in our text Jesus warns about the unforgivable sin in His reply to His accusers.

3.

***"I tell you the truth, all the sins and blasphemies of men will be forgiven them. But whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit will never be forgiven; he is guilty of an eternal sin." He said this because they were saying, 'He has an evil spirit.'*** This was a warning to the teachers of the law who had spoken against Jesus, warning them that they should be concerned about committing the unforgivable sin. All other sins, even blasphemies against God (when men mock Him and speak evil of Him) can be forgiven, and are forgiven through the shed blood of Jesus the Savior. But the sin against the Holy Ghost, blaspheming the work of the Holy Spirit, is the unforgivable sin.

The sin against the Holy Spirit is unforgivable because it places the person who commits this sin beyond the reach where God's pardon can reach him. It makes repentance impossible. It is this that people, against their better judgment, and in spite of the knowledge of the truth of the Gospel and the testimony of the Spirit through that Word, harden their hearts against the truth and the influence of the Holy Spirit. The Book of Hebrews says of this sin: ***"It is impossible for those who have once been enlightened, who have tasted the heavenly gift, who have shared in the Holy Spirit, who have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the coming age, if they fall away, to be brought back to repentance, because to their loss they are crucifying the Son of God all over again and subjecting him to public disgrace."*** Hebrews 6:4-6 For such a person there is no hope. The day of grace is past. He himself by his sin makes repentance impossible and he will be punished to all eternity.

It is a warning to us and all who have heard the truth of the Gospel and who have had the Holy Spirit working in our hearts. The Bible says: ***"If we deliberately keep on sinning after we have received the knowledge of the truth, no sacrifice for sins is left, but only a fearful expectation of judgment and of raging fire that will consume the enemies of God."*** Hebrews 10:26-27 Such a person, the Bible says, ***"has insulted the Spirit of grace."*** Hebr. 10:29

Having heard this warning, let us never consider the work of the Holy Spirit lightly, but let us put our trust in the Lord Jesus who gave His body and shed His blood for our sins, and pray:

"Help me to mend my ways, O Lord,  
And gladly to obey Thy Word.  
While here I live, abide with me;  
And when I die, take me to Thee." Amen.  
(The Lutheran Hymnal 328:4)

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