

Our Redeemer Lutheran Church  
Quincy, IL  
Rev. Martin Eden

Epiphany 5  
Saturday, February 3, 2024, at 5:00 p.m.  
Sunday, February 4, 2024, at 9:00 a.m.

# **“I am a Slave, but I am Free in Christ”**

Mark 1:29-39

Last week, we heard how Jesus cast out the demon from the man at the synagogue at Capernaum. The demon said to Jesus, “I know who you are, the Holy One of God.” Jesus silences the demon, does not permit him to speak, and casts him out of the man.

This week, we hear that there are more in Capernaum suffering from demon possession. It seems that Capernaum had an issue with demon possession. I don’t know how to tell you this other than to just tell you, our world today has a major issue with demon possession. I know a doctor of psychiatry who would be recommending numerous cases to be dealt with on a spiritual basis if the state would allow such a diagnosis. But the state will not allow it even though the signs are obvious.

My good friend Rev. John Dreyer, who spoke here at Our Redeemer a number of years ago, has performed many exorcisms. The modern world does not want to recognize the spiritually charged world in which we live. The good news is

that not only are you are not on your own – you are not your own. You were bought at a price.

To use the imagery of Scripture, Jesus elsewhere says that you are a house, that if left empty, a demon could possess. But you are not empty. The Holy Spirit dwells in you. You are a house that is no longer for sale. Have confidence in what you received from God in your Baptism. He made you His own. He bought you at a price.

To use the imagery from our Epistle reading, Paul says how he is compelled to preach the Good News of Christ. “Woe to me if I do not preach the Gospel.” He has made himself a slave to everyone.

His compelling urge to preach was not self-motivated or of his own will. He became a slave to everyone because he was first a slave to God. Most of the time when God’s people are referred to as slaves in Holy Scripture, we miss the punch of that concept because the modern translators find the word “servant” more pleasing to the ear. We like to think of ourselves as faithful servants with a free will and we choose to work for God. But the word in the Greek is “doulos.” We are slaves. Our Father in heaven purchased us at a very high price – the broken body and shed blood of His only-begotten Son.

The reality is, you have always been a slave. You were born a slave – but at that time you had a different master. You were a slave to sin and Satan. Then God redeemed you. He paid the price to free you from that awful master, and made you a slave to righteousness.

We are free in Christ, but still slaves. St. Paul even says in Galatians chapter 4 that our freedom from slavery to sin has given us the full rights as sons of God – the inheritance of the kingdom of heaven is ours. Our Father no longer treats us as slaves. This is true.

God sees us as His adopted children through Baptism. He loves us and cares for us as a Father, not as a Master. But we are still slaves. We are compelled to do our Father's will. St. Paul is compelled to preach the gospel. He has been entrusted with a stewardship. He must do the will of His Master.

We are slaves to righteousness. We are stewards of the things of God. We have nothing of our own. Out of love and devotion for our Master, we give thanks through striving to be always ready to do His will. After all, God has purchased you at a very high price.

In Baptism, He made you His true child. He even gave you His name, as you were baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. You carry that name with you and you are family. He wants to have a relationship with you.

We understand the nature of a loving relationship. Even with our human relationships, for those whom we love, we are inwardly compelled to please them. But look at our lives – every day we fall short of doing what we could to help and show love toward our spouse, children, and friends. Very often it's a big mess. Yet, our relationship with them is not over. Forgiveness abounds and we move forward together.

We are a family. No one in your family is perfect, and that includes you – and it certainly includes me. The same is true within your family of the church. The family of the church is a real family. The Father gathers His children around His table and we eat together. We spend time talking with our Father – in prayer. The children do not always get along as the Father desires, so confession of sin and the announcement of forgiveness happen on a frequent basis. Real and genuine forgiveness is a necessary component in any relationship. We certainly could not stand before our Father in righteousness without it.

Now there may be some who would hear this message and say, “I like being God’s child, but I can do without that whole slavery stuff. I’m still my own person.” St. Paul says, “No, you are not.” As I said before, that is not an option. We heard Paul say in our Epistle reading a few weeks ago, “You are not your own.” No matter what we say or do in this life, we are slaves. The only question is who our master is going to be.

We can remain children of God and slaves to righteousness showing our love and devotion to our Father in heaven. Or we can shipwreck our faith and go our own way and shackle ourselves again in slavery to sin – foolishly thinking that that constitutes “freedom.” And in doing so, you get the “freedom” to be an “empty house.” But you won’t be an empty house for long. You will either be ruled or possessed by a master you do not want.

The demon possessed people in Capernaum which we read about in Mark’s Gospel, we are told, were silenced by Jesus and He would not permit them to speak because they knew him. In Luke chapter 4, we read about this same instance and Luke tells us that Jesus did not allow them to speak because, as they were coming out of people, they were crying out, “You are the Son of God!” [Lk. 4:41].

As Paul says, “Every knee shall bow in heaven and earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord.”

I fear for and genuinely pity those who are outside of the comfort of God’s forgiveness. They search for freedom in this world and end up being slaves to a very harsh master.

I am a slave. You are a slave. Yet we are free. You were born a slave, and you will die a slave. Yet, through our adoption in the waters of Baptism, we are free in Christ. Amen.