

Mark 1:29-39

Epiphany 5; February 4-5, 2024

I think that one of the greatest buttons on a computer is the “undo” button. Clipping, pasting, copying, bold or normal type are all great, but that “undo” button is the best. I can remember using the typewriter to write papers and assignments. The teacher or professor wanted that document to be typed without any errors. And so, you would get almost to the end of that sheet of paper, you would make a mistake. The only thing that you could do was to start over. I wonder how many sheets of paper I wasted because I would have to start over. But then came the age of the computer and the “undo” button. Instead of having to start all over, a few key strokes would correct the mistake. Wouldn't it be great if life had the *undo* button? With one simple stroke, the mistake would be erased.

That's what Jesus does for us sinners. With one single stroke, he takes the mistakes away. The Devil doesn't want you to know that. He wants to keep you in your sins. Martin Luther once said, *“Where God built a church, there the devil would also build a chapel.”* Satan and the other demons hate God. They demonstrate hatred by hurting those that God loves in any way they can. Their attacks are real. They are dangerous. But Jesus wants us to see that he is continually *“undoing”* the devil's work. Moreover, through his Word, Jesus gives us the power to resist the devil and stand firm in the faith. That's what Jesus wants us to see as we look at these words and see: **“The Devil's Work Undone.”**

Our Gospel Lesson continues from where we left off last week in the Gospel of Mark. Last week we saw Jesus begin his ministry by calling disciples, by teaching in the synagogue with authority and driving out an impure spirit from a man. Jesus wants the people to see just how much sin can devastate this world and our lives. We see the Devil's work in so many ways. Even though that is true, Jesus wants us to see that he has come to undo the work the work of the Devil, and to restore things to where God had intended.

Mark writes: **“As soon as they left the synagogue, they went with James and John to the home of Simon and Andrew. Simon's mother-in-law was in bed with a fever, and they immediately told Jesus about her. So, he went to her, took her hand and helped her up. The fever left her and she began to wait on them. That evening after sunset the people brought to Jesus all the sick and demon-possessed. The whole town gathered at the door, and Jesus healed many who had various diseases. He also drove out many demons, but he would not let the demons speak because they knew who he was.”**

Things were not the same as they should be. The synagogue where He was teaching had been claimed by an unclean spirit. The home where he was invited to stay the evening was filled with sickness, making ordinary hospitality impossible. When the sun went down and the Sabbath was over, the town where this synagogue and this home were located revealed its heartache. People came out, bringing their sick and their demon possessed to Jesus. And this town was only one of many towns that spread throughout Galilee.

So, what does Jesus do? He comes to make them be the way they should be. In Capernaum, he starts in the synagogue. Jesus reclaims this space as holy and drives out the unclean spirit. His work continues as he enters the home of Peter's mother-in-law. He doesn't even need to speak a word; he took her hand and raised her up. From the home, his work spreads into the community. People come to the doorway and bring their real needs and burdens. We see Jesus bless them and heal them. Then, He lifts His eyes in prayer to a much larger mission: The restoration of all synagogues, homes, and cities. He leads His disciples on the footsteps of that mission. Mark wants his readers to know that Jesus' ministry will be a ministry of restoration. He takes very ordinary lives of people like you and me and fills them with his extra ordinary love.

The demons know who He is, but he will not allow them to speak. People will not learn about Jesus from the mouth of a demon. Instead, they will learn about Jesus from His mouth and from His hands and from His heart as He goes about His work. Jesus' work is about the business of remaking creation, one “synagogue” (one church), one house, one city, one person at a time. It wasn't going to stop in Capernaum. Jesus replied, **“Let us go somewhere else—to the nearby villages—so I can preach there also. That is why I have come.” So, he traveled throughout Galilee, preaching in their synagogues and driving out demons.”**

But that doesn't mean that Satan is going to give up trying to destroy Jesus' work. Peter describes that work in our Second Lesson for today. **"Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour."** How does Satan do that? He lies. He has been lying from the Garden of Eden. He has gotten good at it. He lies to us, and we listen to him. He is dangerous. The Devil and his demons somehow have the ability to influence human beings. He is able to influence human thoughts. The scary thing is that by ourselves, we can't stop it. I don't believe that these people, that Jesus was working with, wanted to be possessed by demons. Their goal is simple: they want to destroy believers in Jesus. They are actively and daily at war with us. They want us to think that our salvation is in jeopardy.

So, how do we stand up to Satan? Peter writes: **"Resist him, standing firm in the faith, because you know that the family of believers throughout the world is undergoing the same kind of sufferings. And the God of all grace, who called you to his eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered a little while, will himself restore you and make you strong, firm and steadfast."** Jesus says: Trust Me!

Life can be so unpredictable—joys and sorrows, blessings and difficulties can come so unexpectedly. Our life's dreams and plans can change in an instant. We all know this to be true. So how can we find peace amid such turbulence? Horatio Spafford knew something about life's unexpected challenges. He was a successful attorney and real estate investor who lost a fortune in the great Chicago fire of 1871. Around the same time, his four-year-old son died of scarlet fever. So, he thought that it would be a good time to go on a vacation in Europe. At the last minute, he couldn't leave. As his family left on a ship, he promised that he would soon catch up with them. On the open sea, there was a terrible accident. 200 people lost their lives, including his four daughters. His wife would survive and be rescued. When she arrived in England, she sent a telegram to her husband back in Chicago, *"Saved alone. What shall I do?"*

Horatio immediately left for England. At one point during his voyage, the captain of the ship that he was on, became aware of the tragedy that had struck the Spafford family. He would summon Horatio to tell him that they were now passing over the spot where the shipwreck had occurred. As he thought about his daughters and wife struggling in the ocean water, words of comfort and hope filled his heart and his mind. He would write them down, and they later would become a well-known hymn (which we sung before the sermon):

***When peace like a river attendeth my way,
When sorrows like sea billows roll—
Whatever my lot, thou hast taught me to say,
It is well, it is well with my soul.***

May you and I continue to trust in our Savior's love. The demons are real. They are dangerous. Yet, take courage. Jesus has come to undo the Devil's work. It truly is well with my soul. Amen.