

Proper 5B – Jesus bound the strong man to set you free

1. It was June 6<sup>th</sup>, just like today, but it seems like so long ago and far away
  - a. On the beaches of Normandy France, the Allies had launched Operation Overlord, which was the codename for what we have come to call D-Day
    - i. This was the beginning of the final push against German occupied Western Europe that would end WWII.
    - ii. To put a stop to the German war machine the allies had to overcome the forces protecting the beaches and push into the German homeland.
    - iii. Some of you sitting here today might remember the war reports first-hand as they happened – what a time of tension and anxiety it must have been.
    - iv. But through very hard fighting, the allies accomplished their objective, the power of the strong-man, Hitler, was bound, his forces beaten, his stronghold plundered, and the world was set free from his tyranny.
  - b. The metaphor of war and conquest is appropriate for today as we look at our OT and Gospel lessons because we see the same dynamic at play on a cosmic scale
    - i. The OT lesson from Genesis relates the establishment of Satan’s hold on earth with Adam and Eve’s fall into sin
    - ii. And our Gospel lesson reveals part of the liberation campaign that was our Lord’s ministry.
  - c. I have said this several times recently – depending on the vantage point from which you evaluate the Lord’s ministry it was either a campaign of conquest or a mission of mercy
    - i. From our perspective Jesus came into the world for our salvation, the cross is an instrument of grace.
    - ii. However, from the perspective of Satan the cross was the ultimate weapon of warfare, more akin to the atomic bomb that definitively ended WWII in the Pacific.
    - iii. Through the cross Jesus dismantled Satan’s power as Paul tells us in Col, **“And you, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses, by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross. He disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in him.”** (Col 2:13-15)
    - iv. Jesus bound the strongman to set you free!
2. Let’s take a closer look at both Genesis and Mark to see how these two texts are inextricably linked because you can’t understand the ministry of Christ unless you know WHY He had a ministry in the first place

- a. In Genesis 3 we are presented with the “why” of Jesus’ ministry – do you want to know “why” Jesus came this is it!
  - i. To review this may seem unnecessary, but we live in a world that has long-since forgotten (or outright denies) our origin.
  - ii. Adam and Eve were created in the image of God, without sin, without shame, perfect, and immortal.
  - iii. In Genesis 3 we see that even in these early days of creation something has gone wrong because the serpent (whom we know to be Satan) is already seeking to draw Adam and Eve away from God by disobeying His command not to eat from the tree in the middle of the Garden.
  - iv. Satan’s temptation was the insinuation that, **“God knows...when you eat of this tree you will be like God knowing good from evil.”** (Gen 3:5).
- b. But God’s command in Genesis 2 not to eat of the fruit also came with a penalty for disobedience, **“for in the day that you eat of it you shall die.”** (Gen 2:17)
  - i. Our OT lesson picks up after Adam and Eve have already eaten, they’ve become aware of their sin, and they are hiding from the presence of God (something all of us still do when we’ve done something wrong)
  - ii. From that moment the world was broken, not only did the immortal put on mortality (death came) but we hear in God’s curse levied in the verses after our reading, everything was tainted: childbirth would be painful and dangerous, the relationship between husband and wife would be marked by brokenness, the earth would be at odds with humans.
  - iii. In short everything that we think of as “normal”- disease, death, war, famine, natural disaster were not part of the creation until we sinned and became subject to death and bound by the power of the devil.
  - iv. This is our natural state from the moment of conception, separated from God needing to be rescued.
- c. But in this sad tale of death and failure was a promise though easily overlooked.
  - i. In our reading we hear God curse the serpent, but the curse contained a promise for us, a hope that we would be rescued from our fallen state.
  - ii. God tells the serpent (Satan) that his days are already numbered, **“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.”** (Gen 3:15)
  - iii. There would come a son born of a woman who would crush Satan’s head, destroying his power and restoring creation
  - iv. If you want to know what the Bible is all about, this entire big book, look no further than this verse – the Bible is the account of how God fulfilled that promise given in the Garden to restore what we broke!

- v. Why did Jesus come? He was the One promised long ago who would crush the serpent's head for us.
- d. In our Gospel lesson this morning that's what we see, His ministry was God's Operation Overlord, to liberate humanity from sin, death and the devil
  - i. As the Pharisees speculate that He casts out demons by the power of demons Jesus says, "**How can Satan cast out Satan? If a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand.**" (Mk 3:23-24)
  - ii. Rather our Lord tells them, "**But 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.**" (Mk 3:27)
  - iii. This world was the strongman's house, since the fall Satan held everything in His grip but Christ rendered his forces powerless and bound the strongman to set us free!
  - iv. We have been liberated from slavery to sin and death through the sacrifice of Christ on the cross, He took our sin, shame and punishment on Himself that through faith we are forgiven, adopted children of God!
- 3. And our Lord liberally distributes the fruits of His victory here in the church
  - a. The Church is a field hospital for the sin-sick and injured where our Lord gives the medicine of life
    - i. Each week we confess our sins at the beginning of service and receive His word of forgiveness and pardon. This is a reminder that we're not yet home, and our enemy though defeated wants to take as many of us with him as he can.
    - ii. We hear His Gospel read and proclaimed, the very Word of eternal life that shapes our faith
    - iii. We receive His real body and blood along with the bread and wine for the nourishment of our souls, a beautiful fulfillment of our Lord's promise that I am the vine and you are the branches from John 15 our Lord comes to dwell with us physically
    - iv. Finally, in baptism, He washes away our sins and grants us the gift of the Holy Spirit, He claims us as His own.
  - b. And from this field hospital we are sent back into the fight, having been restored we are sent to bring others back that they might be healed
    - i. The life of a Christian is not a life of leisure behind the lines – Jesus bound the strongman to set us free to continue His mission.
    - ii. An ongoing mission where those who have been left for dead in their sins are brought back to life through Word and Sacrament only to be sent out to do the same for someone else.