

Scripture: Mark 3:20-35

Text: Mark 3:27

The One Stronger than the Strong Man

Beloved in Christ, last Sunday, we heard that Jesus withdrew from the Pharisees [3:7]. They plot to destroy Him. But Jesus withdraws to the sea, healing the multitudes, casting out demons [3:7-12]. He then goes up the mountain where He appoints 12 apostles. He sends them out to preach and to have authority to heal sicknesses and to cast out demons [3:13-19].

Through the 12 apostles, He will form a new community of believers and send them out into a world bound by Satan and darkness.

Not only His enemies, the Pharisees and the scribes, but now also His own friends, associates and even family make matters difficult for Him. That hurts!

See **verses 20-21 and 31-32**. Jesus is again in a house surrounded by crowds. He and His disciples have no time to eat. We read in **verse 22**, *"But when His own people heard about this, they went out to lay hold of Him, for they said, 'He is out of His mind.'"* It's like a Christian today who lives out his faith, in spite of strong opposition, and people calling him crazy.

And then in **verses 31-32**, even his own brothers and mother come to Him. They are standing outside the house. They send some people to Him, calling Him. We read in **verse 32**, *"Look! Your mother and Your brothers are outside seeking You."*

Naturally they're concerned! Their affection for Him shows. They probably heard the reports and ran to the house. They want to take Him out of the public eye.

Do you see what His friends and family are doing? They are trying to control Him. They are trying to bind Him. But He will not allow "His own people" nor His "mother and brothers" to take priority over the new community of believers that He is forming through the twelve disciples.

Now, from verse 27 we see that Jesus has come to break into the house of the strong man, Satan, in order to build His own house. This will mean opposition. This will mean His death on the cross for our salvation. From verse 27, see His love for you

1. He binds/ties the strong man up
2. He plunders his house
3. He sets the captives free to follow Him

He binds the strong man

The scribes [religious leaders] came down from Jerusalem. They hear about Jesus healing people and casting out demons. The scribes now [religious leaders] call Jesus 'Satan.' Worse words cannot be spoken. In the midst of the crowds, they say about Jesus, "*He has Beelzebub*" and "*By the ruler of demons He casts out demons*" {**verse 22**}. Beelzebub literally means "lord of the house" referring to Satan. The hostility reaches a new level.

Notice, they don't deny that Jesus has power to perform miracles. But they say the source of His power is not God; but Satan. Just because people see miracles does not mean they will believe in Christ. They saw; yet they do not believe! They call Christ, 'Satan.'

Falsehood should never go unchallenged. In **verses 22-26** Jesus responds: if His work and words are against Satan, then how can He be empowered by Satan? It makes no sense! "*So He called them to Himself and said to them in parables, 'How can Satan cast out Satan? If a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand. And if a house is divided against itself, that house cannot stand. And if Satan has risen against himself, and is divided, he cannot stand, but has an end.'*"

The truth is that, in His works, Jesus is subduing the strong man, Satan, **Verse 27**: "*No one can enter a strong man's house and plunder his goods, unless he first binds* [ties up] *the strong man.*" This is the point!

In ordinary life, a robber does not receive an offer of help from the homeowner. Rather, the homeowner will call 911. So the robber first ties him up and then he carries away the goods of his house. Here, through His Word, this is what Jesus is doing: breaking into Satan's house and tying him up and carrying away the captives. Satan is strong. Jesus is stronger!

A couple of months ago, when I referred to this text, someone asked, 'but isn't it wrong to break into someone's house, tie him up and carry away his stuff?' The answer is 'yes.'

But remember: who created the house for Adam and Eve? God did. He created us to live with Him in this world. But when mankind disobeyed in Adam, we gave the house over to Satan, including ourselves. See the sad results: anger, envy, jealousy, hatred –fuelled by Satan. Look at all the violence in our world! You see the strength of this strong man. Man is slave to greed and lust. Clearly man is not at peace with God and with his neighbor.

When Christ is breaking into the strong man's house and tying him up, He is not stealing. He is rightfully claiming what belongs to Himself, God Himself! Only He is stronger than the strong man Satan. He breaks in, ties him up for our salvation. Chris is the "Healer of strife" and "sin's deep disgrace."

By becoming man, by His victory over the devil in the wilderness of His temptations, by His powerful Word to the demons, He began to bind Satan. He conquers the house, ultimately through His death, His resurrection and ascension into heaven for us and in our place! Read Colossians 2:15, *"And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross."*

Now the plundering begins. This brings us to our second point

He plunders the strong man's house

Read **verse 27**, *'And then He will plunder his house.'* When a conqueror comes, what does he do? He takes away all the goods of the enemy!

The plundering is Christ taking over the house of Satan. It is Christ taking over hearts and minds and lives today. He subdues us by His Word and Spirit. This is the evidence of His plundering! How is He doing this? He was doing this and continues to do this through the power, not of Beelzebub [Satan] but by the Holy Spirit.

Earlier in Mark, John the Baptist spoke about the coming one, the one *"mightier than I . . . He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit"* [Mark 1:7-8]. He was anointed by the Holy Spirit at His baptism. His works were accomplished by the power of the Spirit. He is the Strong One, the Son of God.

Being possessed of the Holy Spirit He stands, as one commentator says, *"as the Champion of God in the battle with Satan."* In John 12:30-31, Jesus says, *"Now is the time for judgment on this world; now the prince of this world will be driven out. And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to Myself."*

Today, Christ is plundering the house of Satan as the Holy Spirit works powerfully through the preaching of God's Word! Satan today, is being deprived, being deprived more and more of his 'goods', his furniture; that is, people belonging to Christ.

Christ today sends out the church into all world to spread the good news of repentance and forgiveness of sins throughout the world! Christ gathers all His chosen who believe and will cast out all who do not believe!

We hear about the iron fisted leaders in Iran and China trying to stop the gospel. But Christ is plundering. People are coming to faith in Christ by the thousands! [examples]. Yes, Satan tries to put chains on the gospel. In Canada, chains are on the doors of our government schools. In 2 Timothy 2:9, the apostle Paul speaks of being in chains; that is, in prison. But then he says, *"But the word of God is not chained."*

Other chains can be drugs, pornography, money, alcohol, or worship of false gods. It can be greed, hatred, anger, and envy. No man is strong enough to free himself from Satan's bondage. But if you want to be free from this, there is good news for you.

Christ is Stronger than the strong man, Satan. Go to Him in faith. When Christ plunders, He causes those whom He conquers to share in His life and in His glory! By His Spirit, Christ reconciles us to God, recreating us according to His image!

I want to address verses 28-30 briefly here. Notice the sober warning of Jesus to the scribes. Jesus says that God forgives all sins, sins we repent of, no matter how terrible those sins may be. But Jesus speaks of one sin that is never forgiven. **Verse 29**, *“but he who blasphemes against the Holy Spirit never has forgiveness but is subject to eternal condemnation..”*

This raises the question: what is the sin against the Holy Spirit? The scribes were calling Christ ‘Satan’. What the Holy Spirit was doing through Christ, they said was of ‘Satan.’ They did not say this out of ignorance, but willfully and deliberately. They knew what they were doing. They had God’s Word. Jesus warns them of this sin, *“because, they said, ‘He has an unclean spirit’”* [verse 30].

This warning should not be a cause for worry. A person who sins against the Holy Spirit has no desire for repentance nor will he ever want it. He just doesn’t care. If you are anxious about it, it shows you are sensitive to the work of the Holy Spirit.

Christ has bound Satan. He has and is plundering His house, and we see in the third place

He sets the captives free

He sets them free from Satan’s house to join His house, His kingdom. We see that in verses 31-35. A multitude, a huge crowd of people are still sitting around Him. The house was full of people. Jesus’ mother and brothers come. They can’t get inside, so they send a messenger to call Jesus.

It’s colorful. The message is being passed from Jesus’ mother and brothers to the special messenger. Then it goes from him to the people sitting closest to Jesus, and from there to Jesus Himself. This is the message, **verse 32**, *“Look, Your mother and Your brother are outside seeking You.”*

But Jesus uses this interruption as a good teaching point – also to us. He answers them in **verse 33**, *“Who are My mother or My brothers?”* He looks around about at those sitting near Him. He says, **verses 34-35**, *“Here are My mother and My brothers! For whoever does the will of God is My brother and My sister and mother.”*

What is Jesus teaching us? He is teaching us that in His kingdom faith ties are more important than blood ties. Relationships in Christ, whether Chinese, Indian, Dutch or Iranian, are more important than blood relationships. This is His priority: forming a community of new believers. Like the apostles in 3:14-15, disciples of Jesus share two qualities: they are with Him and they do His will. They show their trust in Him by fellowshiping with Him and desiring to obey Him.

He sets the captives free from Satan’s house to join His house, His chosen family - those who were demon-possessed; those who were sinners in need of forgiveness; many kinds of sinners came to him with afflictions and burdens. By grace He conquers them to share in His life and glory.

You are sitting today with Christ who speaks through His Word. To be ransomed, healed, restored, forgiven – there is no greater news than this! Some here more than others feel the painful scars of the past. They may be emotional, mental or physical. Perhaps you feel its sad effect to this present day. Don't you think many of those whom Jesus called and healed had the same?

Think of the scars on Jesus, how *"He was wounded for our transgressions; He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement for our peace was upon Him, and by His stripes we are healed"* [Isaiah 53:5]. For your salvation, He broke into Satan's house, tied him up, carried away his goods. He rescued you and paid the price to God for your sins so that you can belong to Him now and forever.

He does not leave you empty handed. God credits to you His perfect righteousness through faith in Christ. That's everything! Let us worship and adore, offering our lives in thanks to Him, our Savior and King! Amen!