

A few weeks ago we heard Deacon Brian tell us that during Advent we would be going through a 4-week period where we talk about our story, the true account of reality and how we relate to it in our world today.

The first part was called created and Father David talked about that last week.

And it was good.

The second part is called captured and it is not as warm and fuzzy as part 1.

As a matter of fact it is really bad news.

The captured part of our life can be summed up with just one simple question.

Why are things so messed up?

If creation was awesome and God is so good, why is this world so messed up?

What the hell happened?

We face terrible things and bad news everyday.

If you have ever experienced any of these things,,, that is you living out the 2<sup>nd</sup> part of your story and it is not a good story.

As a matter of fact it's dreadful.

I have no doubt that we all wonder why are things so bad?

The main reason,,,, is the devil.

The devil will try his best to deceive us about how much he is responsible for our messed up world.

How real is this deception?

I have a quote that comes from a priest in 2019, so not so long ago: "Symbols are part of reality and the devil exists as a symbolic reality, not a personal reality."

This quote caused a great stir in the Catholic world mostly because it is not true and very scandalous.

But this is how the devil works.

He tells you two big lies.

One is that he is not real, that he is just a symbol.

And if you don't believe the first lie and realize he is real, the 2<sup>nd</sup> lie he will tell you is that he is more powerful than he really is.

The devil is real, and he knows you. He knows you very well as a matter of fact.

So when we talk about the story of our capture, we are really talking about the devil and the consequences of being captured by him.

And because of the fact that we are captured by the devil, we should probably know as much about him as we can.

So who is he?

He is our enemy.

He is a creature, an angel and he was made good.

God named him Lucifer, which means light bearer.

He was one of God's greatest angels, but by his own decision, he became evil.

Another thing we must realize is that he is not God's equal.

God is way more powerful than he will ever be.

So why did Lucifer become evil, what made him take this horrible U-turn?

Because of envy,,,,,, his envy of you.

What? Why would the devil be envious of me?

Because God's plan for Lucifer was to have him serve a creature that was less divine than Lucifer.

What creature could be less divine than Lucifer?

Us. All of us.

The logic of God's love for us was to have us be exalted above Lucifer's level in heaven.

Lucifer was sad when he found this out.

And his sadness turned into envy.

Envy can be described as being so sad at someone else's success and good fortune, that I don't want them to have it.

Can you imagine that feeling?

A feeling that I would rather someone not be happy, because their happiness makes me sad.

Have you ever felt this way?

I have. I do it with sports teams all the time.

I won't say which team I feel envious about but you might be able to guess.

I need to work on that.

So Lucifer's plan is to destroy God's plan by enslaving us, damaging us.

So how does the devil do this?

By convincing us that we can find happiness away from God.

And this is exactly what happened in the Garden of Eden.

And this plan works so well that he continues to use the same game plan on us today.

So what does that game plan look like?

Can we study it and learn how the devil works in our lives?

First he accuses. He accuses God.

He asked Eve, did God really say that you could not eat from this tree?

Then the devil lies. He told Eve the fruit would not hurt her.

He divides. The devil divides us from God and lets us be one on one with the devil.

He compliments. You can be just like God.

He tempts us. Go ahead and take the fruit, commit that sin, it won't be that bad.

And finally he discourages us.

After we sin the devil calls us fools, he mocks us and discourages us from trying to reconcile with God. "You are never going to be good in God's eyes again."

Does this sound familiar to you?

It should.

This is how we are all captured at this moment in time.

And it is tragic.

The devil's goal is very simple and Jesus tells us his goal in John chapter 10 when Jesus says, "A thief comes only to steal and slaughter and destroy."

The devil is the thief and Jesus tells us in plain language what his plans are for us.

Steal you away from God, kill you,,,,, and destroy you for all eternity.

That is the devil's horrific goal for every one of us here today, it his goal for every generation that came before us and every generation that comes after us.

We are all captured by his plan.

And the results of us being captured are two simple truths.

Sin and death.

And we have no control over these 2 things.

These two powers, sin and death, are the reality of living in a fallen world.

We cannot escape these two things.

There is nothing, absolutely nothing we can do about this,,,,, on our own.

We are powerless to get away from sin and death.

We cannot compete with these powers.

It is depressing to think about,,, but it's the truth.

And we need to hear it.

For me this truth helps explain a part of scripture that keeps playing in the back of my head.

It's from Romans chapter 7 verses 14 & 15.

"We know that the law is spiritual, but I am carnal, sold into slavery to sin.

What I do, I do not understand.

For I do not do what I want,,, but I do,,, what I hate."

Those verses became so clear when I started reading about being captured and what that meant in my life.

I am powerless to sin and death and the truth is,,, we all are.

We cannot overpower sin and death on our own, without Jesus we are doomed.

We are going to live our worst nightmare without Jesus saving us.

We are all captured, we are all enslaved to sin, we are alone and no one is coming for us.

Its over, its hopeless, its depressing,,,,,

without the hope of Jesus.

This is horrible news.

And it's real news, this isn't fake news, there are no fact checkers who are going to be able to dispute this fact.

We are all captured, all of us.

The devil runs this world and we are all stuck living in it, enslaved to it.

I cannot over emphasize how bad this is for us.

But, and I hope you all were waiting for this "but", because it is a very important part of our story.

But,,, our story doesn't have to end with this bad news, we do not have to live our lives captured if we don't want to.

Today we heard John say,

"The one who is coming after me is mightier than I.

I am not worthy to carry his sandals.

He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire."

We do not have to live in despair;

we can and should live with the divine hope,,,,, that Jesus is offering us.