

## Sermon Transcript for March 20, 2022

Grace, mercy, and peace be with you from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

So we have Jesus casting out a demon. Now you would think that that would be a pretty impressive event. That this man who was mute, a demon is cast out of him, and then suddenly the man could speak. You would think that the crowds and the people would say, "Wow, this man comes from God. Maybe we should listen to Him. If He can make the mute to speak, then maybe He has something worth saying."

But instead they accuse Him of casting out demons in the name of Beelzebub. In other words, He is casting out demons by the power of Satan himself. Because Beelzebub is another name for Satan. It actually is Lord of the Flies. That's where we get that phrase from, Lord of the Flies. Where does that come from? It comes from that he is charged over the gates of Gehenna. Gehenna is a place outside of Jerusalem where all the waste product was placed. It was basically a burning pile of waste, smoldering all the time, always smelling, always burning. Flies were all over it, the dogs barking and everything. That's the image that we get. It was a mockery of Satan. The Lord of the Flies is the Lord of the dung heaps is really what Beelzebub means.

Now why in the world would you want to serve the Lord of the dung heap is beyond me, but it seems like that is human nature's natural response, is to go to the dung heap. We like it for some reason. We wallow in it. I mean, remember Jeremiah is one of the last prophets before Judah is taken off the valley. In fact, he actually is alive when the events take place. He gets the fortunate opportunity of being one of the prophets that is actually alive when his prophecies come true. I'm sure he enjoyed that a lot. He was put in prison for his words and told that he would die unless he repented of his words.

Here we have the beginnings of that. He preaches out against Judah because they were falling after Beelzebub. They were going after the dung heap. Rather than worshiping the Lord their God, they decided that they would worship Satan himself. And we might say, "Oh, well, we don't worship Satan. I mean, that's pretty clear and obvious. We're good people." We look in the Ephesians passage, and it says, we're to walk in love. But we must flee sexual immorality, impurity, and covetousness, crude joking, foolish talk. I love this. There's sexual adultery, and then there's crude talk, and there's covetousness, and they're all evil.

Now I can fairly easily define sexual immorality. That's pretty straightforward. Anything outside one man, one woman in the bonds of marriage, that's sexual immorality. Period. It doesn't matter what flavor or what combination. It's all evil in the sight of God. It's very easy to point out and say, "Oh, yeah. Don't do that." Well, what does it mean to be impure or covetous? Those terms are a little bit harder to define. Covetousness or idolatry, what does that mean? What does it mean to have an idol that we worship? I don't know about you, but I don't have a statue of Baal or Rock or Zeus or anything like that in my living room, at least nothing that I worship. So, we think of idols as these pieces of things, these statues that people worship, pagan people worship. But idolatry is much more subtle, as is covetousness.

If you remember, we read... I don't know. It's been a month or two. When what we talked about do not worry or be anxious about anything because that is idolatry and sin. So basically, every time we worry and fret and are anxious, we are being covetous and idolatrous. Because if we worry we're basically saying, "God, I don't trust You to get me through this situation. I don't think You're big enough to handle what's going on." And that is in essence saying, "God, You are not truly God."

Now we may not think that's what we're doing, but that's exactly what we are doing. Let's face it, if you look around the world today, if you've turned on the news for any length of time, it's easy to get anxious. The world seems to be falling

apart, as does our own nation. Let's not even talk about our own lives and what's going on personally, and the struggles that we personally face, and the anxiety that is in our lives, the things that cause us to be uncertain and shaken. What are we called to do about all of this?

We have the prophets that say, "Turn from your evil ways and confess to God and maybe He'll relent from the punishment that is coming." We as a church community are called to do just that. Now it might be tempting to try to figure out what do we need to do to change this society to make it better. That I should do something, I should go somewhere, whatever. But if you listen to what Jesus has to say, and if you listen to what Jeremiah has to say, the first step in all of this, and even what Paul says in Ephesians, is that the first thing that we need to do, the only way that we are going to deal with the anxiety of our own lives and the anxiety of this world is to be imitators of God and walk in love as Christ loved us. We're to hear the word of God and keep it. The first way that we keep it is trusting Him in all things. Trusting Him that no matter what I hear on the news, no matter what diagnosis I get personally, no matter what struggles I'm facing in my individual life, no matter what sin seems to plague me, that God is more powerful than any of this. He casts out demons with His word.

He describes his role. The strong man, Satan himself, has many allies. Satan has himself, he's got the whole world around us that's fighting against God, and even our own sinful natures are fighting against God in our normal Christian lives. He has three strong men, strongmen, who are attacking us and trying to get us to doubt and to worry and to fret and to be anxious. When he says when a stronger man comes, he takes away the armor of the strong man and he overcomes it, and he divides and spoils. In other words, Satan is a strong man, but God is stronger still.

This struggle that we face, this anxiety that we face, this is a spiritual battle with Satan. And he is strong. But like the words of A Mighty Fortress, one little word can fell him. He's got an Achilles' heel. Except for it's not a small opening. It's a huge weakness to pass, and that is Jesus Christ. Christ on the cross died to forgive our sins. Christ on the cross died to redeem this world. Christ died on the cross to defeat Satan and to defeat his power over us. We are called to hear the word. We've been emphasizing this over and over again, especially during the season of Lent. Rather than focusing upon, "Let me give something up for Lent," let's add something. Add a reading of the word of God. Increase your time and study. Increase your time in prayer. Increase your devotion to the word of God because that is where we find the strength. That is where the strong man is defeated. That is where our anxiety loses its force. That is where our fear dies, is in the word of God and only in the word of God.

Let it dwell in you richly no matter what they have, no matter how the rest of the world is going to react. Because look what they said to Jesus. Jesus is doing miracles and what do they want? They want a sign from heaven. If casting out a demon is not a sign from heaven I don't know what is. Yet, they want another sign or something. They accuse Him of serving Satan. We hear this today in our own lives. Those who support life, who are pro-life are considered bigots for whatever reason. It's a moral virtue to support abortion on demand. It's a moral virtue to divide us based on color, creed, or anything else. They stay on the moral high ground by accusing good people of being evil because they won't say that their evil is good. We can try and convince them, we can try and argue with them, we can try and show them through reason and logic and history and the scriptures and you name it that we are not. That we are of love.

But they don't listen. We are not to be surprised when our culture is actively trying to cause us to be anxious and to be fearful and to divide us. It's always been there. The devil, the world, and sinful nature are always fighting against the peace of God. But rather than be discouraged about it, rather than become despondent, God has given us something very powerful upon which we can stand on, and that is His word that we live out in love. We're not going to convince the world that we're right. They're always going to listen to some other argument somewhere. But what we can do and what God has called us to do is by listening to His word, to walk in love as Christ has loved us. To flee from crude and evil things. To keep our minds pure and our voices pure and our thoughts pure. To focus upon work. To put our energy into serving Him and to loving Him and to walk in faith.

For the fruit of light is found in all that is good and right and true. We walk as children of light. It's a heavy burden to try to change the world. You're not capable of it. But it's much lighter to keep your eyes on Jesus because He is giving you the strength to do just that. By keeping your eyes on Jesus some of the culture may change. Well, maybe not the culture, but some people may see your walk in Christ, and they hear your trust and anxiety in troubled times. They may see you walk in faith when the rest of the world is crashing around you. They may ask you, "How are you not anxious? What do you know that I do not?"

See, that's what love is. That's how we walk in the newness of Christ, in likeness. That is light in this dark world. Depression and anxiety have increased multiple times over in these last couple of years of the pandemic lockdowns, but we have hope. Not just in the midst of a virus, not just in the midst of war and rumors of war, but in the midst of every single situation, struggle and trial that we face. No matter how small or how large, listen to the word of God and keep it. Walk in love as Christ has loved us because He would never leave us nor forsake us. We do not need to be anxious about anything, for He gives us peace. May that peace, which surpasses all understanding be and abide with you always, now and forevermore, under life everlasting, Amen.