

Third Sunday in Lent
03/03/2013
Shepherd of the Hills Lutheran Church
Luke 11:14-28
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I bring you grace mercy and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ Amen.

The Word of God for our consideration today is from Gospel according to St. Luke the 11th chapter.

Two Sundays ago in the Gospel we heard about our Lord as He faced the devil's temptations in the wilderness after His baptism for our sakes. It's good to remember that once you're baptized you're named. God sees the Name (which is Christian) and He sees one of His own redeemed by His Son. Satan on the other hand sees the Name and plots to trick us out of it. You at the point of your baptism become prey for Satan. He wishes all men condemned. He wants no human to come to faith. He'd rather that all of us drift aimlessly and blindly through this life. He would have us arrive at the gates of hell firmly in his evil grasp with no knowledge of Jesus. He'd leave you alone if you were like that. He'd let you do as you please, if you just didn't have that name on you. Yet you bear the Name from your baptism.

That Christ would be tempted soon after His baptism indicates that you and I can expect the same. It's also worth noting that last week in the Gospel Jesus healed the Canaanite woman's daughter. The dog who approached Christ asking for His grace and favor was rewarded better than she had a right to expect. Christ healed her daughter and once more thwarted Satan as He did in the wilderness. He defeated the devil's assaults on His own person and

defeated the assault on the daughter's person as well. That the woman's daughter and the man in today's Gospel could be taken over by demons should tell us something about the chief of all demons.

Against God and His Christ Satan is impotent. Satan has no power over you who belong to Christ. He is defeated. Christ accomplished that at the cross just as God prophesied He would way back in Genesis 3. Now two weeks in a row we see in Scripture someone possessed by a demon. Two weeks in a row we get a glimpse of what happens when we deal with Satan on our own, apart from Christ. It's before Christ that Satan is impotent, not before you. Do not attempt to fight Satan on your own. That is: never be without faith, never be without the Word of God.

"Now [Jesus] was casting out a demon that was mute. When the demon had gone out, the mute man spoke, and the people marveled. But some of them said, "He casts out demons by Beelzebul, the prince of demons," while others, to test him, kept seeking from Him a sign from heaven." In this case and the one last week it had to be that these people were without Christ. It had to be that they were outside of faith. In that position humans are sitting ducks for the devil. Alone we're easy prey for him. Now obviously a possessed person is not beyond Christ's ability to help, but alone they would never be set free.

The people surrounding Jesus on this day knew the power of demons. They saw first hand how they could take over people. So it comes as no surprise that they were amazed Jesus had the power to rid this man of his demon. The problem was they didn't necessarily believe that Jesus was a force from God.

They certainly didn't believe Jesus was the Christ. He by His simple command, by the force of His words forced the demon to leave the man and it had no choice but to comply. Yet some of the people said that it must be that Jesus was in league with the devil. They said it was the devil himself doing the exorcism.

Now it might be that the devil would fake an exorcism to fool people. If someone preached a false religion he would allow them to cast out demons if for no other reason so that he can keep fooling people. But he would not willingly allow Christ to do it. Why would he want to give credence to Christ's message? Why would he want to give the impression that Christ had power over him? This demon was forcefully removed by the power of God. He didn't want to be removed. He couldn't help but be removed from the man.

If you believe Scripture and if you believe Lutheran theology then you know what we all are as we are conceived. We are human and sinners from the first moment cells begin to divide in our little bodies. Before our mothers even knew we existed we were sinners. If you take a baby and never expose it to the Word of God through Baptism or proclamation what will happen? Will they ever come to a true knowledge of God. Now sure enough, that baby will eventually seek a god, but because of sin they'll never seek the true God. That child would end up making all kinds of things his god, but always with a futile ending.

Babies are conceived as sinners, 100%. Babies are born as sinners, 100%. But we have a merciful God who at the beginning wishes to apply the justification of Christ to that child. He wishes to drive out the spirit of the devil and replace it with the Spirit of God. Out with the evil and in with the Holy. So it

happens every time we have an infant baptism in this place. It sounds strange to our ears, but it's so. Every time someone is baptized it's a miracle as great as we read about in our Gospel today. And at almost every baptism there are those who doubt.

Whole denominations doubt that God works through such simple means as water and Word. How can it be that through this act faith is given and received? Doubters reason that the person must make a logical affirmation of faith in order to be saved. They reason that an infant must be brought to salvation some other way. How can they have faith? They don't know anything. They don't say anything. Faith takes knowledge. Faith takes confession, so the doubters say.

To all that we reply 'faith only needs Christ'. See faith isn't our response, it's God's work. Faith only needs for God to create it and that He does and that He promises. God says, "*Baptism now saves you.*" God says, "*Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is for you and for your children and for all who are far off, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to Himself.*" Jesus says, "*All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.*" So says our Lord.

Don't short sell your baptism because most of American Christendom says Baptism is just your confession and that's all. Your Lord's Words you just heard say it's much more than that.

So we're all baptized. Life should be easy now. "I'm named by God. I belong to Him" Well sure enough you are and do. But the devil knows your new Name. And he wants you to lose it. Jesus says about those who are converted and fall back into their sinful ways, "*When the unclean spirit has gone out of a person, it passes through waterless places seeking rest, and finding none it says, 'I will return to my house from which I came.'* And when it comes, it finds the house swept and put in order. Then it goes and brings seven other spirits more evil than itself, and they enter and dwell there. And the last state of that person is worse than the first."

Get rid of that demon, then run the Holy Spirit out too and you have a nice neat home for 8 demons instead of 1. In that situation the person will be worse off than they were at first. Remember that Saint Paul pictures the faith as a race. Not a sprint but a nice, long endurance race. However long you live on this earth that's how long your particular race is. Christ gives us our faith. He gives us everything we need to inherit eternal life. He prepares us for the race. But neglect the faith, fail to hear the Words of God, fail to receive the Sacraments, and fail to gather with our faithful brothers and sisters and faith will disappear with a whisper and the race is lost. At that point you'll be worse off than you were before. Satan will finally have you where he wants you and you did it all yourself.

But it doesn't have to be that way. Jesus gives you everything to create faith but He also gives you everything to sustain faith in this life. The Word of God, Baptism, the Lord's Supper and absolution are all here as gifts to you. They are gifts to create, sustain and strengthen faith.

To those who are baptized and who keep and guard the Word of God Jesus makes a promise. Satan will come after you. That sounds bad, and it isn't good but it'll be okay. It'll be okay because Christ is the devil's master. Satan cannot defeat Jesus. Jesus cast out demons because Jesus is God. And His promise is that He will protect you, His child, and keep you for all time and even eternity. For that He has given you His Word. He has given Baptism. He has given His body and blood. For Christ's sake you are forgiven. You are God's child named with the Name of Christ, redeemed for eternal life. Amen.

Now may the peace of God which passes all understanding keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.