

Christ Reformation Church

Tillamook, Oregon

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The Gospel of Matthew

The Kingdom of Darkness Rages

July 5, 2020

Sermon Text: Hebrews 2:14-15

Scripture Reading: Matthew 26:21 – 27:66

Hebrews 2:14-18 ESV Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same things, that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil, (15) and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery. (16) For surely it is not angels that he helps, but he helps the offspring of Abraham. (17) Therefore he had to be made like his brothers in every respect, so that he might become a merciful and faithful

high priest in the service of God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. (18) For because he himself has suffered when tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted.

Satan was raging, pulling out every resource he had, to kill Jesus and destroy Christ's kingdom. You see this in the Scripture's account of the crucifixion and the events leading up to the cross. Consider how the kingdom of darkness went all out as Jesus' appointed time on the cross approached (and even earlier of course, such as the devil tempting Jesus back in Matthew 4) –

Satan Used the Counterfeit Church

John 8:40-44 ESV but now you seek to kill me, a man who has told you the truth that I heard from God. This is not what Abraham did. (41) You are doing the works your father did." They said to him, "We were not born of sexual immorality. We have one Father—

even God.” (42) Jesus said to them, “If God were your Father, you would love me, for I came from God and I am here. I came not of my own accord, but he sent me. (43) Why do you not understand what I say? It is because you cannot bear to hear my word. (44) You are of your father the devil, and your will is to do your father's desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks out of his own character, for he is a liar and the father of lies.

You all know how Jesus’ chief enemies while He was in this world were the religious leaders. They are of their father the devil, and Satan used them to persecute, arrest, and kill Jesus.

And so it has continued to be down through the history of the church. The corrupt, counterfeit “church” led by the devil’s offspring have kept right on working to kill and destroy the true church, the real people of God. We need to be very, very wise to this and expect it lest we be deceived by the glitter of Satan’s kingdom parading as light.

What other forces did Satan bring against Christ?

Satan Incited and Led the Mob

Matthew 27:20-26 ESV Now the chief priests and the elders persuaded the crowd to ask for Barabbas and destroy Jesus. (21) The governor again said to them, “Which of the two do you want me to release for you?” And they said, “Barabbas.” (22) Pilate said to them, “Then what shall I do with Jesus who is called Christ?” They all said, “Let him be crucified!” (23) And he said, “Why? What evil has he done?” But they shouted all the more, “Let him be crucified!” (24) So when Pilate saw that he was gaining nothing, but rather that a riot was beginning, he took water and washed his hands before the crowd, saying, “I am innocent of this man's blood; see to it yourselves.” (25) And all the people answered, “His blood be on us and on our children!” (26) Then he released for them Barabbas, and having

scourged Jesus, delivered him to be crucified.

The raging mob is a common weapon of the devil that has repeatedly persecuted Christ's people and still does today:

Acts 7:54-58 ESV Now when they heard these things they were enraged, and they ground their teeth at him. (55) But he, full of the Holy Spirit, gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. (56) And he said, "Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God." (57) But they cried out with a loud voice and stopped their ears and rushed together at him. (58) Then they cast him out of the city and stoned him. And the witnesses laid down their garments at the feet of a young man named Saul.

Satan is using the raging mob even today all around the world to kill Christ's people and destroy His true church. And his evil arsenal contains even more weapons:

Satan and Rome

While it was the Jews who were the chief voices calling for Jesus' death, it was the Romans who were used to actually carry out the arrest and crucifixion:

Acts 2:22-23 ESV "Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested to you by God with mighty works and wonders and signs that God did through him in your midst, as you yourselves know— (23) this Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men.

Once more we realize that the history of the church has been one of repeated assaults by corrupt civil governments motivated by the devil to destroy Christ's people. Still another weapon in his arsenal.

And last time we saw Satan using that corrupt, counterfeit plant among Christ's Apostles – Judas.

Satan and Judas

John 13:2 ESV During supper,

when the devil had already put it into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray him,

John 13:27 ESV Then after he had taken the morsel, Satan entered into him. Jesus said to him, “What you are going to do, do quickly.”

As Satan uses wicked people against Christ, we see that he is able in some way to “put it into their heart” and to “enter into” them. But it is not just the wicked that he works this evil upon:

Satan and Peter

Luke 22:31-34 ESV “Simon, Simon, behold, Satan demanded to have you, that he might sift you like wheat, (32) but I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned again, strengthen your brothers.”

(33) Peter said to him, “Lord, I am ready to go with you both to prison and to death.” (34) Jesus said, “I tell you, Peter, the rooster will not crow this day, until you deny three times that you know me.”

Now, there seems to be a difference in the way Satan worked in Judas and how

he did so in Peter. Judas willfully and actively desired to betray Jesus and looked for an opportunity to do so – for money. Peter’s thinking and actions never approached that level. He was fearful in his denial of Christ, but that little mustard seed of faith was never extinguished – Christ had prayed for him.

Nevertheless, we see that Satan certainly will work on us, on Christ’s true people, by communicating his lies to us with the goal of instilling *fear* in us. Lies and fear. But we have the weaponry of *truth and faith*. We simply must use them!

Ephesians 6:16-17 ESV In all circumstances take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one; (17) and take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God,

Satan’s Mega Weapon

Before the cross, Satan enjoyed power that he no longer has. For instance:

Luke 10:17-18 ESV The seventy-two returned with joy, saying,

“Lord, even the demons are subject to us in your name!” (18) And he said to them, “I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven.

Hebrews 2:14-15 ESV Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same things, that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil, (15) and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery.

1 John 3:8 ESV Whoever makes a practice of sinning is of the devil, for the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil.

John 12:31 ESV Now is the judgment of this world; now will the ruler of this world be cast out.

Colossians 2:13-15 ESV And you, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses, (14) by canceling

the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross. (15) He disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in him.

Let's see if we can summarize these things:

1. Before the cross, Satan had certain powers. He had access in heaven.
2. Before the cross Satan had the power to accuse and enslave.
3. Before the cross, Satan was armed. And his ammo was our sin and the demands of the Law that we be put to death, condemned by the Law.
4. Satan in other words had “the power of death,” and he used that power to enslave people. He still uses it today in regard to those who reject Christ.

Death, the condemnation and curse for our sin demanded by the justice of God's Law, was the mega weapon Satan used against us. “There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus” (Romans 8:1). Why? Because:

Romans 8:2-4 ESV For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death. (3) For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do. By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh, (4) in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.

The main point I want us to focus upon here this morning however is that Satan loved this mega weapon. But in regard to the elect, to Christ's true people, it has been stripped from him.

Now, as the time of the cross was approaching and Satan was gathering all his forces to murder and destroy Christ and His kingdom, what was the ultimate weapon he was working to use? *Death*. His old favorite. And it appears that he really thought his failsafe mega tool of destruction would work for him again. It always had. You see it at the tomb:

Matthew 27:62-66 ESV The next day, that is, after the day of

Preparation, the chief priests and the Pharisees gathered before Pilate (63) and said, "Sir, we remember how that impostor said, while he was still alive, 'After three days I will rise.' (64) Therefore order the tomb to be made secure until the third day, lest his disciples go and steal him away and tell the people, 'He has risen from the dead,' and the last fraud will be worse than the first." (65) Pilate said to them, "You have a guard of soldiers. Go, make it as secure as you can." (66) So they went and made the tomb secure by sealing the stone and setting a guard.

And this is the chief point I would like us to understand this morning. Listen again:

Hebrews 2:14-15 ESV Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same things, that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil, (15) and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery.

“...who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery.”

Satan had the *power of death*. It was, as we said, his “goto never fail weapon.”

I think we can only understand these two verses when we acknowledge the truth of *the elect*. That is to say, in connection with the Cross, *Christ died effectually for His elect*. He did not die in order to pay for the sins of all human beings and hope they would choose to believe in Him and be saved. No. Christ’s death on the cross *delivered* His elect. Look at that word – *delivered*. This deliverance was accomplished, effected, and applied to every single one of the elect.

Now why do I say that it is necessary to confess the truth of *election* and Christ’s death for His elect in order to understand Hebrews 2:14-15? I will tell you:

Apart from Christ’s redeeming, delivering work, His people were held in bondage – just as the Israelites were enslaved in Egypt. We looked to Him for rescue, but the enemy held us in bondage. How? Through fear of death – that is to say, through accusation, guilt, and condemnation. The Law was wielded by the enemy. It demanded our eternal death and damnation. God’s

justice required death for sin – the wages of sin = death. And Satan used God’s holy and righteous Law to keep us enslaved to a life of trying to keep the Law, but never succeeding.

Galatians 3:10-14 ESV For all who rely on works of the law are under a curse; for it is written, “Cursed be everyone who does not abide by all things written in the Book of the Law, and do them.”

(11) Now it is evident that no one is justified before God by the law, for “The righteous shall live by faith.” (12) But the law is not of faith, rather “The one who does them shall live by them.”

(13) Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us—for it is written, “Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree”— (14) so that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, so that we might receive the promised Spirit through faith.

We could never, ever break out of Egypt. Satan’s mega weapon that never failed him was the fear of death which

was held over our heads by the Law's condemnation, and Satan never missed an opportunity to accuse us on that basis.

This is the weekend of Independence Day, the 4th of July. But in Christ the Christian is the one who truly celebrates independence. Freedom.

Romans 8:1-4 ESV There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. (2) For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death. (3) For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do. By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh, (4) in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.

And so it was. The tomb was sealed. The enemy had a strong guard on it. Satan had struck Christ with death and I have no doubt that there was a real party of evil in the kingdom of darkness

when that stone was rolled into place. The mega weapon had never failed.

But it did fail. It not only failed, but its power was broken forever. When Christ rose from the dead, He did so because the complete demands of God's Law had been perfectly met. The curse was gone and as a result, the power of death over His people was gone. And more:

"...that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil..."

This is the good news of the gospel, the real declaration of independence – Christ is risen. There is, therefore, now no condemnation for them who are in Christ Jesus.