

## **JUNE SIX, ZION, AKRON.**

## **Mark 3:20-30**

Some men like to brag about how strong they are. One day some boys on a school playground were bragging. Johnny said, “My dad has a list of all the men he can beat up—and all of your dads are on the list!” Later that afternoon a knock came on Johnny’s house. His dad answered the door. A big angry man said, “Are you Johnny’s dad?” He said, “I am.” “Well Johnny told my son said you have a list of men you think you can beat up, and my name is on it.” Johnny’s dad said, “That’s right.” The big guy started rolling up his sleeves. He said, “Well, I don’t think you can beat me up. What are you going to do about it?” Johnny’s dad said, “I’m going to take your name off the list.”

Since 1977 an annual event has been held. It’s been televised. It is called “The World’s Strongest Man Competition.” Most of the winners have come from Finland or Iceland. One of the competitors from Iceland, who is nicknamed Thor, stands 6’9” and weighs 435 pounds. He once pulled a Boeing 747 with his teeth.

Who do you think was the strongest man in the Bible? Are you thinking of the book of Judges? The man with the long hair who could kill a lion with his bare hands? His name was Samson. He was pretty strong. But after he got a haircut, he lost his strength.

Today, Jesus talks about a strong man. Then He’s going to mention a stronger man. By the time we finish today you will know the identity of the “The World’s Strongest Man.” Jesus faced criticism from his family. They said He was crazy. They wanted to take charge of Him. They said, “He is out of His mind.” They came to rescue Him before He could make a fool of Himself.

But the Pharisees leveled a much stronger accusation against Him. They couldn’t deny the reality of the miracles He was performing, so they claimed He performed those miracles by the power of Beelzebub.

Beelzebub was the prince of demons. Jesus faced criticism from these religious leaders throughout His ministry. That lets us know that if you’re serving God, you can be assured that you’ll face criticism.

When Jesus faced false accusations and criticism, He never tried to defend Himself. He turned them into teachable moments. In this case He asked, **“How can Satan drive out Satan?”** Then Jesus shared one of his shortest parables.

**“No one can enter a strong man’s house and carry off his possessions unless he first ties up the strong man. Then he can rob his house.”**

With this in mind, I want to make the following points:

**NUMBER ONE: Jesus came to reverse the work of Satan!** In Jewish literature, Beelzebub was the chief demon. Sometimes he was identified as Satan himself. So now you realize the depth of the insult they leveled against Jesus. But He used it as an opportunity to give a short but powerful parable. The point of His parable was this: **Satan is strong, but Jesus is stronger! IN FACT, HE IS THE STRONGEST.** Jesus came to drive out Satan, the prince of this world.

This is John 12:31, **“Now is the time for judgment on this world; now the prince of this world will be driven out.”**

Here’s the truth: Jesus isn’t just stronger. He is the strongest. Satan is real, and he is strong. But sometimes we make the mistake of giving him qualities that only belong to God. Only God is omnipresent. Only God is everywhere all the time. Only God is omni-potent. Only God is all-powerful. Only God is omniscient. He alone knows everything. Satan, which means adversary, is a fallen angel. He isn’t omnipresent. He has an army of demons, but he isn’t all-powerful. He isn’t omniscient. He can’t read your thoughts.

The strong man in this parable is the devil, but Jesus is stronger. Satan’s house is in this world. He is called the prince of this world, but this isn’t the only world there is. Jesus is the one who came into the world. He has bound Satan and then stolen his possessions. But Jesus wasn’t really stealing anything from Satan. He was only reclaiming what Satan had stolen in the first place. Jesus called Satan a thief.

He said in John 10:10, **“The thief comes only to steal and kill destroy; I have come that they might have life, and have it to the full.”**

Satan’s “possessions” are people who are living without Christ. The Bible describes them this way: **“As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world & of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who’re disobedient.”**

Satan is at work in the lives of people who don’t know Christ. Now if you told an unbeliever they were under the control of Satan, they would laugh at you. They would probably say, “Are you crazy? I don’t even believe in Satan!”

But the Bible says in 2 Corinthians 4:4, **“The god of this age [Satan] has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ who is the image of God.”**

Even for people who don’t believe God exists or that Satan exists, he is actively keeping their minds shut to the truth about Jesus. They are slaves to Satan without even knowing it.

Without realizing it, when we are born, we are born in slavery to sin and Satan. We all need a Savior to come and rescue and reclaim us from the strong man. That’s what the strongest man, Jesus came to do!

**MY SECOND POINT IS THIS: Jesus bound and robbed Satan on the cross!** The very act where the strongest man, Jesus robbed the Satan was at the crucifixion. Colossians 2:14-15 reads, **“Having canceled the written code, with its regulations, that was against us and that stood opposed to us; he took it away, nailing it to the cross. And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross.”**

Years ago, a man by the name of Hal Lindsey wrote a book. It was called, **“Satan is Alive and Well and Living on Planet Earth.”**

That title always bothered me. Satan may be alive, but He is not well. He hasn't been well since the cross. God dealt Satan a mortal wound at the cross.

I John 3:8, **“The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil’s work.**

Hebrews 2:14 reads, **“By his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death—that is, the devil.”**

So, what does this mean to us? The devil is a defeated foe. He is still active, but he was rendered powerless on the cross. Whenever we give in to Him, we are giving in to a defeated enemy. He knows his doom is sealed. He’s smart enough to read Rev. 20:10: **“And the devil, who deceived them, was thrown into the lake of burning sulfur, where the beast and the false prophet had been thrown. They will be tormented day and night for ever and ever.”**

You may be thinking, “Pastor if the devil is a defeated foe, he sure is causing me a lot of trouble.” That’s his job. He’s like a wounded animal. He’s going to fight to the end, even though his defeat is sure. He continues to steal, kill, and destroy. But he no longer has any authority over you.

He will try to kill your joy, steal your peace, and destroy your testimony, but his power is broken. You can say to him, **“Get away from me, Satan, because greater is he who is in me than he who is in the world!”** Satan may be strong, but we have the strongest man living in us. Because these religious leaders accused Jesus of being in union with Satan, He responded with a stern warning about their spiritual blindness.

**HERE’S THE WARNING: Jesus will forgive every sin except persistent rejection of the Holy Spirit’s conviction.**

Confusion about the “unpardonable” sin has caused a lot of needless confusion and guilt. So, is there such a thing as an unforgivable sin? And if so, what is it? unforgivable sin? Let me tell you what it’s NOT. It’s not murder. Moses was a murderer. He’ll be in heaven It’s not adultery. King David committed adultery and God forgave him. So, what is it?

In Revelation 12 Satan is called the Accuser of the Brothers. He wants to keep you confused and unsure. He slips up to you and says, “You’re no good. How dare you sit in the choir and sing praises after all you’ve done? How dare you teach a Bible Study class after all you’ve done? How dare you sit in church after the things you’ve done?”

When he whispers that and accuses you, just do as Jesus did when He was tempted. Quote scripture in the face of his accusations.

Try 1 John 1:7: **“Mr. Devil, the blood of Jesus Christ, God’s son, cleanses me of ALL sin.”** God has placed my sins in the depths of the sea and has placed a “no fishing” sign there. God has placed my sins behind His back and remembers them no more. God has separated my sins as far as the East is from the West! You got defeated on the cross, so leave me alone!” Resist the devil and he will flee from you.

So, is there such a thing as an unforgiveable sin? Can you commit blasphemy against the Holy Spirit?

Jesus said in John 16:8, **“When the [the Holy Spirit] comes, he will convict the world of guilt in regard to sin and righteousness and judgment.”**

Before you can ever be saved, you must experience a sense of guilt over your sinful condition. Jesus said this is the role of the Holy Spirit. Only the Spirit of God can bring true conviction of sin. By nature, we are spiritually blind, dead and an enemy of God. Therefore, as Luther wrote, **“We cannot by our own reason or strength believe in Jesus Christ or come to Him.”**

I Corinthians 2:14 reads, **“The man without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to Him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned.”**

The word blasphemy means to “speak against.” So, blasphemy against the Holy Spirit is when a person says, “No” to the conviction of the Holy Spirit. In that moment they are “speaking against” the Holy Spirit. Speaking against the Holy Spirit is rejecting, completely and finally, the witness of the Holy Spirit. The witness of the Holy Spirit which declares that Jesus Christ is the Son of God who alone can save us from our sins. No one has committed the unpardonable sin who continues to be under the disturbing, convicting, and drawing power of the Holy Spirit. The very fact that you are struggling is proof positive that God is continuing to draw you to Himself.

The only sin that can't be forgiven is terminal unbelief. And the reason God won't forgive that sin is because the person who commits it will never ask God to forgive them.

I appeal to you to trust Jesus today. Every time you say, “No” makes it easier to say, “No” the next time. There is more to life than this life. And the moment after you die, you will realize this. One day we will face eternity.

If you are still under the conviction of the Holy Spirit, you haven't committed the unpardonable sin. But our point of rejoicing today is to know that because Jesus has defeated the devil, we can have victory over the devil as well!

When Jesus died on the cross, it would seem as if He had been defeated. But on Easter Sunday morning the rest of the message was received. Jesus defeated the enemy! And we can rejoice today. The World's Strongest Man has defeated our enemy!