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2nd Sunday after Pentecost
10 June 2012
Grace Lutheran Church, Wichita
Mark 3:20-35

In the name of the Father and of the ✠ Son and of the Holy Spirit

Today's Gospel reading locates us within another man's house.
You're a prisoner, a slave—
 beaten and tormented and coerced to do whatever the master of the house wants.

Your will is bound, you have no choice or voice of your own.
And even though you may not have chosen to be in this house,
 you strangely find it comfortable.
You like it, you see it as home.

And the longer you spend in this house the more and more rooted you become.
You become invested in keeping the house up, strengthening the walls, painting the fence.

Over time, you even learn to love the master of the house, the strongman.
You like what he says, think that he's right, and defend him from any attacks he may suffer.

But you're a slave, a prisoner, and that's all the life you know.

And you're not alone in this house.
The strongman has lots of slaves, lots and lots of prisoners doing his will, carrying out his wishes,
 and for some reason, they all love him for it.

This is your house.
And Satan is the master.
You are his slave along with every person born into this world by a mother and a father.
And there's nothing you can or want to do about it.

That's where today's Gospel picks up.
But today's reading tells us that something's not quite right in this house of ours.
It's Jesus—He sticks out.

Here He comes home, just after calling the twelve, “**those He also called apostles**” (Mk 3:14).
Now Jesus calls these apostles, Mark tells us,
 “**so that they might be with Him and He might send them out to preach and have
 authority to cast out demons**” (14-15).

So it's the 12 and Jesus who come home, probably to Mary, and any other relatives who could
make it, and she's got a meal hot and on the table.

“**But,**” Mark says, “**such a crowd has gathered that they couldn't even eat**” (3:20).

And then the house we're so comfortable with, the slave house that we call home,
 this strongman's house erupts.

Strangely, Mark doesn't tell us what happened between verses 20 and 21—
 it's simply the family running out, the crowd in such an uproar, and Mary trying to pull
 her son Jesus back into the home;
 for they were all crying, "He's out of His mind!"

Whatever happened, it threw the house on its head!
 In our house of slavery, our kingdom ruled by the prince of this world,
 something had gone terribly wrong.

And here we find out what Jesus did, one last miracle before grabbing dinner with the family—
 He did just as He called the 12 to do: cast out demons.

Now, there's no question that He did it.
 The crowd saw it, "**the scribes who came down from Jerusalem**" saw it (3:22).
 So the question isn't whether or not Jesus actually cast out the demon, but *how*?
 By what *authority*?

So the scribes conclude that He has this power to cast them out and the authority to do so
 because "**He's possessed by Beelzebul; by the prince of demons He casts out demons**" (3:22).

But that just doesn't make any sense.
 Jesus uses three images, or metaphors—parables, Mark calls them—to show how His power and
 authority cannot come from Satan:

**"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 will not be able to stand.
 And if Satan has risen up against himself and is divided, he cannot stand,
 but is coming to an end"** (3:23-26).

And this is the point: *Jesus isn't of this house.*

A divided house or kingdom will fall.
 Satan opposing Satan can only mean that Satan loses.
 And even Satan isn't that ignorant!

But this Jesus, well He's different.
 He's not from this house.
 He's not a slave or a prisoner to this strong man.
 He's not like us, born of man and woman—
 but born of God through woman.

But even though Jesus is not by nature a member of this household, this strong man's fortress,
 He nevertheless enters it.

He's an outsider that made His way in.
 And He sticks out like a sore thumb—every time demons see Him, they alert the others!

In Mark 5, Jesus encounters a man from the Gerasenes, possessed by an unclean spirit, who cried,
“What have you to do with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God?” (5:7).

The demons recognize Jesus for who He is—not a slave or a prisoner, but a free man—
 and they shutter!

But what does it all mean?

Why is Jesus in this prison house?

Why does He join all of us in shackles and suffer the harsh discipline from the strong man?

And how will the strong man react to Jesus turning the tables within this house?

The house that you’ve grown up within, the house of slavery,
 this house was relatively calm until Jesus stepped in.

When the Holy Spirit came upon Mary and she conceived the Son of God,
 this house was set on edge.

The demons entered panic mode, the strong man readied his armies, and we,
 well we fought this Christ with everything we had.

But Christ was here on a mission.

He was incarnate by the virgin Mary for a reason.

And that reason, that mission, His task was to defeat the strong man once and for all, and free the
 prisoners from their house of bondage.

So He says in today’s Gospel:

**“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”** (3:27).

Jesus has entered this house to bind and plunder.

But notice how Jesus doesn’t barge down the door of the house with guns blazing.

He doesn’t come by force or by strength or by power or by honor.

He comes as another man in shackles.

He comes in weakness, humility, and shame—as a man.

So how does this man, in weakness and poverty bind the strong man?

He does it on the cross.

He lets the strong man have his way.

He entices Satan himself to go ahead with what he’s wanted to do his whole angelic life.

Because Jesus knows the one thing Satan hates more than anything else,
 is that a Man is seated on the throne, and not an angel, like him.

And now, that Man who sits upon the throne has entered the house in weakness.

Here’s his chance.

And Satan is so greedy for this, so lustful after the destruction of his eternal enemy,

that he takes the bait!

And on the cross, in the nail-holes, with the spear, with the blood of this Man dripping down—
Satan, the strong man is bound.

Weakness overcame strength.
Humility defeated pride.
Life put an end to death.

And now for the plundering.
This is just a fun word for looting, or taking the spoils, or running through the house and taking
all that's there for yourself.
Jesus runs through this house—no longer a house of slavery, but of freedom—
and He takes a hold of you.

He removes your shackles.
He feeds you with a bread that actually delivers life and not death.
He washes you off, clean from your filth.
He bandages your wounds and wipes your tears from your eyes.
He heals. He saves. He speaks so tenderly to you.
And He says, "*You're free.*"

He is now your master, your Lord—but not in a way you've ever known a master or a Lord.
For this master and Lord doesn't come by force or strength, but in weakness, lowliness, and joy.
And having been set free by the work of this Jesus, binding the strong man and plundering his
goods—
you're in His family, His house, His kingdom undivided.

And where divisions exist, let them be put away.
Where we have sins against another: anger or hatred, envy or lust—
let these be confessed and forgiven and put away.

For you're no longer in a house where you must fight to defend yourself.
You're free.
And so is your neighbor.

You're free to confess this Christ, to speak His name, to call upon Him in every trial and need.
You're free to hear His word, delight in His gifts, and receive with joy all He has to offer.
You're now free, finally, to do the will of God. As Jesus said,
"For whoever does the will of God, he is My brother and sister and mother" (3:35).

Your sins are forgiven, shackles removed, fear put away, and death is no more a threat at all.
For your Lord and master is the giver of life—
and He gives it all to you.

In the name of the Father and of the ✠ Son and of the Holy Spirit