

In the Name of the Father, and of the ✠ Son, and of the Holy Ghost.

St. Luke records that the Lord taught His disciples to pray. He taught them the Words of the Lord's Prayer, teaching them to call God their Father. He taught them the true meaning of prayer, and the great blessings that prayer brings. He taught them that God hears prayer and answers it. And then Luke continues "And He was casting out a demon..."

Consider for a moment the dynamics of what St. Luke describes. A man was possessed by a demon. A dark, evil force, a force stronger than any man, a sinister force had overcome him. It took control of him. It took away his speech. It rendered him mute. And there was nothing he could do about it. He was helpless.

St. Luke continues by saying only "So it was, when the demon had gone out, that the mute spoke..." The man was healed. He regained his speech. He was freed from that dark and harmful force. The Evangelist doesn't record what the Lord said or did. The Evangelist doesn't record what the healed man said with his first words.

But he surely knew great joy. He knew a freedom that he hadn't previously enjoyed. And he knew his Savior. He knew the only One who can truly heal. He knew the One who saved him from that demon. St. Matthew writes of the same account that the multitudes marveled, and said "It was never seen like this in Israel!"

There are a good number of accounts in Holy Scripture of our Lord casting out demons. While St. Luke doesn't go into detail regarding the casting out of the demon that caused the man's loss of speech, several times Scripture describes the Lord casting out a demon by rebuking it. He commands them, for they are under His authority.

He scolds them. He admonishes them like a naughty pet, and they obey. They must obey. He is God. They don't have a choice. Mere men can't rebuke demons by their own strength. But the One who exorcised the mute man was no mere man. His works show it. His miracles testify to it. The marveling multitudes confirm it.

But the Pharisees don't marvel. Like bickering political factions in the run-up to a Presidential election, they level the most slanderous accusation against Him when all evidence points to the contrary – they say the demons obey Him because His power comes from the devil.

He answers them in a way that appeals to human reason – if what they say is true, then Satan is divided against Himself. It makes sense, even to the politically enraged, even to those blinded by factional hatred.

And then the Lord teaches about a strong man. Clearly the demon that had possessed the mute man was strong, and dispatched by one who was stronger. So there was a strong man who guarded his own palace and his goods, and among those goods he counted the mute man. And this is where the account St. Luke records meets you.

The strong man guards his own palace and his goods. Truth be told, you were the goods the strong man Satan guarded. You were made his by the sin in which you were born. You

remained under his rule because of the sins you daily committed. Like the mute man, you were held captive, captive to sin, subject to a dark and sinister kingdom of transgression and death.

St. Paul describes that kingdom, the darkness of sinful man: fornication, uncleanness, covetousness, filthiness, foolish talking, coarse jesting, idolatry. And the Apostle teaches of the consequences: “For this you know, that no fornicator, unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, has any inheritance in the Kingdom of Christ and God.”

Upon such, the Apostle teaches, “the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience.” Like the mute man, you were held captive by a strong man, unable to free yourself, helpless.

But thanks be to God, a stronger Man came. He had defeated the devil before. For war broke out in heaven: Michael and his angels fought with the dragon; and the dragon and his angels fought, but they did not prevail, nor was a place found for them in heaven any longer.

So the great dragon was cast out, that serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was cast to the earth, and his angels were cast out with him. And there, on earth, did he possess the mute man. And here, on earth, did he count you among his goods.

But thanks be to God, a stronger Man came. He overcame Satan, taking from him all his armor. The armor of the devil is the lie. Truth Incarnate prevailed over him. God Incarnate won the war. Christ is the Strongest Man. And yet in a great Mystery, He manifested His strength in weakness.

He demonstrated His great strength by going silently, like a lamb to the slaughter. He demonstrated His great strength by dying on the cross. It is there that He atoned for your sins, for the sins that bound you like chains and kept you in the kingdom of darkness and death. He exchanged His life for yours, taking your sins upon Himself, rendering His life for your ransom.

As the Apostle writes, “Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma.” And although He knew the darkness of death, in the glorious light of His resurrection, He freely gives you His righteousness.

Believing in Him, baptized into Him, you who were once darkness are now light in the Lord. And so you walk as children of the light, for the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness, righteousness and truth. And the Spirit that brings goodness, righteousness and truth is the Spirit that fills you, the Spirit that gives you faith in Christ.

He is the Finger of God, the God that men can touch and see, God who has fingers and arms and legs. He divided the devil’s spoils, by sundering you from the devil’s snares, from sin and death, and He redeemed you. You are the spoils of war. The enemy is overcome, for as St. John was given to witness “they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony...”

Christ, the Strongest Man, has freed you from sin, darkness and death. And He has brought you into His Kingdom, the Kingdom of peace and love, the Kingdom of salvation and life, the Kingdom of hope and comfort and divine protection – protection against the devil and his

minions, protection against the tribulations of this fallen world, even epidemics, protection against death. For in Christ you have life, life that cannot be taken away.

And this day the One who freed you, the One who loves you, the One who brought you into His Kingdom, the Holy Church, the One Undivided House of which He is Head; this day He has brought you into His House, into this House of God, the House of the Strongest Man, to receive His Saving Gifts.

He has brought you here to eat and drink Christ, to receive His forgiveness, and to hear His Word. So blessed are you who hear the Word of God and keep it. For surely the Kingdom of God has come upon you.

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