

Week of March 18-24

SOMEONE STRONGER

Scripture Reading: Read Luke chapter 11

If you have ever visited Washington, D.C., you probably made your way to the Lincoln Memorial. On the walls of the memorial are inscribed the familiar words of Abraham Lincoln's Gettysburg Address and his second inaugural speech. The memorial is a powerful tribute to the sixteenth president of the United States who led the fight to abolish slavery in our land, and whose term of office was marked by the bloodiest war in terms of American casualties that our country has ever experienced.

Two years before Lincoln was elected president, he gave another now familiar address in which he declared in part, "A house divided against itself cannot stand. I believe this government cannot endure, permanently, half slave and half free." He was right. It's why the Civil War was fought as Lincoln noted in his second inaugural address, "Both parties deprecated war; but one of them would make war rather than let the nation survive; and the other would accept war rather than let it perish."

Lincoln's quotation about a house divided is drawn from the teachings of Jesus as we see in our chapter reading today. Jesus' adversaries couldn't accept the possibility that Jesus was who he claimed to be but neither could they deny his miraculous works. Their solution? They accused Jesus of being in league with the devil; that he was driving out demons by Beelzebub, the prince of demons. In response, Jesus declares, "*Any kingdom divided against itself will be ruined, and a house divided against itself will fall. If Satan is divided against himself, how can his kingdom stand?*" He goes on to add, "*But if I drive out demons by the finger of God, then the kingdom of God has come to you.*"

For Jesus, as we saw in Matthew's gospel, it's all about the kingdom. The kingdom of God had come with the coming of Jesus. Rather than being in league with the devil's kingdom, he had come to overthrow it. Jesus had come to overpower the strong man as he implies in verses 21-22, "*When a strong man, fully armed, guards his own house, his possessions are safe. But when someone stronger attacks and overpowers him, he takes away the armor in which the man trusted and divides up the spoils.*"

Over and over again in the gospels, we see Jesus on the attack, overpowering the devil's forces and setting captives free. His mission, in part, was to release prisoners from bondage...bondage to sin and bondage to Satan. Jesus has the goods. He has the power. He is the "someone stronger" that defeats the "strong man" and he invites you to enjoy the spoils of his victory.

Action Step: When is the last time you reflected on the fact that if you're a Christian greater is He who is in you than he who is in the world?

Prayer Focus: Thank God for Christ's victory over the "strong man."

Take-away: *When it comes to kingdoms, put your faith in the "Someone stronger"*