

In Lent, more than any other time in the church year, we see an emphasis on warfare. 1<sup>st</sup> Sunday, Invocabit, to call on the Lord in warfare, as Jesus endures Satan's attack in the warfare for you. Last Sunday, Reminiscere, remember His mercy; we struggle, wrestle against the Lord in our life of warfare, and another demon possession. Today, Oculi, to see rightly. The warfare of demons, evil men, against our Lord, who cast out a demon, then accused of being demonic. He rebukes them, then we get a little story and a warning. A story of a strong man, Satan, he guards his palace for it is stolen but Jesus, the stronger man, invades the devil's palace. That invasion began at the incarnation: Jesus enters the world to do combat; thus a stronger man, God in flesh, who will show His strength in sacrifice; show His almighty power by His passion and giving Himself in death to disarm, defeat Satan. Satan a defeated enemy but like a mortally wounded snake, can still strike, kill, lashes out in warfare.

Jesus then warns us: there are no empty houses, no neutral countries in war. If you are not with Him, you're against Him. The consequences eternal. If a demon is cast out of the body but not the soul, it will come back with a vengeance, if not in one's lifetime, the demons wait to take them when they die. The Lord isn't merely sparing the man from demon control. He's gives life in which Satan, demons cannot have you.

Oculi Sunday, to see rightly. There are demonic powers at work. And if our eyes were opened, we would see it at work in our world, with terrifying intensity. I said 2 weeks ago which bears repeating, if people truly see the evil forces against them, their family no one would miss church or live without a Bible closeby. Satan, demons in warfare to destroy you and all you love.

The demons should be regarded, but not feared. They've no claim on you so long as you abide in Christ. Their main power is lying and they hate the Truth.

Jesus says: **blessed are those who hear the word of God and keep it! Keep it** not just as we often understand, to obey; but the word here is guard. Guard the Word of God with all your might. Be armed in this warfare with Scripture.

250 years ago today. Patrick Henry spoke the words, "I know not what course others may take, but as for me, give me liberty or give me death." It inspired a nation in warfare against a tyrant. How much greater is our cause in spiritual warfare. How much more powerful are the words we've been given. Do not underestimate, dear imitator of Christ, how the Lord would have you serve in this warfare; of what the Lord would have for each of you, each day, how you impact, inspire so many lives of those around you, as a child of the Light.

St. Paul writes: **Let no one deceive you with empty words.** Satan loves much of the talk about God you find out there, even in churches -with no talk repentance, no cross, no objective truth of our bodies, of life, marriage, no talk of Sacraments Jesus commands. He loves it. Be on your **guard**.

Jesus casts out demons **by the finger of God**. Jesus evokes this finger of God, Jesus speaks, reality happens, still today. The finger of God creates and upholds

the universe. The finger of God casts out demons. The finger of God is attached to the hand that was nailed to the cross, bringing forth the sacrifice that saves us from the power of the devil, from death.

You see the finger of God here at work today with Constance, in your baptism, to open unmute you, open your ears and mouth to confess Him. The finger of God points to the altar, as the Lord Himself says, **This is My body, This cup My blood**, you have eternal life and here is the most sure thing in your life. Certainty, **the Kingdom of God has come upon you.**

What an incredible Epistle today, **Be imitators, what is proper among the saints.** Look at that great Ephesians reading and Repent. Look at it and live intentionally Christians and as no other confession so places Christ at the center of all it teaches and confess, as the Scriptures do, live intentionally be Lutheran. This is more than action as reading fills you with so much to do. **Be imitators** is your identity. You are baptized, a disciple of Jesus.

The Epistle starts **Therefore.** Therefore what? The verse right before it. **Be kind, compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you, therefore, be imitators of God, as beloved children.** You are a people of forgiveness. Do the words kind, compassionate describe you. Shame on you, shame on us all. Consider how you treat others. Think about forgiveness. God doesn't forgive you because you're usually nice, you're good people. No, you don't deserve forgiveness. Yet its overflowing, in abundance to you. So then, you forgive, especially as they do not deserve it, because none of us deserve forgiveness.

The Introit: **My eyes are ever toward the Lord.** Being a disciple of Jesus is not an intellectual exercise, but an all-encompassing life. Live intentionally Christian, Lutheran, for who else dares to believe, teach, confess, practice as the Church always has without adding or subtracting to God's Word. **Blessed are those who hear the word of God and... guard it!**

So consider today's Gospel: Christ overcomes the strong man, Satan. Alone you have no power. But you are not alone. You are not desolate and afflicted. You are in Christ, so you are never alone in this life's struggle, warfare against the devil, against the pattern of this world, against your own sinful flesh.

**Your eyes ever toward the Lord.** There's no elaborate or mysterious method to this. The devil is turned away by the Name of Jesus, the Word of God, the Image of Jesus, the Body and Blood of Jesus. Live intentionally Christian, put up a crucifix, receive the blessed Sacrament. You drive evil away from your home, your person, your family by the Scripture, prayer, speaking the Holy Name. These things are our armor against evil, our joy even in dark times. Do not be partakers with evil. Flee from demonic things. Here, with sound doctrine and practice which stand against the lies of demons, the Kingdom of God that has come upon you in Baptism abides. You are safe. Walk as the baptized child that the Light of the World, called you to be. You are made holy. You are a saint. Live as such By the finger of God, **The kingdom of God has come upon us.**