

Oculi – Lent 3
March 6-7,2010
Luke 11:14-28
“Slavery Gone”

In the Name of the Father and of the ☩ Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen. Our text for this morning is the Gospel lesson just read from Luke chapter 11, and from Exodus chapter 8, the beginning of the plagues.

The people were under a cruel dictator. He made them slaves. He killed them indiscriminately, all in the name of his so-called gods. Even their young male children did not escape his wrath and fear. They had suffered under him for many years. It seemed there was no hope, no deliverance from their suffering and death.

The people longs for deliverance, but they were afraid to hope, afraid even to ask that God would release them from their sorrow and pain. *Was God there any more? Did he care about their trials and tribulations? And perhaps even more series still, could God deliver them? Did He have the strength and the power to go against such a cruel tyrant?* That was the question on everyone’s lips.

We’re not talking about Osama Bin Laden, and the war against Afghanistan, dear friends, or any other dictator from the last centuries. We’re talking about Pharaoh and the people of Israel. It is amazing, though, how often the events of this life seem to parallel and mimic the great stories from the Scriptures, *isn’t it? Don’t you feel sometimes as if we’ve been here before?* Our lives are déjà vu, a reflection of the lives of suffering and pain which have gone on forever.

Back in Moses’ day, when the people suffered under cruel Pharaoh, they cried out to God for a deliverer and God sent him. His name was Moses. God’s hand was upon him. He went to Pharaoh and said on behalf of the Lord, let my people go. But Pharaoh would not let them go. He was too arrogant, to struck with

pride in his own power and accomplishments to realize that the very finger of God was upon him, and about to squash him as a bug.

Each time God sent a plague upon the people of Egypt, Pharaoh's magicians and sorcerers would try to mimic it, to copy the power and might of the God of Israel. Sometimes they were successful. The rod into serpents. The plague of blood. They could copy God's power, to an extent. But it would not last.

In our Old Testament lesson today, the magicians and false gods reached their limits. They could not mimic the plague of lice or the flies that swept over the land. This is the finger of God, they told Pharaoh. They had met their match in the God of Israel. But Pharaoh would not listen. He refused to see what was plainly right before his face. He would not hear what God told him through God's servant, Moses. Eventually Pharaoh would suffer the virtual destruction of his nation before he would see that he wasn't in control.

Now this story about Pharaoh and the children of Israel I suppose could teach us something about the war and how we should operate with patience toward the people, and pray for a swift victory. That's probably true. But that's not the point for us here today.

The point for us is that Jesus is the greater Moses, who delivers us not from a cruel tyrant here on earth, but from the cruelest dictator of all, Satan himself. Jesus casts out demons. That is His work, to undo the power of Satan in our midst by forgiving sins and drawing us to Himself. That is the very essence of Jesus' work here on earth. Everything else which Jesus does in His ministry serves that one great purpose of bringing you to heaven to be with Him forever.

That is what offended and scandalized the Pharisees and the like in our text. Jesus casts out a demon and the multitudes marveled. He is doing His work of undoing Satan's work of destroying our lives. But while Jesus is about His work, others said

that He casts out demons by Beelzebub, or Satan, the prince of demons.

The children of Israel could not get out of their slavery by themselves. There even came a time for them when they were willing to compromise in order to get out the easy way. But God was not content to have their slavery be easier, he wanted it GONE. And in order for that to happen, their deliverer had to come. They could not save themselves.

The same is true for you and me. You cannot save yourself. You cannot fix the mess of your life. When you and I try to solve the problems of our life without Christ, we are like the man in our text who tries to remove the power of Satan on his own:

When an unclean spirit goes out of a man, he goes through dry places, seeking rest; and finding none, he says, ‘I will return to my house from which I came.’ And when he comes, he finds it swept and put in order. Then he goes and takes with him seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter and dwell there; and the last state of that man is worse than the first.

This man could not get out of the mess of his life by himself. When the unclean spirit left, he searched and searched and everything was dry. So he went back to the old way, the way of the Law. And so when he returned to his old way, things were worse than when they were before.

Our Lord Jesus Christ this Lent has big plans for you. He has plans not to just make your slavery easier. He doesn't want your problems and difficulties to be manageable, like an incurable disease you just have to live with. No, His plan is to deliver you completely. He is the stronger man in our Gospel, who binds the power of Satan with the cords of his own death. And because of Jesus' death, the bonds Satan has over you are broken forever.

Repent of your self-willed ways. Repent of your desire to solve your own problems and get out of your own difficulties. Repent of your arrogance and pride to believe that you can defeat

the enemies that are against you on your own. Repent and believe. Believe that Jesus Christ is the one who is the very finger of God, who traces His life upon yours. Believe that Jesus is the stronger man, who can bind the power of Satan up forever.

Repent and believe. Christ is your deliverer. He is the Lord of your life and the God of your salvation. He is the one who saves you by His blood and then gives you His body and blood to show you His great love for you. In a world of uncertainty and trials, He is your life and your peace. Believe it for His sake. Amen.