

Unbound in Christ
 Text: Mark 3:20-35
 Proper 5
 June 10, 2018

Dear Friends in Christ,

You've probably never given this much thought, but it is amazing how often we make reference in our everyday conversations to being "*bound up*." For instance, if we're unable to help someone out because of red tape and bureaucracy, we say that our hands are tied. If something is really easy, we'll say that we can do it with one hand tied behind our back. If our schedules are jam-packed and hectic, we say that we're tied up and can't get away. You get the picture. You probably don't realize how often you use this binding imagery throughout the day, but I'm sure you use it more than you realize.

And that's what I noticed about our Gospel lesson for this morning. In just these few short verses there are *numerous* references to binding; *more than you probably realize*. Let's begin with verse 21, where we hear that Jesus' own family members—His own mother and brothers—were outside the house He was staying, trying to *seize* Him, claiming that He was out of His mind. The Greek word used here—*kratehō*—carries with it the meaning of restraining. Basically, they were looking to lay hands on Jesus and bind Him up and haul Him away because they figured He was crazy. You can almost picture the guys in white suits being called in with a straight jacket for Jesus, looking to take Him away.

Now, why would Jesus' mother and brothers have thought him to be "out of his mind"? Why would they try to seize him and bind him? Jesus was a carpenter who had taken on the role of a Rabbi. But he wasn't acting like a traditional Rabbi. According to St. Mark, Jesus' first miracle was casting out an evil demon in the synagogue in Capernaum. That miracle was quickly followed by the healing of Peter's mother-in-law, the healing of a paralytic and the cleansing of a man with leprosy. In that instance, Jesus actually touched the unclean man, which should have made him ceremonially unclean. But just the opposite happened! The man became clean at Jesus' touch. Health flowed in the wrong direction, from the healthy to the unhealthy! Then Jesus ignores the Sabbath laws, allowing his disciples to pick heads of grain on the Sabbath. Why, He even forgave people their sins. No, Jesus wasn't acting like a normal Rabbi. He was setting people free from their various bondages. So now his family is beginning to think there's something wrong with him. So they want to bind and restrain him.

Let me let you in on something: We're all guilty of attempting to bind and restrain Christ, no different than His own family was. For instance, have you ever allowed yourself to be bound up in *silence or inactivity* when it comes to stewardship? "*I'd love to help out more, but I can't. My hands are tied. My funds are all tied up. I have bills to pay, gas tanks and cupboards to fill, vacations to take, retirements to save for.*" And you're right. We are tied down with obligations and responsibilities. But the problem is, we think that whole "*fearing, loving, and trusting in God above all things*" only applies to *certain* aspects of life; the comfortable, easy ones that we like and agree with. *To think that it would apply to all of life is crazy! "I can't help out because that time interferes with my favorite TV show, my Facebook time, my tee time, my "me" time. I should fear, love and trust God above ALL things? That's crazy talk!"*

How many of you have ever allowed yourselves to be bound up in *silence* when you've encountered sin? *"Confront it? Rebuke it? Are you out of your mind? That wouldn't be polite. Everyone has a right to their opinion, don't they?"* You see, we fail to speak up when we should and when we do speak, too often it's to criticize or gossip about one another. We continually struggle with these problems, don't we – with selfish pride, with fearful cowardice, with shameful thoughts, with hurtful actions and reactions. And when we reflect on these things, know what we discover?

We are the ones who are bound, aren't we? Bound by sin. *Our Lord calls us to repent! Turn from your binding ways! Turn back and be unbound in Christ.*

Friends, That's what this ministry is all about. That's what this congregation exists for—to *proclaim this Good News of Christ Jesus*. This is why Almighty God Himself has allowed this congregation to exist (and prosper for the nearly 90 years now). We, as God's people here, have been *set free and unbound* in the Gospel truth of Christ crucified and resurrected for all mankind.

Our Lord Himself was bound. Jesus allowed soldiers to seize and bind him. They led him bound to Caiaphas, the High Priest, and then to Pilate, the governor who interrogated the Son of God. Still bound, the soldiers stripped and whipped him and then fastened him to the cross with nails. They even tried to seal him a grave, thinking that there was no way he could escape. He allowed himself to be placed into such bondage so that we could be freed from bondage, free from the chains of sin, death and hell.

Not only that, our text assures us that in performing all the miracles of healing and helping people become free of their bondage, Jesus is not an ally of Satan, but his fiercest enemy. He is the one who has entered the strong man's house, who has plundered his goods, who has bound Satan so that his fiercest weapons, (sin and death) are destroyed.

Do you realize what a tremendous, life-giving, *liberating* treasure God Himself has implanted in your hearts? This is what the sanctified life is all about. As those who believe and trust in the total and complete forgiveness that is ours by God's grace alone because of the all-redeeming work and person of Jesus Christ alone, we have been set free; *unbound so that we can serve and proclaim Christ with joyful freedom*. We are not to be caught up and bound up in the ways and worries of this fallen and sinful world. Whether we live or whether we die, we belong to Christ. Heaven is our home. We have been baptized into Christ's death and resurrection.

It is God the Holy Spirit who has given us this great gift of faith – the gift to believe and receive all the freedom from bondage that Christ has won for us – the full forgiveness of our sins. But Jesus warns us of a sin that cannot be forgiven. He calls it "blasphemy against the Holy Spirit...an eternal sin". This is a very difficult passage to understand, but it ultimately is a warning against rejecting the gift that Christ won for you and rejecting the faith that the Holy Spirit has created in you.

Even Jesus mother and brothers didn't yet understand what Jesus was all about. They would eventually, but for now Jesus reaches out to those who do have full confidence in him. "Looking about at those who sat around him, he said, "Here are my mother and my brothers!" It's not always easy getting along in a family. And it's not always easy getting along with one another in

the family of faith. But as we keep our eyes focused on what Jesus, in love, has done for us, setting us free from our bondage, we can be united in love for one another.

And that's how we'll end for today. Look around you. Here are your mothers and brothers and sisters in the faith. Here are those who serve and love and forgive because of the joy of knowing that God *first* loved and forgave them.

May the Good News of your justification in Christ alone by God's grace and love alone unbind you and *set you free to serve, honor, love, and obey your Lord* with all that you say, think, and do. In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen