

Psalm 19:14 Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O LORD, my strength, and my redeemer.

1 Timothy 1:2 ...Grace, mercy, and peace, from God our Father and Jesus Christ our Lord.

Text: Luke 11:14-28

“Strong Man Spirituality”

Introduction: Our Home

A home can be described as the place where you feel most comfortable. Your home should be a safe haven, a refuge from the tempests of the world, the place where you can relax and really be yourself.

Many people feel at home in this world. They feel as though this world is as good as it gets, the best of all possible worlds. Often people who have been blessed with health, wealth, social status and all the other good things this world has to offer feel “It’s a Wonderful Life.”

But among God’s people, there is a sneaking suspicion that there should be something more. We know this world has some good, good that reflects the goodness of our Creator, but this goodness is not as good as it could or should be.

Satan’s Home

The sneaking suspicion that this world is not our home comes to the forefront when we face death. When a young person dies in Iraq, when there is a sudden car accident, when someone is diagnosed with an unsuspected illness, we know that this is not how our heavenly Father designed life to be. We are not in our home. So we feel uncomfortable at the very least, grief stricken if the death strikes at a loved one.

There is beautiful hymn called, “This Is My Father’s World.” I am sure that many of you are familiar with it. Yet, it is not in any of our hymnals. The reason that it is not in any of hymnals is that we are *not* in our Father’s world (and the theologians that put our hymnals together know this.) This is *not* our Father’s world - at least not in the way that he originally designed it. He is its Creator but there are deep imperfections running through it because of sin. We don’t see the Father’s will in the “natural” course of life here and now.

In the course of our day, we speak about tragedies happening for various reasons. We say that woman died in a car accident because the roads were icy. We say that elderly gentleman passed away from old age. But in reality, we are all dying and the cause of all death is sin – not necessarily actual *sins* like getting drunk or smoking but *sin* as a condition that permeates this world – in other words, original sin.

The Strong Man

God is the author of life but Satan is the author of sin. Satan invented it. He convinced Adam and Eve to participate in it. He still controls it today. That is not to say that every bad thing that happens is the direct product of Satan but he is always encouraging it as much as he can.

Satan is the strong man mentioned in today’s Gospel lesson. Jesus says, “*When a strong man, fully armed, guards his own palace, his good are safe.*” This world is Satan’s palace. Have you ever thought about that?

Jesus even recognized the devil’s authority in this world when he was tempted in the desert. Let me refresh your memory about that temptation by reading Matthew 4:8-10.

Matthew 4:8 Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor. 9 "All this I will give you," he said, "if you will bow down and worship me." 10 Jesus said to him,

"Away from me, Satan! For it is written: 'Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only.'"

Notice Jesus doesn't answer Satan by saying, "This Is My Father's World" so you can't give it to me. Instead, Jesus recognizes that Satan has been given authority over this world. He recognizes that Satan could give him the "kingdoms of the world" if Jesus would worship him but Jesus does not give in to this temptation. Instead, he submits to the Father's will.

The Stronger Man

Jesus shows that he is stronger than Satan during this temptation. Satan throws all he has at Jesus but Jesus does not yield. Jesus does not want to live in the devil's palace. He wants to rob his goods. Satan's goods are, of course, you and me. Jesus came to steal us from the ruler of this world.

Jesus robbed Satan on the cross. To the world, Jesus appears at his weakest on the cross but he is actually at his strongest there. On the cross, he robbed Satan of every man, woman and child in this world. Jesus emptied Satan's palace except for those who refuse to leave. Soon that palace will be demolished and rebuilt the way God intended it to be.

Satan knows that his time is short, so he does all he can against God's saints now.

The Great Raid

One of the best movies of 2005 is the "The Great Raid," a movie about American prisoners of war held by the Japanese in the Philippines. The movie is set at the end of World War II. The Japanese have been brutalizing American troops, forcing them to march through the jungle, beating them while they march, humiliating them and slowly starving them.

As the war draws to a close, US military leadership starts to worry that the Japanese will kill off the remaining 500 prisoners. The Japanese leadership knows they have lost the war and they may want revenge on these unarmed prisoners.

To prevent a massacre the 6th Ranger Battalion is sent to rescue them. The Rangers risk their lives to save their fellow soldiers. After vicious fighting, the American prisoners are set free.

Conclusion: Prisoners Freed

In this fallen world, we face a similar situation. Our enemy the devil has been defeated. He knows he has lost the war. So like a brutal prison guard, he tries to inflict as much damage as he can with time he has left.

We sit like prisoners of war in this world. We watch the sky, not hoping for American aircraft, but for heavenly aircraft. We wait for the Second Coming of Jesus. He is our airborne Ranger. He is our strong man who overpowers the strong man of this world. He is the one who sets this world's prisoners free.

In the meantime, we remain faithful. We help one another through the difficulties of our forced march. And we remain joyful in spite of suffering because we know that our enemy has been defeated.

May that peace which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.