**Satan Bound and Bruised**

Based on [Genesis 3:8-15](http://www.esvbible.org/search/Genesis+3%3A8-15/) and [Mark 3:20-35](http://www.esvbible.org/search/Mark+3%3A20-35/)

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Pentecost 2

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Today’s scripture lessons, the OT and Gospel reading both deal with a battle. The lesson from Genesis predicts a battle to come, and the Gospel lesson is one round of that battle. The battle is between Jesus and Satan, but he’s not always called Satan. First, he’s called a “serpent,” and later he’s called a “strong man.” And our lessons speak to how Jesus will bind the strong man, and bruise the serpent.

In our gospel lesson today, Jesus is being accused. Jesus had been casting out demons. The scribes, who didn’t like him, were accusing him of casting out demons by using Satanic powers. And Jesus says to them, “**that’s just stupid**.” Why would Satan cast out his own…huh? ..makes no sense. Why would a player put the puck in the other teams goal? Why would an athlete run the ball into his own end zone? Why would a soldier shoot down his own aircraft? He wouldn’t. Neither would Satan cast out demons. Only his enemies would do that.

But Jesus takes it further. He says *why* he’s casting out demons. He says, *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.* First bind the strong man, then plunder his house. As we’ve said, satan is the strong man, and Jesus binds Satan, restrains him, ties him up, puts him up against the ropes by casting out demons.

And why does he need to tie up the devil? Because he wants to plunder the devil, pillage his house. To put it simply, Jesus wants to steal something from the devil. He wants to steal *you* from Satan’s grip.

You once belonged to the devil, you see, that’s what original sin means. You hear of all those old stories about people making a deal with the devil. Well, that’s what Adam and eve did. Made a deal with the devil. And now, he has property rights, the most basic property right you can have, the right of possession.

Ladies and gentlemen, there is evil in this world, real evil. It’s not just that there’s good intentioned people who make mistakes. Good and evil are not just different points of view. There is good and there is evil, and there’s a battle going on. Demon possession is just one way that Satan possesses people, takes them as his own. He possesses people’s thoughts and minds by distracting us from God and from seeking communion with him.

Jesus once painted a picture of us. He called us sheep, even lost sheep, and that says a lot. The thing about sheep is that they have a herd mentality, and the shepherd can use that to his advantage. You can’t herd cats right, cats don’t have a herd mentality. But sheep do, and that works to a shepherds advantage.

If a sheep were always aware of his surroundings, he’d never leave the flock. So why are there lost sheep? Because a sheep can get distracted. A sheep might keep his head down for too long, eating a particularly plush patch of grass. And as he’s grazing he might following the patch of grass…preoccupied, possessed by the desire to keep grazing until, when he finally lifts his head up again, he finds out he’s wandered away from the flock. Now he’s lost. Now he’s vulnerable. Now he’s right where the wolf wants him to be…and the sheep don’t stand a chance. The sheep has wandered away from the shepherd, the protector, and now he belongs to the wolf.

The devil is as hungry as a wolf, strong as a strong man, and he is crafty like a serpent. That means that, if we mere mortals were left to face him alone, we wouldn’t stand a chance.

Our OT lesson contains the “first gospel” in the whole bible. Adam and Eve had just been seduced by the serpent, the devil, and ate the fruit forbidden by god. And so god curses the serpent, and then makes a prophesy. God says to the serpent, the devil, “**Someday, I will send somebody, born of a woman, and he will be your enemy. He will bruise your head and you shall bruise his heel.**

Satan is the serpent, the strong man. The evil forces of this world are stronger than you. What it means is that Satan is stronger than men. Jesus, when he became man, and when his glory was veiled in his human flesh…Satan was stronger than him too. Now at any moment Jesus could have called upon his father and legions of angels would come to his aid, and bind the “strong man” this devil, for him. But he didn’t. Instead, he lived his life in utter reliance and utter submission to the will of his Father.

When Jesus was tempted by the devil in the wilderness, do you remember what was his defense? Did he overpower Satan by force or might? Did he wrestle with Satan, put him in a choke hold, get him to scream uncle? Did he dance his pecs around, and send the devil running scared? No, he simply expressed confidence in the benevolent will of his Father to deliver him. In other words ***he lived by faith***. And when Satan would try to box below the belt, Jesus would defend himself with scripture, God’s Word, and the authority of that word sent Satan packing.

Satan is powerful, but he is bound. Jesus bound Satan on the cross. The cross was like a trap. And how do we cast out demons, by preaching that cross. That means that every time we proclaim the deeds and the name of Jesus Christ, it’s like yanking a choke collar on the devil. How do we keep Satan from possessing our lives, from claiming us as his own, from seducing us into a life of sin, by preaching and hearing the words of Jesus?

Our greed, our pride, our anger, our jealousy, our lust, these things lead us away from the flock where Satan waits in ambush. But the good news of Jesus Christ is that he wins the battle, and defeats our enemies that threaten to devour us. Jesus battled Satan on the cross, and crushed his head, and when we preach of that victory…wolves flee in terror, strong men are bound helpless, and serpents are trampled under foot and we can sing those famous lines from the *Battle Hymn of the Republic*:

**I have read a fiery Gospel writ in burnished rows of steel;  
“As ye deal with My contemners, so with you My grace shall deal”;  
Let the Hero, born of woman, crush the serpent with His heel,  
Since God is marching on.  
Glory! Glory! Hallelujah! Glory! Glory! Hallelujah!  
Glory! Glory! Hallelujah! Since God is marching on.**