

JESUS DELIVERS BY DEFEATING DEATH APR 5, 2015
EASTER SUNDAY EXOD 15:6-11, LUKE 11:21-22

- ⁶ Your right hand, O LORD, glorious in power,
your right hand, O LORD, shatters the enemy.
- ⁷ In the greatness of your majesty you overthrow your adversaries;
you send out your fury; it consumes them like stubble.
- ⁸ At the blast of your nostrils the waters piled up;
the floods stood up in a heap;
the deeps congealed in the heart of the sea.
- ⁹ The enemy said, ‘I will pursue, I will overtake,
I will divide the spoil, my desire shall have its fill of them.
I will draw my sword; my hand shall destroy them.’
- ¹⁰ You blew with your wind; the sea covered them;
they sank like lead in the mighty waters.
- ¹¹ “Who is like you, O LORD, among the gods?
Who is like you, majestic in holiness,
awesome in glorious deeds, doing wonders?”

If you fly on an airplane, one of first things that will happen
is you will be shown a picture of how you would escape
if there was an emergency.

In midweek Lent worship we have been looking at pictures:
parables Jesus told about the kingdom of God which show
what God is like & what we are like in response.

Today we look at another picture, actually two pictures,
which show way of escape when it seemed there was none.
One is a historical snapshot of Israel when they have escaped
from being trapped in slavery and death.

Other is picture drawn by Jesus after he has freed a man
who was controlled by the devil: LUKE 11:21-22

²¹ When a strong man, fully armed, guards his own palace, his goods
are safe; ²² but when one stronger than he attacks him and overcomes
him, he takes away his armor in which he trusted and divides his spoil.
These pictures of what has happened for others
help us see what happens for us today
because of Jesus’ resurrection.

WE ARE TRAPPED BY DEATH AND THE DEVIL
DEATH IS DEFEATED BY JESUS’ GREATER POWER
WE ARE FREED TO LIVE WITH GOD

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We are all too familiar these days with pictures of hostages
being taken by terrorists and militias.

We can't help but think about the terrible fate
of being captive, controlled & abused.

Such fear also keeps others in virtual prisons, trapped by fear
in their own homes or in squalid refugee camps.

Israel had experienced being free but not really free.

The ten plagues had gotten Pharaoh to release them
from lives of slavery which worked them to death.

But path they took when leaving took them to the edge
of the Red Sea where they were trapped
when Pharaoh changed mind & sent troops after them.

What good did it do to be free from captivity
when they still couldn't escape from death itself.

We also can end up trapped, not by water, walls or chains
but still trapped by death and the devil.

because many today seek to use their freedom
in ways that end in death.

Jesus pictured the man who had been possessed by demon
as being under guard in house of armed strong man.

Too much literal slavery exists still today
even without chains or locks

when vulnerable people are controlled by threats.

Even though we may not be literally possessed by the devil,
too many people today are still enslaved, controlled by sin.

The weapons Devil uses first to control us are his temptations
to pride, selfishness and independence

because this strong man knows that our weakness
is ironically, thinking too highly of ourselves.

but what happens when we use our freedom to act this way
acting in pride leads us to be caught instead in shame,

selfishness leads us to fear of losing what we have.

and independence traps us in isolation and loneliness

This way of life leads to dead end from which we can't free self.
It is a literal dead end, because it destroys faith
and so turns us away from God, the giver of life.

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One of reasons our country is hesitant to send weapons
to places of conflict around world is concern they
could fall into hands of enemy & be turned back against us.
This is exactly the kind of thing God does when evil attacks us.
In his wisdom & power, he uses what threatens to save us.
When Israel is trapped between water of sea & Egypt's army,
he opens up the water to make a way of escape
and uses that very water to drown the enemy.

When the Devil threatens us & holds us prisoner,
Jesus, the stronger one steps forward to take our place
and grabs his own weapons to use against him.
He takes everything the devil throws at him and says,
"Is that all you've got?"

He resists pride and accepts all the shame of our sins,
dying naked on the cross surrounded by mockers
but in a way that makes centurion exclaim,
"Surely this was the son of God!"
and he rises again in a blaze of glory.

He accepts rejection and abandonment even by his disciples
and cries "My God, My God, why have you forsake me."
but still says "Father, into your hands I commit my spirit."
and he returns to regather and reunite with his disciples.

He accepts the loss of everything, including life itself
as his killers divide up his only possessions
but he now lives forever as lord of all creation.

By his death, he has sucked all of the power out of death.
By being buried and rising again,
he has entered Satan's prison and blasted an exit
through which he leads us as well.

Now he uses even our deaths as way to take us to heaven.

Having grabbed control of the devil's worst weapons
and used them against him, he now plunders his palace
and claims those he had held hostage.

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Jesus says "he takes away his armor in which he trusted
and divides his spoil.

If you were protected by a power that was able to turn
everything that threatened you back against the attacker,
you would never have any reason to fear.

This is exactly what God has shown he is able to do.

The waters of the sea that meant disaster for Israel
were turned into the avenue of their rescue.

God does the same for us through Holy Baptism
in which our own sinful self is drowned

& we are brought through to new life as God's children.

Now as those claimed by Jesus we are delivered
from the Devil's weapons of death both now
and forever in heaven.

We are freed from shame and the need for pride
because God's forgiveness is stronger than any sin
and our value comes from Jesus' love for us.

We are freed from fear of loss that leads to selfishness
because God can provide more than any destruction
can take away

and we have his assurance that he will take care of us
through the loss of our life itself

so God's peace that passes understanding
is strong enough to calm any anxiety about the unknown

We are freed from isolation and foolish independence
by the love of Christ from which nothing can separate us.

and the life God gives us in heaven is beyond compare
with suffering and death which can only be temporary.

This is what Jesus gives us through the power of his word.

Even when the Devil holds person in the grip of possession,
he knows he has to flee when commanded by the
authority of Jesus.

Even when we have been caught in temptations and sin
we are freed from guilt and given a fresh start
by forgiveness in the name of Jesus.

This is why today and again week after week we gather
to hear and to repeat and to sing and to celebrate
what God tells us in his word
and we continue to receive through faith
what he has given us in his promises,
because his word is the weapon of the stronger man
who has come to rescue us when...

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in lives controlled by shame, fear and isolation.

DEATH IS DEFEATED BY JESUS' GREATER POWER

and so all the power of sin and the devil over us is broken.

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who has brought us through the water, out of the prison,
by the death and resurrection of Jesus
who leads us with him into eternal life.