

Mark 3:20-35

June 6, 2021

Grace and peace be with you from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

So, there are a lot of titles for Jesus in the Bible, in hymns, in prayer books, and in other places too.

You probably have your own favorite title for Jesus that you like use in prayer. I guess I usually just use “gracious Lord.” I’ve always thought maybe I should expand my titles, but I always fall back into that one.

How about you? What title do you use for Jesus?

Some of the titles we use for Jesus help us to remember who Jesus is and what Jesus does – such as Friend, Comforter, or Savior.

Other times the title is used to remember what Jesus said about himself. I am - the Way, the Vine, the Door, the Bread of Life, the Good Shepherd

Titles are also good for remembering how his early disciples described him – the Rock, the Lamb of God, the Messiah, the Deliverer, Emmanuel...

These titles for Jesus are helpful, because they are a shortcut to remind us who Jesus is. Jesus is Love. Jesus is Light. Jesus is Life.

There are easily 100 titles for Jesus, just do a Google search. I’ve looked at a lot of the lists, and on all of the lists I’ve ever checked, I have never, ever, not even once seen the title for Jesus as the Plunderer. The Plunderer. Never. Have you?

Jesus is the Plunderer.

It’s right there in Mark 3:27. Jesus says, in so many words, that he is the one who plunders the house of Satan. Jesus the Plunderer, probably not the first thing anyone thinks about when it comes to Jesus, right? But, there it is in black and white.

Jesus the Plunderer. It’s is Biblical!

And thanks be to God that he is the Plunderer, because who wants to be held captive in Satan’s house? Who wants to be trapped thinking that they are worthless and of no value? No one, right?

Satan is the oppressor who holds people in captivity by making them think they are not worthy of being a full person.

There are a lot of things that can be considered Satan.

In Jesus' day, it was the Roman occupation that told the people of the Land that they were not complete people. They were not fully human. This is one of the ways Rome kept the peace.

In the Roman Empire, there was a hierarchy of the civilized with the emperor at the top, then the nobility, then the merchants, then the slaves, and then the occupied people were the lowest of the low.

And I should note that the emperor considered himself to be the savior of the civilized world and a god only slightly below Jupiter and the pantheon of Romans gods.

Today we would consider Satan to be any of the isms that we face – racism, ageism, sexism, classism, ableism, nationalism – and all of the phobias against certain groups of people – like homophobia and Islamophobia.

Satan is the name for that phenomena in us that tempts us into thinking that people have to be perfect, or a certain way, to be complete and to be loved by God. That somehow we have to earn God's love by changing ourselves to fit a certain mold, to fit a certain set of criteria set by other people. But, we never reach that goal. We always fall short.

What we really need is a real Savior, a Plunderer, who will save us from that despair, not impose on us unreasonable requirements. So thanks be to God that Jesus is the Plunderer! He comes to the rescue. He ties up the strong man, Satan, in all of his lies, and he sets us free to be who God created us to be – beloved children.

Jesus, the Plunderer, destroys every connotation that suggests we are worthless or unloved. That is simply never the truth.

As my friend use to say – God don't make junk! God loves all of creation.

And so Jesus, the Plunderer, comes for us. He comes for us. He dies for us on the cross and is risen on the third day for us in order to tie up Satan in all of his evil lies and proclaim that we are already complete.

On the cross and into the resurrection, Jesus takes all shame, worry, and doubt, and destroys them so that the idea that anything can separate us from God is obliterated.

Nothing, not sin nor death, can ever separate us from God. Jesus is proof of that, and in his act of ultimate love, in his death and resurrection, Jesus is the Plunderer.

And that act of Plundering continues today through the Holy Spirit. It is through the Holy Spirit that we are eternally connected to God and have the forgiveness of all of our sins and life everlasting with God. The Holy Spirit does that, and anytime we suggest otherwise, we sin – we remove ourselves from God and God's will once again.

Because, God is merciful, full of compassion, slow to anger, and loves us eternally. That is the truth. That is the truth for all people – all people!

If we ever think someone doesn't have the Holy Spirit, that someone is cursed by God, or that we don't have the Holy Spirit, and we are cursed by God, then we are liars who are held in captivity by Satan and we are blaspheming against the very essence of God.

But, the good news is that Jesus never tires of tying up Satan and setting us free, eternally bringing us the good news of God's love through the Holy Spirit.

Jesus is the Plunderer. He forcefully and eternally takes back everyone Satan has stolen from God - he did it through his death and resurrection and continues to do it through the Holy Spirit.

Satan cannot compete with God's greatest act of love! It's no contest.

So, do not ever let your heart be troubled. Trust Jesus. Trust God. Trust the Holy Spirit who is with you always and forever, and then be the child of God you were born to be – forgiven and beloved. Be Jesus' brother, sister, and mother by doing God's will.

Listen to the good news. Know God's love. Confess your sin. Receive forgiveness. And, restore relationships with and between others.

Don't be like Adam and Eve playing the blame game in the Garden, which just destroys relationships. Instead, be Jesus' family by restoring relationships, really restoring relationships, not placating them, by being honest about who you are and what you have done.

Relationships are truly restored when we confess our sin, take full responsibility for all of our own actions, and then ask those we've hurt to forgive us.

Confession is never an act of weakness, but it is the most courageous thing we can ever do – even more courageous than forgiving those who have hurt us.

God already knows us naked, stripped of all of the bravado we like to show other people.

God knows us completely – every hair, every wart, every wrinkle, every scar, and also all of our worries, doubts, and fears. God knows them all, accepts them all, and then goes beyond just knowing and accepting them to giving us healing, deep healing. Deep to our core healing.

In 2019, Lizzo released her album “Cuz I Love You.” You may remember it, because she was naked on the cover and a lot of people were really quite shocked by it. She got a lot of flak for her size, but Lizzo owns who she is and refuses to let anyone shame her. She takes what others consider shameful and puts it out there for all to see – much like Jesus on the cross.

With the Holy Spirit, we cannot be shamed by other people who judge us by projecting their own insecurities onto us, because they themselves do not feel fully loved. And, that is where forgiveness on our part comes in. In judgement, people do not realize what they are doing. That they are crying out – I’m fully clothed and you’re not – when in fact they are completely naked.

We are not perfect. I’m not perfect. You’re not perfect. No one is perfect but God alone, and the perfect one – the one who is totally complete - is the one who destroys shame by dying in the most “shameful” way possible in order to make us whole by proving to us that we are loved unconditionally and God wants us to love ourselves and each other unconditionally as well.

Jesus joins us in the muck in order to grab us by the hand and pull us out of it. The muck is not who we are.

Shame is not of God. It is of Satan, and Jesus has tied up Satan so that we can be set free – free to love in the world as we ourselves are already loved by God.

There is no shame in love – perfect love, God’s love – chases it away, and because of that we are Jesus’ family eternally. We are loved eternally. Through the Holy Spirit, nothing can ever separate us from God, because Jesus is the Plunderer, and Satan’s house is empty!

Thanks be to God. Amen.