



ST. PATRICK'S ANGLICAN CHURCH

4797 Curtis Rd Port St John FL 32927

3rd Sunday in Lent. March 7, 2021

**✠ In The Name of The Father and of The Son
and of The Holy Ghost. Amen. ✠**

The passage selected for the Sermon this morning is taken from the Gospel:

“When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walketh through dry places, seeking rest, and finding none, he saith, I will return to my house whence I came out. And when he cometh, he findeth it swept and garnished. Then goeth he and taketh seven spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter in and dwell there, that the last state of the man is worse than the first.”
St. Luke 11:24-26

The Old Testament lesson for the day is taken from Deuteronomy. The Lord has just delivered the people of Israel from their bondage in Egypt. He gives them commandments and demands their allegiance and their faith. Along with the Ten Commandments, He gives them this explanation of why they must subject themselves to His authority, and deny their pride. “The Lord commanded us to do all these statutes, to fear the Lord our God, for our good always, that He might preserve us alive.” (Deut. 6:24)

Why does God need to preserve us alive. He preserves us because the devil is real, and he desires to lure us into despair and death. The devil wants to alienate us from God, to deter us from obedience and charity through pride and selfishness. He tempts us

toward self gratification and alienates us from love and life. In the very beginning of the Bible, God tells us the history of Adam and Eve being tempted by the devil. This account isn't just a history or a creation myth. It is a revelation for us of the devil's intent and his method. The devil isn't some vague force. He is not the projection of Man's inner psyche. He is a person of comely features and beguiling words. He attacks us personally. His temptations are specific to our lives and hopes and fears. His hope and expectations are to pry us individually and personally from our relationship with God and to lure us into his dominion of despair and death.

Listen to the words of the demon that has been cast out. “I will return to MY house.” My House. The devil considers our bodies and souls, our being, to be his house, the house of death, and pointlessness, and fear, and cruelty and sin and darkness. He owned it. The strong man came and cast him out by force. Jesus is the strong man, and through Baptism He has taken possession of our being. Through the Eucharist, He fortifies us to retain it from the onslaught of the seven-fold demons. He has made us temples of His Holy Spirit, so that we can “walk as children of Light, for the fruit of the Spirit is in goodness and righteousness and truth.” (Ephesians 5:8-9) Hear the words St

Paul writes to the Corinthians in the readings for Morning Prayer. “Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you.” Jesus has replaced darkness with Light, sin with righteousness, cruelty with love, fear with hope, pointlessness with Holy purpose, and death with life.

But the devil wants us back. He wants his possession restored. He wants his house back under his control and dominion. The devil finds his former house swept and garnished, fortified with Light, Love, Life and the Holy Spirit. He realizes he cannot take it back by himself. He goes and gets seven other spirits and they lay siege. Of course these demons can not loose the grip of God on His children by themselves. The devil cannot defeat God in open combat for our souls. Only we, ourselves, can accomplish that victory.

It is telling that the point of greatest weakness and maximum assault is after the house had been purified. When we feel we have been saved and when we believe we are most comfortably and firmly living a Christian life is when we should be most vigilant. Jesus regularly warns those he has healed to be vigilant that they sin no more.

That is the purpose of Lent. To separate us from our inclination to invite the devil back into his old home, to quiet the noise of this world, so that we can hear the Word that the Lord has spoken to us. Lent is when we build up our resolve to face temptation, and to remain strong in the Lord, to keep our souls and bodies as Temples of the Holy Spirit; and to glorify God.

Because the delivery from sin is not the guarantee of salvation. The delivery from our sins is the beginning of the next temptation. The desire of the devil is constant, and so are his tactics. He wants his home back. He appeals to our vanity, he preys on our

weaknesses and addictions, he constantly tempts us.

He wants to weaken us, to have us give in to the little sins and selfishness and pride so that we will be without resolve or reserve at the end when the last and great temptation to despair confronts us. The devil didn't care that Adam and Eve ate the fruit. His victory as that they hid themselves from God in shame. His triumph was that they would not admit their sin and ask forgiveness, but instead passed the blame along and rationalized their disobedience. The victory of the devil in our lives is when, at the last breath, we fear that God is either not there or does not care. Or worse, that we are so corrupted that we despair that He will forgive us and restore us

That is why our Lenten discipline can't be just giving up our gratifications and avoiding temptations. The swept, garnished and empty house is easy prey for the devil. If we want to effectively defend ourselves, we have to fill that house by engaging the Holy Ghost in living a godly life. It is the life that is filled with Christian virtue that has no room for the devil's enticements.

What is it that God wants from us. The answer is in the great commandments. We need to love God with all our hearts and all our souls and all our minds, and we are to express that love through our kindness and charity for our neighbors.

By prayer and fasting we turn down the volume of the temptations of the devil. By self denial, we quiet the urgency of the need to respond to our addictions and desires. By other-centeredness, we close off the channels of indulgence that the devil uses to lure us from our defense. By tuning out the material world and tuning in to prayer, Scripture and Liturgy, we gain wisdom. By choosing to imitate Christ, and to live a life of love and service to the people that He gives us, we will persevere to live with Him in glory forever.

***In the Name of the Father and of the Son and
of the Holy Ghost. Amen***