

“Re-Created”

Earlier in chapter 3, St. Mark tells us about what happened on a Sabbath day – and that’s important. The Lord who creates ALL things, and declares all of Creation to be “very good” – also instituted the Sabbath Day – so that man may rest with God.

The Sabbath day is a holy day – “set apart” from all the other days – so that one might spend time hearing God’s Word, receiving His Divine Service, and thanking and praising Him for all His goodness towards us.

Jesus would go on to teach us that the Sabbath day is for doing good, not harm. It is for saving life, not killing. And so, Jesus healed a man’s withered hand. A hand which once showed forth the debilitating and destructive nature of sin in the world – is now evidence of God’s goodness, His life-giving Word, His Sabbath rest. Jesus restored His creation, He re-creates the man’s hand.

The world is in desperate need of the Lord’s Divine Service, His Sabbath rest, His re-creating work. And so are you. The crowds gather – they follow Jesus – so much so that they could not even eat. But not everyone wants what Jesus has to offer.

The Pharisees and Herodians were looking to destroy Jesus – all because He healed the man’s withered hand. Jesus’ own family members think He’s out of His mind. And the scribes that come from Jerusalem say that Jesus is “possessed by Beelzebul” – that He’s in cahoots with the “prince of demons.” All because He dares to do things on the Sabbath day – like feed, and heal people.

Blasphemy! That’s what the Scribes are guilty of. They are mocking God, insulting Jesus by claiming that He is demon possessed. Rather than thanking and praising God for His work of restoration and re-creation – they call His goodness, “evil.”

How ludicrous is their charge against Jesus – calling His works satanic. They don’t see good works that give life – they see a man breaking their laws for the Sabbath day. They don’t see Jesus as God in the flesh – they see a man who is threatening to take the crowds away from them. So, they claim Satan is at work in this man.

That's crazy! The devil doesn't come to save and restore and give rest – he comes to destroy and kill and wreak havoc in creation. The feeding and healing – and most importantly, the forgiving that Jesus has been doing – is not the work of Satan. It is God's work of salvation, His restoration of His creation.

Jesus points out their folly. "How can Satan cast out Satan?" Satan can't fight against himself and survive. "And if a house is divided against itself, that house will not be able to stand." And then these all-important words of Jesus. "But no one can enter a strong man's house and plunder his goods, unless he first binds the strong man. Then indeed he may plunder his house."

Jesus is the One who has entered the strong man's house and plundered his goods! He comes into the kingdom of the prince of demons and binds him, plundering his goods.

When Jesus feeds, heals, and raises people from the dead – when He forgives sinners – He is taking back what belongs to Him. What the devil and sin has destroyed and alienated from God – Jesus comes to redeem, to "buy back," to restore, to re-create and reconcile to the Father.

Jesus enters the devil's house with His "holy precious blood and with His innocent suffering and death" – binding the devil, crushing his head --- redeeming the hostages.

Sinners possessed by the devil – suffering physical, mental and emotional distress – living in isolation from God, cut off from His presence by their sin --- it is for them, "for you," that Jesus comes to do His Divine Service – forgiving your sin, setting you free, re-creating you and giving you His Sabbath rest.

People are more likely to believe that demons are at work in this world – than believe that God is present and active in our midst. They see pain and suffering as the devil's work – and think God is far away in heaven, powerless to do anything about it.

In Jesus we see what is true – that God is present and active in our world, in our lives – plundering the devil's house, binding him, and restoring His creation.

It is blasphemy to insinuate that the Lord doesn't care about His creation about you. "Truly, I say to you, all sins will be forgiven the children of man, and whatever blasphemies they utter, but whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit never has forgiveness, but is guilty of an eternal sin."

What a beautiful proclamation of the Gospel – and a stark uttering of the Law. Whatever your sin is – even your mocking and insulting of God – “truly,” it is forgiven in the blood of Jesus Christ. That's good news. That gives hope of a restored and everlasting life with God. That is a Sabbath rest.

But “whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit” has no hope, no rest. The Holy Spirit works through the Word of God to create and sustain a faith that trusts in Jesus Christ for forgiveness – for the forgiveness of ALL sins – even blasphemy.

But one who mocks the Holy Spirit's working through the Word – has no other means by which they may be forgiven, made holy, and saved eternally. To say NO to the Holy Spirit when He comes to cleanse you in the blood of Jesus Christ – is to reject Christ and His death for you – to reject His blood as the atoning sacrifice for your sin.

Without the Holy Spirit, you do not have Christ. And without Christ and His “holy precious blood and innocent suffering and death” – you do not have forgiveness, life and salvation. You are not restored to the Father, and you do not have Sabbath rest.

Dearly beloved – Jesus, the Son of God, comes into your midst this day to redeem you. He plunders the devil's house, He binds the devil's power over you, He crushes his head – all so that you may be free from such a tyrant who only brings death and destruction.

Today Christ pours out His blood on you – forgiving ALL your sin, re-creating you, restoring you to the Father – and giving you the Sabbath rest He instituted in the beginning, so that you may live in it all your days. Amen.

The peace of God which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.