

Demolition Day

Luke 4: 31-44

There's a whole channel on TV where all the shows are about renovating homes. Whether the home being renovated is in Chicago or Minneapolis, on the beach on a tropical island, or in the Rocky Mountains, all of these shows feature some dynamic duo – often a husband and wife team. One is the home builder, and the other person is the designer. After the house is chosen, the first step in fixing it up is a dramatic moment. It's called "demo day" on the TV shows. That's the day when a small army of people enter the house, all wielding sledge hammers and crow bars. They rip out old sinks and tubs. They take down kitchen cupboards. They smash through walls that won't be needed, tearing them down. The house looks like a wreck, and then everything is carried out and thrown into a dumpster. After a day of sweat and dust and hard work, the areas to be fixed are left with just bare studs.

Demolition day is fun to watch. It might be fun to even do the smashing. But when it comes to it happening in your *own life*, it's not fun at all. It's painful. No one likes to have their thoughts, their habits, their patterns de-constructed. We are comfortable with our lives the way they are, and maybe we can agree to a little minor repair.

In today's Gospel Reading, it's "demolition day." In one short day, Jesus smashed the teaching that the religious leaders kept giving to the people. He shattered the power that demons held over God's people. Jesus destroyed disease that stole the health and the hope of people. And Jesus invites you to experience the strength of Jesus' demolition power, and to rejoice that Jesus uses this great power of His always in love, for your good.

If you were with us last week, you know that we saw Jesus back in His hometown of Nazareth. He spoke in the synagogue describing what kind of a Savior – a Messiah – He would be. The people didn't like that. He was rejected. In today's glimpse in the life of Christ, He moves from Nazareth to a synagogue in

Capernaum. Nazareth sits about 20 miles southwest of Capernaum, but it's downhill all the way. Nazareth is 1,150 feet above sea level, and Capernaum is 680 feet below sea level. So Jesus went from way up in the mountains of Nazareth down. Capernaum was on the seashore of the Sea of Galilee. It was the home of Jesus' first disciples who were fishermen, Peter, James, John and Andrew.

Today we get to see 24 hours in the life of Jesus. If you ever thought it would be great to hang out with Jesus for a day, we'll do that in our story. Our story begins in the morning, on a Saturday, the Jewish holy day, in the synagogue in Capernaum. It's demo day. It begins with **Jesus destroys the teaching that lacks His love and truth.**

Luke tells us, ***"Then He went down to Capernaum, a city of Galilee, and was teaching them on the Sabbath. And they were astonished at His teaching, for His word was with authority."***

Notice, ***"They were astonished."*** The word "astonished" in the Greek means "to strike out of" or "to be struck out of yourself." The modern term would be "blown away" or "It blew my mind!" So, they were totally blown away with Jesus' doctrine or teaching.

Why were they blown away at Jesus' words? **Number one, He spoke the truth.** The Bible says ***"speak the truth in love"*** Ephesians 4:15. Jesus said, ***"I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me"*** John 14:6-7. Jesus always spoke the truth of God's Word, and He spoke it in love. That made His teaching amazing.

Second, Jesus spoke in parables. The word "parable" comes from the Greek word "parabole," which means "to lay alongside." A parable is a story laid alongside spiritual truth to explain the spiritual truth. Jesus was telling parables, which were earthly stories with a heavenly meaning. The people understood the stories and learned the truth about God's love for them. His teaching was blowing them away.

Third, Jesus spoke with authority and not as the scribes. Mark writes about the same day, and Mark says, ***"And they were astonished at His teaching, for He taught them as one having authority,***

and not as the scribes.” The scribes quoted authorities in their teaching. Their teaching was, “Rabbi Shammai said thus-and-so”; “Rabbi Hillel said this-and-such.” Jesus didn’t need to quote any rabbis; He spoke on His own authority. Jesus taught as one sent from God, who came from the Father full of grace and truth. He taught with full confidence: He knew what He was talking about, and people could sense that.

The rabbis would deal with trivial matters, and add on their own man-made commandments: how to tithe mint and cumin; how many steps you could take on a Sabbath’s day journey. And they would neglect the issues God is really concerned about, like mercy and faithfulness. Jesus got right to the heart of the matter: love for God, love for the neighbor.

The rabbis would break God’s Commandments and rationalize why it was OK to do so. They didn’t take a knife and stab anyone to death, so they thought they didn’t kill, that they were keeping God’s Commandment. They thought they could waltz right into heaven they were so perfect.

Jesu said, ***“You have heard that it was said to those of old, ‘You shall not murder.’ But I say to you that whoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment”*** Matthew 5:21-22. Jesus said anger in your heart is committing murder.

That’s why it blew their minds. “What?! You mean it’s not just the action? It’s also the attitude of the heart?!” Yes. (It’s kind of hard to drive the freeway during rush hour and not murder someone.) God looks at our heart and not just at our actions.

But when Jesus says, “You shall not murder,” He’s not saying you can’t step on a bug. He’s not saying that if you’ve got a gopher in your yard, you can’t kill it. It’s “You shall not murder.” It’s not “You shall not kill.” God’s talking about homicide. It’s okay to eat a hamburger for lunch today if you want to do that. It’s about murdering and that sin is in our hearts and minds.

The same, Jesus said, is true about adultery. It’s not just the action; it’s the heart attitude. You can sin in your own mind when you entertain thoughts that are not pleasing to God. So Jesus

shows us all that we are sinners who NEED God to save us. We come to God humbly asking for forgiveness, and God, in His limitless love, grants it.

Jesus smashed the grip the religious leaders had over the people by demolishing their teaching.

Next, we get to see **Jesus destroys the power of evil over His followers.** Luke tells us, *“in the synagogue there was a man who had a spirit of an unclean demon. And he cried out with a loud...”* or “very, very loud” *“...voice, saying, ‘Ha! What have you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are—the Holy One of God.’”*

“But Jesus rebuked him, saying, ‘Be silent and come out of him!’ And when the demon had thrown him down in their midst,” – threw him on the ground – *“he came out of him, having done him no harm. And they were all amazed”* or “astonished” at His power over demons *“and said to one another, ‘What is this word? For with authority and power He commands the unclean spirits’”* – or “demons” -- *“...and they come out.’ And reports about Him went out into every place in the surrounding region.”* Luke 4:33-37

Demons like to go to church. Wherever God’s Word is preached, demons want to distract. So, Jesus was teaching in the synagogue, and the demon cries out of this man. This is “demon possession.” This man had a demon who lived inside him, controlled him and could speak through the man’s vocal cords. That’s a scary thought. In the original Greek writing, the demon’s voice was a screech of terror.

Demons are basically fallen angels. In the spiritual realm, there is only God and angels. There are no ghosts—certainly not Casper the Friendly Ghost. Satan is a fallen, rebellious angel. His original name was Lucifer, and Ezekiel describes him as a beautiful angel. The Bible says that he was prideful and wanted to usurp his place over God. So Satan was kicked out of heaven. He became the devil. And other angels went with Lucifer to the earth. There

was an angelic rebellion. So, we have all these fallen angels, or demons, which are intelligent, powerful and not to be played with.

There are two dangers when it comes to demons. One is to deny their existence, which is pretty common, and the other is to be captivated with them.

Jesus demolishes the demon's hold on the man not just to show who is boss—it does show that, yes – but also to show that Jesus uses His authority to help people. He has compassion on us, just as He has compassion on this demonized man. The demon wants to harm the man; Jesus wants to help him.

When Jesus casts out these demons, it is anticipating the decisive victory Jesus will win over the devil on the cross. There on the cross, Jesus defeated the devil by taking away the thing the devil held over our heads, our sins. But Jesus took away our sins by taking them onto Himself. The devil no longer has anything left with which to accuse us! And with sin taken away, death loses its power. So, these castings out of the unclean spirits are a part of that great mission Christ came to do for us.

If you are a Christian you don't have to worry about having a demon live inside of you. They can oppress you. They can tempt you. But they cannot possess you. God promises, ***"He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world"*** 1 John 4:4. There is nothing in the Bible to indicate that a child of God can be demon possessed. The Bible says that as believers, our bodies are ***"the temple of the Holy Spirit"*** 1 Corinthians 6:19. So the Holy Spirit isn't going to live upstairs in you and the demon live in the basement. You are redeemed by the blood of Christ. Jesus smashed to smithereens the power the devil has over anyone who trusts in Christ. That's guaranteed in your Baptism.

That demolition day, **Jesus destroys disease, restoring hope to the hopeless.**

Next, Luke tells us, ***"He arose from the synagogue..."*** So we are still following Jesus in the same day but now in the afternoon.

"...and entered Simon's house." So this is after church is over. What do Christians like to do after church? They like to eat. There was

no Bob Evans or McDonalds in town, so they go to Simon Peter's house. ***"Now Simon's mother-in-law"*** -- apparently Peter was married, He had a house. His mother-in-law ***"was ill with a high fever...."*** and they asked Jesus to heal her. So ***"Jesus stood over her and rebuked the fever, and it left her...."*** Same word for "rebuked" the demons. He wouldn't let them speak. Jesus didn't want demons advertising Him. ***"And immediately she rose and began to serve them."***

Take note of how Jesus heals. **Jesus** ***"stood over her."*** Then Jesus actually spoke to the fever, and it immediately left her.

Next we move to the evening at Peter's house. ***"When the sun was setting, all those who had any who were sick with various diseases brought them to [Jesus], and He laid His hands on every one of them and healed them."*** So first He spoke and the fever left, and now He lays hands on them and the sick are healed and delivered.

When Jesus laid His hands on the man with leprosy, instantly his skin was renewed. When Jesus reached out and healed the lame man, he immediately walked— no going to a rehab facility for a few weeks of physical therapy to regain his strength -- just instantly, totally, immediately healed on the spot.

Our bodies weaken over time. Eventually, all of us will die. Sickness leads to death. But Jesus raised people from the dead. How's that for destroying disease? He stood at the grave of Lazarus who had been dead four days. That's really, really dead! Jesus said, ***"Take away the stone."*** So, they rolled away the stone and Jesus said, ***"Lazarus, come forth!"*** John 11:43. And Lazarus came forth. Jesus has the power to overcome sickness completely!

Sickness comes because our bodies are sinful and weak. But one day, when Jesus comes back, He will raise all people who have ever lived back to life. Anybody who has trusted in Jesus for forgiveness, will go to heaven. In heaven, there will be no sin, ever again. When there is no sin, there will be no sickness or death. The Bible says that, because of what Jesus has done by His life and His death and resurrection, His gift to you is this, waiting in

heaven, ***“He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away.”*** Revelation 21:4 No more disease, no more death, no more pain or tears ... ever again! You talk about demolishing disease!

In our lives now on earth, God has not guaranteed that we, as Christians, will be healed of our physical sicknesses. But Jesus still does heal broken bodies today. ***“Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever”*** Hebrews 13:8. He did it back then, and He still does today. But He hasn’t guaranteed that if you’re a Christian and you have enough faith, you’ll have perfect health. No!

Jesus said, ***“In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world”*** John 16:33.

Every one of us will get older, regardless of the tummy tucks, face lifts, workouts, and eating health food. Sooner or later you will go ***“the way of all flesh”*** 1 Kings 2:2. Every one of us will die, unless Jesus comes again. But one day our bodies will be free of sickness, free of weakness, free of back aches. That will happen when we go to heaven and get remade perfect bodies. In the meantime, the Lord can heal me if He wants to. He can. So, pray and trust the Lord. But if He doesn’t heal us now, He’ll heal us then.

Do you know what, folks? It’s still demolition day today! Jesus’ word still speaks today, and it is a living, active, powerful word! • Do your sins trouble you? Listen, your sins are forgiven! • Does the Evil One still accuse of your soul causing guilt and doubt? Listen, the devil has no power over you! • Does the fear of death or the pain of illness feel like a black cloud in your mind? Listen, sin and sickness and death have been defeated! Your body—yes, that old achy body – that body will be healed and restored perfectly in the resurrection at the last day!

You see, Christ has spoken His word of authority over you in your baptism. There God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit placed His name on you, and claimed you as His own.

Christ has destroyed your guilt and given you His truth and grace. He has wrecked the devil’s power over you forever. Jesus

has demo'd disease and death. You are free, you are God's child, you are part of God's forever family!

Today Jesus invites you to trust in and rejoice in Jesus' power which He uses in love for your good.

Did you notice that the people of Capernaum spread the word. The news traveled *fast!* By evening, there was a sea of people gathered outside the door as the sun set, and Jesus healed them all, and taught them, and cast out the demons. Those people invited others to come and experience the same loving, powerful, demolishing Jesus that they had experienced.

And you can INVITE OTHERS to come to rejoice in and trust in Jesus' power and love too.

AMEN.