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St. Paul's Lutheran Church
2100 16th Street SW
Austin, MN 55912-1749
Pastor Ted Barthels
Sermon preached on
March 17, 2021
5th Midweek Lent

Responsive Reading: Psalm 2

Passion Reading: Jesus Before Herod; Barabbas

Hymns: 145; 141; 159; 552:1,6,8

Grace be unto you and peace from God our Father and our Lord
and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Sermon Text: Genesis 3:15

“And I will put enmity
Between you and the woman,
And between your seed and her Seed;
He shall bruise your head,
And you shall bruise His heel.” (NKJV)

This is the Word of God.

Sanctify us, oh Lord, through Your truth. Your Word is truth.
Amen.

In Christ Jesus, our Crucified Savior, dear fellow Redeemed:

INTRO: Dealing with the devil.

What do we think of when we think about the devil? Very likely our minds go to one or two Bible history lessons. The first is the one that comes immediately before our text, and includes the words of our text. The other is probably the account of the devil tempting Jesus in the wilderness. In spite of our familiarity with these biblical accounts along with others as in the book of Job, we probably don't give the devil much thought. We think about Jesus every day. We are sure to pray to Jesus. We address Jesus with our

table prayers, our bedtimes prayers, and we are careful to pray in Jesus' name with all the rest of our prayers. So, hopefully we keep Jesus before us a bit more than the devil.

However, we shouldn't just dismiss the devil out of hand. The devil is very real, very cunning, very powerful, fully capable of doing things that we would consider supernatural, and perhaps even scary. If we aren't focused on the devil as we make our way through life, be assured that the devil is very much focused on us. He focuses on us not only as the large group, the Church, the believers in Christ Jesus, but also individually. Luther encourages us in the Catechism to be aware of the devil and the power he would exert against us. Both Luther's morning and evening prayers end with these thoughts, *"Into Your hands I entrust my body and soul and everything else. Let Your holy angel be with me, that the devil may have no power over me.* (Luther's Small Catechism: Daily Prayers.)

In our Lenten meditations, "It's all about Redemption" we are considering Jesus' Passion and how that impacts us for our salvation. We are doing this on the basis of Luther's explanation to the Second Article of the Apostles Creed. Just a couple of minutes ago we professed this truth: *"He has redeemed me, ... purchased and won me from all sin, from death, and from the power of the devil."* That last phrase is the focus of this evening's meditation. --

THEME: Jesus Rescued Me from the Devil's Power.

We need to appreciate more fully --

I. Our Need to be Rescued.

Let's start at the beginning, shall we? That is where our text takes us, back to the Garden of Eden, and that tragic day when the devil asserted his powers to deceive Adam and Eve. They fell for the devil's lies, and they saw the fruit of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil as being good to eat, and something that was desirable to make them wise. (Genesis 3:6) It is easy for us to say, "How foolish they were," and indeed they were foolish, for they did not consider what that meant to know both good and evil. As soon as they knew evil, they knew *only* evil continually. The devil

is the Great Deceiver, and he managed to deceive Eve and then Adam, and together they sinned against the Lord!

From that moment they were in league with the devil. The devil controlled their thoughts. As soon as they took and ate of the forbidden fruit their eyes were opened. They saw that they were naked, and they were ashamed. When they heard the Lord coming into the Garden they were afraid. They were afraid of their loving Creator God! And they didn't any longer understand the nature of God. They tried to hide from God. And then when confronted by God, instead of confessing their sinful error, they attempted to pass off responsibility for what they had done as if it wasn't their fault!

That is but the beginning of the devil's power over sinful man. He is cunning, deceitful, a liar from the beginning, and all unbelievers are in the same plight of being under the devil's power, as Jesus declared to and of His enemies: *"You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own resources, for he is a liar and the father of it."* (John 8:44)

What was true for Adam and Eve regarding their relationship with God is also true for all natural man. We know what the Scriptures say: *"The carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be. ⁸So then, those who are in the flesh cannot please God."* (Romans 8:7-8) Enmity. It means animosity, rancor, hostility, antagonism, hatred. That is what is in the heart of natural man towards **God**. That is from the devil.

Our way of thinking comes from the devil. Natural man thinks of righteousness in terms of what nice things we can do. We are sure the kind of things that will impress other people will also impress God. And yet the devil would use a sneak attack to accuse us of **un**righteousness, and the certainty of death and damnation, for doubt is always in the back of every mind, "Have I done enough? Will God be pleased? Is God still angry in spite of how good I am!"

That is what it is like to be under the devil's power. Think of Judas Iscariot and how the devil controlled him through his love of

money, and then led Judas to despair, and end his own life! Think of how Peter failed to heed Jesus' warning, "*Simon, Simon! Indeed, Satan has asked for you, that he may sift you as wheat.*" (Luke 22:31) Peter foolishly placed himself in the way of temptation, and then, in a panic, denied the Lord Jesus, even cursing and swearing, so there would be no doubt in the minds of others that this man was NOT one of Jesus' disciples. The devil's power.

The devil had his way with Peter, and the devil would have his way with you and me as well. Except for Jesus we would be lost and condemned sinners! **But He has redeemed me a lost and condemned sinner!**

II. We have Been Rescued by the Hero of Our Salvation.

That rescue was first announced in a fallen world to two undeserving sinners named Adam and Eve, even as the Lord proclaimed to the devil himself the defeat that would befall him! These are the words of our text: "*And I will put enmity Between you and the woman, And between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head, And you shall bruise His heel.*" (Genesis 3:15)

For the devil to be defeated, for fallen mankind to be rescued from the devil's power it was necessary for a man to come into this world to take on the devil in mortal combat. And so the eternal Son of God took on flesh and blood *and mortality* to face and defeat the devil. And it was most certainly nothing less than the fiercest mortal combat with the highest of stakes in the history of the world. It was to be the Seed of the woman, a descendent born of a woman, a mortal man, who had to defeat the devil. The devil, as well as his seed, (all his evil minions) would fall before the power of this Hero of our salvation.

The devil was put on notice that the enmity brought into the world through the devil's deception and lies would be turned back on him. There would be enmity between the Seed of the Woman and the devil. There would be allegiance between the Seed of the woman and the Lord! In the end there would be one Victor, one Champion, that would be the Champion of our salvation, Jesus Christ, the Crucified!

There would be a crushing blow given and a crushing blow received. These are the words of the Lord. The difference is found in the location of the crushing blow. The Seed of the Woman would **crush** the serpent's **head**. The devil's cunning power would be ended! He would be defeated. To accomplish this feat the Seed of the Woman would have to endure a crushing blow Himself. God references it as the crushing of His **heel**.

It all came to its culmination in Jerusalem, where Jesus was arrested, falsely accused with every lie the devil could pump into the system, be scourged, and condemned and ultimately crucified on Calvary. Through it all the devil continued to try to bring Jesus down, to cause Him to sin, to cause Him to abandon His mission of salvation. And then Jesus died. He poured out His life blood, and gave up His spirit, *“that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil.”* (Hebrews 2:14)

Was that the devil's final attempt to destroy Jesus? Did the devil think that by Jesus' death he had crushed the head of the Seed of the woman? Any who thought Jesus was defeated at Calvary had another think coming! He was triumphant in His death, for He paid the price of sin once and for all; for all time and for all people! He revealed that victory in His resurrection on Easter morning. Jesus, the Seed of the woman rescued us from the devil's power! He set us free to once again be at peace with God and live in harmony with the God of our salvation.

“Oh, for a thousand tongues to sing
My great Redeemer's praise,
The glories of my God and King,
The triumphs of His grace!

“He breaks the power of canceled sin,
He sets the prisoner free;
His blood can make the foulest clean;
His blood avails for me.

“See all your sins on Jesus laid;
The Lamb of God was slain;
His soul was once an offering made
For every soul of man.”

(The Lutheran Hymnal 360:1,4,6)

AMEN.

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