

Pastor B. J. Froiland  
Oculi Sunday  
3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday in lent  
Luke 11:14-28  
March 7, 2010

In the Name of the Father and of the Son ✠ and of the Holy Spirit. Amen

One can hardly think of a hero in the Holy Scriptures stronger than Samson. As a judge during the Old Testament times, Samson was known for his great strength. Perhaps you're familiar with some of the stories about Samson, and if not, well, you will be now.

On one occasion, the mighty Samson struck down 1,000 Philistines (enemies of the Israelites) with only the jawbone of a donkey. Samson was the major enemy whom the Philistines couldn't defeat. By trickery, the Philistines did eventually capture Samson. They gouged out his eyes and bound him in chains. They chained him to large house pillars and praised their pagan god for this victory. They mocked him and insulted him. 3,000 Philistines took part in viewing this public spectacle of entertainment. But Samson, with all his might, was able to push down the pillars, which destroyed the house and killed all the Philistines. The dead enemies whom Samson killed in his death were more than those whom he killed during his life.

When Samson was seeking a wife, he went up to the city of Timnah. Along the path of the road as he walked, there appeared suddenly a young lion, coming at him and roaring. With his great strength he tore the lion in pieces as one would tear a small goat. Samson had no knife or sword on this journey. He used only his bare hands to defeat this lion. Several days later, walking along the same path, Samson saw the carcass of the lion that he had killed. There were bees living in it and they had made honey. So Samson composed the riddle, "Out of the eater came something to eat. Out of the strong came something sweet."

Samson conquered the lion with his bare hands. Yet, with all Samson's strength, there's still one stronger than he. Another lion whom Samson did not defeat still prowls around this world. "... Your adversary, the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour; whom resist steadfast in the faith." The devil is the enemy of the church and he is your enemy. He works with the world and your own sinful flesh against you. He seeks to rend asunder what God has joined together in Holy Marriage in your life and the lives of others. He seeks to lead you into temptation, despair, and shame. In fact, he

already has you in his slavery. “Behold, I was shapen in iniquity and in sin did my mother conceive me.” “And you were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience – among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind.” Now you’re the tool of the devil. Now you have become corrupt and pitiable in soul. Now you are by nature children of wrath, enslaved to the kingdom of the devil. You were born under the devil’s power. Much like the mute man held captive by a demon in today’s Gospel reading, you are by nature spiritually blind and deaf, not knowing God. You are by nature sinful and unclean in thought, word, and deed, by what you have done and by what you have left undone. You have not loved God with your whole heart. You have not loved your neighbors as yourself. You justly deserve God’s present and eternal punishment.

The devil has you in his kingdom. Yet, there’s still One stronger than he. Christ speaks of the war between Himself and the devil in the Gospel reading today. Did you catch it? Listen again: “When a strong man, fully armed, guards his own palace, his goods are safe; but when One stronger than he attacks him and overcomes him, He takes away his armor in which he trusted and divides His spoil.” When the devil is fully armed with the temptations of the world to abuse your weak flesh, he guards the palace of this world where all mankind is under his power and control. When Christ comes and attacks him, He strips him of his armor in which he trusted. Christ then claims all human souls to be freed in Him. And so, Christ was the greatest thief, robber, and crook to ever live. Without hindrance or second thought, the Lord brings in one robbery after another for his loot. One more baptized – One more written in the Book of Heaven – One more soul stolen from the devil’s grasp. Christ overcame the assaults of the devil and gave His life as a ransom for many that with cleansed hearts we might be prepared joyfully to celebrate the paschal feast in sincerity and truth.

Christ is the true Samson who ripped apart the hellish lion. And whereas Samson needed two bare hands to destroy the devouring lion, Christ needs only 1 finger. “If it is by the finger of God that I cast out demons, than the Kingdom of God has come upon you.” As Christ by the Spirit and the Finger of God expels the devil, so also He still today wins His victory against the devil and transfers you out of the kingdom of darkness and into the Kingdom of Light. This Kingdom comes through the Finger of God, which is none other than the Word and holy Sacraments. By 1 Finger, He lays these gifts into your ears. You see them with your eyes. You taste them with your tongue. By them are you a member of God’s Kingdom and out of the devil’s power.

But as long as we still bare this flesh on this side of eternity, the devil won't stop trying to get you back into his kingdom. Christ says, "When an unclean spirit has gone out of a person, it passes through waterless places seeking rest and finding none it says, 'I will return to my house from which I came.'" The devil tries hard to take those redeemed by Christ back into his kingdom. He lurks about looking for any advantage so that he once again might get his claws into you. From the right and from the left, in good days and bad days, inwardly and outwardly, he works his deceit against you and all the faithful.

But even though all hell would assault you, God still grants you peace. "Lord be our light when worldly darkness veils us; Lord be our shield when earthly armor fails us; And in the day when hell itself assails us, Grant us Your peace, Lord." And so we pray in the Our Father, "Deliver us from evil." We pray that He would rescue us from every evil of body and soul, possessions and reputation (and all fleeting and varying things in life), and finally when our last hour comes, give us a blessed end and graciously take us from this valley of sorrow to Himself in heaven." The Lord delivers us from evil to His heavenly kingdom.

How does this happen? I return to the riddle of Samson, the riddle which said, "Out of the eater came something to eat. Out of the strong came something sweet." The answer of course is the lion and the honey inside. But is not Christ's death also such an equally possible answer? By Christ's suffering and death, eternal death is conquered. Out of Christ's death, springs your life. Amen.

The Peace of God which passes all understanding keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.

✠BJF✠