

Grace mercy and peace to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen. This past Wednesday was the 74<sup>th</sup> anniversary of D-Day, the storming of the beaches of Normandy. My information from Wikipedia says that on this occasion, an Allied force of 156,000 men came by plane and boat on the beach of Normandy against 10,000 Germans who were already defending the beach in bunkers and tanks. Riss' grandfather, Vernon Miller, was among those who stormed Normandy and lived to tell the tale. The Allies suffered at least 12,000 casualties, the Germans from 4,000 to 9,000. The loss was still heavy. The United States was in World War II. They had been hit in the Pacific by Japan at Pearl Harbor on December 7, which brought the US into the war. But the US pushed back. It took months to mobilize the nation, to draft and prepare men, to move supplies, to make machines and weapons. It ended up bringing the US out of the Great Depression, but the US entered war against Germany, Italy, and Japan, among others.

We are at war. And who is our enemy? Who are we fighting against? Our enemy is Satan. His first attack is laid out in Genesis 3 against our first parents, Adam and Eve.

He attacks them some time after creation. Satan does not go after Adam, he strikes at Eve. And everything takes a wrong turn. He coaxes Eve saying "Did God really say, 'You must not eat from any tree in the garden'?" He tries to plant doubt in the greatest of God's creation. Eve takes the bait, "The woman said to the serpent, "We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden, but God did say, 'You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die.'" You see that is not what God said. What God said is "You are free to eat from any tree in the

garden; <sup>17</sup> but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die.” He did not say, “and you must not touch it,” Eve added that part. God commands Adam, who then teaches this command to Eve. The serpent tricks Eve, and sin is brought into the world. The war begins. It is a war between Satan and his forces against the church and her children.

Who is our enemy? We know God is a Triune God. He is Father, Son and Holy Spirit. And he saves us. He is our saving God. He is our Savior. Now a young man had asked me during Vacation Bible School, “What is a savior?” I do not remember why he asked the question, but I was glad he asked it. I answered, “A savior is someone who saves or rescues you.” He left it at that. Your mind and my mind then should ask, “From what do we need saving?” Well, we need salvation from sin, death, and the power of the Devil. And Jesus is that very savior.

The Good News is that Jesus has already defeated our great enemy. As God says in Genesis, “he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel.” Surely no strike against a heel will inflict as much damage as a crushed head. It is much worse to have a crushed head than a messed up heel. Jesus defeated Satan on the Cross with his death and resurrection. As “A Mighty Fortress” tells us, “Though devils all the world should fill, all eager to devour us. We tremble not, we fear no ill, they shall not overpower us. This world’s prince may still scowl fierce as he will, He can harm us none, he’s judged; the deed is done; One little word can fell him.” The battle is won. Satan is doomed.

Satan wants us to think otherwise. He has quite an array of weapons. He knows scripture better than you and me. He knows my sins and your sins better than you

and I know them. He knows you and me better than we know ourselves. He knows our weaknesses. He knows more than we give him credit. Jesus says he ain't stupid. He points it out in our gospel reading, "How can Satan drive out Satan?"<sup>24</sup> If a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand.<sup>25</sup> If a house is divided against itself, that house cannot stand.<sup>26</sup> And if Satan opposes himself and is divided, he cannot stand." Satan will not do the things Jesus' opponents point out. Satan is out to get us, and will use whatever weapons he is able to use.

Satan's point is to separate us from the love of God we have in Christ Jesus. It's why Satan works on Adam and Eve. We are the weak links in our relationship with God. We can lose faith. We can despair of God. We can grow cold and unloving and faithless to the God who loves us and dies for us. The sin of unbelief is the sin against the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is the one who works faith in our heart. He makes us believe. To cast out the Holy Spirit is to rid ourselves of the one who saves us. To sin against the Holy Spirit is to cut yourself off from the one who works faith in us, and thus condemn ourselves. This is Satan's aim to cut us off from God. He wants us to stop believing.

He is after you and me. He is not after unbelievers or Mormons or Jehovah Witnesses or Muslims or Buddhists. Satan has them in his clutches. He is after the children of God.

It is important to remember who our enemy is. What do you think of when you think of an enemy? Now be honest. Is it someone who did a serious wrong against you? Taken money? Perhaps someone who cheated on you? A spouse? Someone who has hurt you very deeply? Or perhaps it's someone who just gets under your skin?

Do you know someone, who for lack of a very appropriate term, is just plain evil? Someone who causes trouble for you, with or without reason? Someone who acts irrationally just to inflict pain and chaos?

Well, you know what? Jesus died for that person too. His or her sins, are also paid for on the Cross. That person is also a beloved child of God. The real enemy is not those who cause us trouble or pain, but Satan. He uses so many tools against us. Satan wants us to get so wound up in a problem that we lose sight of the real trouble, the real problem. He wants us to lose sight of the fact we are also sinners. We are broken. We are not high and mighty and perfect. We are sinners and we need God.

In the waters of baptism, you and me are made children of God. Jesus calls us his brothers and sisters. Our Gospel reading, “Then Jesus looked at those seated in a circle around him and said, ‘Here are my mother and my brothers! Whoever does God’s will is my brother and sister and mother.’” And what is to do God will? None other than to believe. The will of the Father is to believe. He wants all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. Jesus calls us his family.

We are part of his heavenly family and have eternal life with him.

It is said, “We have found the enemy and he is us.” Satan uses so much against us, whether we know it or not. The teachers of the law come to Jesus, as does his own family, trying to put a stop to him. But Jesus continues to do his work, his work to save us. The Lutheran Study Bible makes a good note, “Even as Jesus seeks to expand His ministry by appointing and sending 12 apostles, His family comes and tries to make Him stop what He is doing. How ironic that those who think they know Jesus best are trying to stop Him from fulfilling His mission! Unfortunately, similar examples are still

seen, as when lifelong Christians undermine sound mission strategies. But the Lord and His mission are not overcome by even this opposition. Jesus willingly faced death and conquered it for us.”

Even though Satan tries to scare us and torment us, he is beaten. That is what his posture is all about. Satan goes about on his belly not because he is serpent, he's on his stomach beaten. Defeated. Conquered. Jesus crushed Satan's head on the cross. Jesus beat him. Jesus is triumphant. Jesus even calls us family. In the name of Jesus. Amen.