

Text: Mark 9:38-50

Theme: Who's side are you on?

Grace, mercy, and peace be to you from God our Father and our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

My dear beloved flock, the text for our meditation today is the Holy Gospel according to St. Mark chapter nine verses thirty-eight through fifty.

Good morning, boys and girls, how are you this morning? I pray that you are well. Have you ever seen anyone do something bad? Maybe you saw your brother or sister take a cookie from the cookie jar or coloring on the walls, or not sharing the video game controller and letting you have a turn. You run to mom and tattle on them. What will mom do? Mom will punish your brother or sister for the slight against you. In our text for today, we see John running up to Jesus tattling on someone who was casting out demons in Jesus' name but he was not one of them. How does Jesus' reply? What does Jesus' reply tell us how we should act when things like that happen? Ponder these questions as you listen to the rest of the sermon. You may go back to your seats and those who love you. Whose side are you on? Devil or Jesus? How can you tell?

Whose side are you on? This question seems to be one that is concerning John in today's text. John recounts an occasion when the twelve witnessed a stranger to them casting out demons in Jesus' name. They rebuked him and told him to stop doing that. What is so wrong about that? Well, who is this guy? He does not follow after "us," so what business does he have casting out demons in the name by which we are supposed to cast out demons? He's not following us so he's doing something wrong. John is quick to point out that since he does not "follow us," and is at the same time casting out demons in the name of their Master, they forbade this action. Who does this guy think he is, anyway? Jesus is quick to offer an answer. "But Jesus said, 'Do not forbid him, for no one who works a miracle in my name can soon afterward speak evil of me. For he who is not

against us is on our side (40-41).” Well, John gets his answer. Jesus gives to the Twelve a straight answer concerning how to identify this “someone” as one who is on their side. This “someone” uses the name!

How do you use the name of Jesus?

Are you on the side of Jesus, using His name to praise and glorify Him or are you on the side of the devil and sin, using His name for your own wants and desires? If you are being honest with yourselves, you often use the name of Jesus in ways that do not glorify him. We break the Second commandment often, misusing His name and using it in a wrong way. To curse others who are made in the image of God, to swear that you will do something when you have no intention of actually doing it, to call down curses on inanimate objects when accidents happen of our own making, like hitting ourselves with a hammer when we miss the nail. Even worse, what happens to those who see us as children of God treating His name in this fashion? They stumble. The misuse of the name has serious consequences! Causing one to stumble has serious consequences!

However, how great is the joy when that name is used, seen, and received rightly! For by this name demons are cast out! The one who bears this name, “being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death, even death on the cross” (Philippians 2:8). Here we have the name for its true purpose: the forgiveness of sins, your sins; life, your life; salvation, your salvation.

Christ forgives our sins, faith makes us on His side.

Jesus Christ, God in the flesh for you, takes all of your sins upon Himself. All of the times when you have cursed and lied, sworn and failed, and much more. He has nailed them with Himself

on the cross. He sheds His perfect blood as payment for every single one of your sins. Jesus buries your sins with Him in the tomb and leaves them there, rising again from the dead to give you new life and salvation. He takes you from being on the side of sin, death, and the power of the devil, and places you on His side forever and ever. You are the one who not only has the privilege of using the name of the Lord for all that is good, but you bear his name as one who belongs to him.

This He does, in the waters of Holy Baptism for you. Here at the font, Jesus' name is placed upon you. You bear the sign of the cross on your forehead and heart to mark you as one redeemed by Christ the Crucified. Sin, death, and the devil were cast out of you by the same name. This name is the name that you wake up to every morning of your life—you woke up to this name this morning! So rejoice in this name above all names that rests on you, and marks you as one saved from that place “where the worm does not die, and the fire is not quenched.”

Having been thus saved by the Death and Resurrection of our Lord, and granted the faith to believe that Jesus did this for us, we encourage each other as we go about our lives, remembering that we are on the same side and bear the name of Jesus. We use His name in Prayer, praise, thanksgiving, proclamation, consolation, and all that we have been given to do upon this earth and in our lives. We use this name to bring to the world the flavor of the Holy Gospel, spreading His Good News to those who have not heard it, that they too many not perish eternally but live forever with us in the splendor of heaven.

May the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, guard and keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.